

Visibility detection

Conquering
the last mile
in real-time
personalization



Visibility detection: Conquering the last mile in real-time personalization

Have you heard of the “last mile” in personalization? It refers to the time from when a decision to deliver content is made, and when that content or experience change is presented. Unfortunately, this is where many marketing technologies struggle because it’s very difficult for solutions to deliver on. With the complexity and speed of digital today, there are three main concerns with delivering effective real-time personalization:

1. Was the content replaced after the default content had already loaded?
2. Was the decision made quickly enough to deliver the content at all, or was it never presented to the individual?
3. If it was placed on the page/screen, was it actually seen or had the user already scrolled beyond where it was placed or moved to a new page before it was loaded?

With the intricacy of digital across all channels, organizations often don’t realize how few of their personalized offers or experiential changes ever make it to the consumer due to poor coding, data time outs, and other common challenges. Even if the content was delivered, there’s no real reporting on the visibility of those changes, i.e. did anyone actually see it?

Standard marketing solutions consider an ad as “viewed” when the ad is delivered – meaning the page it’s supposed to be on is loaded. They don’t factor in whether the ad was actually shown to the visitor. There are widespread impacts from this “assumed visibility” approach, from skewed performance reporting to inaccurate marketing attribution models.

Many A/B tests and multi-variate experiences misreport success and failure due to an inability to deliver content in a timely manner. To the experience platform it’s black and white – either it loaded, or it didn’t. Likewise, machine decisioning relies on data and when that data is wrong it negatively impacts predictive models used for marketing personalization and invalidates retargeting of non-responders.

This guide explores the impact of visibility in terms of total marketing ROI and delivering effective real-time personalization.



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1. What exactly is “visibility”
2. Why visibility detection is so important
3. How visibility detection improves machine learning and prevents bias

What exactly is “visibility”?

There are many terms used in marketing and advertising: ad-visibility, viewed impressions, ad measurement. In short, it's a measure of how many times your ad or offer was truly seen by a real human. It's a critical component of marketing analytics and revenue attribution because the standard measurements of CTR and conversion rate are irrelevant if the content is never viewed. If your ad or offer isn't seen, it's literally impossible for it to be clicked or generate conversions.

Increasing visibility and [optimizing PPC ad spend](#) is of course a major goal for marketers across the globe, and Google shocked the industry in 2014 when they announced that 56% of online display ad impressions weren't actually seen by consumers. After the resulting shift in approach by advertisers and publishers, that number hadn't improved much by 2018 when the true visibility rate was still only 46.4%.

Although these numbers refer specifically to paid advertising, the concept is the same for any personalized content or offers presented to consumers, including retargeting campaigns and offers for existing customers on your owned channels. Visibility is a key factor in assessing marketing success, and you need precise visibility metrics to accurately assess campaign performance.

Why are ads/offers not seen?

There are many reasons marketing content may never be seen by a human. Placement and timing can be big factors. If a viewer scrolls too fast or doesn't scroll down the screen at all they may not ever see the content you're altering. If your “real-time” solution





takes 30 seconds to process data and feed it to decisioning systems your target viewer may be long gone before the change is even sent.

Technical issues and slow page load times can prevent the offer from appearing at all. And what if the visitor loads a page, then jumps into another browser or tab to check something else? The page may be open, but the content on it isn't visible to them. Ads and pop-up blockers can also prevent offers from showing – and let's not forget about bots. A bot accessing the page your content is supposed to appear on isn't the goal of your campaign and therefore shouldn't be counted as a view.

What can you do to improve visibility?

Depending on the reason your content isn't being seen, there are many ways to improve visibility. Changing the placement of offers, optimizing for mobile devices, and using "sticky" placement so content stays in the same place as a user scrolls will help with issues related to user behavior. Improving site speed and page load times and fixing technical errors not only improves visibility, it enhances the user experience. Another popular solution is to use lazy loading for ads and offers so they don't load until their slot is in the viewport. And of course [getting the data you need in true real-time](#) is critical.

While all of these are great ways to improve visibility, they still won't account for tab-overs or bot views. Your decisioning systems need a precise way to measure the true visibility of your content to correctly assess the results of your marketing campaigns. In addition to accurately evaluating CTR and conversion rates, this is also the best way to quickly identify technical issues so they can be addressed to improve overall visibility. This is where visibility detection comes in.

Why true visibility detection is so important



Visibility detection ensures your campaign analysis is concise and provides relevant, actionable data to drive optimized, successful, real-time personalization.

At the end of the day, marketers want to improve efficiency and boost ROI by delivering the right message, to the right person, at the right time. This is measured continually to ensure positive results. If campaign A is outperforming campaign B it makes sense to shift more resources to campaign A. Marketers typically look at “impressions” or “viewability” to understand the impact and ROI of their campaigns, as a vital part of CTR and conversion rate evaluation.

How impressions are defined is critical to having the correct metrics to assess the efficacy of your marketing efforts. Is it based on page load, offer load, or something else? If your campaign measurement relies on a tag saying the page was loaded, your view metrics are going to be skewed. Even a tag on the ad or offer itself will be inaccurate if the user scrolls too fast, doesn’t scroll down the page at all, or moves to another tab or browser.

Unfortunately, with most marketing attribution, these metrics only measure the potential for an ad to be seen, not how many times it’s actually seen.

It’s a critical distinction that can dramatically skew advertising metrics and reporting. If 1000 ads are “shown” and only 20 are clicked, you have a CTR of 2% right? Not necessarily. If only 400 of those ads were actually seen by a human, your true CTR is 5%. Since this is often a determining factor in which content to deliver

on which channels and to which viewers, it’s important to have accurate information.

The same goes for [real-time personalization](#) campaigns. You work hard to create the right message, for the right person, at the right time. You need to understand if those in-the-moment changes are effective or not. Measuring the visibility of these changes is the first step in understanding the impact of personalization.

When it comes to real-time personalization, the advantages of visibility detection within a customer data platform span the entire organization. Here are some of the most common benefits:

- **More accurate predictive analytics models** for real-time decisioning and outbound marketing, leading to increased sales
- **Marketing mix modelling or multi-touch attribution models** are improved, which drives better [return on marketing spend](#)
- **Marketing performance and funnel reporting** will more accurately reflect the relative performance of different pieces of content and messaging
- **Improved compliance and auditability** around whether customers have reviewed T’s & C’s or other regulatory content

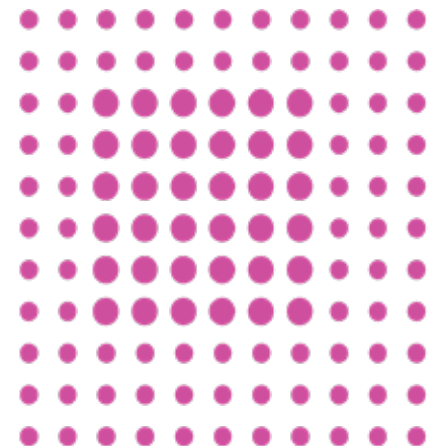
Visibility detection improves machine learning (ML) and prevents bias

Decisioning engines rely on machine learning models to determine which messages work best for which customers on which channels. In a nutshell, intelligent machine learning is required for personalization. The data used to train machine learning models includes whether content was loaded, and if a customer engaged with that content. If a customer doesn't click, machine learning will assume the message was unsuccessful, but what if the message wasn't even visible?

The impact of poor data quality can be far reaching in terms of machine learning because tests and decisions are designed to adapt based on updated information. The ultimate goal is to deliver messages quickly and efficiently, but decisioning models need accurate data to do this. If the content is counted as delivered simply because it's sent to the channel, it leads to an inaccurate analysis of what's working and what's not. When content is delivered but not seen, and the machine learning model uses that to analyze engagement, it creates a false positive. If your models are being trained based on whether the offers are converting, but the offer was never seen, you may wrongly train the models to believe the offer wasn't effective. This is called machine learning bias.

Visibility detection ensures you're better informed about what your consumers are actually seeing by generating the most accurate insights into how visitors interact with targeted content while providing protection from bias in machine learning models.

This includes measuring when content is displayed 'above the fold', and standard visibility measurement according to Internet Advertising Bureau standards (at least 50% of the banner or creative must display on screen for more than one second). Generating visibility timings and coverage metrics also provides more accurate measurement beyond industry standards. To prevent false positives, visibility detection must pause measurement when content moves off the page (i.e., not visible as a user scrolls), as well as during 'tab-over' events in the browser. Using true visibility metrics provides accurate campaign results and [improved machine learning models for real-time personalization](#). Feeding that rich data back into your testing platforms ensures the math is right and you can trust the results used for decisioning.



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