



ANA Members on Walled Gardens: Overwhelming Support for Independent Audits by Media Rating Council

A walled garden is a platform where the carrier or service provider has control over applications, content, and media, and restricts convenient access to non-approved applications or content. In the advertising industry, many large digital enterprises are walled gardens.

In advance of the just-completed ANA Media Conference, we asked ANA members for their perspective on recent developments related to walled gardens. The specific question was:

A walled garden is a platform where the carrier or service provider has control over applications, content, and media, and restricts convenient access to non-approved applications or content. Facebook and YouTube are two examples of walled gardens. Recently, Facebook and YouTube announced that they would break down their “walled gardens” and allow independent audits by the Media Rating Council. What’s your view of these developments for the advertising industry?

The results: Eighty-nine percent of respondents view these developments as positive for the advertising industry — 57 percent very positive and 32 percent moderately positive. Meanwhile, 8 percent were neutral, 3 percent were moderately negative, and no one was very negative. One hundred thirteen (113) ANA members responded.

Among the “very positive” respondents, reasons for answering included:

- “The more transparency we have from vendors on data and performance, the greater advertisers can trust the platform.”
- “So metrics can be validated by a third party and aren’t only self-reported.”
- “Can compare within the wall to outside it.”
- “To develop holistic plans that cross multiple platforms, it’s critical that we have some level of consistency in metrics.”
- “Walled gardens are blind spots.”

In a [blog post on February 10](#), Facebook announced, “We are committing to an audit by the Media Rating Council to verify the accuracy of the information we deliver to our partners.” Timing and details are still pending.

In a [blog post on February 21](#), Google announced that, building upon existing MRC accreditations of ad serving functions that already exist, including ads served to YouTube reported via Doubleclick Campaign Manager, it is undertaking a new independent audit seeking MRC accreditation of its third-party viewability integrations for YouTube. That process is expected to be completed within a couple of months.

ANA Perspective

In an era of concerns about transparency in the advertising supply chain, independent audits of the large digital enterprises by the MRC are very positive developments. Furthermore, it’s clear from the ANA survey that there is overwhelming support from client-side marketers for independent audits by the Media Rating Council.

The ANA applauds the recent announcements of Facebook and YouTube. We would appreciate both companies keeping the marketing community fully informed of their plans and timetables.

Meanwhile, there are other large digital enterprises — i.e., walled gardens — which have not yet undergone (or announced support for) independent audits by the Media Rating Council. These include Amazon, Foursquare, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Snapchat, and Twitter. The ANA calls on these organizations to embrace transparency and “break down their walled gardens” by allowing independent audits by the Media Rating Council.

www.ana.net

March 2017