Agency Guidance for Evaluating MFA Websites

Made For Arbitrage (MFA) websites, also known as Made For Advertising websites, are created for the sole purpose of generating revenue through the sale of advertising on these websites. While many websites use ad sales to generate revenue, there are some clear distinctions that warrant closer scrutiny of Made For Arbitrage websites.

Made For Arbitrage websites operate by buying web traffic and selling ad space for more than was paid to acquire said traffic, profiting on the difference in cost. These websites tend to exhibit certain characteristics that make them superficially appealing, in that they deliver on vanity KPIs, but in fact generate minimal to no value to advertisers, while also creating adverse ad experiences for consumers. Research has shown that Made For Arbitrage sites have a higher cost per outcome (sales/conversions) when compared with the internet average.

The entire purpose of Made For Arbitrage websites is to sell ads, NOT to deliver any information or value to consumers. These websites exploit the programmatic supply chain by creating websites that look attractive to advertisers but may associate brands with websites that are not well-received by consumers.

In the absence of outcome based KPIs, the following criteria can be used to determine if websites are MFA websites. The use of multiple criteria will improve evaluation accuracy.

High ad-to-content ratio
- Usually at least twice the internet average, e.g., ad-to-content ratio of greater than 30 percent for desktop

Rapidly auto-refreshing ad placements
- Numerous refreshing banner ads
- Auto play video ads flood the site
- Slide shows forcing visitors to click through multiple pages to access content, with multiple ads

High percentage of paid traffic sourcing
- Made For Arbitrage publishers often have little-to-no organic audience and are instead highly dependent on visits sourced from clickbait ads that run on social networks, content recommendations platforms, and even on the websites of reputable publishers. Buying paid traffic is the primary cost driver of operating an MFA business. Overcoming paid traffic acquisition costs requires MFA publishers to engage in aggressive monetization practices and arbitrage.

Generic content (non-editorial or templated, low-quality content)
- Often syndicated, dated and non-unique (articles regurgitated).

Usually poorly designed, templated website designs

Additionally, there may be several other factors that can prevent marketers and technologies from detecting these types of websites.

High Viewability Rates	High Video Completion Rates	Low instances of fraud because they are purchasing legitimate traffic	New websites are continually being created to avoid any single website from being flagged because of high ad investments

We encourage all advertisers and agencies to be proactive in their identification of Made For Arbitrage websites to ensure they are spending advertising dollars on websites that achieve positive outcome based KPIs and create a positive experience for consumers.

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The 4A's Advertiser Protection Bureau (APB) committee hopes you find this information helpful. Please let us know if you would like to discuss further.

Contact Kevin Freemore, 4A's SVP Media, Tech & Data at **kfreemore@4as.org** for more information.