



# Online platforms and digital advertising market study

A response to the invitation to comment from The Joint Industry Committee of Web Standards (JICWEBS)

## 1. Introduction

The CMA has launched a market study into online platforms and the digital advertising market in the UK. As part of this you will *‘examine the extent to which platforms’ market power might distort competition in digital advertising, as well as concerns around transparency and conflicts of interest in the intermediation of advertising’*.

[JICWEBS](#) develops digital advertising standards, including the world’s most stringent brand safety certification here in the UK, allowing all organisations in the supply chain to be transparent about their business practices, should they choose to do so. We are also facilitating a pilot into DLT blockchain technology during H2 2019, to understand more about how this technology could bring greater transparency to digital advertising transactions.

## 2. What is JICWEBS?

JICWEBS is an independent, not-for-profit organisation, representing all sides of the digital advertising industry. We’re a **joint industry committee** (JIC), made up of four trade bodies: The Association of Online Publishers (AOP), The Internet Advertising Bureau UK (IAB), The Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA) and The Incorporated Society of British Advertisers (ISBA).

JICWEBS is owned by the industry - advertisers, agencies and media owners - to set **rigorous, transparent and objective ad trading standards** for digital advertising in the areas of brand safety, ad fraud and the viewability of ads. Media companies - from the tech giants and large publishers to media buying agencies and ad technology businesses, all along the supply chain - sign up to JICWEBS standards and **undergo an audit to gain certification**.

## 3. JICWEBS Standards, certification and membership

In 2018 Internet advertising in the UK rose by 15% to over £13.4bn, some 57% of total media advertising. JICWEBS Standards relate to display advertising and the associated risk, which accounted for £5.25bn spend last year. The vast majority of this is traded ‘programmatically’ targeting consumer behaviour in real time, rather than targeting specific content. This is usually highly efficient for the advertiser, but can result in brand ads appearing on harmful and inappropriate pages, (‘unsafe’ environments), unviewable ad impressions and is a magnet for fraudulent activity.



[JICWEBS Standards](#) in these areas encourage best practice to minimise risk in these areas across the supply chain.

Companies signing up to JICWEBS have six months to prepare for an audit with a JICWEBS approved auditor. When they pass the audit, they become JICWEBS certified and a certificate is produced which transparently details how they apply our best practice standards.

JICWEBS membership has risen sharply over the last 12 months from 65 companies to around 120, including Google, YouTube and Group M, with Facebook, eBay and Spotify currently undergoing their audits. A full list of JICWEBS signatories and certified members can be accessed [here](#)

#### **4. JICWEBS DLT/Blockchain Pilot**

Earlier this month [JICWEBS launched an industry wide pilot](#) project to evaluate how blockchain - or more widely Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT) - can contribute to resolve the trust, transparency and inefficiency problems the industry is facing. Several large advertisers including Nestle, MacDonalD's and Virgin Media are taking part in this pilot through their media agencies. The pilot will follow advertising spend across the supply chain to gain an end to end view of trading practices.

#### **5. JICWEBS partnership with US organisation, TAG.**

JICWEBS partners with its equivalent US organisation, The Trustworthy Accountability Group ([TAG](#)), which was founded five years ago to combat online ad fraud and piracy. During 2020 TAG's brand safety seal is due to be upgraded to the JICWEBS standard to bring the US into line with the UK.

#### **6. Summary and suggested next steps**

JICWEBS is very interested in the online platforms and digital market study as it closely touches the areas we cover, and which our standards have been created to help tackle. Our DLT/blockchain pilot should also be of interest to the study, as we examine how this technology can increase transparency by following advertising spend across the digital supply chain. We believe this could be a potential remedy to some of the challenges the study uncovers, as could universal adoption of our standards and certification across the supply chain.

JICWEBS would therefore welcome an invitation by the CMA to explain our work more fully, and to take an active role on any consultative groups you may create.

For more information and any questions regarding JICWEBS please contact CEO, [jules.kendrick@jicwebs.org](mailto:jules.kendrick@jicwebs.org)