How to Evolve to Brand Suitability with True Context

Is your brand safety stale?
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Introduction

Brand safety and suitability are high on every marketer’s list of needs for their advertising campaigns. But not all approaches are the same, nor are they adequate.

In this guide, you’ll learn what brand suitability is and why it’s important for you to evolve your current brand safety tactics with true context.

Contextual advertising through the decades

It’s 2020 and it’s a crazy world out there—online and off. That is why brands, publishers, and platforms are adjusting their tactics for navigating the wild west of digital. Thankfully, technology is advancing, making it possible to stay relevant while playing it safe. Context in advertising is not a new concept. Legacy brand safety tactics are as old as the internet but it’s time for a fresh approach.

For example, despite domain level blocklisting being a tactic from the 90s, it’s still widely used today.

As we enter the 2020s, new challenges are driving the next frontier of contextual intelligence and the emergence of brand suitability. From dealing with the speed of a lightning-fast news cycle or ensuring relevance across varying platforms and channels, to call yourself an advanced marketer, you must move beyond the limiting tactics of legacy brand safety.
Why you need to move on from legacy brand safety

Most likely your legacy brand safety approach involves two tactics:

- **Keyword blocking**: Content is blocked based on the appearance of a specific or predetermined keyword either in the URL string or throughout the content itself.
- **URL blocklisting**: Websites are flagged for the content they publish and added to blocklists that remove them from the advertiser’s bid.

**Keyword blocklists miss the mark**

Looking at a real blocklist of an agency client, we saw that 60 percent of content was deemed unsafe based on their keyword blocklist. A comparison against our standard segments suggests that their lists were over-blocking by 33 percent. Such a disparity in available inventory drives media prices up and removes opportunities to advertise in quality environments.

**Keyword and URL blocking are limiting and outdated. Why?**

It’s simple: These tactics rely on a basic interpretation of words to categorize content and inventory as safe or unsafe. But a single word can mean different things based on the broader context of the story being told, leading to over-blocking safe content or it being incorrectly categorized as harmful. This means valuable inventory is missed, and scale is dwindled.

Blocking content due to the appearance of words such as “shot” fails to take nuance into account. A single word can have various definitions and interpretations based on the broader story being written.
Bridge the gap between risk and opportunity using contextual intelligence

Modern contextual intelligence solves for the limitations imposed by keyword blocking and URL blocklisting by going beyond scanning keywords to reveal the true context of what’s on the page. This means you know exactly what the news story, blog article, or video is about, and you can confidently target that page with your advertising, or block it if it doesn’t meet your standards. This level of contextual control means you can make sense of the billions of pieces of content that permeate the web and develop a nuanced understanding of an ad’s environment.

Ultimately, contextual intelligence bridges the gap between risk and opportunity to find a beneficial balance, enabling you to define what is suitable for your brand’s specific voice and persona.
Take control with a brand suitable approach

To achieve successful programmatic advertising, you need flexibility and control—two things not afforded through standard brand safety. Brand suitability, on the other hand, is brand safety evolved. It goes beyond fear-based avoidance to create a profile unique to your brand.

A brand-suitable approach provides the level of control and fidelity you need to succeed in the digital ecosystem today. Its combination of avoiding brand threats and aligning to appropriate content allows you to make more deliberate and flexible content decisions for your campaign. Because protecting your brand shouldn’t limit your inventory or ability to connect with your audience—it should help you reach them in the right context.

### Risky content

- **Product recalls**
- **Head-to-head reviews**
- **Lawsuits**
- **Negative brand press**

### Brand alignment

- **Heartwarming moments**
- **New product releases**
- **Positive brand press**
- **Seasonality or spokespeople**
Where are you on the contextual intelligence journey?

As you become more sophisticated in your understanding of what true context is, and how critical it is for your digital campaigns, use this framework to assess where you’re at on your journey. As mentioned, every modern marketer should focus on reaching levels three and four, especially with the upcoming changes to cookies and identity.

**Four levels of maturity**

1. **Legacy**: Domain and keyword level blocklisting and targeting
2. **Baseline**: Pre-bid protection of brand safety, viewability and fraud
3. **Brand suitability**: Custom brand safety
4. **Connections**: Targeting audiences through custom targeting and Predicts segments

Ask yourself where you see your brand or agency on this path. The reality is, if you’re still at the legacy protection phase, then you’re leaving opportunities on the table, and you need to implement a path to more advanced contextual targeting through brand suitability.

To do so, start by defining your risk profile and thinking more broadly about brand safety—from simply blocking content to targeting specific environments that help you reach new, relevant audiences at scale. What do those environments look like for your brand?

From there, build, iterate, and constantly assess the types of environments that are working for you. By doing so, your brand suitability strategy will start to take shape, and you’ll be well on your way to success.
Need help with Brand Suitability? We’re here for you.

Navigating the difficulties of a complex online landscape requires finding new ways to reach our audiences and deliver messages that resonate.

Oracle Data Cloud’s unlimited custom, brand-suitable segments are uniquely created based on your brand’s needs. As you think about what brand suitability means for you—from the company level all the way down to individual campaigns—we enable you to deploy solutions that provide the best chance for success.