

## **Identifier for Advertising (IFA) for Over-the-Top (OTT) Devices** *Frequently Asked Questions*

### **Why is there a need for a standardized Identifier for Advertising (IFA) across Over-the-Top (OTT) devices and platforms?**

The OTT ecosystem is very fragmented—consumers are accessing OTT content via streaming devices (Roku, Google Chromecast, Apple TV, and Amazon Firestick), Smart TVs (Samsung, Sony, Vizio, LG, etc.), video game consoles (Xbox and PlayStation) and Blu-ray devices. Additionally, advertisers cannot rely on cookies like they can in a traditional browser environment since they do not exist in the app-based OTT ecosystem. This leaves marketers reliant on device identifiers and IP addresses for targeting consumers and managing frequency. There has been a need for a standardized, software-based advertising identifier for OTT that can be disabled and/or reset by the consumer and that can be passed through the supply chain in a similar fashion to the mobile Ad IDs that have existed for years for Android and Apple OS devices (and which have helped grow and scale the mobile advertising industry).

While there are some devices that provide industry-compliant identifiers for advertising, there are still many others that do not send any IFA, and still others that send a non-standardized form of the IFA (an IFA in ‘a different language’) which then requires manual work on the buy side to translate into a usable form. Additionally, some publishers in the OTT supply chain are withholding this identifier when communicating with the advertiser’s ad server.

The industry needs all devices and publishers to be in compliance with one another so that ultimately consumers encounter the best possible ad experience, regardless of how they are navigating across apps and devices. Improvement and consistency in user experience will ultimately lead to consumers spending more time with OTT content.

### **Aren’t IP addresses an acceptable workaround for a lack of an identifier?**

IP addresses can and have been used for targeting and frequency management but have two problems. In general, it is hard to be privacy compliant when reliant solely on IP addresses (which do not support user opt-out from ad tracking). Secondly, IP is not a persistent identifier (depending on how often the consumer’s Internet Service Provider (ISP) changes IP addresses).

### **Is this similar to how IFAs are managed in the mobile app environment?**

Yes! The concept of the IFA for OTT mimics what has been adopted and is now in widespread use across the mobile industry for Apple and Android devices as cookies on mobile are largely ineffective and non-existent in some [mobile browsers](#). The big difference between mobile and OTT is the fragmentation of OTT. In mobile, only Apple and Google had to come on board since they command over 99% of the mobile phone marketplace. Today there is a large and diverse landscape of devices, Smart TVs, video game consoles, and Blu-ray player manufacturers that enable OTT, all of which would need to adopt the common IFA for identifier to enable synchronized ad experiences at scale in OTT.

### **What are the main benefits that will come out of IFA for OTT implementation?**

With a standard IFA in place, publishers and DSPs will be better equipped to target OTT consumers across any device. Ad frequency and creative rotation can be better maintained. Additionally, the use of the IFA gives the consumer the option to limit ad tracking and is therefore consumer friendly and privacy-compliant. Backend metrics that rely on identity, such as attribution, reach, and cross-screen frequency will be more accurate. Re-targeting capabilities, which is reliant on knowing the identity of who saw an ad, will also be improved.

### **What are the core components to the IFA for OTT?**

As part of any ad request, all devices and apps must store and send these three parameters:

- **An Identifier for Advertising (IFA)** - A 32 hexadecimal code that is unique to the consumer's OTT device. This is required unless the user has opted in to limit ad tracking and is also resettable upon user request.
- **The IFA 'type'** - This indicates the device the IFA was generated from (i.e. ifa\_type=rida for Roku and ifa\_type=idfa for Apple). If none is generated by the device, the publisher may generate the IFA (and would indicate in the ifa\_type).
- **Limit Ad Tracking** - Response to this is either Yes (lmt=1) or No (lmt=0). If consumer opts out of ad tracking (lmt=1), the IFA should never be sent with the ad request. Session (or synthetic) IFAs can be sent in place when this occurs, but it must clearly be indicated as such within the 'type' field.

*Examples of the use of these fields are available in the guidelines.*

### **What are Session (or synthetic) IFAs and when and how should they be used?**

These are IFAs that are generated by publishers or SSPs in the absence of a device-generated IFA. This allows for frequency management to still take place within the consumer's single viewing session. For example, when the same user views an ad multiple times on the same device, the same synthetic ID should be generated for that user so that frequency capping can be applied to their synthetic ID.

### **As a publisher, what is my role in this?**

In order for the IFA to serve as the "connective tissue" between buyers and sellers it is crucial that publishers and SSPs utilize the IFA generated and sent by the device. Equally important, publishers should also pass this ID along to the advertiser's ad server and/or DSP.

### **As a publisher, does this IFA replace my own IFA?**

This does not replace any pre-existing IFA, but it does give guidance on how to implement and utilize the IFA so that it is consistent across the OTT landscape.

### **As a publisher, how will I gain access to the device level IFA?**

Consumer Electronics Manufactures (Smart TVs, streaming devices, Blu-Ray players, and video game consoles) are responsible for providing an Application Programming Interface (API) or Software Developer's Kit (SDK) so that publishers can read the IFAs generated.

**As a publisher, what if I do not receive an IFA from the device?**

In the absence of a device generated IFA, a publisher should generate their own IFA that is consistent across all of their owned OTT apps. This should be clearly indicated in the IFA Type parameter.

**I am a publisher that utilizes server side ad insertion (SSAI, or ad stitching), how will that affect how I deploy this?**

Publishers should work with their SSAI vendors to ensure compliance with all IFA for OTT components. They should ensure that the IFA gets sent from the devices to their ad insertion server before being sent to the advertiser's ad server.

**What types of ad related activities can be utilized through the IFA?**

- Frequency capping
- Better targeting
- Sequential advertising
- Reporting & audience measurement, including unique reach
- Fraud detection

**What happens when a user disables ad tracking (Iamt=1)?**

Ad platforms must ignore the IFA if consumer opts out. Ad platforms should never pass through the IFA to any 3rd party if ad tracking is turned off.

**As a publisher, what are the advantages that I will see if compliant?**

By passing through the device-generated IFA, publishers should start seeing an increase in yield via a higher fill rate as well as higher CPMs. There is a growing demand for targetable Connected TV impressions and those that fail to comply will miss out on the opportunity to monetize their audience.

**From a consumer point of view, what is the best way to opt-out of OTT ad tracking?**

The best way for a consumer to opt-out of OTT ad tracking is to do so at the device-level. This is persistent and can only be reversed by the consumer. As consumers typically own multiple streaming devices, they should opt-out of each device separately.

**What role does (or will) increased consumer privacy regulations (such as California Consumer Privacy Act and Europe's GDPR) play in this?**

The use of identifiers such as the IFA for OTT (as well as mobile's IFAs—IDFA and AAID) are compliant in that the consumer's consent is required for any personalization of ads based on these IDs.