

# FULL PAGE ADVERTISING: TRENDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Everything You Need to Know About Full Page Banners, Interstitials and Pop Ads!

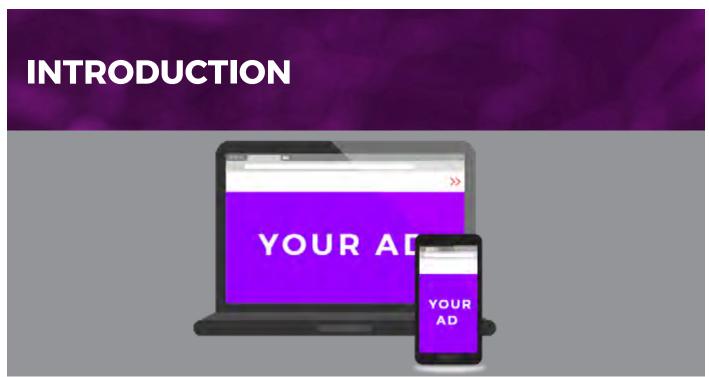
A WebPick White Paper



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Full Page Advertising (FPA) is the most popular form of in-app and mobile web advertising. Years ago, the desktop FPA market has often suffered from (mostly unjustified) reputation issues and been underestimated or misrepresented. However, FPA has been and remains one of the strongest areas of digital advertising, and experienced significant growth in recent years due to the rise of mobile advertising, eventually embraced by digital advertising giants such as Facebook and Google.

This white paper examines the FPA market's characteristics, trends and opportunities, especially in the forms of interstitial, pop-up, pop-under and new tab ads as well as full page banners. It is based on WebPick's vast experience in this field and unparalleled business data from thousands of publishers and advertisers around the world.





Full page advertising existed in newspapers, TV and billboards many decades before the Internet. Full web page ads have been with us for 25 years. Many people have never experienced a world without pop-ups, pop-unders, or interstitial pages.

During the early years of the Internet, when the digital marketing industry was still in its infancy, pop-up ads were a novelty. They looked cool and got the job done in terms of making brands and companies visible to a wide range of users. Pop-unders were developed afterwards as a way for users to still be able to see the page they were visiting despite the ads.

Interestingly, these forms of online advertising remain effective; and this is why the method, first created by Ethan Zuckerman in 1994 when he worked at Tripod.com, is still being used today. According to Zuckerman, the pop-up ad was created to resolve a complaint from a client. Tripod.com was a webpage hosting site, and one of its clients, a car manufacturer, was displeased that its banner ads were present on a site that had sexual content. The solution Zuckerman came up with was a code that launches ads in separate windows. This was later adapted by the online advertising industry, and became known as the pop-up ad, the first kind or FPA.



#### The History of Full Page Advertising

Adpushup reports that pop ads became prevalent after the dot com bust because of their dynamic nature. This was the period when banner advertising was no longer enough to generate revenue. Pop-ups, since they opened a new window, were harder to ignore and elicited a response from the user.

Pop-under ads are a variation of pop-ups. These types of ads appear behind or under the main browser window. There were some instances where pop-unders performed better than pop-ups. ExitExchange claims that it invented the pop-under and says this was a "polite form" of displaying ads.

As will be elaborated later in this white paper, Google has been ambivalent towards FPA – some argue that it is because of the user experience while others attribute it to different commercial reasons. Over the last years FPA became a leading form of advertising in the mobile industry and was adopted by Google itself, which sometimes blocks it and sometimes encourages it. The company attributes its actions in improving the user experience, but others think they are primarily intended to promote its own business interests. For example, according to the developers of Ghostery, a well-known ad blocking extension for Chrome, Google is using its market dominance to enforce changes that are designed to benefit not the user, but websites and Google's own advertising revenue. However, nowadays the majority of mobile apps use full page ads, commonly served by Facebook or Google.





#### **FPA comes in several physical forms:**

#### 1. Full Page banners:

ad elements that allow to add a banner image to a web page. This kind of banners fills the entire width of a page, and it is an extremely popular kind of ads in the mobile era.

#### 2.Interstitial ads:

"in between" pages which are displayed specifically before or after an expected content page (unlike full page banners that can be served anytime). They occasionally come with a timer or darken the previous screen. Interstitials are one of the most common forms of FPA, and they come in different forms, as the ad may:

- Cover the original content page
- Cover the destination content page once it is loaded
- Reach an intermediate link at the same website, and only when it is closed proceed to the destination content page
- Reach an intermediate link at another website (e.g. Amazon), and only when it is closed proceed to the destination content page

#### 3. Pop-up ads:

windows that appear ("pop up") in the foreground of the visual interface and contains an ad.

#### 4. Pop-under ads:

similar to pop-up ads, but the ad window appears hidden behind the main browser window rather than superimposed in front of it. They do not immediately impede the view of content, but remain unnoticed until the user closes or minimizes the main browser window, which usually makes them more user friendly.



#### Full Page Advertising Methods

#### 5. New Tab ads:

ads that are opened in a new tab and then the content of the old background tab is replaced with an ad page by URL redirection, or switches the tab the user is on to the ad tab. Much like pop-up and pop-under ads, there is also a **New Tab Under option**.

The FPA forms mentioned above have the option to lock the advertisement (with or without a timer or a countdown) or to enable the user to close it for a reward. This method has captured a significant market share over the last decade and is called Incentivized Advertising, in which the publisher rewards users for watching a full page ad (video, banner, etc.). It has gained popularity in in-app advertising and specifically mobile gaming. Although initially rejected by Google, over the last two years the company has embraced it and became the biggest provider of incentivized ads, along with Facebook. While Google still prohibits desktop ads from blocking content with incentivized ads, it widely serves this kind of ads in mobile apps.





According the eMarketer's Digital Ad Spending 2019 report, ad spending in the digital advertising market amounts to US \$333 billion in 2019 (up from \$283 billion in 2018), which is about half of the total media ad spending worldwide. By 2023, the digital advertising market is expected to reach \$517 billion and exceed 60 percent of the overall advertising market.

In 2018, Google's ad revenue amounted to \$116.3 billion. According to Statistica, search advertising (e.g. Google) and social media advertising (e.g. Facebook) account for around \$200 billion together - almost two-thirds of the digital advertising market.

Other reports estimate the size of the overall advertising market at \$1 trillion, as it is more difficult to track offline advertising expenses, which means that the actual digital advertising market size today may be closer to one-third of the overall advertising market. Either way, it's a huge market that is constantly growing.

The FPA market was around \$1 billion when the first iPhone launched in 2007. Since the birth of mobile app advertising, FPA has grown by more than 1,500 percent, and became one of the mainstream forms of digital advertising.



While the FPA market has sometimes been identified with downloads, streaming or adult websites, this couldn't be farther from the truth. Contrary to the once prevailing perspective, FPA is used, one way or another, by almost all major brands. Also, it is much more brand-safe than other forms of advertising, because there is a clear distinction between the publisher's content and the full page ad.

Today, Facebook and Google are most prominent players in this market and they constitute almost 90 percent of it, with the other 10 percent being divided among a few dozen smaller companies. As for these FPA providers, they can be divided into five main types:

- The ad formats they serve interstitial, pop ads, etc.
- Where the ads are published in-app/browser, PC/mobile, etc.
- Whether they are incentivized (with or without rewards)
- The kind of publishers they specialize in games, news, video, music, etc.
- The kind of advertisers they serve brand advertising, where the "premium" content is highly invested in terms of messaging, design and rich media; or performance advertising, which is much more ROI-oriented

Of course, there are providers that do not specialize in one area or market and offer more diverse FPA solutions.

No research relates directly to the FPA segment of the global digital advertising pie. We at WebPick conducted an in-depth examination of this market, based on our business data and the revenues of the leading companies in each of the areas of FPA (in-app, pop ads, etc.). According to the results, the FPA market is roughly **\$13.25 billion**, which accounts for almost **4 percent of the global digital advertising market**, and continues to grow rapidly. Not a market worth ignoring!



Here is some basic information on how the calculation was done (you can contact AdMaven for a detailed explanation). The data used for this research include proprietary data from AdMaven. In addition, we used aggregated competitive ad traffic insights from various platforms (such as App Annie) as well as financial data the annual <u>Google</u> and <u>Facebook</u>'s public financial statements as sources. The findings are as follows:

#### Facebook - \$7 Billion:

According to its reports, Facebook has content spend of about \$10 billion this year on affiliate payments and server spend. In a conservative estimate, Facebook pays affiliates about \$5 billion a year on FPA and retains about \$2 billion.

#### Google - \$4.5 billion:

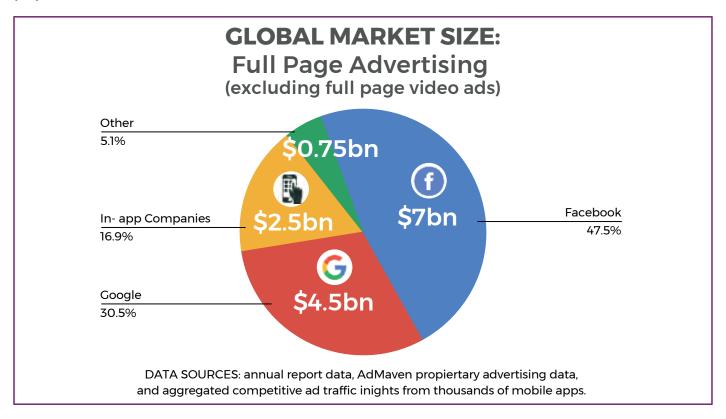
The company pays about \$3 billion a year to search partners (such as IAC's ask.com) or AdSense partners, and keeps 1.5 billion to itself. This figure does not include YouTube advertising (even though video ads mostly appear in full page when the user watch full screen videos.

#### In-app companies - about \$2.5 billion:

The largest companies in this area (AppLovin, Unity, Vungle, Chartboost, AdColony) have revenues of about \$2.5 billion. Most of them have revenues of more than \$100 million. ironSource, a prominent company in this industry, has around \$700 million.

#### Everybody else - about \$ 0.75 billion:

This assessment mainly includes companies that specialize in the areas of pop-up and pop-under ads.







#### Spotlight on Facebook's FPA activity

Facebook is a company that does not need introduction, but not everybody knows it is the most prominent in-app FPA provider. Facebook's Audience Network allows publishers to monetize Android and iOS apps with interstitial ads that they can show in their apps. This area was initially led by monetization companies such as ironSource, Rubicon Project, Amobee and dozens of other companies, but after Facebook and Google came in, they took over it.

Typically, Facebook's interstitial ads are shown when there is a transition in the app. For example, after finishing a level in a game or after loading a story in a news app. According to Facebook, "Interstitial ads are full screen ads that can be effective in catching a user's attention. Many publishers recommend interstitial ads for pauses in game play or times when there is a natural break in your app's flow."



#### Spotlight on a premium FPA provider: Undertone

Undertone, a division of Perion Network Ltd. (NASDAQ: PERI), provides cutting-edge technology solutions for the world's leading brands. Its proprietary Synchronized Digital Branding combines data, distribution and creative to deliver cohesive stories across all critical touchpoints: screens, platforms and a transparent, customizable list of elite publishers.

The Al-driven platform eliminates fragmentation, delivers much-needed revenue for publishers and, most importantly, ensures brand messaging is contextually relevant. Undertone creates stunning campaigns that align with KPIs—always with beautiful creative and in brand-safe environments.

Learn more at www.undertone.com





#### Spotlight on an interstitial ads provider: AdFly

Adf.ly is a service which allows advertisers to take a long URL and shorten it with their service. The new link will then place an interstitial ad. Then they get paid for the ad views. This is an effective solution for mainly individuals who upload content on social networks like Facebook and Instagram and want to make a profit from home.

Learn more at <a href="https://adf.ly.">https://adf.ly.</a>

A company that offers a similar URL shortener service, but one that is less focused on monetization, is Bitly.



#### Spotlight on a performance-oriented FPA provider: AdMaven

AdMaven's advertising network counts more than 10,000 website owners and serves more than 5,000 direct advertisers and 100,000 third party advertisers, all connected through over 200 media acquisition networks. Thanks to its Al engine, the company is able to work with advertisers in the most risk-free pricing model, CPA, in which the advertisers pay only for actual sales, while most companies offer CPM and CPC models, in which the advertisers pay for impressions or clicks, even if there was no sale at the end of the process. The company is focused on creating value through constant improvement of its optimization engine, in order to match the right ad to every impression.

Learn more at <a href="https://ad-maven.com">https://ad-maven.com</a>





#### Timeline:

#### 2000-2010

Google has no presence in the FPA market

#### 2010

- The rise of mobile web traffic pushes Google to create the full page banner ads and full page interstitials in mobile web in order to dominate this market.
- The rise of YouTube and video advertising makes Google #1 in the full page video market.

#### 2017

- The rise of in-app incentivized advertising market (with companies such as ironSource and App Annie) pushes Google to join this market and become #2 after Facebook, soon to become #1
- The rise of native advertising (with companies such as Taboola and Outbrain) pushes google to enter this market
- The rise of Ad Blockers competition and user experience issues push google to announce that it will launch Google AdBlock as part of Chrome that will block most of the advertising methods that are not included in its offering

#### 2020

- Google becomes the strongest player of the FPA market
  - #1 in mobile web full page banners
  - #1 in mobile web full page interstitials
  - #1 in app full page ads
  - #2 in app full page incentivized ads
  - #1 in full page video ads



- The market is waiting to see if Google will play aggressively. For example the terms and condition of AdSense allow pops while AdBlock does not, so some websites allow the use of pop ads and some do not
- The market is waiting to see if Google will expand its AdBlock to in-app traffic, that is not influenced by the Chrome browser's AdBlock, by using its domination of the Android app store and operation system. Doing that will block companies like Facebook that are currently not AdBlock compliant (for example, they have a 5-second timer on ads before the user can close them)
- The market is looking to see if Google will expand its AdBlock or start its own operation to push notification as this is one of the only advertising markets that Google did not enter or block. Some publications suggest that Google might block it soon

As mentioned before, Google has been ambivalent towards FPA – especially pop ads and incentivized traffic. In the first years, Google simply ignored it. Witnessing the rise of independent ad blockers, it co-founded The Coalition for Better Ads and launched AdBlock for Google Chrome. It started penalizing websites that used this method on their SEO ranking. The FPA market (mainly pop-ups) was initially affected by the company's actions, since Google had set the tone for premium publishers and advertisers. However, as will be explained soon, the emergence of in-app advertising (along with PC advertising), with emphasis on incentivized traffic, eroded the cards and caused FPA to expand significantly – now with the active help of Google. How did it happen?

During the PC-only period, the FPA & interstitial market was small and negligible. The growth of mobile web, where the screen is small and small banners cannot be effectively embedded (because there is not much room for content anyway), has resulted in a huge increase in the use of full-screen (full page) banners. In fact, there is virtually no difference between them and pop-ups, and they are even less considerate of the users than pop-ups, since pop-up at least requires a click, while a full-screen banner can be at the site entrance without even clicking on something or between articles.

Google has very quickly took over this market and today it has around 80 percent of the mobile web full page advertising market.



The growth in the app market, and especially in game apps, has led to an increase in the interstitial market. Companies in the field, such as ironSource and others, have reached revenues of several billion dollars. Facebook took advantage of the fact that Google was not a player in the market and took over more than 50 percent of it. Because of the lost revenues and since Facebook found a niche to compete in, there was pressure on Google to either block or enter this market. Because apps cannot be blocked by the ad blocker that Google launched (on which we will elaborate later), it has joined this market. Google entered the market a year and a half ago with one small change in the incentivize model, in which the user can close the advertisement and give up the prize. The other companies still do not work the same way - for example, Facebook does not enable the user to close the ad in the first 5 seconds, and the X on ad only appears after a few seconds. Facebook-like behavior in apps is a form of advertising that Google currently blocks on the web - both on mobile and on PC - with its Chrome browser and AdBlock, of which we will expand on later, so there are concerns that, just as Google has done before on web, it will also use its control over the Android operating system and apps to block companies running in-app ads in other ways, like Facebook does. Google has already done this several times in the past - a few years ago it removed from the store apps that sent push notifications within advertisements, eliminating an entire market and nearly closing many companies, such as AirPush, which had employed hundreds of workers until then and earned tens of millions of dollars.

Another area in Google is the biggest player in the world is full-page video advertising, thanks to YouTube's dominance and its video advertising network. The video area is not covered in this document.

So, as mentioned above, Google has become the most dominant FPA market in full page banners and interstitial video ads, but at the same time a year ago it has also become its biggest opponent with the launch of Google AdBlock, which is also designed to enhance the user experience.



Google in many cases does put the customer at the center and places significant emphasis on its user experience. Thus, some believe that Google's AdBlock is purely designed for that. Others hold a more cynical stance that Google's goal is to weaken the types of ads that are not part of its own advertising offerings. Others claim that Google's main goal is to counteract the development of other ad blockers, so they will become less popular and will not block its own ads. According to Gizmodo, "Google makes a big chunk of moolah off its ad business, so cynically speaking, it doesn't have a huge incentive to make things easy for third-party ad blockers." According to TechRadar, the developer of uBlock Origin and uMatrix, two popular ad blockers, complained that if Google's limitations were implemented, they would kill off his plugins. CNET quotes Ghostery President Jeremy Tillman, who said similar things: "Whether Google does this to protect their advertising business or simply to force its own rules on everyone else, it would be nothing less than another case of misuse of its market-dominating position. If this comes true, we will consider filing an antitrust complaint."

Some suggest that Google it trying to set the rules of mobile advertising as it did to a great extent in desktop advertising. However, the digital advertising market is very complex and it is difficult even for Google to categorically manage all the different formats. Some of the more popular forms of FPA are Google's in-app full page banners and YouTube's full page video ads. Google, which owns YouTube, will probably not block itself. Once the traditional rival of FPA, Google has now become the world's most prominent FPA provider. Google is number 1 in mobile web FPA, and number 2 in in-app FPA, right after Facebook. Just before launching its AdBlock, around two years ago, Google embraced another kind of FPA form it did not use before – incentivized ads in mobile apps (mostly games) – as well as native ads.

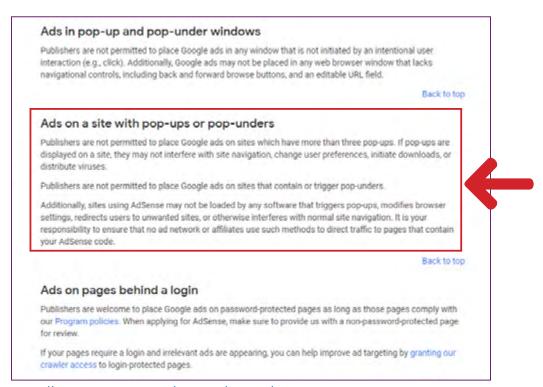
As for pop-ups, Google AdSense approves their use as long as there are no more than three of them on the same site. However, Google AdBlock does not encourage them and sometimes require publishers to remove them, so there is confusion in the market as to whether they should be used. Even so, numerous publishers has combined pop-ups and Google AdSense on the same site, thus doubling their profit. And it is not just AdSense – pop-ups and pop-unders can live with Criteo, Adroll, Rubicon, Pubmatic and other ad services on the same site. According to Google's terms and conditions:

"Publishers are not permitted to place Google ads on sites which have more than three pop-ups. If pop-ups are displayed on a site, they may not interfere with site navigation, change user preferences, initiate downloads, or distribute viruses. Publishers are not permitted to place Google ads on sites that contain or trigger pop-unders. Additionally, sites using AdSense may not be loaded by any software that triggers pop-ups, modifies browser settings, redirects users to unwanted sites, or otherwise interferes with normal site navigation. It is your responsibility to ensure that no ad network or affiliates use such methods to direct traffic to pages that contain your AdSense code."

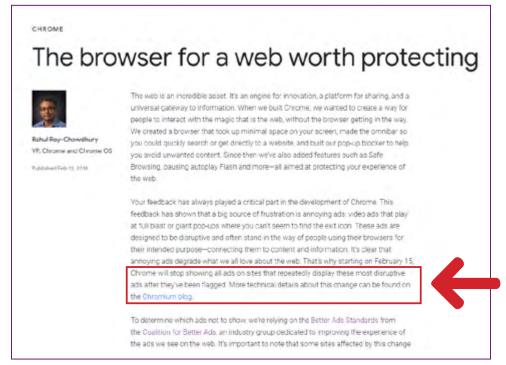


So you can practically use pop-ups with Google AdSense, but discouraged from using them by Google AdBlock, which may indicate confusion, conflicting interests or lack of coordination between the various departments in the same company.

The following screenshot was taken on July 5, 2019 and shows that Google contradicts itself in this matter (according to Google AdSense, up to three pop-ups are allowed, but according to its ad blocker, pop-ups are forbidden):



https://support.google.com/adsense/answer/1346295?hl=en





These contradicting policies in Google's different products may suggest its own ambivalence towards the subject and its complex - often competing - business interests.

Regarding interstitial ads, Google allows them provided there is no countdown that stops the user from proceeding to the content page. However, this kind of ads is used freely and rapidly in mobile applications of which Google has less presence.

Because Google became so huge – it provides both the operating system and the browser and also serves as the regulator – its impact on the market may sometimes be monopolistic, what recently resulted in punishments and penalties from different states and organizations. Google's sporadic prohibitions against FPA have been implemented slowly and quite randomly (some websites have been blocked and others have not), maybe because that blocking everyone in one day will cause many companies to go bankrupt and will create a great public outcry. Most of the FPA vendors, publishers and advertisers hope that Google will curb its involvement in this field and not block in-app advertising products with its app store. Right now it seems likely that Google will continue to play accordingly, since FPA has become a substantial part of its own business and in the next two years expected to grow its traffic.



### **USER EXPERIENCE**

Since the rise of native ads, the users find it harder and harder to distinguish between original and sponsored content, and FPA formats such as full page banners and interstitial ads eliminates this issue.

Flashy pop-ups and colorful ads have once been considered as disturbing types of advertising, distracting people from the content of the page they are viewing.

However, FPA is actually a much more user friendly and legitimate form of advertising nowadays. It creates a clear separation between content and advertising, which is vital to the end-users. Pop-under ads are not considered intrusive to the end-user, and interstitial ads and full page banners are mainstream forms of mobile advertising. Most end-users, of course, would prefer that there will be no ads at all... but the very existence of much of the Internet is based on them. And not just the Internet – every form of mainstream advertising is built on uninvited intervention with the attention of those exposed to it. In this aspect, banners, print ads or billboards are not "friendlier" than FPA.

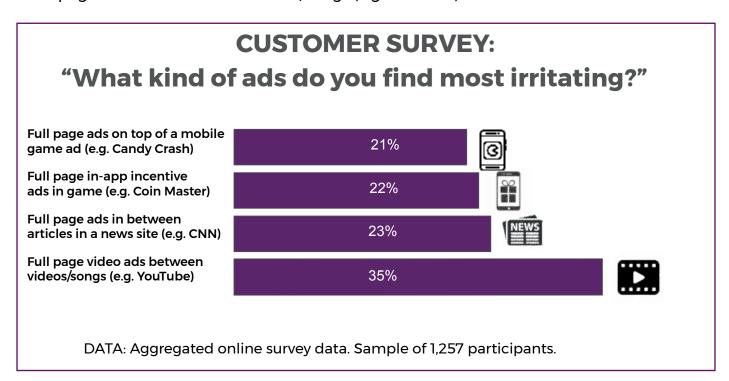
The few surveys in the field, especially those funded by interested parties, are often formulated in a way that does not harm their interests, thus their results are sometimes biased and very different from one another. Looking at the surveys it is clear to understand that some users fail to understand the different terms in the field. While old surveys show that pop up ads got low grades, newer surveys show that autoplay video ads are the most hated advertising technique.



#### **User Experience**

The WebPick group conducted an independent survey of 1,257 end-users (via a pop-up questionnaire) answered the question: "What kind of ads do you find the most irritating?" The possible answers were:

- Full page ads on top of a mobile game ad (e.g. Candy Crash)
- Full page ads in between articles in a news site (e.g. CNN)
- Full page in-app incentive ads in game (e.g. Coin Master)
- Full page video ads between videos/songs (e.g. YouTube)



Not surprisingly, **video ads were selected as the most irritating form of ads**, with 35% of people choosing them. Full page ads in between articles were second, with 23% of votes). Full page in-app incentive ads came third, with 22% of votes and finally full page on-game ads came last with 21% of the votes. It is interesting to see how disproportionately irritating full page video ads felt to people that did the survey.

In a smaller sample group, it conducted several dozen in-depth interviews. The end-uses were asked to give specific explanations of what annoyed them. The most common complaint was that on YouTube, when you hear music (especially playlists), the atmosphere is suddenly ruined by a noisy video ad. Another survey made in the US by eMarketer shows quite similar results.



# PUBLISHERS' TARGETING AND PREFERENCES

Publishers today can control the amount, the interval and the frequency capping of full page ads per website, per page, per user and per hour, and can configure them per location, per web browser or per operating system (mobile/desktop).

Additionally, full page ads can be placed strategically on different kinds of websites offering various targeted content. This makes it easy for online marketers to do split tests to assess the effect of their ad campaigns on different demographics and get the An important advantage that FPA has over banners is that while banners are mixed with the site's content and could distract its visitors, full page ads that open in a separate tab at pre-defined intervals (once per session or even less) keep the site clean and with no distractions, separating the publisher from the ad.



#### Publishers' Targeting and Preferences

#### Using FPA, advertisers have many targeting options:

- Per publisher (the website/s they are advertising on they can choose any website or marketing channel they are interested in)
- By operating system (Windows, iOS, etc.)
- Browser (Chrome, Safari, etc.)
- Internet connection (Wi-Fi, 3G, etc.)
- Time (by minute, range of hours, selected days)
- User location on the website
- Business model (incentivized / not incentivized)
- The content type of the website
- Retargeting (by using a dedicated pixel)
- Configuration (new tab, new tab under, pop-up, pop-under, interstitial page)

Advertisers are mainly concerned with practical results and their brand image, and correct use of FPA can easily address the two of them.

One interesting aspect of full page ads is that they actually contribute to keeping the brand safety just like they do for the publisher - because the advertising is on a separate page and not visibly next to the site's content, the advertising is not perceived to be directly related to the site. Thus, the brand maintains its reputation anyway.

The best means of advertising may vary from product to product. For example, those who adopted pop-under ads and brought them back to the mainstream are the performance advertisers, because they needed to provide advertisers with clear results rather than nice "stories". Recently, the premium brands have also returned to use FPA, mainly in mobile apps (and less in desktop, where Google rules). Google influenced only the premium advertisers who are more concerned with branding, but performance advertisers have always looked for clear ROI. Now that most of the mobile ads are interstitial ads, more and more premium brands returns to FPA, which is better measured and usually more brand-safe.

Another reason for the FPA renaissance among advertisers is Banner Blindness - phenomenon in which visitors of a website consciously or unconsciously ignore banner-like information (it is also known as Ad Blindness). This phenomenon became so prominent that it is harder and harder to catch the visitors' attention. FPA, much like billboards or sponsored content in offline advertising, is just impossible to completely ignore. And incentivized ads, the latest form of FPA, requires the end-users to be actively exposed to the advertisement, otherwise it will disappear and they will not receive the conditional reward, which creates a higher level of user engagement.



## **CONCLUSION**

Full page ads became one of the most popular types of advertising over the last 25 years. As time passed, more and more ads were served via pop ads, and different methods were devised to improve them, such as pop-under, new tab and interstitial ads. Google's early efforts to suppress FPA, whether for commercial or user experience reasons, have partially succeeded, and distanced some of the premium advertisers from using FPA on websites. However, the rise of mobile advertising over the past 12 years has brought FPA back to center stage, with interstitial ads becoming the most popular form of in-app ads. As a result, and with the advertising market's increased emphasis on performance, premium brands have returned in recent years to extensively use different forms of FPA, and Google became the main provider of FPA itself. The field's future growth will be partly affected by Google's regulations (or the lack of them).

FPA grows rapidly and is adopted each year by more and more advertisers and publishers, launching new types of formats and business models. Due to all of this and the constant weakening of banners, we expect the FPA field to rapidly grow and expand in the years to come.