



The Approach to Real  
**BRAND  
SAFETY**

New **Intelligent Technologies** and **Processes** for **Context Management**

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Keywords are the tip of the iceberg.  
Deeper analysis allows you to see  
the true context of a page

# 1. Analysing the Brand Safety Issue

Out of the three main issues the advertising industry is facing – fraud, viewability and brand safety – brand safety is the only one related to communication and reputation; fraud is related to a waste issue and viewability to efficiency.

In recent years, the industry focused on programmatic in relation to concerns over ad fraud and viewability, but has only recently brought new attention on brand safety – and the damaging impact inadequate safeguards will have on revenues in the long-term. The reduced control over ad placements that programmatic might bring can damage a brand if not addressed adequately.

In fact, the perception of a brand will be influenced – either positively or negatively – by the content that appears alongside it and consumers will judge brands if they appear to support dangerous or inappropriate content.

## WHAT IS BRAND SAFETY ?

Brand Safety (BS) escapes a clear universal definition, and each brand has its own meaning of it. In fact, true Brand Safety is tied to the brand itself and its brand values & positioning. However, one thing is clear to all players involved in the advertising sector: **a campaign that does not consider the content and context** of the URLs in which ads are served, and does not respect the brand's needs and requirements, **will impact a brand's reputation**.

The association of an ad message with the wrong content does not imply an unrecoverable waste of the investment. However, damage control and fixing mistakes will be more expensive than setting up the correct strategy at the beginning. This is where the right brand safety and contextual technology partner comes into play.

“  
*Out of the three main issues the industry is facing – fraud, viewability and brand safety – brand safety is the only one related to communication and reputation*

The fact that Brand Safety has become a hot topic in the last years is confirmed by the abundance of statements Media, Industry Leaders and Marketers have released.



## What Digital Media say



## What Industry Leaders say

“Frankly, there’s, we believe, at least 20% to 30% of waste in the media supply chain because of lack of viewability, nontransparent contracts, nontransparent measurement of inputs, fraud and now even your ads showing up in unsafe places.”

**Marc Pritchard, Procter & Gamble**

“For a while, marketers got so caught up in low CPMs that we just lost quality. I think you’re going to see a flight back to quality, even if it means your costs go up. I’ve got to measure for quality, my brand and for safety.”

**Kristin Lemkau, JPMorgan Chase**

“What’s changed over the last six months is the agenda item that’s been added around brand safety and brand measurement. I’d say measurement was always there. Safety was not.”

**Alison Lewis, J&J**



## What Marketers think

Research by **Trusted Media Brands**, which involved various Brands, highlights the importance of Brand Safety in Advertising. Outcomes include:

- Over half of respondents have made deliberate efforts to improve the brand safety of their digital media buys and another third plan to in the future.
- Audience quality is impacted most by advertising in a brand safe environment as well as brand success metrics.

# MARKET CHALLENGES

An effective brand safety solution must be able to protect the brand from inappropriate content and at the same time maintain the expected delivery volumes and spending.

Tackling the brand safety issue opens to companies some key common challenges and key questions:

1. A shared **definition** of Brand Safety.
2. Who is **responsible** for ensuring brand safety: publishers or buyers?
3. What **level** of brand safety is the appropriate one: Whitelists/Blacklists, Standard, Brand Level?
4. What is the **value** a company gives to brand protection?
5. Trade-off between **delivery** and **safety**.

We believe that overall brand safety management implies some key industries alignments, a clear management strategy from brands and the right technology solution.

## 2. A Successful Strategy, Technology and Know-How

To ensure the most effective brand safety solution is in place we need a basic know-how, a comprehension of key elements of an effective strategy and, clearly, a basic technology understanding. Below each one is analysed in detail.

### KNOW - HOW

Let's start from a few basic **know-how** concepts.

“  
*The more personalized the brand safety strategy is - linked also to contextual targeting - the more effective it will be*  
 ”

#### Pre-bid or Post-bid?

Both are necessary, depending on the campaign delivery requirements.

**Pre-bid** brand safety acts as a filter before the bidding process, discarding unsafe pages before their impressions can be bought. The obvious advantage of this approach is that there is no impression waste, only safe impressions are purchased.

**Post-bid** is applied at the ad server level, and will block unsafe impressions after they've already been bought. This second approach is nonetheless necessary in certain occasions, for instance in direct buying, or PMP deals. The important thing is that both are pre-delivery filtering mechanisms – ads will not be displayed on unsafe pages.

#### What are the Levels of BS?

Understanding levels of Brand Safety is at the basis of an effective and safe ad placement.

**1<sup>st</sup> Level** - *Whitelists* or *Blacklists* are lists of safe or not safe domains.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Level** - *Standard Brand Safety Categories* are a few common categories that identify questionable and inappropriate content (e.g. violence, pornography, inappropriate language etc.) at the page-level that would hurt the brand's reputation if ads were served.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Level (brand care)** - *Vertical Sector* or *Custom Brand Safety Segments*:

- Vertical sector: **specific custom** "brand safety" **categories by industry** according to the specific vertical sector.
- Brand safety segments: **tailored brand safety segments** built together with the brand, both identified at the page-level.

#### “Brand Safety Only” or “Brand Safety with Contextual”?

**Intelligent brand safety** is **crucial** to avoid negative associations. This is the optimal approach to drive the ad placement to the right context, through a granular analysis conducted at the page level. Understanding the contextual relevance of page content not only allows brands to avoid negative adjacency issues, but also enables them to target the placements most likely to attract the attention of their intended audience.

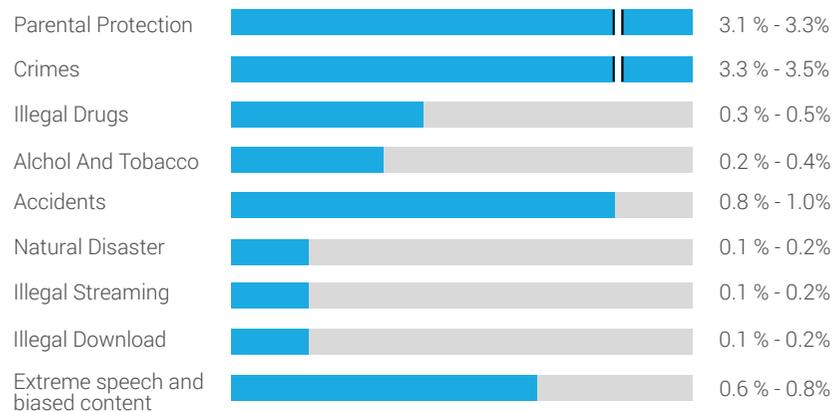
#### Filter Only or also Measure?

**Reporting & Planning** - When applying brand safety filters, it is always important for brands, agencies or publishers to be in control of how much inventory will be - or is being - blocked, and plan accordingly. A complete Reporting & Planning tool performs a simple yet crucial function: it provides DSPs and publishers with full evidence of the contextual elements including brand safety.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Level Brand Safety versus 3<sup>rd</sup> Level Brand Safety

To guarantee effective protection for a brand, **the best strategy for Advertisers and Publishers is to move towards 3<sup>rd</sup> level brand safety**, defining a tailored strategy of the contents to be avoided for each particular campaign or brand. See below a few stats in a typical DSP environment, where we analysed approximately 100+ billion impressions/month. Thanks to our intelligent technology, we discovered the following level of unsafe content and the need to move to the 3<sup>rd</sup> level.

### Second Level of Brand Safety for Standard Negative Content

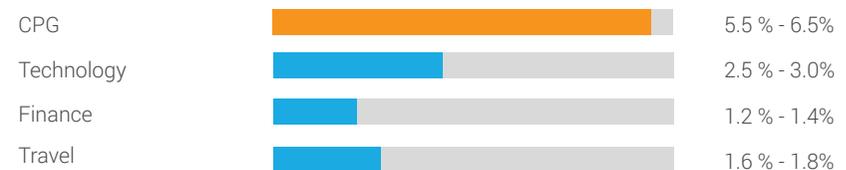


As you can see, at **the 2<sup>nd</sup> level**, brand safety by standard categories **filters between 0.1% to 3.5%** of negative content.

### OUTCOME

*These numbers show how the overall brand safety risk for vertical industries is higher than the average risk of appearing next to standard objectionable content, because negative topics and sentiment specific to the sector of choice must also be taken into account.*

### Third Level of Brand Safety by Vertical Sector



To strengthen the protection we need to move to the **3<sup>rd</sup> level** brand safety by vertical sector, including negative content for the specific product area or vertical sector (e.g. baby products in the CPG sector, as shown below).

Furthermore, with a deeper analysis of the CPG sector percentages of negative content are higher:

### CPG Sector Brand Safety



Source: Data analysis by AdmantX

# STRATEGY

No effective implementation exists without a clear strategy and a clear goal. In our experience, for a successful strategy the following **Key Brand Safety Principles** should be kept in mind:

## Key Brand Safety Principles

### - THE BRAND DRIVE.

Each brand must define its own guidelines for inappropriate and damaging context, according to its specific needs. No strategy and implementation can exist without a clear goal and definition.

### - GO TO THE 3<sup>rd</sup> LEVEL OF BRAND SAFETY.

A successful brand safety strategy can only be reached through a granular analysis conducted at the page level, which can place the ad in the right context (content + emotions and sentiment), personalizing the ad positioning in accordance with brand's values and the company's requests.

### - NEED FOR TRUE PAGE ANALYSIS INTELLIGENCE.

Technology is fundamental for effective brand safety and only understanding the real meaning of a page, like a human would, allows full protection.

### - PRE-BID AND POST-BID OPTIMIZATION.

Both are necessary, depending on the campaign requirements.

### - OPTIMISATION AND MANAGEMENT (check-up).

Brand Safety is a form of "risk management" and must be considered a process to be managed. This includes:

- Reach management (manage filters to not impact the reach).
- Event management (in case of a negative event the brand safety tactics should be immediately updated accordingly).
- Ongoing brand safety personalization (depending on the brand's communication and positioning strategy changes).
- Periodic control (periodic check of reports and refine strategy).

### - PROTECTION AGAINST EXTREME SPEECH AND BIASED CONTENT MUST BE INCLUDED IN THE BRAND SAFETY STRATEGY.

### - FOLLOW BEST PRACTICES.

Experience counts! See ADmantX best practices on page 13.

# TECHNOLOGY

Not all technologies are appropriate to achieve true brand safety. Keyword searches and domain whitelists or blacklists cannot guarantee complete protection for the brand, because they do not really understand the context and, therefore, the positive or negative relevancy of that page content and the emotional impact on the user.

“

*Keyword technologies fail because they are unable to understand the complex relationships words have with each other*

Relying on keyword targeting and filtering is not fit for the purpose, especially for brand care level (3<sup>rd</sup> level). However, most advertisers **rely on keyword lists** — a list of words brands don't want to be linked with. Any page or URL (depending on the tech partner) including a single word found in this list should be discarded. While at the beginning it seems that ads are placed in the chosen environment, and unsafe pages are discarded, in reality this strategy **can have a negative impact on monetization**. This happens because of **False Positives** (FPs) and **False Negatives** (FNs), which are both consequences of technologies that do not take the full text meaning of the page into consideration, but rather just look for keywords and discard pages only on these grounds.

**False Positives** are words that are incorrectly recognized in context. For example, a headline such as "IKEA Kills It in Retail", which is positive in context, is not properly understood by keyword engines and the web page is blocked, even if it is safe.

On the other hand, **False Negatives** are pages that should have been blocked by the brand safety tech, but are not because the specific keywords were not included in the list. For instance, the keyword list may include "shooter", but not its synonyms "hitman", "hired gun", "gunman", etc.

The solution for advertisers is not to compile the longest and most comprehensive list, adding keyword over keyword hoping everything will be covered. Instead, advertisers should rely on true NLP technology that takes the full text into account and the full understanding of it, thus limiting the risk of FPs and FNs to a minimum.

Overcoming the limits of these outdated techniques is now possible thanks to **Artificial Intelligence**, which has made available techniques that enable algorithms to read texts as humans would.

Brand safety is one of the areas where these technologies (AI and ML) can have a real impact.

“  
*False Positives and False Negatives are consequences of technologies that do not take the context of the page into consideration*

“  
*The best strategy to reach a real brand safety is deploying semantic technology designed for granular analysis*

### 3. ADmantX Solution for Real Brand Safety

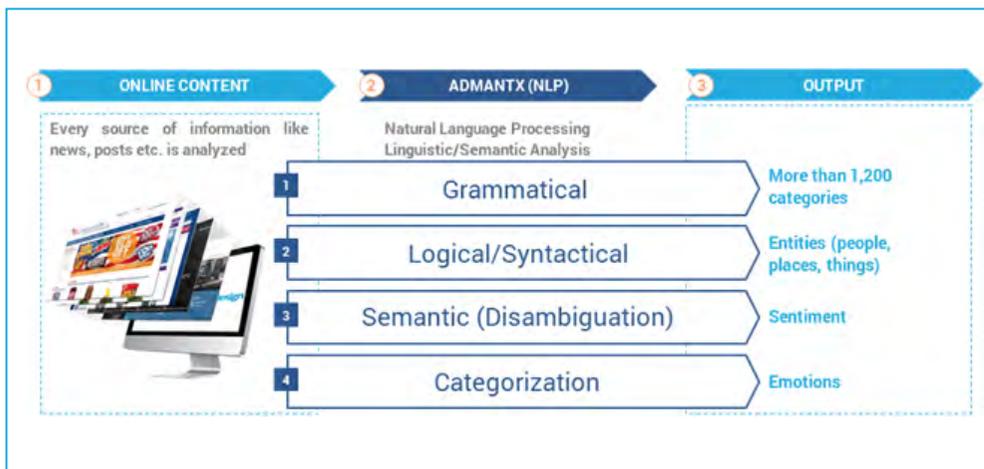
ADmantX uses **patented cognitive semantic technology** to disambiguate all of the words on a page.

## OUR SOLUTION. *True understanding implies full contextual protection*

In a true **semantic network** all words are organized in groups representing the same concept. Working with concepts (rather than simple keywords) and linguistic semantic relationships between concepts, makes it possible to fully understand the meaning of single words, sentences and entire documents with unmatched precision and with a greater flexibility in the development of new categories.

Starting from the content in a page, thanks to its Semantic technology, ADmantX can analyse content and the sentiment/emotions of the page; this includes not only a grammatical analysis, but a deep comprehension of the context for a correct categorization.

*ADmantX makes use of its patented NLP system to classify content at the page level*



**Analysis**



**Comprehension**

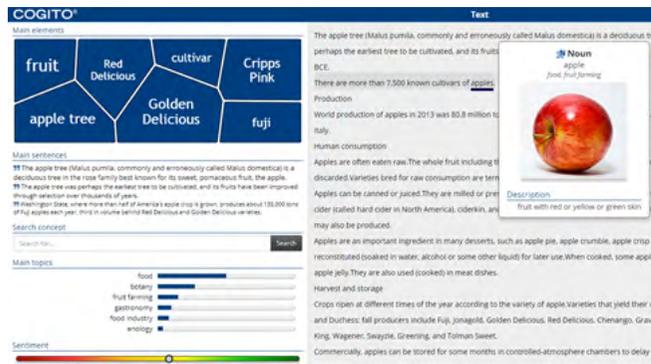


**Categorization**

This method best exploits the potential of linguistics applied to computer science and carries out a complete multi-level text analysis (lexical, grammatical, syntactical and semantic analysis) interacting with a proprietary semantic network, a Neural Network of all the concepts of the language and the semantic relationship among them (more than 600K concepts and 11M semantic relationships).

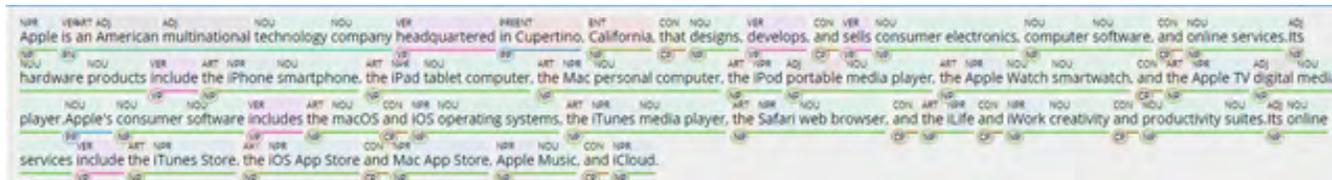
## A concrete example of how our technology works

Consider 2 texts comparing the difference between ADmantX's Semantic analysis of a text about **Apple (IT company)** versus a text about **apples (the fruit)**. The correct meaning of the word Apple is understood by our NLP technology thanks to the context of the page – the same process a human reader would undertake to identify what an article is about.



“ ADmantX is able to understand the “real” meaning of a word thanks to the analysis of the context and the content of a page.

## Our analysis in detail



“ Proper technology, deep knowledge of the topic (know-how), a well defined initial strategy and optimisation process are the main ingredients for successful brand protection in the digital environment

# OUR OFFER. *Support, Capabilities and a Complete Solution to Manage the Brand Safety Process*

AdmantX offers specialized support, expertise and a **high quality complete solution** to better manage the full brand safety process, from pre-bid and post-bid with a wide range of categories predefined by sectors or by negative topic, to tailored protection for any brand requirement.

We cover all 3 levels of brand safety and our technology is integrated with leading DSPs and SSPs. In addition, we operate globally and are registered with JICWEBS (it is an independent organisation, representing all sides of the digital advertising industry and oversees the independent development of Good Practice and Standards for digital ad trading).

## 1) PRE BID AND POST BID.

AdmantX offers a sophisticated solution for marketers looking to efficiently and effectively place brand messaging while avoiding unsafe ad placement.

## 2) ALL 3 LEVELS OF BRAND SAFETY

**1<sup>st</sup> Whitelists and blacklists.** We support the use of whitelists or blacklists of sites which can be used to assess content at the domain level.

**2<sup>st</sup> 12 Predefined Page-Level Standard Brand Safety Categories.** The AdmantX Standard Brand Protection categories: our Standard Protection Angels are detailed below.

THE STANDARD PROTECTION ANGELS

PARENTAL PROTECTION	NATURAL DISASTERS	CRIMES
ILLEGAL DRUGS	ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO	ACCIDENTS
NEGATIVE FEELINGS	ILLEGAL STREAMING	ILLEGAL DOWNLOAD
WEAPONRY AND MILITARY	TERRORISM	EXTREME SPEECH AND BIASED CONTENT*

\* Our latest solution "Brand Safety against extreme speech and biased content" combines the most advanced semantic analysis of expressions indicating hatred and racism with the management of a comprehensive and regularly updated list of untrustworthy websites.

**3<sup>st</sup> 116 Brand Safety by Industry Vertical Categories.** AdmantX delivers vertical categories by sector that will be associated with pages in which AdmantX's semantic analysis has found standard negative content (such as sexual content, disasters, accidents, crime, terrorism, illegal drugs and diseases), or the negative topics/elements specific to the product of choice. For instance, the "automotive" Vertical Brand Safety segments will avoid road accidents, drunk driving, auto recalls, etc.

**Unlimited Brand Safety Custom Segments .** These segments, built by our team for your brand/campaign, combine all of the elements of AdmantX's semantic analysis (categories, feelings, sentiment and entity extraction) to filter contents at the page level.

It is crucial to take into account the brand's sector (vertical categories), and to apply a customized solution that takes specific customer requests into consideration. For advertisers and agencies who want to better protect their brand image from online risks generic protection is not enough. Instead, a tailored solution that is specific for that brand offers the highest level of protection. Furthermore, **moving from the 1st to the 3rd level is the best decision for a more personalized protection** to guarantee real brand safety.

### 3) PLANNING & REPORTING.

We offer detailed reporting for specific ad's performance, which can be useful to plan future actions to improve campaign results.

### 4) BRAND SAFETY CHECK-UP.

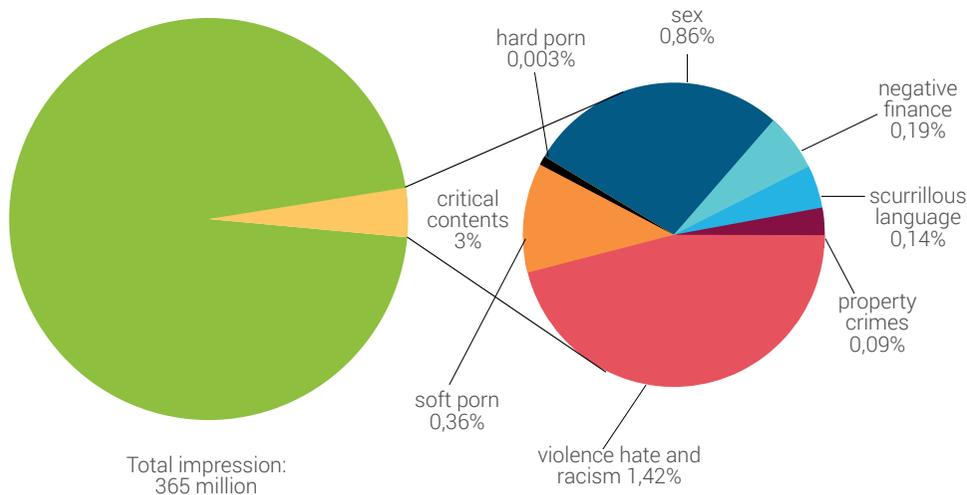
Before starting a new ad placement, a Brand Safety check-up is a good way to understand what happened in past campaigns.

**Brand Safety Check-Up** is an effective control system aimed at eliminating future risks, guaranteeing greater brand safety and better positioning of advertising messages. It provides, in a specific period of time, a complete overview of the URL-level data of where ads have been served. Our analysis, supported by our semantic engine, will provide a full report about the type of inappropriate standard, vertical and customized content found in such pages.

In the graphic you can see data from a Brand Safety check-up conducted by ADmantX showing that **3% of ads had been served on critical contents.**

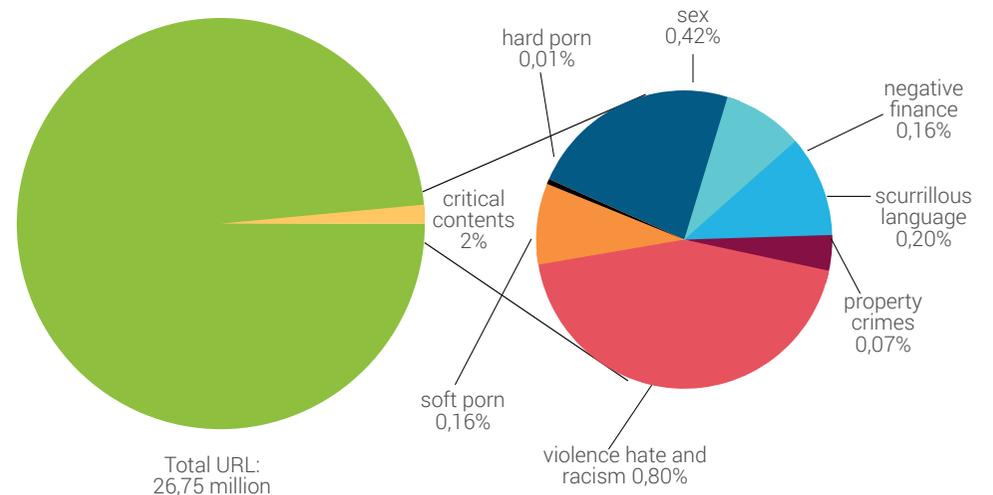
Using this data, ADmantX and the customer were able to define a tailored brand safety strategy.

#### Impression analyses



Source: Data analysis by ADmantX

#### URL analyses



Source: Data analysis by ADmantX

## BEST PRACTICES. *Basic Procedures to Ensure a Successful Brand Safety Result*

### Brand safety best practices:

- Evaluate and discuss Brand Values and Brand Sensitivity.
- Always apply standard brand safety categories (Parental Protection, Illegal Drugs, Alcohol & Tobacco, etc.).
- Evaluate extra minimum-standard safety attributes based on campaigns (e.g. "Accidents" for a travel campaign).
- Develop custom 3<sup>rd</sup> Level Brand Safety segments (or use Vertical Industry segments).
- Combine Brand Protection with Semantic Contextual Targeting.

## CONCLUSION.

**ADmantX's proprietary advanced semantic technology** takes contextual targeting and brand safety beyond the limits of keywords, helping brands and agencies deliver highly targeted and effective ad campaigns.

By fully comprehending the meaning of words – not just their presence on a page – and concepts, our analysis allows full management of URL selection or de-selection, including accurate identification of sentiment and emotion. This enables **brand safety at a granular level**, empowering advertisers to avoid placements alongside content that expresses adverse sentiment towards their specific brand or their sector as a whole, as well as ensuring that ads avoid inappropriate or damaging content.



***A GOOD REPUTATION TAKES A LONG TIME TO BE BUILT BUT ONLY A SHORT TIME TO BE DEMOLISHED***



We help you define the safest and most relevant context for your brand

# BRAND SAFETY TIPS.

