UPA guidelines on audience measurement in the current digital and cross-media landscape

A. Background and purpose

The guidelines proposed here essentially respond to the need to evolve the system of official single-media measurements that insiders often refer to as the "audi system", updating it to the current market reality,.

The audience measurement process, since the end of the 80s, has been based on autonomous research systems, vertical by medium, carried out with the participation of all the market players - publishers, sales houses, media agencies, investors - in order to guarantee independence and adaptability to the evolution of the market over time. This is the system of JICs and "audi's", which still represents the reference standard of the market.

The proliferation of media, platforms and devices, however, has created cross-media - not just multimedia - user behaviour: not only is it a matter of understanding the multiplicity of advertising channels, but also the patterns of usage that qualify the value of each medium, and allow their optimal role in advertising campaigns.

Moreover, the evolution of the content offer has created environments and related models of advertising that are structurally not comparable to traditional media.

This is an historic change, which requires, in the interest of all operators (publishers, producers, distributors, investors) a consideration of the evolution of the audience measurement system that is consistent with the spirit that has characterized the evolution of individual media, namely: data interoperability, adaptation to the context, industry-wide consensus and**i**ndependence.

In this new scenario, a common appraisal seems necessary in order to remodel the official measurement systems around the ongoing evolution of both the demand for and the supply of communication.

There have been a number of recent initiatives which aim at solutions that can ensure comparable, authoritative and interoperable audience measurement data for the market, including:

- The [Agcom resolution](#), the Authority's most recent intervention in the field of communications, which proposes to the market a regulatory framework and a timeframe within which to verify its implementation;

- The [WFA Manifesto](#), the authoritative guide to the underlying principles that must characterise new research structures in the new cross-media scenario - codified by the global association of advertisers - according to which the US and UK, for example, are initiating tests for the implementation of new research models;

- [The White Paper on Digital Communication](#), to date the best description of the relevant areas in digital communication, shared by all the representative subjects on the Italian market.

Today there is a twofold need: on the one hand, ensuring that emerging platforms, media and ways of delivery can enjoy reliable audience measurement mechanisms that can be compared with what the JICs have already

developed with respect to their media; on the other hand, introducing a cross-media approach.

The change of context underlines how the evolution of the audience research system will require a strengthening of the ability to follow and measure the behaviour of individuals not only in relation to single media, but also in relation to their wider media journeys. In the years to come, it is easy to foresee further new platforms and new ways of media delivery entering the market, and therefore the existence of integrated and convergent cross-media research would allow an easier positioning in the advertising market for publishers and a faster and more effective investment by advertisers.

Proper measurement produces benefits to consumers through a better advertising experience, thereby avoiding rejection of and hostility towards advertising, and greater value to advertisers through increased effectiveness and efficiency in the media marketplace.

The possibility of systematically evaluating the effectiveness of campaigns, compared to their stated goals, in full transparency and allowing open competition in the planning of all advertisers, is the most powerful foundation for the innovation of the communication industry and for the constant development of the advertising market.

B. General principles of measurement models

An audience measurement model updated to today's cross-media landscape should be a system capable of:

1. Using robust, transparent and shared models and methodologies, and, in accordance with conditions appropriate to the needs of the entiresupply chain, measuring the audience of content and advertising in a correct way on individual media, for individual modes of use and used for planning;

2. Generating data systems for different media and different modes of use that are comparable, unambiguously defined and measured according to conventions and logics that are fair and shared by stakeholders;

3. Extending its scope over time to all platforms, all content formats and allmodes of use that will emerge as relevant to the players in the supply chain, as a result of market evolution.

In a manner consistent with these prerogatives, it is hoped that themodel to be developed will therefore follow the following principles:

- Comparability: while considering and acknowledging the varying nature of data generated by individual contents/platforms and the need for precise measurement systems, the aim of the system must be to generate data that are comparable and measured according to unambiguous, shared and transparent principles regarding content and advertising audiences, be it video, audio, text or a combination of them.

- Inclusiveness: measurement should be as inclusive and integrated as possible for all formats made available by technology, by content producers / distributors / publishers.

- **Timeliness**: In all areas where it gradually becomes possible, the model should achieve the provision of data in real time, and where this is not possible, it should strive for the objectives of maximum timeliness of data sharing.

- **Cross-media:** the model must be able to measure the audience following the behaviour of individuals, allowing a precise and clear allocation of the audience, by publisher, platform and delivery channel (e.g. TV channel, browser, app, etc.).

- **Granularity:** the cross-media measurement architecture must allow data to be re-aggregated at various levels in a de-duplicated way.

- **Interoperability:** the metrics that the system will adopt must be as widely co-ordinated as possible and comparable on all platforms subject to audience measurement, as well as consistent with the measurement systems that the supply chain uses to design advertising campaigns.

  Fairness: in order to allow for a fair allocation of resources, the system must be designed with effective tools to combat ad fraud, screen out non-human views and provide functional information to verify compliance with brand safety or brand policy criteria. At the same time, the model must adopt an agreed perspective on the definition of unique user / listener / reader, the measurement of time spent, the definition of stream view, the definition of page view, the definition of viewability. This will allow analyses that are as immediately comparable as possible between platforms, in full compliance with privacy regulations and the highest guarantees in terms of

cybersecurity.

- Independence: in order to have all the stakeholders' voices represented within the model, a governance mechanism based on the Joint Industry Committee (JIC) model is confirmed as valid, i.e. with an active and concerted participation of all market players. Only in this perspective, in fact, it is possible to share and apply mutually transparent and correct methodologies to the model.

C. The measurement standards proposed by UPA

1. There are essentially three elements to be measured, because they are relevant to both content and advertising: video, audio and text. These are the elements on which any content strategy and any advertising planning is based. Whether they are longform (entire films or video or audio programmes) or shortform (video clips or information snacks), and whether they are delivered in linear mode or on demand, the measurement methods must be homogeneous and consistent.

   - For video or audio files, their census-level delivery, i.e. delivery on any device/platform, is detected through software (SDK) in the publishers' player. This is in addition, of course, to the use of audio-matching technology for linear TV without a 'return path'.

   - For text, a page counter, or page scroll action, must be included.

   A socio-demo profile must then be attributed based on the evidence collected from the panel in use (television, digital, single source), and a probabilistic model (data science) with the help of virtual identity identifiers.

2. The devices / screens / aggregators of content and advertising (video, audio, text) that are to be measured are the following: smartphones, tablets, computers, linear TV, connected TV, game consoles, radio, cinema, mobility, i.e. outdoor installations, and any other mode / technology of use. Clearly, some of these imply individual consumption while others, systematically or occasionally, may imply shared consumption. Therefore co-viewing measurement models must be defined (ad hoc for single devices).

3. Definition of:

   - Unique user / listener / reader: the unique user of content and advertising must be deduplicated on digital platforms and in non-digital usage (e.g. linear TV or print reading), according to the most common methodologies. As far as linear TV, radio and print media are concerned, the current definitions remain valid;
       - for print media it is very useful to introduce the processing of the average reading data of the day closest to the survey (yesterday);
       - with non-digital TV, radio and print, it is necessary to study models of individual attribution deduplicated with respect to the uses on the platforms, to be studied on single source panels;

   (b) Time spent: must be measured in seconds; and must be able to be aggregated into minutes if necessary with respect to television metrics;

   (c) Stream view: must coincide with the start of the video; SDKs that detect stream views must be adjustable according to unambiguous conventions established by the market;

(d) Page view: a shared definition is needed, in light of the technologicalevolution of browsers and the use of "infinite" social pages;

(e) Viewability (video): as proposed by the MRC, indicated in the WFA Manifesto, and in Project Origin in the UK, it should be defined at 100% of the pixels for at least two consecutive seconds of viewing. For mobility, the viewability criteria for single installations that will be adopted for out of home can be integrated.

The goal must be to measure advertising together with content , i.e. advertising - total campaign - together with the context – total audience - in which it is delivered.

The metrics defined, or to be defined, must be compatible with the data necessary for the verification of the most widespread KPIs for the evaluation of communication campaigns, systematized in the KPI library created by UPA+Furlanetto. It is very important, in fact, that there is a coherent correspondence between the data collected in audience/readership research and the data needed to calculate the KPIs for setting up and subsequently evaluating the outcome of advertising campaigns.

D. Proposed methodology

General principles:

I. It must be hybrid, not based on a single panel or measurement sample, but include: a) census-level data collection on the various devices; b) several different sources, but made consistent, of data such as log files, return path data, first-party data consented for the purpose; c) a "source of truth" or a single source panel, on the real use of content /

advertising among real people in real life.

II. Internal data of a content producer/distributor/publisher, derived from tracking software, or so-called analytics, or proprietary methodologies are not relevant in the context of audience measurement for advertising market trading purposes.

III. If, within the technologies and methodologies of a JIC's measurement system, such internal data must be used because the system requires it, it must first be certified and integrated by the JIC itself.

IV. It is very important that the strategic assets of the data production structure are held by the JICs, to allow maximum independence and interoperability between individual vendors in the market.

1 Establishment Survey:

a. Sociodemographic universes need to be produced by an Establishment Survey for the whole field of audience measurement for advertising investment purposes;

b. The research should also have the function of gathering respondents' willingness to be part of the panel(s) (single source or targeted);

c. It must have a universal sampling frame, and not be based on partial lists.

2 Census survey:

a. This must be done with SDKs (Software Development Kits), which are integrated into the software players of content, video and audio;

b. The SDKs must be adjustable, i.e. they must be able to be modified from the default specifications proposed by the suppliers, according to market requirements on all software setting parameters (see point C.3.c).

3 Data sources:

a. Each content producer / distributor / publisher can contribute with its own data sources - of which it has the consent to the processing forthe specific purposes - to a data lake aimed at the most accurate profiling of the audience, subject to technical compatibility checks by the JIC;

b. Advertisers can also contribute to the same goal with data collectedwhen users browse the brands' digital properties;

c. To facilitate progressive convergence between "audi's", a datalake that contributes to audience profiling should contribute to all JICs that require it in their methodology.

4 People Panel single source:

a. It must represent the Italian population, with only a lower age limit compatible with the metering/measurement of personal devices for minors.

5 Audit:

a. The entire methodological structure of JIC data production must be auditable by third parties (i.e. with the possibility of non-intermediated inspections), in particular for individual segments deemed critical, at the suggestion of the Technical Committees, on the recommendation of the Board, or of Agcom.

E. Governance

The governance of the measurement systems should be that of the JICs (Joint Industry Committee), with Boards in which all the subjects operating in the market are represented, both on the demand and supply side of advertising communication. The issue of governance is very important, the need for it to take the form of a JIC is expressly indicated in the WFA Manifesto as well as in the Agcom resolution, in order to ensure effective representation of the entire industry, the fundamental components of the market.

F. Privacy

1. The methodologies and technologies used for measurement must all be compliant with privacy-by-design regulations.

2. Data protection and consent requests must be handled correctly (GDPR). Personal privacy must be protected, and user identification and re-identification must be avoided.

3. Data security must be guaranteed in the flows between the servers of the different partiesand in the production processes at the highest possible level.

G. Prospects for a cross-media audience measurement system consistent with the current state and evolution of the Italian communication market.

The guidelines outlined so far are proposed by UPA for open discussion with all the players operating in the advertising investment market:

- with Media Agencies for whom the professional and continuous use of data produced by the research systems is a guarantee of reliability in their best future approaches;

- with publishers / producers / distributors of advertising-supported content, so that they co-operate in the common goal of updating research with their fundamental contribution of expertise;

- To the JICs that today carry out the main measurement systems, so that they can start a path of coordination and convergence, as requested and within the timeframe set by Agcom;

- To all the trade bodies that already cooperate with UPA on several fronts: UNA, FCP, Fedoweb, Fieg, and others who wish to share the objectives, so that the agreements tested in recent years may continue to guarantee a profitable evolution for the entire Italian advertising market.