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Anatomy of Outcomes in Video Advertising

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Introduction

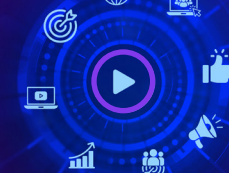
In today's fragmented video advertising landscape, one metric sits at the center of both investment and accountability: **Outcomes**. As marketers navigate across platforms, adapt to tightening privacy regulations, and respond to growing demands for performance transparency, the ability to **accurately measure the results of advertising**—from brand lift to app installs to actual sales—has become more important and more complicated than ever.

This paper is part of [IAB's Video Advertising Anatomy](#) series—a broader initiative to improve clarity and consistency in cross-platform video measurement. It serves as a companion to [Anatomy of a Video Impression](#) and [Anatomy of Reach in Video Advertising](#). While those other documents focused on whether an ad was served (*impressions*) and to whom it was delivered (*reach*), this paper focuses on what happened next—**did the ad exposure lead to any meaningful consumer action?**

Whether the goal is to drive awareness, visits, installs, or purchases, marketers today must show that their media investments deliver tangible business results. Measuring outcomes—actions taken *because* of an ad exposure—is critical to evaluating effectiveness and optimizing future campaigns.

Yet outcomes are often misunderstood, inconsistently defined, or measured using opaque methodologies. Without a clear and rigorous approach, impressions and reach alone lose their strategic value. Advertisers may struggle to calculate return on investment or understand which exposures truly worked.

This paper explores the **anatomy of outcomes**: what they are, how they're measured, and the challenges of standardizing outcome measurement in today's multi-platform, privacy-conscious environment.



Executive Summary

Outcomes are the clearest indicator of advertising effectiveness—and the most complex to measure consistently. An outcome refers to any action taken by a consumer that is influenced by ad exposure, such as brand lift, website visits, app installs, online purchases, offline sales, or subscriptions.

This paper outlines the key challenges marketers face when measuring outcomes across platforms, devices, and media environments. Fragmented identity signals, limited access to exposure or conversion data, inconsistent attribution methodologies, and privacy constraints all contribute to a landscape where outcome measurement varies widely in practice.

Unlike impressions or reach, which are based on direct exposure events, outcomes require linking that exposure to a downstream behavior—often with incomplete, delayed, or indirect data. Attribution methods may differ by platform, campaign, or provider, ranging from simple last-touch logic to advanced modeled or experimental approaches.

While industry standards—such as the [MRC's Outcome and Data Quality Standards](#) and IAB's guidance—provide a strong foundation for defining, validating, and reporting outcomes, the real challenge lies in the limited adoption, inconsistent implementation, and lack of accreditation across the ecosystem. Many platforms, particularly large closed, “walled-garden environments”, use proprietary methodologies, apply attribution rules differently, or do not disclose key assumptions, making it difficult to compare performance or validate results. As of today, few platforms have pursued or achieved [accreditation](#) for outcome measurement, leaving marketers with limited validated and comparable sources to guide investment decisions.

Despite these challenges, the industry is making meaningful progress. Innovations like closed-loop attribution, privacy-preserving clean rooms, identity resolution, and advanced modeling techniques are helping bridge measurement gaps. Meanwhile, efforts to improve transparency, encourage accreditation, and align on standardized definitions are laying the groundwork for more scalable and trustworthy outcome reporting.

IAB's Measurement, Addressability & Data Center calls for renewed collaboration among marketers, publishers, technology platforms, and measurement providers to close the gap between existing standards and real-world execution. Achieving accurate and actionable outcome measurement will require not just new tools, but a shared commitment to transparency, consistency, and responsible data practices.



1. Defining and Measuring Outcomes

In advertising, *outcomes* are defined as **measurable consumer actions or changes in perception** that result from ad exposure. Unlike impressions or reach—which measure whether an ad was served and to whom—outcomes assess **whether the exposure is associated with a meaningful result**. These metrics are essential for evaluating effectiveness, optimizing performance, and demonstrating return on investment.

According to the Media Rating Council (MRC) [Outcomes and Data Quality Standards](#), valid outcome measurement requires:

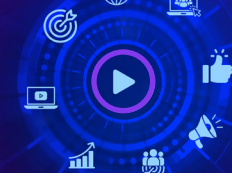
- Proven causality between an ad exposure and a subsequent consumer action.
- Filtering for invalid activity (e.g., fraudulent clicks, bot actions).
- Transparent documentation of attribution logic and modeling methodologies.
- Clear definitions of the outcomes being measured.

While outcome measurement plays a critical role in media planning and valuation, it is highly variable across industries, platforms, and individual organizations—especially in video advertising. Differences in campaign objectives, data infrastructure, regulatory environments, and measurement maturity all influence how outcomes are defined, attributed, and reported.

For example, a retailer running shoppable CTV campaigns may prioritize direct commerce outcomes using closed-loop attribution, while a CPG brand may focus on brand lift or modeled sales tied to household exposure. In regulated industries like healthcare or finance, outcome measurement often leans on panel-based surveys or proxy behaviors due to stricter privacy constraints. Additionally, larger advertisers with access to clean rooms and advanced analytics may deploy custom multi-touch or incrementality models, whereas smaller teams may rely on platform-reported outcomes using simplified attribution logic.

Integrating emotional assessment through neurometrics—such as EEG-based engagement and valence tracking—could strengthen brand outcome measurement by validating not just awareness, but also depth of emotional resonance.

These variations underscore the need for greater transparency and standardization to ensure outcome metrics in video are both comparable and credible. Outcomes must always be interpreted within the context of exposure, timing, attribution assumptions, and external factors influencing consumer behavior.



TYPES OF OUTCOMES

OUTCOME TYPE	DEFINITION
Brand Outcomes	Changes in brand awareness, favorability, intent, or perception measured through surveys or modeled analytics.
Website and App Outcomes	Actions such as website sessions, app downloads, or in-app events following ad exposure.
Commerce Outcomes	Transactions including online purchases, offline sales, subscription sign-ups, or in-store visits attributable to advertising.
Hybrid (e.g. Full-Funnel) or Modeled Outcomes	Outcomes estimated through modeled relationships between exposure and downstream behaviors, often blending survey, panel, and transactional data.

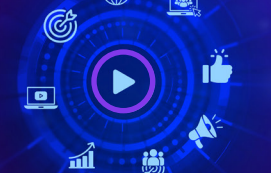
Note: While widely used in the industry, engagement metrics are not classified as outcomes under [MRC's Outcomes and Data Quality Standards](#). They are best viewed as *leading indicators* or signals of potential intent, rather than definitive proof of impact. For outcome measurement to be valid, it must demonstrate a clear and attributable result tied to ad exposure.

MEASURING OUTCOMES ACROSS MAJOR VIDEO ENVIRONMENTS

Outcome measurement in video advertising varies significantly by environment. Each channel—digital, social, CTV, and linear—has unique capabilities, limitations, and data access models that shape how outcomes are tracked, attributed, and reported. Understanding these differences is essential for evaluating campaign effectiveness and ensuring fair cross-platform comparisons.

Digital Video

In digital video environments, outcomes are often measured through pixel-based tracking (e.g., website conversion pixels), app SDKs (e.g., app install trackers), server-to-server integrations, and analytics platforms that attribute user behaviors to exposure events.

**Key considerations:**

- Click-based outcomes are easy to track but represent only a small fraction of the total exposed audience, often less than 1%, so they may not fully capture long-term brand impact.
- Cross-device journeys—such as viewing on CTV and converting on mobile—complicate attribution without robust identity resolution.
- Privacy regulations (e.g., GDPR, CCPA, Apple’s ATT) increasingly limit the ability to link exposure directly to behavior.

Social Video

Social platforms provide built-in analytics that report outcomes based on user engagement within the platform (e.g., likes, shares, comments) and, in some cases, off-platform actions (e.g., website visits, purchases).

Key considerations:

- Deterministic attribution within the platform ecosystem due to user log-in and direct user IDs. However, this deterministic matching frequently applies only to on-platform actions, while attribution of off-platform outcomes commonly relies on modeled or probabilistic approaches.
- Data access is limited to what the platform allows, which can make integration with external reporting systems or cross-channel measurement more difficult.
- Outcome definitions and attribution methodologies may vary by platform and are not always externally verifiable.

Connected TV (CTV)

Outcome measurement in CTV environments often relies on matched exposure and outcome datasets, using device graphs, IP matching, or partnerships with data providers (e.g., credit card networks, loyalty programs).

Key considerations:

- Household-level attribution is common; person-level attribution is rare.
- Offline outcomes (e.g., in-store purchases) are increasingly connected to CTV exposure through third-party data matching.
- Privacy constraints limit deterministic attribution at the individual level.



Linear TV

Linear TV outcome measurement traditionally relies on matched market analysis (e.g., test/control regions) or panel-based survey data.

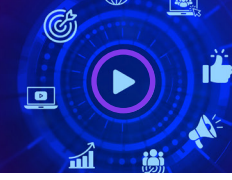
Key considerations:

- Attribution relies on statistical modeling rather than direct linking. While deterministic direct linking may seem more straightforward, it is often constrained by privacy limitations, cross-device identification challenges, and lack of incrementality assessment.
- Delayed effects (e.g., seeing an ad today, purchasing weeks later) complicate causal inference.
- Cross-media effects (TV driving digital search, social activity, or ecommerce behavior) are often underrepresented.

VARYING OUTCOME MEASUREMENT CHALLENGES ACROSS CHANNELS

Understanding the differences in outcome measurement approaches across environments is critical for evaluating video advertising effectiveness. Without consistent outcome definitions and attribution methodologies, comparing campaign performance across platforms becomes unreliable.

MEDIA TYPE	COMMON METHODS	PRIMARY CHALLENGES
Digital Video	Pixels, server logs, SDKs	Cross-device attribution, privacy restrictions, measuring causality
Social Platforms	Native platform analytics	High privacy interoperability requirements, and common gaps reconciling full-value from 3P last-click reporting alone, measuring causality
Connected TV	Device graphs, IP matching	Household-level attribution, limited person-level data, measuring causality
Linear TV	Panels, modeled attribution	Sample-based estimates, long conversion windows



2. What It Takes to Measure Video Outcomes

While outcomes are the ultimate goal of video advertising, measuring them accurately is significantly more complex than tracking impressions or reach. Outcome measurement requires establishing a valid connection between a viewable ad exposure and a subsequent consumer action—often across different devices, platforms, and timeframes. This process must also account for evolving privacy regulations, signal loss, and inconsistent data access across environments.

Unlike impression or reach, which focus on confirming ad delivery and deduplicated exposure across time, devices, and platforms, outcome measurement must determine whether the exposure actually caused or contributed to a behavioral shift. It's a more interpretive and model-driven process—often reliant on partial data and layered with assumptions.

Even with standards like the [MRC's Outcomes and Data Quality Standards](#) in place, real-world implementation varies widely. Platforms and providers often use different attribution windows, proprietary models, and definitions of success. Additionally, few platforms have pursued accreditation, and many do not disclose enough detail to validate how outcomes are calculated—making it difficult to compare campaign performance across environments.

STAGES AND EVENTS IN MEASURING VIDEO OUTCOMES

The process of measuring outcomes typically follows a multi-stage approach, based in industry standards and best practices, including the Media Rating Council's (MRC) [Outcomes and Data Quality Standards](#). These frameworks provide robust criteria for validating outcome measurement through consistent definitions, transparent attribution methodologies, filtering for invalid activity, and ensuring data quality and comparability across platforms.

STAGE	DEFINITION AND RELEVANCE
Valid Ad Impression Event	Only impressions that have been properly rendered, meet viewability requirements, are filtered for invalid traffic, and are confirmed for human presence are eligible to contribute to outcome attribution.
User or Household Identification	Persistent identifiers (user IDs, device IDs, household IDs) are used to associate exposure with subsequent actions.
Exposure-Outcome Matching	Exposed users are matched to outcome events (e.g., purchases, site visits) based on identifiers, timeframes, and other linking mechanisms.
Attribution Rule Application	Specific rules (e.g., last-touch, multi-touch, modeled attribution) determine how credit for an outcome is assigned to exposures.
Time-Window Attribution	Outcomes are matched within a defined time window after exposure (e.g., 1 day, 7 days, 30 days) to account for immediate and delayed effects.
Final Outcome Reporting	Outcomes are reported at the campaign, placement, or creative level for evaluation, optimization , and used as inputs for Media Mix Modeling (MMM), geo-experiments, or Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs) .



Each stage introduces opportunities for variability and error if methodologies are not standardized, validated, and transparently disclosed.

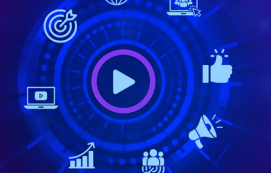
While the stages above outline the operational steps involved in measuring outcomes, it's equally important to understand the different outcomes that can result from these processes. Not all outcomes are measured the same way—or carry the same level of precision or confidence. The table below describes the primary types of outcome measurement used in video advertising and highlights how each approach reflects varying degrees of observability, attribution logic, and causal inference.

LEVELS AND TYPES OF OUTCOME MEASUREMENT

While outcome measurement approaches are often described in distinct categories, in practice some methods overlap or combine elements. For example, incremental outcomes can be viewed as a subset of direct measurement when individual actions are observable, or as a validation layer applied on top of attribution models to determine causal lift.

OUTCOME MEASUREMENT TYPE	DEFINITION
Direct Outcomes	Outcomes directly observable after an exposure event (e.g., click-to-site, app install, purchase).
Modeled Outcomes	Outcomes estimated through statistical models or machine learning models that link exposures to behaviors without direct user-level tracking.
Incremental Outcomes	Outcomes measured through experimental designs (e.g. geo-tests, randomized test/control groups) to estimate the causal impact of advertising beyond natural baseline behavior; may use direct tracking, modeled data, or both.
Attribution-Based Outcomes	Outcomes assigned to campaigns or touchpoints through rule-based or algorithmic attribution models (e.g., last touch, data-driven attribution) that distribute credit for conversions across exposures. Incremental testing can be layered on to validate causal contribution.

Note: The boundaries between these approaches can blur, for instance, modeled outcomes may feed into attribution systems, and attribution results may be validated through incrementality testing.



The type (or combination) of outcome measurement used—whether directly observed, modeled, or incrementally validated—can significantly impact how performance is interpreted and acted upon. Marketers must align their measurement approach with campaign goals, available data, and the level of precision required for decision-making.

For example, modeled or attribution-based outcomes may suffice for directional optimization, but high-stakes decisions—such as budget reallocation or long-term ROI planning—may require more rigorous methods like incrementality testing. Without clear disclosure of how outcomes are defined and calculated, marketers risk misinterpreting results or overvaluing certain tactics. As the industry advances toward more consistent frameworks, outcome transparency and methodological alignment will become essential for comparability and accountability across platforms.



3. Challenges in Cross-Channel Outcome Measurement

As video consumption spans web, mobile, social, CTV, and linear TV, measuring outcomes across platforms remains one of the most complex and unresolved challenges in advertising. While standards for outcome and attribution measurement—such as those from the MRC and IAB—exist, **adoption and consistent implementation are still lacking**. This includes the [MRC's Outcomes and Data Quality Standards](#), which outline foundational principles for measuring deduplicated reach and outcomes across digital video and TV platforms.

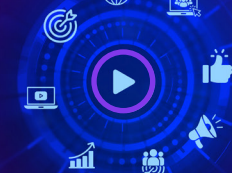
The framework sets important groundwork for aligning outcome reporting across environments. This results in a fragmented landscape where methodologies vary widely, making it difficult to compare performance, evaluate effectiveness, and build confidence in reported results.

Even platforms that use similar outcome labels may apply different definitions, attribution rules, time windows, or modeling techniques behind the scenes. Without transparency and standardization, cross-channel reporting becomes inconsistent and unreliable—especially in video campaigns that touch multiple environments.

DATA FRAGMENTATION, IDENTITY LOSS, AND ATTRIBUTION GAPS

Several factors complicate reliable outcome measurement across environments:

- **Fragmented Identity Signals:**
Consumers often interact with ads and brands across different devices, browsers, and platforms, generating separate identifiers that are difficult to reconcile without unified identity solutions.
- **Privacy-Driven Data Restrictions:**
Regulations such as GDPR, CCPA, and platform policies like Apple's AppTrackingTransparency framework restrict the ability to link exposure and conversion events directly.
- **Limited Interoperability Across Platforms:**
Many platforms operate within closed ecosystems, restricting external access to exposure data, outcome data, or both. This fragmentation hinders cross-platform outcome deduplication and attribution consistency.
- **Incomplete or Delayed Outcome Data:**
Offline purchases, in-store visits, or delayed subscription activations are often not captured in standard digital attribution windows, leading to underreported outcomes.



VARIATIONS IN ATTRIBUTION METHODOLOGIES

Attribution and outcome measurement approaches vary based on campaign objectives—whether the goal is to drive immediate conversions, influence brand perception, or expand reach. No single method fits all use cases, and applying the wrong one can distort how value is assigned across channels.

Performance-Oriented Attribution Methods

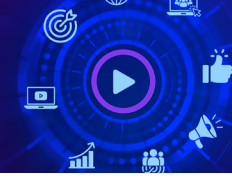
These are most commonly applied to direct response or conversion-driven campaigns, where the goal is to quantify which touchpoints influenced a measurable outcome (e.g., a purchase, sign-up, or visit).

- **Last-Touch Attribution:**
Full credit is assigned to the final exposure before the outcome event. While simple and widely used, it ignores earlier touchpoints and can bias toward retargeting or lower-funnel media.
- **Multi-Touch Attribution (MTA):**
Credit is distributed across multiple exposures based on a predefined model (e.g., linear, time-decay, position-based). This approach attempts to capture the contribution of upper- and mid-funnel touchpoints but depends on access to deterministic or persistent identifiers.
- **Modeled Attribution:**
When user-level linkage is unavailable, statistical models estimate the contribution of different exposures to the outcome. Often based on regression, machine learning, or other modeling techniques, this method is sensitive to input quality and may lack transparency.

Causal and Lift-Based Methods

These methods are increasingly used across both brand and performance campaigns to isolate the incremental effect of advertising from natural or baseline behavior.

- **Incrementality Testing / Lift Studies:**
Controlled experiments (e.g., exposed vs. control groups) measure the lift in outcomes attributable to the campaign. Traditional randomized control trials (exposed vs. control groups) are commonly used in walled gardens or via third-party measurement partners and are especially valuable when attribution is difficult or disputed.
- **Matched Market Tests / Geo-Testing:**
Media is held constant or varied across geographic regions to estimate impact. This is especially relevant for retail, CPG, or geographically controlled campaigns, where clean test-control splits are possible. Here, media spend or creative exposure is varied across predefined geographic regions with control areas withheld from advertising. By comparing outcome metrics such as sales or conversions across these geo slices, marketers can estimate causal effect sizes without relying on user-level data, which is especially valuable in privacy-constrained environments.



- **Media Mix Modeling (MMM) and Creative Scoring Integration:**

Beyond attribution, heavy brand advertisers—particularly CPG companies—often use MMM to assess marketing effectiveness holistically across channels and over longer time horizons. While MMM is not campaign-level attribution, creative and video scoring platforms increasingly supply granular engagement and quality metrics to advertisers and MMM modelers. These data enrichments allow marketers to better understand how creative quality and media investments combine to drive incremental sales, brand equity, and return on investment.

Brand-Focused Outcome Approaches

Campaigns focused on brand awareness, favorability, or reach often require different approaches altogether. These typically do not rely on user-level attribution and may involve panel data, survey-based measurement, or exposure modeling.

- **Brand Lift Studies:**

Surveys or panel data are used to measure shifts in brand metrics (e.g., awareness, consideration) among exposed vs. unexposed users. While valuable for assessing perception changes, results can be influenced by survey bias, recall lag, and the need for sufficient exposure frequency before a measurable shift occurs—making methodological disclosure essential for proper interpretation.

- **Attention-Based Models:**

Newer approaches use viewability, engagement signals, or biometric proxies (e.g., eye tracking, time in view) to estimate attention quality as a predictor of brand outcomes.

- **Cross-Media Reach & Frequency Frameworks:**

These frameworks aim to quantify effective audience reach and exposure quality across platforms—often incorporating attention or time-based weighting—to better correlate media delivery with long-term brand outcomes.

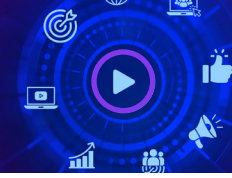
Choosing the right measurement method starts with understanding the campaign's primary goal and how success should be defined. While some methods are better suited for performance campaigns, others are more appropriate for brand initiatives. Marketers are encouraged to align measurement approaches with their objectives, ask for transparency from providers, and ensure the outcomes being reported reflect what truly matters to the business.

TIME-WINDOW INCONSISTENCIES

Different platforms and marketers apply different attribution windows when matching exposures to outcomes:

- Some attribute outcomes that occur within 24 hours of exposure.
- Others extend attribution windows to 7 days, 30 days, or longer.
- Some platforms reset attribution windows with each exposure (“restart window”), while others do not.

Inconsistent time-window attribution practices can lead to overstatement or understatement of outcome performance, especially in cross-channel comparisons.



MANAGING DELAYED AND MULTI-EVENT JOURNEYS

Consumer journeys often involve multiple exposures across multiple devices before a final outcome occurs:

- Viewing an ad on CTV, researching on mobile, purchasing on desktop.
- Viewing multiple ads across different apps or platforms before taking action.
- Delayed conversion behaviors, where an action occurs days or weeks after initial exposure.

Traditional attribution models often can't fully capture this complexity—especially without cross-device identity resolution or advanced probabilistic matching.

COMPLICATIONS WHEN BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

Most platforms are equipped to measure outcomes within their own ecosystems. The real challenge arises when advertisers, agencies, or publishers attempt to bring together outcome data across platforms to create a unified view of performance.

Inconsistent rules, varying attribution logic, identity mismatches, and different time windows can lead to:

- **Over-attribution:** The same conversion is claimed by multiple platforms.
- **Under-attribution:** Conversions go uncounted due to data gaps or short attribution windows.
- **False positives:** Outcomes are incorrectly linked to exposures due to poor matching.
- **False negatives:** Valid outcomes are missed entirely due to fragmentation or silos.

Even when advertisers designate a single ad server or analytics system as their “source of truth,” attribution discrepancies persist. Channels like social and search, which often sit outside ad server-based tracking and default to last-touch attribution, tend to receive disproportionate credit—especially when they capture the final interaction. This can result in upper-funnel channels, such as video, being undervalued despite their influence on consideration and brand lift.

Compounding the issue are today's evolving privacy expectations and data access restrictions, which limit the ability to directly link exposures and outcomes across ecosystems. As third-party signals diminish and interoperability becomes harder to achieve, marketers are turning to probabilistic approaches—such as marketing mix models (MMM), synthetic cohorts, calibrated panels, and clean room integrations—to estimate performance across channels in a privacy-compliant manner.

Bringing outcome data together across video platforms now requires more than technical stitching. It demands alignment on definitions, attribution logic, time windows, and transparency around methodologies and assumptions from all parties involved. Without that alignment, unified reporting risks becoming a patchwork of partial truths—undermining the very decisions it's meant to inform.



RETHINKING CREDIT ASSIGNMENT: THE ROLE OF ASSISTED ATTRIBUTION

To address blind spots in traditional measurement, marketers should explore Assisted Attribution—a complementary approach that helps identify which ad exposures played a meaningful role in driving outcomes, even if they weren't the final touchpoint before a conversion.

What is Assisted Attribution?

Assisted Attribution tracks and quantifies the supporting contributions of earlier or indirect exposures—those that influenced awareness, consideration, or intent—but didn't receive credit in last-touch or direct conversion-based models. Think of it as recognizing the “assist” in a goal, not just the goal scorer.

For example:

A user sees a CTV ad, later encounters a social video, and finally clicks on a paid search ad before purchasing. Common attribution models like last-touch assign full credit to search. However, many attribution methods, such as position-based, linear, or data-driven models, allow credit across all touchpoints, recognizing the combined influence of CTV and social exposures. In assisted attribution, the CTV and social exposures are still acknowledged as contributing factors, especially if patterns show they consistently appear in converting paths.

To enhance Assisted Attribution, consider layering in neurometric evidence of attention and emotional arousal across earlier exposures, helping identify which touchpoints primed the user for downstream actions.

Why It Matters

As privacy restrictions grow and direct identity resolution becomes harder to achieve, assisted attribution provides a way to connect the dots without relying solely on deterministic matching. It enables a more holistic view of the customer journey and can prevent over-investment in bottom-funnel channels that happen to appear last, but may not be doing the heavy lifting.

How It Works

Effective assisted attribution models typically:

- Blend deterministic and probabilistic signals—linking what's observable with what can be reasonably inferred.
- Use exposure sequence and recency to understand where in the journey an ad appeared and how close it was to the outcome.



- Apply channel and format weighting, recognizing that different types of media play different roles in the funnel. Video formats vary widely within and across platforms—from short unskippable spots to long-form or interactive content—each serving different objectives and funnel roles. This diversity makes “video” hard to compare and warrants differentiated weighting in attribution models.
 - *Example: A high-impact video ad may be weighted more heavily for awareness, while a search ad may carry more weight for conversion intent.*
- Rely on aggregated exposure data, identity graphs, or clean room environments to estimate contributions across platforms.

Benefits for Marketers

Incorporating assisted attribution can help:

- **Rebalance value** toward under-credited but high-influence channels like CTV, display, or branded content.
- Reveal **synergies across media types**, especially when multiple touchpoints contribute to the same outcome.
- Support **more strategic media planning**, creative sequencing, and budget allocation.
- Provide a **bridge between performance and brand measurement**—connecting storytelling with results.



4. Advancing Outcome Measurement Through Standards, Technology, and Collaboration

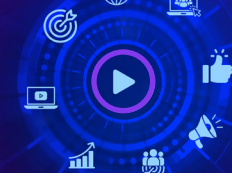
Outcome measurement is evolving from a patchwork of isolated metrics into a more disciplined practice grounded in transparency, interoperability, and accountability. While challenges remain—particularly around identity fragmentation, data privacy, and attribution inconsistencies—the industry is actively building the scaffolding for more scalable and credible approaches.

As part of future outcome measurement evolution, leveraging real-time emotional signals—captured through neurosensor data or affective AI—could improve modeled outcomes by adding a layer of implicit consumer feedback.

The shift from measuring signals of interest to proving impact requires tools and frameworks that can support outcome validation across platforms and channels, while respecting consumer privacy. This includes everything from clean room infrastructure and persistent identifiers to machine learning models and standardized taxonomy for outcome classification.

Key enablers shaping the future of outcome measurement include:

- **Signal Harmonization and Measurement Interoperability**
Shared frameworks and open standards—such as those developed by IAB Tech Lab, IAB and Media Rating Council—allow exposure and conversion data to be collected consistently, regardless of environment. Initiatives like OM SDK have laid the foundation for harmonized data collection, but bridging that with conversion signals remains a priority.
- **Privacy-Centric Matching and Modeling**
Clean rooms and other privacy-enhancing technologies (PETs) have become central to reconciling exposure and outcome data without compromising user identities. These tools allow for deterministic or probabilistic matching, but outcomes derived from such environments must still adhere to disclosure, documentation, and data quality expectations.
- **Responsible AI for Outcome Attribution**
Machine learning models are increasingly used to estimate outcomes where direct observation is not feasible. From synthetic control groups to dynamic weighting of exposures, AI is filling measurement gaps—but it also introduces new risks. Without human oversight, clearly defined inputs, and regular validation, AI can obscure more than it clarifies.
- **Independent Accreditation and Methodological Transparency**
As methodologies diversify, third-party validation becomes essential. Accreditation from bodies like the MRC and transparent documentation of how outcomes are defined, matched, and attributed foster trust and consistency across the ecosystem.



Outcome measurement will never be one-size-fits-all—but it can be consistent, interpretable, and aligned with shared principles. By investing in collaboration, transparency, and scalable technical solutions, the industry can move beyond siloed reporting and toward meaningful proof of advertising effectiveness.

Conclusion

As video consumption continues to fragment across devices, platforms, and behaviors, measuring advertising outcomes has become more critical and complex. Connecting exposures to business results requires navigating identity fragmentation, data access limitations, attribution variability, and increasingly non-linear consumer journeys.

Yet despite these challenges, the industry is making meaningful progress. Open technical frameworks like the IAB Tech Lab's Open Measurement SDK, privacy-safe data matching through clean rooms, responsible use of AI—encompassing bias mitigation, transparency, auditability, and human oversight—along with alignment with standards such as the MRC's Outcomes and Data Quality Standards are helping to lay the foundation for more consistent, scalable, and credible outcome measurement.

Many measurement providers are already leading the way—developing hybrid models, strengthening validation protocols, and tailoring methodologies to fit the unique needs of different verticals. In an environment where no one-size-fits-all solution exists, these innovations are helping marketers extract actionable insights, even amid constraints.

Reliable outcome measurement, however, requires more than technical solutions. It demands a shared commitment to methodological rigor, transparent disclosure, independent validation, and responsible innovation. Moving forward will depend on broader adoption of accreditation frameworks, clearer documentation of attribution practices, and closer collaboration across marketers, publishers, platforms, and measurement providers.

To help accelerate this momentum, IAB will explore gathering direct input from across the ecosystem and spotlighting how leading organizations apply these outcome principles in practice. Showcasing real-world examples—especially from verticals already advancing in this space—can help surface best practices, encourage innovation, and foster a more accountable, future-ready measurement ecosystem.

Achieving consistent, privacy-conscious outcome measurement at scale will require continued alignment across all stakeholders. Key priorities include:

- Broader adoption of open technical frameworks for exposure and outcome signal collection
- Privacy-safe interoperability for data matching across platforms
- Responsible use of AI to complement—rather than obscure—attribution logic
- Transparent, standardized, and independently validated methodologies



This paper, along with *Anatomy of a Video Impression* and *Anatomy of Reach in Video Advertising*, provides a holistic framework for understanding the core pillars of advertising measurement—from exposure and audience delivery to business impact. While impressions confirm an ad was served, and reach ensures that delivery is deduplicated against real audiences, outcomes answer the most important question: *Did it work?*

Looking ahead, the advertising ecosystem must continue to evolve its outcome measurement practices to meet rising expectations around privacy, transparency, and cross-platform consistency. By aligning on standards, innovating responsibly, and committing to collaboration, the industry can ensure that outcomes remain a trusted, actionable foundation for media planning, optimization, and performance evaluation.



Company Participants

<i>Alvarez & Marsal</i>	<i>Media Rating Council</i>
<i>Comscore</i>	<i>Meta</i>
<i>Dentsu</i>	<i>Nielsen</i>
<i>DoubleVerify</i>	<i>Quigley-Simpson</i>
<i>Glassview</i>	<i>Spectrum Science</i>
<i>Havas Media Network NA</i>	<i>The Trade Desk</i>
<i>iSpot</i>	<i>VideoAmp</i>
<i>LiveRamp</i>	<i>Visit Orlando</i>
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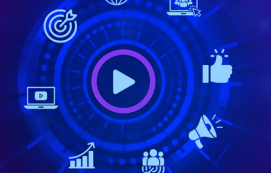
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About IAB

The Interactive Advertising Bureau empowers the media and marketing industries to thrive in the digital economy. Its membership comprises more than 700 leading media companies, brands, agencies, and the technology firms responsible for selling, delivering, and optimizing digital ad marketing campaigns. The trade group fields critical research on interactive advertising, while also educating brands, agencies, and the wider business community on the importance of digital marketing. In affiliation with the IAB Tech Lab, IAB develops technical standards and solutions. IAB is committed to professional development and elevating the knowledge, skills, expertise, and diversity of the workforce across the industry. Through the work of its public policy office in Washington, D.C., the trade association advocates for its members and promotes the value of the interactive advertising industry to legislators and policymakers. Founded in 1996, IAB is headquartered in New York City.

About IAB Measurement, Addressability and Data Center Board

IAB's Measurement, Addressability & Data (MAD) Center Board of Directors aims to provide essential industry guidance and education on solutions and changes in underlying technology and privacy regulations. The MAD Center specializes in measurement and attribution, addressability, advances in retail media, and privacy concerns, providing a comprehensive approach to digital media challenges. Board members set the agenda and direction for IAB and the industry, approve and prioritize key initiatives, influence industry best practices, receive priority access to IAB experts, research, and tools, and participate in exclusive events and meetings.

Contact Information

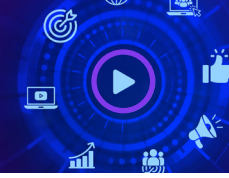
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APPENDIX

UNDERSTANDING HOW OUTCOMES ARE MEASURED ACROSS DEVICES AND PLATFORMS

The table below outlines the common methods used to measure outcomes across different video environments, the primary identifiers leveraged, and the specific challenges associated with accurately attributing outcomes to ad exposures within each context.

ENVIRONMENT	COMMON IDENTIFIERS / METHODS	KEY CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS
Desktop Web	Cookies, browser IDs, server logs	Identifier instability, limited cross-device linkage
Mobile Web	Cookies, local storage, server-to-server APIs	App-to-web linking gaps, privacy policy restrictions
Mobile Apps	Device IDs (e.g., IDFA, GAID), app SDKs	ID restrictions (e.g., ATT opt-outs), attribution signal loss
Connected TV (CTV)	Device graphs, IP matching, third-party data partnerships	Household-level attribution, limited individual-level linkage
Linear TV	Panel data, ACR data, modeled attribution	Sample-based projections, delayed and indirect outcome attribution
Social Platforms	Internal login IDs, platform analytics	Limited external interoperability, platform-contained attribution visibility
Open Web Video	Cookies, device IDs, server-side logs	Cross-publisher fragmentation, inconsistent outcome tracking



CHECKLIST: KEY QUESTIONS TO UNDERSTAND HOW OUTCOMES ARE MEASURED AND REPORTED

This checklist is designed to help media buyers and media owners ask the right questions to ad-serving platforms, ad tech providers, and measurement companies for clarity and transparency in how outcomes are defined, attributed, and reported across different video channels, including web, mobile, CTV, social, and linear TV.

Outcome Definition and Counting Methodology

1. How do you define and measure advertising outcomes?
 - Do your outcome definitions align with industry standards such as MRC Outcome and Attribution Standards?
 - Are outcomes linked to valid, human-rendered ad impressions?
2. What types of outcomes are reported?
 - Brand outcomes, engagement outcomes, website/app actions, commerce outcomes, modeled outcomes?
3. How are exposure events linked to outcome events?
 - Deterministic ID matching, probabilistic modeling, or hybrid approaches?
4. Are outcome measurement methodologies fully documented and available for review?

Identity Resolution and Cross-Device Attribution

1. How are users or households identified for exposure-outcome matching?
 - Are deterministic, probabilistic, or hybrid identity resolution techniques used?
 - How is cross-device behavior handled when users move between mobile, desktop, CTV, and other environments?
2. Is attribution performed consistently across devices, browsers, and platforms?
 - Are identity resolution methods transparently disclosed?

Attribution Models and Credit Assignment

1. What attribution model is applied to link exposures to outcomes?
 - Last-touch, multi-touch, modeled attribution, incrementality testing?
2. Are modeled attribution outcomes clearly distinguished from directly observed outcomes?
3. Are the rules for credit assignment (e.g., linear, time-decay, position-based) documented and available?
4. How are multiple exposures across channels handled in attribution?



Time-Window Attribution

1. What attribution windows are used for matching exposures to outcomes?
 - Immediate (same session), 1-day, 7-day, 30-day, or custom windows?
2. Are attribution windows reset with each new exposure?
 - If so, how is that disclosed and factored into reporting?
3. Are time-shifted outcomes (e.g., delayed purchases or sign-ups) included, and how are they attributed?

Invalid Traffic (IVT) Filtering and Outcome Integrity

1. What processes are in place to filter invalid traffic and fraudulent outcomes?
 - Are GIVT and SIVT filtering applied before outcome calculation?
2. How are fraudulent conversions (e.g., bot-generated installs, fake purchases) detected and excluded?
3. Is your outcome measurement methodology independently audited or accredited?

Transparency and Methodological Disclosure

1. Are full methodologies for exposure tracking, identity matching, outcome linking, attribution modeling, and invalid traffic filtering made available for review?
2. Are updates to outcome measurement methodologies documented and shared in response to privacy regulations, platform changes, or technology shifts?
3. Are modeled or extrapolated outcomes clearly separated from directly observed outcomes in reporting?

Cross-Channel Consistency

1. How is consistency maintained when measuring outcomes across web video, social video, CTV, mobile, and linear TV?
 - Are standardized definitions and methodologies applied across all channels?
2. How are discrepancies handled between platform-reported outcomes and third-party or agency-reported outcomes?
3. Are cross-channel paths (e.g., CTV view leading to mobile purchase) captured and attributed consistently?

CLOSING CHECKLIST NOTES:

- ☒ Request access to detailed methodology documentation from platforms and measurement providers.
- ☒ Ensure that reports are independently audited or certified where possible.
- ☒ Verify that platforms adhere to IAB/MRC guidelines or have an internal methodology that matches industry best practices.
- ☒ Ask for clarity on all elements of reach measurement, from data collection to reporting, to avoid discrepancies and misinterpretations.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Anatomy Series is part of a broader industry effort to bring consistency and transparency to video advertising measurement. The following resources offer deeper insights, standards, and technical frameworks to support implementation and alignment across the ecosystem:

Media Rating Council: Standards & Guidelines

Many of the industry's core measurement standards—covering impressions, audience, viewability, attribution, and more. These guidelines form the foundation for trusted, auditable metrics across the media ecosystem.

[Visit the MRC website to explore the full library of measurement guidelines](#)

IAB Tech Lab: Advanced TV Standards and Guidance

The IAB Tech Lab offers detailed specifications and interoperability frameworks that power Advanced TV advertising—including dynamic ad insertion, measurement signaling, and cross-platform enablement for CTV and beyond.

[View IAB Tech Lab Advanced TV Standards](#)

IAB Video Measurement Map

A visual companion to the Anatomy Series, the IAB Video Measurement Map outlines how measurement data flows across platforms, ad tech systems, and data environments. It defines the relationships between key data sets like impressions, targeting, audience, and outcomes.

[Access the Video Measurement Map](#)