

**ARRESTING  
THE DECLINE  
OF PUBLIC  
TRUST IN UK  
ADVERTISING**

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**A**

**ADVERTISING  
ASSOCIATION**



# WHY WE NEED TO ARREST THE DECLINE OF PUBLIC TRUST IN ADVERTISING

by Keith Weed, AA President

Advertisers have a lot to be proud of.

The UK advertising industry is a global leader in creativity and innovation and we have the highest exports of advertising and marketing communications services in Europe<sup>1</sup>. The UK's self-regulatory system is widely admired in Europe and across the globe. The advertising industry's standards have influenced wider industry practices elsewhere.

Advertising plays an important part in funding all the media. A vibrant and pluralistic media environment is the bedrock of our democracy and provides people with a huge array of content and services.

Yet public trust and favourability towards the advertising industry has been in long-term decline since the early 1990s. That decline could ultimately undermine the creativity, jobs, and value advertising brings to society.

From our research, it appears that the public sees advertising as "a good thing with some downsides". This isn't bad, but we can do much better. The advertising industry now ranks below other industry sectors that have faced major challenges, such as banking and energy, and when compared to other industries, it is the lowest-ranked on the AA's long-term tracking survey.

This matters. Public trust and favourability are essential underpinnings of commercial success.

As the AA's new President, I have made it my mission to lead a programme with the Advertising Association's Council,

which includes ISBA, the IPA, and all the stakeholders in the Trust Working Group, to encourage the industry to grasp the nettle and address this situation with a meaningful action plan.

Addressing public trust and favourability will be a long and potentially difficult process. Halting and then reversing a long, slow decline will take several years at least to take effect. We are only at the beginning and this is Phase 1 of a longer-term action plan. System change is required, and everyone involved in our advertising ecosystem – advertiser, media owner, agency and tech company – has a vital role to play.

We will measure our progress and set challenging but achievable goals. The success of this first phase will influence the design of the subsequent stages of our work. My ambition is to see this first phase successfully implemented with a real improvement made in my term as AA President.

<sup>1</sup>UK advertising exports amount to £5.8m, according to the International Trade in Services Survey, ONS (2016)

# TACKLING THE DECLINE OF PUBLIC TRUST

The AA's Trust Working Group

In 2018, the Advertising Association agreed that action needed to be taken to address the decline in public trust in advertising and set up a working group under the joint chairmanship of Paul Bainsfair, Director General of the IPA, and Phil Smith, Director General of ISBA. The working group has broad and senior representation from industry bodies including the NMA, PPA, DMA and IAB as well from ITV, Channel 4, Sky, Google, Facebook, Royal Mail and the ASA, and the chairs of Front Foot and Credos. It regularly reports on its progress to the AA Council, chaired by the AA's President, Keith Weed.

As a first step, the working group asked Credos, advertising's think tank based at the Advertising Association, to conduct extensive qualitative and quantitative research to explore public perceptions of advertising and identify which factors affect it the most. Credos has tracking data on public views of advertising spanning almost 60 years and has been conducting regular public and MP opinion surveys for the past 8 years.

The working group then developed an industry action plan to address the issues emerging from the research. It was agreed that the action plan needs to be meaningful, developed in phases and long-term. The actions proposed in this paper represent the initial phase.

Feeling "bombarded" by advertising is the biggest of the public's concerns. The industry must tackle this first and foremost and this paper sets out in Actions 1 and 2 some plans to address it.

We also seek, through Action 3, to ensure the ASA is more widely known as "best in class". Research shows that people who perceive the industry as responsible, transparent and open are more likely to be favourable towards advertising, and the ASA epitomises the industry's commitment to responsible advertising standards.

Action 4 sets out the action we will take to create wider awareness about the importance of data privacy. While the benefits of personalisation are recognised, people can be unsettled by advertisements that appear to know about them or what they have been doing online, feeding into the sense of intrusiveness.

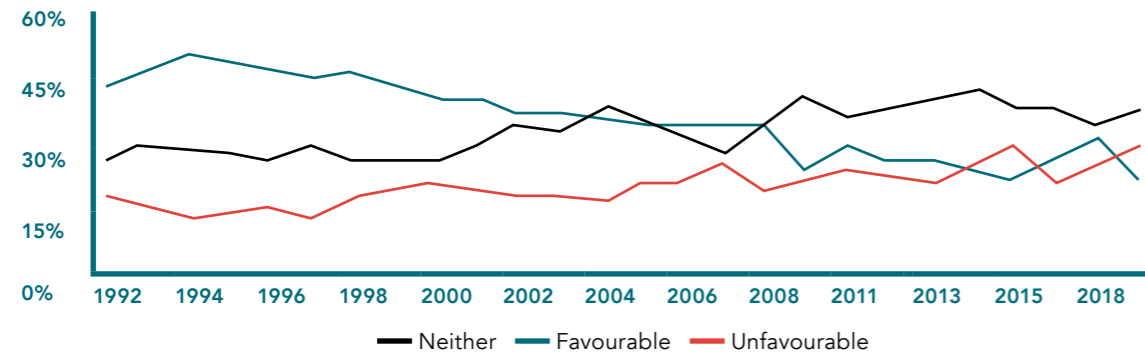
Through Action 5, we will demonstrate how advertising can drive social change and be a positive force in society. We have seen how other industries such as the banking sector have restored public trust by improving their services and communicating to people how these deliver value to the public and we hope to do the same.

Some people are concerned about sensitive product categories like gambling, payday loans, HFSS and alcohol advertising which are already subject to regulatory scrutiny. We do not address them here, as the industry and ASA are already involved in dialogue with the Government.

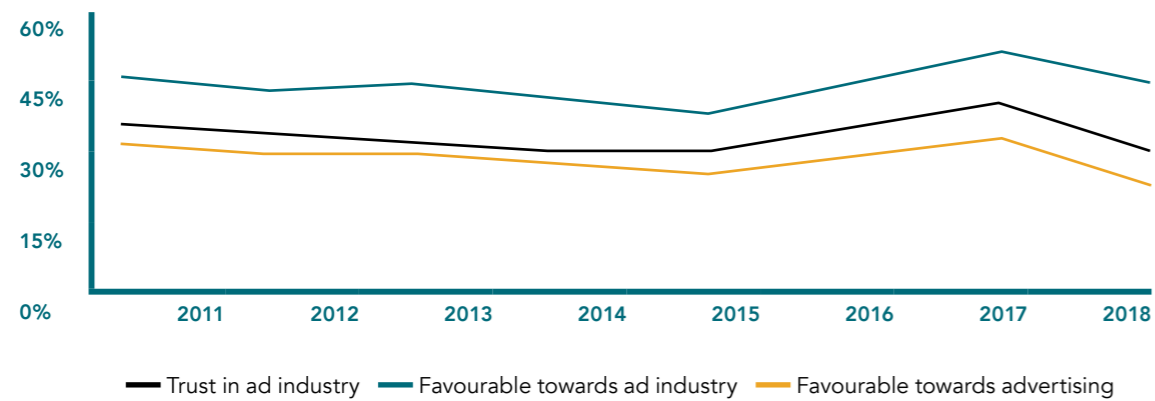


# WHAT OUR TRACKING RESEARCH SHOWS

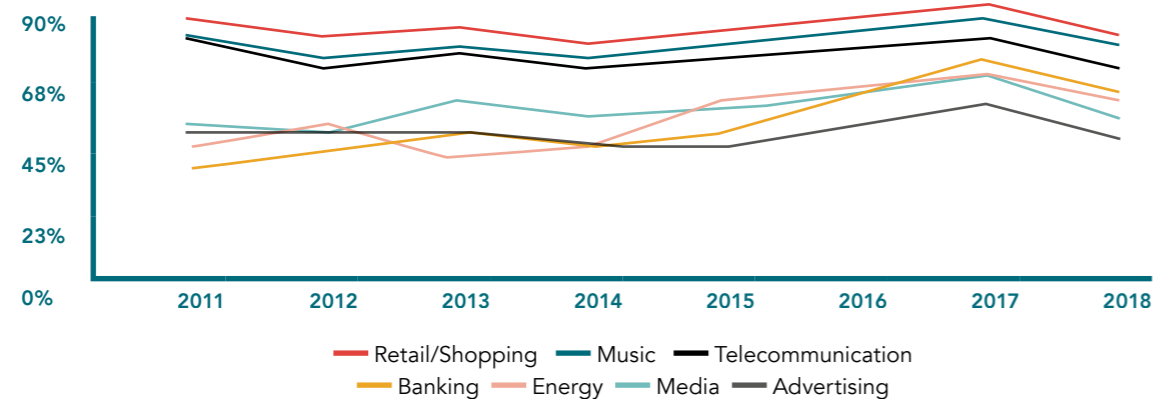
AA tracking research shows that **public favourability towards advertising has long been in decline**, from around **50%** favourable in the early '90s to just **25%** in 2018.



The tracking research also shows that **favourability and trust are highly correlated**, rising and falling together.



After a period of sustained decline, **public trust in advertising increased between 2015 and 2017**. Although public trust in advertising has since fallen, other industries, including energy and banking, saw more rapid increases in trust over this period. As a result, advertising is now in last place out of all industries measured, down from third from last in 2011.



# ABOUT THE TRUST RESEARCH PROGRAMME

The research, conducted by independent research agency, Craft, had two stages:

- The first used a mix of qualitative methods to gather a wealth of unfiltered data on people's interactions with and attitudes towards advertising
- The second quantified what was discovered in the first stage and identified which issues affect public perceptions of advertising the most.

## STAGE 1: METHOD

60 people selected for 10 days of **online self-completion tasks**

12 people selected for **filmed ethnography and depth interviews**

6 people selected for self-completion tasks using **camera glasses**

6 people selected for self-completion tasks using **screen capture software**

## STAGE 2: METHOD

A **survey** of a nationally representative sample of **2,021**

**Data** weighted to ONS figures by **age and gender**

**Factor analysis** used to identify six overarching factors

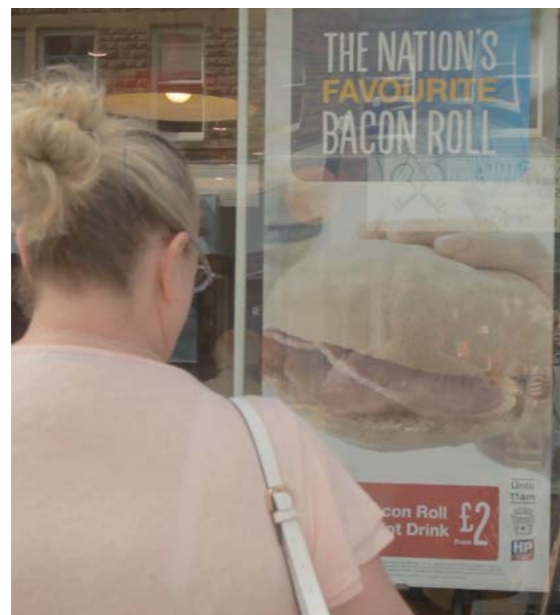
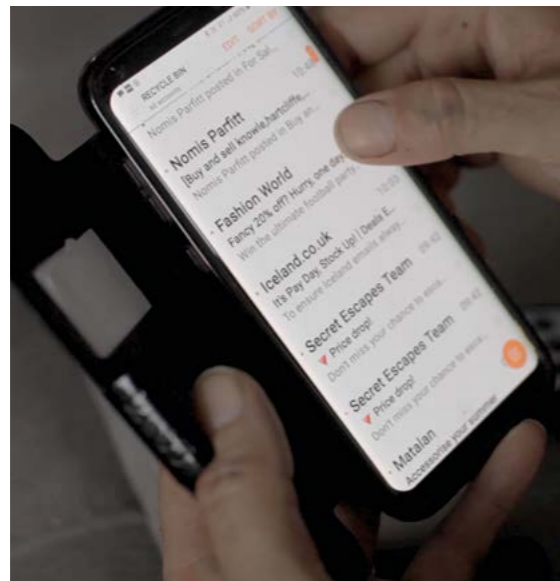
**Regression analysis** used to identify the impact of those factors on overall favourability towards, and trust in, advertising



## KEY HEADLINES

In addition to identifying a range of issues affecting public perceptions of advertising, the research found that:

- Strong opinions on advertising are rare, but it is generally seen as a good thing with downsides, rather than a bad thing with upsides
- People define advertising in broader terms than the industry does, with 97% of people considering many other forms of marketing and promotion to be 'advertising'
- It is easier to be annoyed by advertising than concerned by it, with 42% saying they often come across advertising than annoys them, but only 13% saying they often come across advertising that genuinely concerns them.



## FINDINGS IN DETAIL

The research identified six overarching factors affecting public perceptions of advertising. These factors are ranked in terms of their overall impact on public perceptions below, with the numbers indicating the relative importance of each factor in determining someone's level of favourability towards or trust in advertising<sup>2</sup>.

### ADVERTISING'S BENEFITS importance score for favourability: 51/100

In aggregate, perceptions of advertising's benefits were found to have by far the most significant influence on both favourability towards, and trust in, advertising. This factor includes everything people said they like about advertising, such as its provision of useful information on products and services, funding media and internet services and its ability to entertain and educate. Some participants also praised advertising for accurately representing diversity, while one participant said he owed his father's life to an NHS public health campaign.

### BOMBARDMENT importance score for favourability: 24/100

The next most important factor in determining public favourability towards and trust in advertising is bombardment. This factor has four components – volume, repetition, obtrusiveness<sup>3</sup> and irrelevance. All of these issues were found to be bad rather than 'troubling' by the qualitative stage, with people being annoyed rather than concerned them. Despite this, they are significant and negative issues, closely related and affecting most mediums and formats.

### SENSITIVE SECTORS AND VULNERABLE GROUPS importance score for favourability: 12/100

Most participants had at least one type of advertising they were concerned about, and this concern was most pronounced when it was felt in relation to vulnerable groups. This factor includes gambling advertising, payday loan advertising, and advertising which is felt to 'unfairly' target vulnerable groups, including children, the elderly, the financially insecure and people with addictions.

### UNHEALTHY ADVERTISING importance score for favourability: 5/100

Reasons for being concerned about a type of advertising were often highly personal, with participants citing friends and loved ones who had gambling or drinking problems or were financially insecure. This means that concern about one sector does not always translate into concern about another. As a result, advertising for HFSS food and drink products and alcohol advertising formed their own factor. Concern about these sectors has a lesser impact on overall favourability towards advertising than those included in the previous factor.

<sup>2</sup>Binary logistic regression used to derive importance scores.

<sup>3</sup>Distinct from intrusiveness, obtrusiveness refers to advertising which is felt to unfairly delay or disrupt the user experience.

**INTRUSIVENESS**

importance score for favourability:  
5/100

Distinct from obtrusiveness, intrusiveness refers to advertising which is felt to infringe upon people's privacy. The research identified two key ways in which advertising can do this – appearing in places people consider to be private or using personal data in a way which makes people feel uncomfortable.

**SUSPICIOUS TECHNIQUES**

importance score for favourability:  
3/100

This final factor includes a range of issues which made participants feel suspicious or as if they were being manipulated. These included relatively simple things such as adverts which make claims that are felt too good to be true, or the use of T&Cs to 'hide' important information which is felt to conflict with the overall message of the advert.

It also included more complex issues, such as the increasing difficulty of identifying what is and isn't an advert in a complex and internet-powered media environment – something which was raised by participants in the context of paid endorsements and native content. This factor also includes concerns around the use of airbrushing and the promotion of unrealistic body image ideals.

**CONCLUSION**

The findings suggest that, if the advertising industry is to reverse the decline in favourability and trust, promoting and enhancing advertising's positives is just as important as addressing its negatives. This does not mean the negatives should be neglected and arguably they should be addressed before extolling the benefits of advertising. There are a range of issues which the advertising industry needs to work hard to address. Nonetheless, the findings show that advertising does bring value to people's lives, and the industry needs to do everything it can to maximise that value.

# ACTION 1

## WE WILL REDUCE ADVERTISING BOMBARDMENT



**Where we are at:**

Bombardment is the biggest issue of all the public concerns about advertising and accounts for half of the “negatives” in our consumer research. Within that broad umbrella of “bombardment”, 45% of people are annoyed by repetition and obtrusiveness (getting in the way of their media experience), and 35% are irritated about volume. 38% criticise ads for not being relevant, with others being concerned that they are being ‘followed around the internet’. Bombardment is a particularly prominent issue for certain sectors and types of advertising.

We need to tackle bombardment as the single biggest priority, but it is a challenging issue and a cross-media one. The actions set out here are just the start of an industry-wide conversation. We recognise there are market challenges. Many big brands in ISBA’s membership will be the standard setters and want to appeal to the consumer with quality creative. However, some companies rely on serving the advertisement frequently and therefore “bombarding” people to generate purchases.

This initiative is going to require widespread industry engagement in a rolling programme that builds awareness over time and we recognise that we are not going to achieve change in public perceptions straight away. A system change takes time and this is the first step.

**What we will do in Phase 1:**

**Tackling “obtrusiveness”:  
We will take steps to improve the user experience online, helping to build sign-up to the IAB UK Gold Standard.**

This binds signatories to conform to the standards set by the global Coalition for Better Ads and to reduce annoying and intrusive online ads such as pop-ups on desktop and mobile, flashing animated ads or auto-playing video ads with sound<sup>4</sup>. This is the most relevant part of the Gold Standard for the purpose of addressing consumer concerns about obtrusive advertisements online, though it has also been designed to reduce ad fraud and to improve brand safety specifically for the UK market.

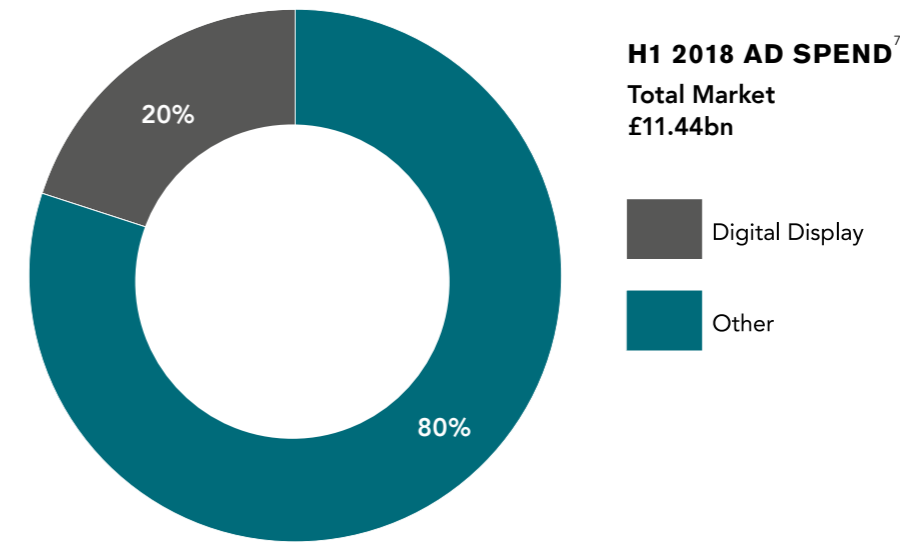
There are 113 digital advertising companies currently participating in the UK Gold Standard<sup>5</sup>. 67 of these companies have achieved certification, including global tech platforms such as Google<sup>6</sup>, Facebook and Amazon. This is already a mark of success, as is the fact that, for other certified media owners and publishers, some are forgoing short-term revenue to build a better digital advertising for the long term. There are already some constructive steps being taken by companies to improve the user advertising experience, for example, Google’s mute ad function.

It is our ambition to get all relevant IAB UK members to sign-up to achieve certification by the end of 2020, recognising that around a third of the current membership base would be exempt. Achieving that would mean that around 20% of total UK ad spend, or 48% of total digital ad spend, would be Gold Standard-proof. This includes display but not search, on the basis that display is “push” and therefore where there is the most risk of obtrusiveness.

<sup>4</sup>These are three of the twelve formats that fall below the level of consumer acceptability and that the Coalition / Gold Standard have banned. [www.betterads.org/standards/](http://www.betterads.org/standards/)

<sup>5</sup>The IAB UK Gold Standard is for companies operating within display advertising on desktop and mobile web. This includes all display-based media, excluding search, accounting for 20% of the total UK ad market and 48% of all digital media. There are no immediate plans to include search, mainly because it is pull rather than push (like display) and, unlike display, is already standardised.

<sup>6</sup>Google’s Chrome prevents ad formats not complying with Coalition for Better Ads standards being displayed.



**To achieve this:**

- The IPA will work with IAB UK to organise road-shows to deepen engagement with agencies including consultation with senior trading directors and an education/training programme aimed at planners and buyers
- ISBA will work with IAB UK to get public buy-in and endorsement from senior, influential advertisers.

In 2019, the IAB will start to measure success and to benchmark it. IAB is researching industry awareness of the Gold Standard as well as the proportion of digital ad spend that goes through Gold Standard-certified companies.

This will show the commercial advantage that media owners, platforms and publishers get from being certified, as part of the wider objective to increase industry support to all relevant companies that operate in digital advertising.

**What does success look like?**

A cleaner online advertising experience for users and signs of increasing consumer approval, benchmarked through consumer research.

From the industry’s point of view, this means moving towards 100% market conformity to the IAB UK Gold Standard.

<sup>7</sup>Digital display includes broadcast VOD and digital news / magazine brands. Source: IAB / PWC Digital Adspend H1 2018 & WARC

# ACTION 2

## WE WILL REDUCE EXCESSIVE ADVERTISING FREQUENCY AND RE-TARGETING



### Where we are at:

People currently feel annoyed by excessive frequency of advertisements and they are disconcerted by ads that follow them around, even after they have bought the product.

Every 15 minutes an advert comes on, and that could be the same advert that's come on before, and that can be annoying, watching the same thing again and again. So, I record that episode and fast forward through the adverts, it only takes ten seconds.

Female, 36, Bradford

I find it annoying when I search for something for example on Amazon and then every time I go on my phone I get adverts for it!

Female, 45, Midlands

Advertising on Facebook, Google etc can be very useful if you're looking for information and ideas but can become a bit annoying if you've moved onto another topic but [are] still being shown links for washing machines, for example.

Female, 70, Croydon





### What we will do:

#### 1. Develop best practice guidelines to reduce excessive advertising frequency

ISBA will bring senior marketing practitioners together to develop best practice guidelines in 2019, aimed at reducing excessive advertising frequency, thus reducing the sense of “bombardment” that the public feels. This cuts across all advertising channels and the scope would therefore include both offline and online media.

- The working group will identify the ways in which advertisers can more tightly measure and control for excessive frequency, including instances where re-targeting occurs across multiple platforms. It is possible that a new set of KPIs will be created
- The aspiration is to articulate how advertisers can exercise a new lever for improved effectiveness and efficiency. By this we mean having suitable controls for frequency to sit alongside their existing safety, transparency and other controls.

They will also see the commercial advantage in reducing excessive frequency as this is a waste of advertisers’ money.



#### 2. Tackle re-targeting

We will tackle the worst kinds of re-targeting and address people’s concerns about the use of their data for advertising and marketing purposes by:

- Making sure industry is more “joined up” about best practice, including principles laid down in industry codes and acknowledged by the ICO, including the DMA and MRS Codes
- Supporting more industry action in the UK and across Europe to give people control and transparency over how their data is used for advertising targeting, in line with the new data protection laws<sup>9</sup>.

#### What does success look like?

A more engaging advertising experience for users, aiming for a better balance in the value exchange with signs of increasing consumer approval, benchmarked through consumer research.

From the industry’s point of view, this means:

- Wider support for ISBA’s development of best practice guidelines on excessive frequency
- Renewed industry dialogue on best practice on the use of data.

<sup>9</sup>The European Advertising Standards Alliance (EASA) has a Best Practice Framework on Online Behavioural Advertising. This has been developed with industry partners through the European Digital Advertising Alliance (EDAA). Discussions are currently taking place to update the OBA framework to take into account the new consent requirements of GDPR.

# ACTION 3

**WE WILL ENSURE THE  
ASA IS “BEST IN CLASS”**



### Where we are at:

A high volume of media coverage and the ASA's advertising campaign in the years 2016-2018 have driven up ASA awareness to record levels, with 57-60% for prompted awareness and 25-26% for unprompted awareness<sup>9</sup>.

Credos tracking data shows that public favourability towards and trust in advertising are both strongly correlated with perceptions of how responsible the industry is.

We have long regarded self-regulation as a vital part of company and industry responsibility. It is important that the public has high awareness of the ASA as a "one stop shop" which can uphold standards in ads, regardless of the medium.

However, the ASA system is under strain.

Around half its workload is now focused on regulating companies' own advertising claims on their own websites and social media spaces<sup>10</sup>. Though it is dealing with a high volume of online complaints, many industry stakeholders see it as an analogue regulator in a digital world. To tackle this, the ASA recently launched its new five-year strategy<sup>11</sup> which puts a strong focus on being more effective as regards online advertising.

It has stated publicly that delivery of the strategy depends on the commitment of the industry to support it and to explore opportunities to engage in and improve their advertising compliance processes, for example, through ensuring that learnings from ASA rulings are applied automatically to analogous ads across their platforms.

### What we will do:

We will deliver strategic and joined-up industry support for the ASA. The industry backs the ASA's new strategy and aims to take all necessary actions to deliver on its objectives.

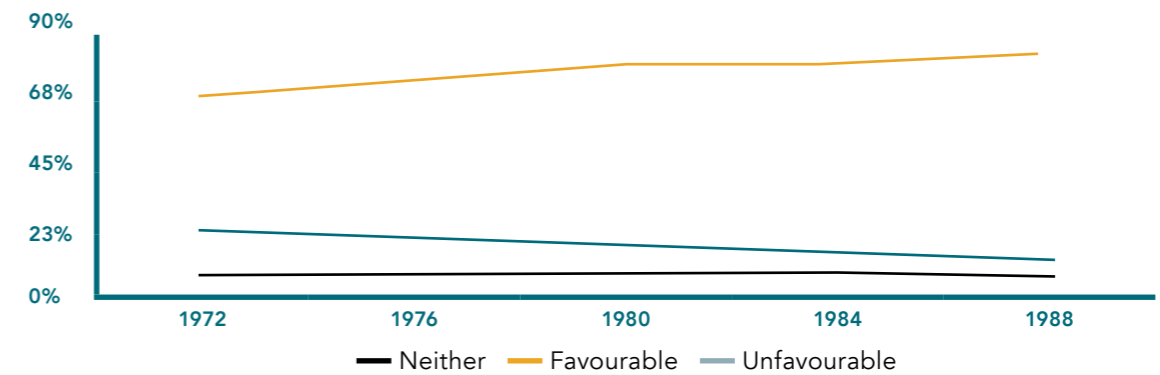
We will also encourage the industry to give more strategic support to the ASA's advertising campaign to increase public awareness about its role as the advertising regulator, there to protect high standards in the public interest.

Research has shown that people who perceive the advertising industry to be effective at ensuring it is responsible, transparent and open are more likely to say they are favourable towards advertising in general. The public's perceptions are also affected by the benefits they perceive advertising to bring to consumers.

In 2017/18 a new, more direct style of ASA advertising was introduced, seen here. Media exposure is driven by donated time and space from media owners and is estimated to have had a value of £3.5m in 2018.

The current campaign is likely to have less reach and spend behind it than the ASA's first advertising campaigns

Public favourability towards advertising in general



in the early 1970s. There may or may not be a correlation with the marked improvement of public perceptions towards advertising, but we believe it is worth exploring. The 1970s was the only time in the sixty years of Advertising Association tracking data that showed an increase in public favourability, and we may be able to learn from that, although other factors may have been a far greater influence, including radical economic reform during the period.

In 2019, we will:

1. Ensure industry support is forthcoming as the ASA implements its new 5-year plan to have 'More Impact Online'. The ASA will report regularly on progress in delivering its strategy.

2. Invest in an upweighted advertising campaign about the ASA in one area of the UK, for example, Scotland, to test the impact on levels of public awareness and favourability towards advertising.

### What does success look like?

1. Through the key milestones, we will be able to measure and record the industry's success in supporting the ASA in delivering its new strategy. The ASA will know it is getting it right in improvements in appropriate scores on its ongoing stakeholder surveys.

2. Through the upweighted campaign in one area of the UK, we will test the effect that a significantly higher spend level and more consistent, year-round presence for ASA advertising could have on the top drivers of trust and favourability in the industry. The impact of this campaign on public trust will be tracked before, during and after the campaign.

<sup>9</sup>ASA consumer research  
<sup>10</sup>In 2017, complaints about online ads (10,932) overtook complaints about TV ads (9,466), with double the number of cases (9,951 v 4,666). That puts online cases (ads complained about) at 2:1 compared to broadcast cases  
<sup>11</sup>ASA's strategy

You should  
be able  
to trust the  
ads you see.

If an ad is wrong,  
the ASA is here to put it right.

ASA.org.uk



# ACTION 4

## WE WILL ENSURE THAT DATA PRIVACY MATTERS



### Where we are at:

At the Advertising Association's LEAD 2019 summit on 30 January, there was support for more action to be taken by the industry to help people look after their data privacy.

Millions of consumers freely and knowingly exchange their data for services they want and enjoy. Some have concern about the ultimate use of that data, while others may not be fully aware of how it is used to support the delivery of advertisements that fund the services.

People's data privacy is important, even though not everybody takes steps to protect it. Sometimes people say it is important, but then do not take the action required. DMA tracking shows that around 50% of the population can be described as 'pragmatists' in the use of their data, with 25% 'fundamentalists' wanting no third-party use and 25% 'unconcerned' about the use of their data.

Much has already been done by trade bodies to create best practice and issue guidance, for example:

- The DMA and MRS have Codes of Practice for their members which set a high bar of responsibility, based on the principle of treating customers and consumers responsibly in terms of their data. These trade bodies have focused significant effort on educating their industry sectors on the importance of respecting their customers and hold regular seminars, conferences and training sessions, working very closely with the ICO
- ISBA has published a series of member-only Guidance Notes for advertisers, designed to provide companies with a highly-accessible overview of the key principles of the law in a marketing context. The Guides will be updated as industry best practice emerges.

In recent years, the DMA has led a workstream at the Advertising Association's Council, leading to the adoption of some voluntary principles on good data practice. These draw upon the principles already established in Codes such as the DMA's and MRS's and are based on a "common sense" approach with some case examples. However, they are not widely known about and not enforced.

### What we will do:

#### 1. Widen industry awareness of good data practice

We will develop a whole-industry communications strategy to encourage good practice.

We will map industry conferences to have key staging posts to encourage wider industry awareness.

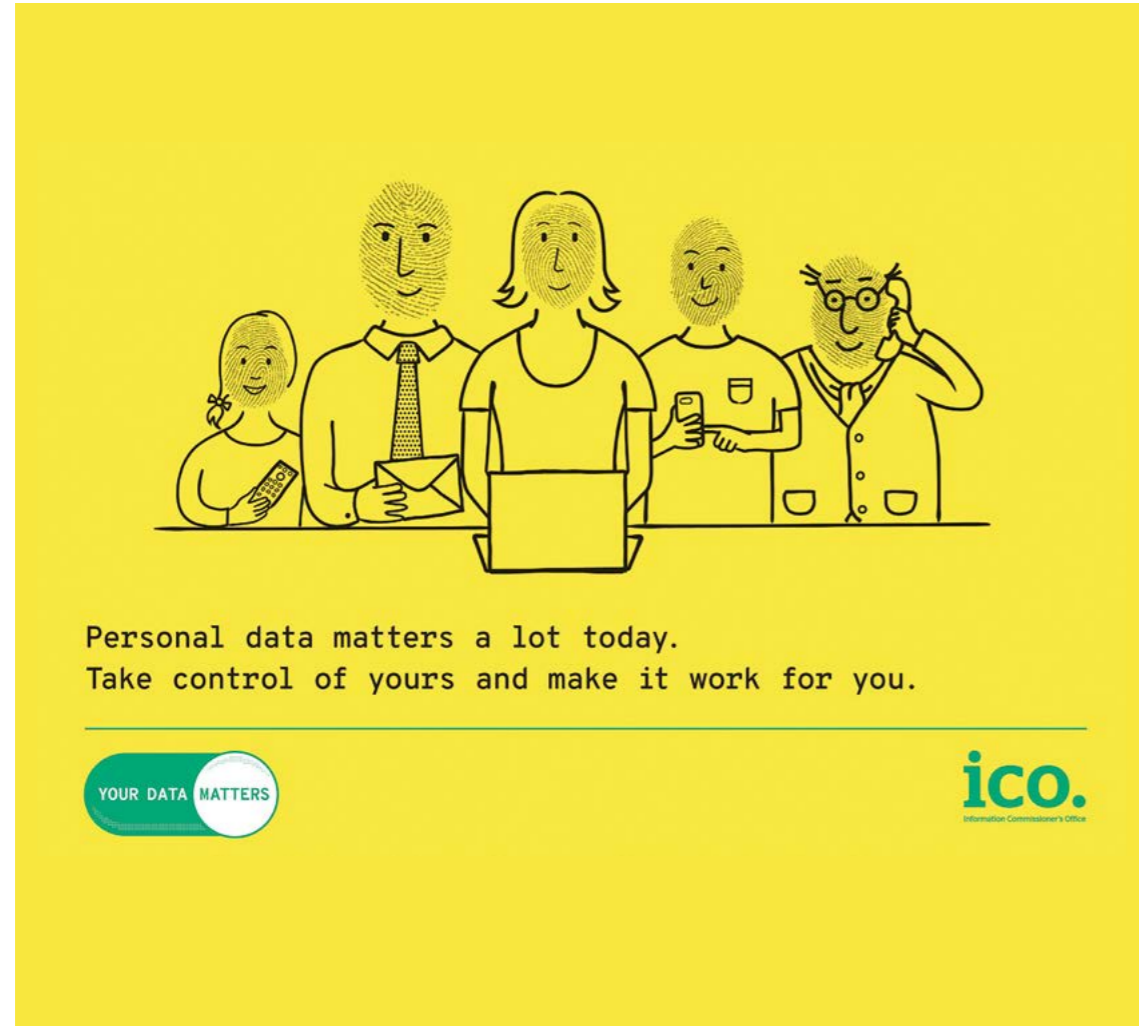
We will aim to ensure high standards on data and e-privacy for consumers and continuing cross-border trade in data. We will do so by working closely with Government to ensure "Adequacy status" for the UK after Brexit.

#### 2. Support the ICO's campaign 'Your Data Matters'

We will discuss with the ICO how we can help them to publicise the message that people's data privacy matters.

A new data protection law (GDPR/Data Protection Act 2018) was introduced last year updating and strengthening rules safeguarding people's data privacy, and the ICO has run a consumer campaign 'Your Data Matters', albeit at a very low level.

There have been very limited overarching communications about GDPR, other than the compliance-related emails around its implementation. The ICO is responsible for GDPR communications.



There is a commitment from the ICO to collaborate with the advertising industry to improve this.

The DMA and the AA will explore with the ICO how the industry might help support the ICO's campaign *Your Data Matters* and how this can be scaled up in a test and its impact on consumer trust assessed.

The ICO team are keen to collaborate further on this project, as they have only limited funds to drive awareness of data regulation.

The timings and scope of this project is to be determined with the ICO, but our objective is to test in H2 2019, in a different region/nation to the ASA upweighted campaign.

**What does success look like?**

We will work to develop a methodology to measure industry awareness of data privacy so as to help inform future action.

We will encourage the spirit, not just the letter, of the data protection law to be observed by the industry.

We will also work with the ICO's office to test how any upweighted ICO advertising campaign, run with industry support, affects public attitudes on data privacy.



**ACTION 5**  
**WE WILL SHOW THAT ADVERTISING CAN DRIVE SOCIAL CHANGE**

**Where we are at:**

People do not know all the ways in which advertising can drive social change, improving the lives of million of people.

The findings from the most recent public opinion tracking commissioned by Credos in December saw reputations decline across all industries measured. This suggests that public perceptions of advertising are, at least to some extent, at the mercy of external factors, such as the overall lack of economic confidence and sense of political uncertainty around Brexit.

Advertising has slipped to last place among the industries measured, something which used not to be the case; in recent years, banking and energy have both made improvements to their public image while advertising has fallen behind.

Looking at the success of the banking sector in restoring public trust, we see the impact of substantive change in improving services and putting customers first, allied with extensive communications of these changes.

We recognise there is much to learn from these success stories and that there can be real value in communicating how an industry works for people.

**What we will do:**

We will widen industry support for key social change campaigns.

**1. ‘Eat Them to Defeat Them’ – campaign to increase vegetable consumption among children**

We will gather wider industry support behind ITV’s new advertising campaign, *Eat Them to Defeat Them*, launched in January with the support of media and retail partners. Launched as part of the broadcaster’s Feel Good initiative, ITV is providing media space on the ITV channels, including primetime entertainment family shows, to engage the nation with this new advertisement. The campaign is being funded by a unique alliance of the UK’s major food

retailers including Tesco’s, Iceland, Lidl, Marks & Spencer, Morrisons, Sainsbury’s and Waitrose.

This is an important campaign to build healthier lifestyles and is launched in support of Veg Power. Building wider industry awareness and support for ITV’s initiative would be a significant step to take as part of industry responsibility in this area.

**2. Increasing diversity in advertising**

We will champion more diversity in advertising content, by forming the UK Chapter of the Unstereotype Alliance and encouraging companies to support it. This will be the first national programme in Europe, and will be a vehicle to encourage companies to give their support to this movement for change.

The Unstereotype Alliance is a UN Women’s platform that uses advertising as a force for good to drive positive change. It seeks to eradicate harmful gender-based stereotypes. The Alliance is focused on empowering women in all their diversity (race, class, age, ability,



ethnicity, religion, sexuality, language, education, etc.) and creating a gender-equal world.

The industry has already recognised changing attitudes through a revision of the CAP and BCAP Codes last year to prevent harmful stereotyping. In recent years, companies like Channel 4 and Mars have run highly-successful and ground-breaking campaigns to counter stereotypes on disability.

Eliminating stereotypes can drive greater commercial success. Unilever has been testing its ads through Kantar Millward Brown and can show that progressive advertising creates 25% more branded impact and is also 16% more relevant, 21% more credible and can drive purchase intent by 18%.

**3. Supporting Media Smart, the industry’s media literacy programme for schools**

Media Smart is the advertising industry’s media literacy programme with a mission to ensure all young people (7-14 year olds) are able confidently to navigate the media, including being able to identify, interpret and critically evaluate all forms of advertising. It provides free teaching resources and parent guides – over the last four years these have been downloaded 45,000 times across the UK.

This not-for-profit organisation, housed at the Advertising Association, is currently supported by 22 companies/associations across the industry including the ASA, Google, Facebook, Sky, Viacom, Channel 4, IAB, ISBA, the IPA and ITV.

Recently it has tackled important subjects like social/online media and body image.

2019 will see the programme focus on key areas of public concern, including:

- Influencer Marketing - to improve young people’s knowledge about and trust in such online marketing communications
- It will also be partnering with ITV to extend the *Eat Them to Defeat Them* healthy eating campaign promoting the idea of eating vegetables to schools and youth organisations.

Research with its teacher database has highlighted that:

- 84% feel they are better equipped to teach about advertising and the media having used the classroom materials
- 81% feel more confident that their students are better at interpreting advertising and the media having used the classroom materials.

**4. Showcasing how advertising can drive positive social change**

We will produce a new Advertising Pays report to showcase advertising that can drive social change. This will quantify the value and impact of industry-led and funded campaigns that contribute to society.

There are many more examples of advertising driving social change across many different media channels and tech platforms, too numerous to mention here. Collectively, we want to be able to explain what contribution this makes to the UK, beyond its well-established economic value.

**What does success look like?**

A greater public awareness and recognition of how advertising can change society and social attitudes.

Specifically, through:

- Galvanising more industry support for the *Eat Them to Defeat Them* campaign
- Encouraging companies in the UK to support UN Women’s Unstereotype Alliance through a new UK Chapter
- Increased membership (and funding) for Media Smart and raised awareness among teachers and parents of its educational resources
- The new Advertising Pays report on how advertising can drive social change.

## THE 'TRUST IN ADVERTISING' CHECKLIST

This is a checklist of 'trust actions' that companies can take, in line with this action plan.

Widespread support for these actions and their adoption in day-to-day practice in every part of the advertising industry will be key to success.

- Sign up** and get certified in accordance with the IAB UK Gold Standard to improve users' online experience with a better advertising environment.
- Support ISBA's development of Best Practice guidance** to tackle excessive frequency and retargeting.
- Support the new campaigns** to build trust and awareness in effective regulation by the ASA and ICO of advertising content and data privacy.
- Be responsible and respectful about use of people's data**, taking note not just of the law but of the ethical standards of DMA and MRS industry codes as well as the industry guidance developed by ISBA and other trade bodies.
- Support key campaigns for social good**, from ITV's *Eat them to Defeat Them*, in concert with Veg Power, to the industry's media literacy programme, Media Smart.
- Support the new UK chapter of the Unstereotype Alliance.**

## TRACKING SUCCESS

### OVER THE NEXT 1-3 YEARS:

We will track support for the initiatives including in the following ways:

- The number of companies signed up to the IAB UK Gold Standard
- The impact of ISBA's new Best Practice Guidelines on excessive advertising frequency
- The impact and effect on public trust of the ASA and ICO campaign
- Measurement and reporting of the impact of social change advertising campaigns, such as *Eat Them to Defeat Them*, in changing attitudes and behaviours in the UK population
- More industry, as well as Government, support for Media Smart and its media literacy resources on a variety of advertising-related topics, to enhance children's and teenagers' understanding of advertising in all its forms
- The number of companies signed up to the new UK chapter of the Unstereotype Alliance
- Annual measurement of impact on consumer viewpoints to track changes in public trust and favourability towards advertising, relative to other industries.

### LONGER-TERM, 5 YEARS PLUS:

We will track:

- Levels of public trust and favourability in the advertising industry (AA tracking)
- Awareness of the ASA (ASA tracking)
- Awareness of data privacy (ICO/AA/DMA tracking)
- People saying they feel bombarded/offended by advertising
- People saying they come across advertising they consider to be good for society
- People saying they see advertising as representing a diverse society
- Number of people downloading ad blockers than previously
- Public attitudes towards political advertising.

# ALL OF US HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY

by Stephen Woodford, AA Chief Executive

**The time for action is now, whilst advertising is still seen as a “good thing with downsides”, rather than “a bad thing with upsides”.**

We have witnessed more than 20 years of decline in public trust and favourability towards advertising. We have fallen, relative to other industries, to the bottom of the pack.

Our quantitative research shows this situation is finely balanced and the scales could easily tip against us. This would undermine confidence in the industry and in our ability to self-regulate. It could ultimately limit the contribution advertising makes now and in the future to the UK's success as an economy and as a thriving and democratic society. The Advertising Association's Trust Group has made a start over the last year by supporting the in-depth consumer research by Credos, analysing its conclusions, and developing some plans for action to start tackling the issue. We believe these actions are just the beginning of a concerted effort to drive system change in our industry and safeguard the long-term future health of our industry.

Looking ahead, we face two challenges.

The first is to ask what more can we do as an industry. As we implement the actions in this paper, the Trust group will begin work on Phase 2 of this industry programme.

We will be looking at other areas of debate, such as the regulation (or lack of regulation) of political advertising, where research shows the public do have concerns about misleading claims.

We will be discussing further how the industry can help and support the ASA in the future, including how it can be resourced to deliver effectively on its new strategy.

All this brings me to our second challenge. A true system change requires all players in our industry to recognise the importance of what we need to do and to get involved. Put simply, we, as the Advertising Association and the Trust Group, need industry support – across all areas of the advertising business. We welcome everyone who has an interest in making sure advertising continues to be the business we have loved working in for so many years to get behind this initiative.

Join us. Talk about it, support it and, together, let's make this much-needed system change happen.





To be part of the drive to address the decline in public trust of advertising, please contact us at the Advertising Association on **0207 340 1100** and ask to speak to a member of the Trust team or drop us an email at [aa@adassoc.org.uk](mailto:aa@adassoc.org.uk)



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