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## **POV:** THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF APPLE IOS 9'S AD BLOCKERS

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# THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF APPLE IOS 9'S AD BLOCKERS

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Apple released its iOS 9 update for mobile devices on September 16, 2015. For the first time, Apple included a feature that gives users the ability to download apps that work within Apple's browser, Safari, to block any and all digital ads on the mobile web. Blocked ads can include any banner, video or interstitial viewed through the Safari mobile browser.



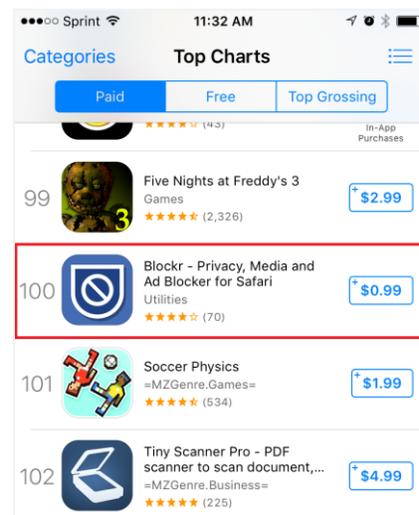
Following the iOS 9 release, ad blockers quickly rose to the top 100 of the App Store's paid list, which grabbed the attention of advertisers and publishers. With [55%](#) of U.S. mobile browser usage occurring via Safari, the implications could be significant.

This POV explores the effects of these ad blockers on digital media campaigns in the pharmaceutical vertical and ways to overcome the potential reduction of available inventory in the mobile environment.

## WHAT'S CHANGING AND WHY

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Apple has been collaborating with developers to allow ad-blocking apps to work within Safari. Apple's rationale is that banner ads slow down the browsing experience and eat up allotted monthly cellular data. They also believe users should not be bombarded with unwanted ads while using their devices. However, some speculate the move was financially driven. By taking away a publisher's ability to monetize their site through the mobile web, publishers will need to shift their advertising stream to an app version of their site. This allows Apple to decrease mobile web traffic, a low source of profit for them, and increase usage of the highly profitable App Store.



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Prior to this iOS update, Safari offered no control over how or where banner ads were displayed. For many, this caused slower web page load times, decreased battery life and incurred unwanted data usage. Now, with ad blockers, users claim they experience a more fluid web-browsing environment and see increases in their battery life and availability of cellular data.

The level of control users have over blocking ads varies from app to app. Some default to blocking all ads across the mobile web, while others allow users to create a “whitelist” of acceptable ads. Ad blockers can be downloaded directly from the App Store in free or paid versions, with the free versions providing very little control over what is blocked.

## IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Intouch is concerned that this change by Apple will impact the availability of the mobile web advertising inventory. While in-app inventory continues to grow, the contextual value of that as it relates to pharma isn't able to fully supplement the loss of mobile web as an avenue for advertising.

**This does not necessarily have a huge effect on every media campaign out there, which is why an evaluation is needed before any major decisions or recommendations are made.**

This does not necessarily have a huge effect on every media campaign out there, which is why an evaluation is needed before any major decisions or recommendations are made. A media agency should be able to quantify the amount of mobile impressions being served on Safari. Once this is determined, the team can provide a recommendation. Following are solutions to be considered:

- + **Evaluate mobile campaign reach within reporting** — Red flags will show when the pacing of impressions is evaluated. If impression pacing appears to substantially decrease, media agencies should work with publishers to understand what percentage of mobile web inventory is pushed toward Safari and how it can be adjusted and allocated to other inventory sources.



- + **Focus on user experience within media campaigns** — Disruptive ads are not always the solution, so make sure to leverage a mix of tactics that reach the right target audience with the appropriate vehicle. Consider increasing e-newsletters, paid search and certain native advertising presences. There are specific in-feed tactics that will avoid the ad blockers and also do a great job of engaging the target audience.
- + **Decrease mobile web impressions and reallocate to in-app media impressions** — Ad blockers do not impact in-app advertising, so these mobile tactics should be investigated to the fullest. In-app inventory is not off-limits for pharmaceutical advertisers but can be more limited than it is for other industries. Therefore, this may not be the sole solution for all campaigns.
- + **Make sure strong content strategies are in place** — This includes email, social and search and should be followed by an investigation into channel options to support those strategies.

## CONCLUSION

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Taking into account Apple's ability to greatly impact market trends, we can expect ad-blocking apps to become standard across all mobile platforms (i.e., Android, iOS and Windows). Fortunately, this technology and its uses are still evolving. There is time for agencies and pharmaceutical companies to play a role in how these apps are used and integrated into mobile websites.

With that in mind, it is important for pharma to continue to embrace email, social and in-app advertising options for their brands, while continuing to grow their mobile web presence. As ad blockers continue to evolve, marketers will need to be ever-mindful of how they plan, design and execute digital advertising to ensure it is less intrusive and more relevant to the user's experience.

It is clear that the mobile industry is shifting. Adopting these strategies will guarantee a more sustainable marketing plan for pharmaceutical companies and allow them to adapt to the changes without losing mobile presence or impact.

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