

Oscars were missed opportunity for brands using outdated ad keyword blocklists

Article

The news: Advertisers inadvertently blocked 56% of **Oscars**-related content because of keyword blocklists despite most of the content being brand-safe, per Mantis. This led many

brands to lose key opportunities to advertise alongside culturally relevant content.

Films like “Nickel Boys,” a Jim-Crow era drama, and “Emilia Pérez,” which follows a former drug cartel boss, were the subjects of some of the blocked content. Traditional blocklists are often tailored to avoid words that may appear in entertainment-related content like film reviews, including words like “violence” and “drugs.”

Zooming out: Concerns over brand safety are nothing new, but the limitations of traditional blocklists raise questions about how to maintain brand safety without missing crucial opportunities. [Per our conversation](#) with co-founder and CEO of Mobian **Jonah Goodhart**, brand safety is not “out of vogue,” but **“the current incarnation of brand safety is broken.”**

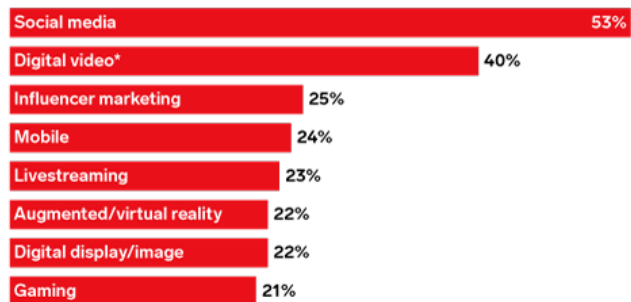
- Oscars-related content isn’t the only casualty—sports and gaming are also heavily impacted. Simply blocking words like “shot” or “shoot” greatly reduces access to sports content and only 43% of content related to **Super Bowl LIX** and the **2024 Paris Olympics** were classified as safe, per Mantis.
- Brands are increasingly worried about how and where their content appears, with [53% of marketers](#) believing that social media presents the biggest challenge for brand safety.
- That sentiment may grow as [Meta removes fact checking](#) and doesn’t give advertisers detailed visibility into where ads run, making it difficult to assess brand suitability. These concerns likely contribute to why advertisers are using robust and overly-restrictive keyword blocklists.

Our take: One major reason brands are missing out on Oscars-related content is **outdated blocklists**. In regards to entertainment content, blocklists are “fundamentally ineffective,” per Mantis managing director **Fiona Salmon** in conversation with **Adweek**. Without essential changes, brands will continue to miss key advertising opportunities.

Advertisers must adopt a more careful and active approach to keyword management, combined with a nuanced understanding of how keywords that might appear problematic on the surface can be uncontroversial in specific contexts. Avoiding such blanket keyword blocks is critical to how advertisers can capitalize on key cultural moments like the Oscars in the future.

Media Types That Will Present the Most Challenges for Brands Safety in the Next 12 Months According to US Marketing Professionals, Sep 2024

% of respondents



Note: top 4 responses; *includes CTV
Source: Integral Ad Science, "The 2025 Industry Pulse Report: U.S. Edition" conducted by YouGov, Nov 18, 2024

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