

# Balancing the connected TV opportunity with brand safety concerns

Article



**The trend:** Connected TV is quickly emerging as a looming brand reputation risk.

- The migration from traditional linear viewing has unleashed a **torrent of marketing spending on CTV platforms**. Free from outdated broadcasting constraints, streaming apps are

absorbing billions in ad budgets, targeting cord-cutting audiences and premium content environments.

- However, this explosive growth brings familiar challenges. Rampant fraud and opaque ad placements are beginning to encroach on what was once considered a safe haven from controversies plaguing social media feeds and user-uploaded content.
- That said, the CTV landscape includes more than just premium streaming services with tightly controlled ad buys made via programmatic direct or private marketplaces (PMPs). **YouTube's** increasing presence on CTVs introduces brand risk due to the prevalence of user-generated content being viewed and advertised against.

**Why it matters:** In 2020, CTV ad spending amounted to \$8.1 billion. Flash forward to 2024, and the channel is expected to exceed **\$23 billion**—nearly tripling in just four years across streaming platforms and program bundles.

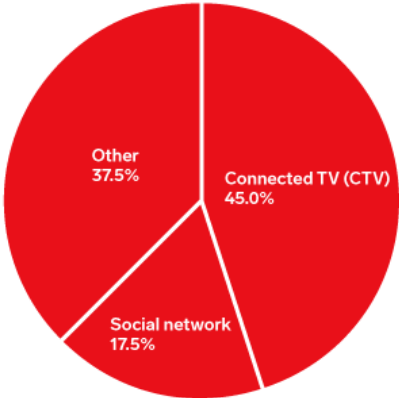
- This meteoric trajectory mimics patterns in digital media. Emerging channels coalesce around brand suitability, only for issues to bubble up as investment inevitably attracts bad actors' attention. CTV is no exception.
- In surveys, over 80% of CTV buyers express significant concern about ensuring ad placements remain brand-suitable as money floods the ecosystem. The concern is understood since the fragmentation of viewer experiences across streaming services multiplies brands' exposure to unpalatable adjacencies compared with linear TV's controlled environment.
- Programmatic buying makes transparency even murkier, with targeted ads often outpacing humans' ability to oversee them effectively. This gap permits the spread of misinformation, extremist content, and fringe conspiracy theories on user-upload platforms now seen on big screens in living rooms.

**Our take:** To maintain CTV's reputation as advertising's premium sanctuary amid the brand crises haunting social feeds, the industry must take immediate corrective measures to enhance vetting processes, disclosure standards, and verification protocols.

- Rigorous third-party monitoring may be the only path to ensure streaming platforms responsibly amplify content.
- Left unchecked, the same flood of marketing investment in CTVs could become a magnet for abusive content and coordinated deception with direct lines into households globally. Like

social networks before them, these popular streaming platforms sit on a precarious perch; they can either build strong brand loyalty or risk losing the trust they've worked hard to earn.

**US Digital Political Ad Spending, by Category, 2024**  
% of digital political ad spending



*Note: includes advertising related to federal, state, or local politics, including elections and lobbying activities; includes advertising directly related to legislative and regulatory issues*  
Source: Insider Intelligence | eMarketer Forecast, Jan 2024

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