



Point-of-Care Audit Guide for Media Buyers



**Alliance for
Audited Media**
TRANSACTION WITH TRUST

Introduction



Point-of-care advertising is booming. [Global consulting firm ZS](#) estimates that pharma ad spend in point-of-care (POC) [will reach \\$870 million](#) by the end of 2022. Advertisers are increasing their investment in a space that delivers a highly engaged audience eager to learn more about their conditions and treatment options.

But wherever media investment grows, so does the need for accountability. Audits have long been a staple in traditional media but are a newer concept in point-of-care marketing. As more money enters the ecosystem, advertisers are demanding a higher level of accountability. Independent, third-party audits are the answer.

The Alliance for Audited Media is a not-for-profit organization founded more than 100 years ago to build trust between advertisers and publishers through media audits. We now provide network and campaign-level audits of print and digital point-of-care media. This guide gives an auditor's perspective of the POC landscape to help media buyers gain a better understanding of the audit process and learn how audits are improving transparency and fostering trust between advertisers and POC media providers.

This guide covers:

- What an audit is
- How an audit works
- Steps buyers can take to foster greater transparency in POC media

First, we explore the basic components of the audit process.

\$870m

Amount estimated to be spent in point-of-care advertising by the end of 2022.

(Credit: ZS Associates)

What is a Point-of-Care Audit?

No matter where you place media buys, trust is the cornerstone for the transaction between buyer and seller. Trust that your message was delivered to the correct location, and trust that the campaign reports you receive are accurate. Audits are critical to achieving this trust because they provide third-party assurance that the POC media provider has been audited and meets industry standards.



You might have questions about the channel you're investing in. Does the POC media provider's network have the number of locations it says it does? Is your advertisement reaching the right healthcare professionals to match your campaign message? Were your guides delivered to the correct locations? Did the ad play during office hours on waiting room displays that were functioning properly? Independent, third-party audits serve to answer some of those questions.

An audit is a thorough review of a POC media provider's ad delivery system to ensure that it is producing accurate, reliable and consistent data and is compliant with industry standards. A well-planned and executed audit provides users of the data with the highest level of assurance. Audits help media buyers assess whether a campaign has met expectations outlined in the contract. They also help buyers make more informed media decisions by being able to select a media provider that has demonstrated its commitment to transparency by engaging in an independent third-party audit.

An industry works together



AAM audits are performed with consideration to industry-established guidelines such as the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) Ad Campaign Measurement & Audit Guidelines, Mobile Web Advertising Measurement Guidelines, the Point of Care Marketing Association (POCMA) Verification and Validation Guidance and generally accepted industry best practices.

How an Audit Works

While each audit is customized depending on the unique characteristics of the POC media provider's distribution system and controls, all AAM audits include three basic steps.

1. Pre-Audit Assessment & Initial System Evaluation

To properly plan an audit, the auditor must have a comprehensive understanding of the processes in place to identify known limitations and potential areas of risk.

For example, media buyers run the risk of buying locations where ads are never displayed on a screen, where posters are never placed on a wallboard, or magazines never make it to the waiting room.

During this phase, auditors ask questions to assess the system's risk and to understand how ads are delivered and measured by the system to ensure compliance with the applicable standards. While these questions do not represent a comprehensive list, they are examples of how the initial assessment is intended to expose gaps in the process, shape the overall scope of the audit and help educate the POC media provider about industry standards and best practices to help the audit run more efficiently.

Auditor Risk Assessment Questions

The audit begins with questions to better understand how the ad delivery system is set up and to uncover potential areas of risk. Sample questions include:

- How is data collected?
- What software is used to ensure that the ad plays and is displayed on the screen?
- How does the provider manage its network to ensure the accuracy of its location database?
- How does the provider determine if collateral was produced, shipped, received and/or displayed at a location?



How an Audit Works *(cont.)*

2. Reviewing, Testing and Sampling

During the audit, the POC media provider's processes, procedures and controls are evaluated to determine whether they can prevent errors from occurring or at a minimum, detect and correct errors when they do occur. Auditors examine documents and data provided by the POC media provider and conduct tests to determine whether the system is providing accurate data. For example, during a print campaign the auditor may examine delivery records to determine if collateral was distributed to a specific location.

Statistically relevant sampling may also be used, such as contacting a certain percentage of locations to confirm product receipt and validate the distribution claim. For a digital audit, playlogs may be analyzed to confirm campaign performance or physical audits may be conducted to verify the size of the network including the number of devices per location. If physical audits are conducted, geo-timestamped digital photos are made available to the POC media provider to support the audit findings.

Many AAM audits take a continuous verification approach to provide ongoing assurance. The initial audit establishes benchmarks so that anomalies are easily detected and mitigated during subsequent analyses.

3. Reporting

When the audit is complete, auditors issue a formal report to the POC media provider that summarizes the audit findings.



AAM Certification Brings Third-Party Trust to Phreesia's Patient Intake Platform

“By being proactive and engaging in certification, we are giving our clients greater confidence in us as partners.”

—David Linetsky, Phreesia's SVP of Life Sciences

Phreesia's recent digital patient engagement platform certification provides clients with greater transparency and ensures the system is operating with optimal efficiency. Learn more about how the certification helps Phreesia build stronger partnerships at [auditedmedia.com](https://www.auditedmedia.com).

What's Audited in Digital and Print?

Audits are adaptable to provide assurance for the types of campaigns you run with your POC media providers. Here are some examples of how AAM has adapted generally accepted auditing standards to serve digital and print point-of-care media and new technologies.



Analysis of a specific ad campaign to determine whether the data collected meets the deliverable outlined in the contract.

Digital Examples

Ad campaign that runs on digital wallboards, waiting room TVs, or interactive tablets. The audit may include location list matching, playlog analysis, and in-person observations.

Print Examples

Ad campaign running in magazines, brochures, on printed wallboards or free-standing displays. The audit may include location list matching, analysis of distribution records and in-person observations.



Analysis of a POC media provider's network to verify the number of devices and/or locations that make up the network.

Digital Examples

Verifies the number of locations as well as the number of devices per location. In-person observations are a key component of a network audit.

Print Examples

Verifies the number of locations where there are physical assets in place. In-person observations are a key component of a network audit.



A complete analysis of the policies, procedures and controls in place to ensure the POC media provider's ad delivery system is providing accurate, reliable and consistent results. Once certified, continuous auditing provides ongoing assurance.

Digital Examples

A deep analysis of the entire ad delivery system including onboarding new locations and monitoring, campaign setup, data collection, measurement and filtration processes, general IT controls, data retention and business continuity planning, reporting and general disclosures.

Print Examples

Includes a deep analysis of the POC media company's total distribution network and the processes and controls in place to ensure accurate delivery including updating/onboarding locations.

The Benefits of Audits for Media Buyers

Greater assurance in point-of-care marketing fosters greater transparency for the industry and leads to stronger relationships between media buyers and sellers.

There are many behind-the-scenes details that are included in an audit of a POC media provider. But by simply asking for an audit, buyers are assured that these details are covered as well as several broader benefits.

Assurance: Third-party audits are conducted in accordance with industry guidelines and best practices to ensure the numbers used to transact are compliant. Audits help make trusted media partners easier to find and reduce the risk of wasting ad spend on unaudited channels.

Confidence: A third-party audit opens doors between buyers and sellers who agree that trust is the foundation for any transaction. A POC media provider that demonstrates its commitment to transparency by engaging in the audit process instills greater confidence in media buys.

Greater ROI: When purchasing audited media, buyers can expect their advertisements to be delivered to locations that match the POC media provider's claims and receive greater ROI. Purchasing through unaudited channels only increases the risk of ad spend wasted on media that doesn't deliver expected results.

Trust: Audits strengthen relationships between buyers and sellers by giving media buyers confidence that an audited company is a trustworthy partner. The more POC media providers that are audited, the stronger and more transparent the entire ecosystem becomes.

Steps buyers can take to foster greater transparency in POC media:

- Communicate the importance of audits to your media partners.
- Add audits to RFPs.
- Participate in industry groups to help set standards.
- Look for the AAM logo to signal whether a media company has been audited.
- Sign up for **AAM newsletters** for notifications of new audits.



About the Alliance for Audited Media

Audits have long been a part of buyer/seller relationships in consumer media. When the Alliance for Audited Media was founded in 1914 as the Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC), its mission was to establish transparency in newspaper and magazine media during a time when trust between advertisers and publishers was greatly needed.

Similar calls for transparency are now being made in point-of-care media. Industry leaders and organizations such as the [Point of Care Marketing Association \(POCMA\)](#) coming together to establish verification standards and promote industry-wide transparency. Such collaborations and demands will only increase in the coming years. Audits help foster stronger partnerships and better outcomes for point-of-care media investments. Media buyers who do not actively cultivate partnerships with audited providers risk losing clients who are demanding transparency, adherence to industry standards and verified results.

Point-of-care media providers are turning to AAM for media verification because our experience is unmatched. Our dedicated team of more than 75 auditors are experts in print and digital media measurement, systems and reporting. We have developed, tested and perfected auditing methods and processes and have adapted them to point-of-care media. As an independent audit organization governed by a not-for-profit board of directors representing agencies, marketers and publishers, we exist for the industry and are lending our experience to create standards that strengthen the entire point-of-care marketing ecosystem.

To learn more about how third-party verification can improve your media buys, contact [George Bartman](#) at 212-271-0710.

