

6 S E N S E

# Lifecycle of an Ad Viewer

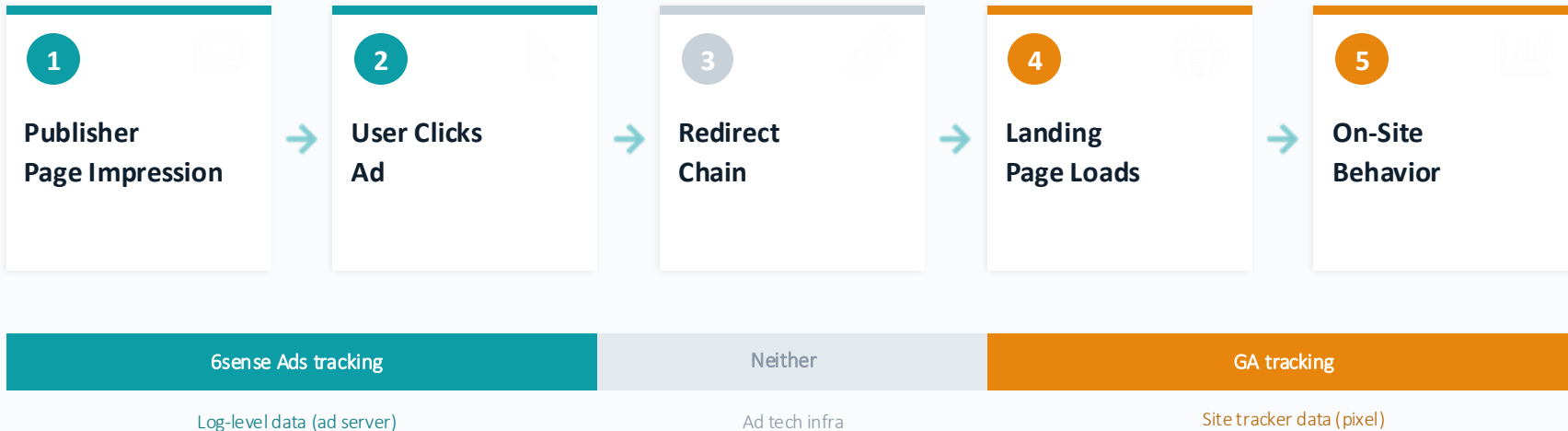
What actually happens between a user seeing your ad and landing on your website.  
Understanding why 6sense and Google Analytics report different numbers.

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6sense | Advertising

# The Full Journey at a Glance

From ad impression to on-site behavior, here's every step a user goes through. Each stage is tracked differently by each platform.



## STAGE 1



# Publisher Page

Examples: CNN.com, Forbes.com, BBC, etc.

The user is browsing a publisher site and sees a 6sense display or video ad rendered in the page. This is the very first moment of engagement, and it's where 6sense's ad tracking begins.

### ● 6sense

Impression logged

The ad server records the impression the instant the creative renders. This is log-level data: every detail about the event is captured at the ad server layer.

Timestamp

Publisher domain

Device / OS

Creative ID

Geo / IP

Viewability %

### ● Google Analytics

Not tracking

Google Analytics has zero awareness that this user exists at this point. GA's tracking pixel only lives on the advertiser's website, not on publisher pages. There is nothing for GA to measure until the user reaches the landing page.

## STAGE 2



# User Clicks the Ad

Click event fires on the publisher page

The user engages with the ad. This is a critical moment for 6sense's Ad tracking. The click is captured, audited, and reconciled against known invalid traffic patterns before being counted.

### ● 6sense

Click recorded

6sense's ad server captures the click and applies advanced filtering using known bot patterns and other criteria to reduce invalid interactions. Every click is counted individually.

Click timestamp

Audit reconciliation

Click ID

Campaign attribution

Bot / IVT filtering

### ● Google Analytics

Not tracking

The user still hasn't left the publisher's page. GA remains completely unaware. No session has started, no cookie has been set, and no data has been recorded. GA will only begin tracking once the landing page loads.



## Redirect Chain

Multiple hops through ad tech infrastructure

The click-through URL fires and the browser passes through multiple ad tech infrastructure hops for verification, billing, and fraud detection. This is standard in programmatic advertising.

### ● 6sense

Already counted

6sense recorded the click in the previous step. These redirect hops occur in downstream infrastructure that 6sense has no involvement in. The hops may include ad server redirects, click trackers, SSP/DSP billing, verification vendors, brand safety checks, and creative validators.

### ● Google Analytics

Still not tracking

GA is still waiting for the user to arrive at the landing page. But something critical is happening: each redirect hop has the chance to overwrite the HTTP referrer. By the time the browser finishes this chain, the original referrer (e.g., CNN.com) is often lost.



Each redirect hop can overwrite the HTTP referrer. GA may attribute this visit to amazon-adsystem.com instead of the actual publisher.

## STAGE 4



# Landing Page Loads

Customer's website (e.g., acme.com/demo)

The browser now resolves to the advertiser's landing page. This is the handoff point: 6sense's Ad tracking side of the job is done, and GA's tracking begins (if the page loads and cookies aren't blocked).

### ● 6sense

Not involved

6sense Ads does not track what happens on the landing page. Its measurement scope ended at the click. It has no concept of sessions, bounce rates, page views, or on-site engagement. The click is the last event 6sense records.

### ● Google Analytics

Session starts

GA's tracking pixel fires and a session begins. A cookie is set (if allowed). But if the user stopped the page, or if privacy settings block the GA cookie, this session may never be recorded.

Session start

UTM parameters

Cookie ID

Device / browser

Referrer (can be wrong)

*Note: If using 6sense's Web Tag on the landing page, additional account based metrics are tracked.*



## On-Site Behavior

Browsing, scrolling, converting

This is Google Analytics' strength. It tracks everything that happens on the advertiser's site after the user arrives.

### ● 6sense

No visibility

6sense Ads cannot see any of this. Bounce rate, time on site, pages viewed, conversions, scroll depth... all invisible to 6sense ad reporting. This is not a gap; it's by design. 6sense Ads measures ad performance, not site performance.

### ● Google Analytics

Full session tracking

GA tracks everything: pages viewed, scroll depth, time on page, events, conversions. If idle 30+ min and user returns, GA starts a new session. So 1 click can become 2 sessions.

Pages / session

Conversions

Bounce rate

Scroll depth

Session duration

Events

*Note: If using 6sense's Web Tag on the landing page, additional account based metrics are tracked.*

# Why the Numbers Don't Match

Common scenarios where 6sense clicks and GA sessions diverge.

Scenario	6sense Reports	GA Reports
User stops page load mid-redirect	1 click	0 sessions
Privacy settings block GA cookie	1 click	0 sessions
Cookie consent banner not accepted	1 click	0 sessions
User idle 30+ min, then returns	1 click	2 sessions
User reloads the landing page	1 click	+1 pageload
User clicks ad multiple times	Multiple clicks	1 session
Creative auditing/verification scan	0 clicks (filtered)	1 session

## KEY TAKEAWAY

# 6sense and Google Analytics aren't measuring the same thing at the same time.

### Use 6sense Ads for:

- Ad performance decisions
- Bid optimization & budget allocation
- Creative testing & campaign effectiveness
- Account reach & engagement metrics

### Use Google Analytics for:

- Post-click user behavior
- Engagement analysis
- Content & landing page performance
- On-site conversions & session metrics