

Optimising PPC campaigns to win more subscribers

A guide for telecom operators protecting acquisition budgets from invalid traffic

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01 The problem no one is measuring

Telecom PPC budgets are under pressure from every direction. CPCs climb year on year. OTTs and MVNOs are intensifying competition for subscribers. Margins are thinner than ever.

Through all of it, a significant share of every operator's paid search spend goes to clicks that will never generate a single new subscriber.

The problem is not just generic ad fraud. In telecom, the threats are structural and specific: competitor bots scraping your plans and pricing, existing subscribers using paid ads to log in, and outage events triggering instant budget blowouts.

What is invalid traffic?

Invalid traffic (IVT) is any click or impression that provides no legitimate value to the advertiser. It covers both deliberate fraud and unintentional waste: bot clicks, accidental taps, returning users navigating via paid ads, and automated scraping.

Whether the click came from a bot, a competitor's scraper, or a loyal subscriber checking their bill, the outcome is the same: **you paid for it, it generated no revenue, and it polluted your data.**

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02 Invalid traffic by the numbers

The scale of the problem has grown significantly. These are not theoretical numbers.

\$172B

Projected global cost of ad fraud by 2028

Juniper Research via Statista

51%

All internet traffic is now automated

2025 Imperva Bad Bot Report

37%

Web traffic generated by bad bots, up from 32%

2025 Imperva Bad Bot Report

20.6%

Global IVT rate across 105.7B impressions

Fraudlogix, 2025

22%

Digital ad spend attributed to fraud annually

Juniper Research

18%

Account takeover attacks targeting telecoms/ISPs

2025 Imperva Bad Bot Report

These numbers represent real budget consumed by non-human or non-incremental activity every single day.

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03 Why this hits telecom hardest

Subscribers are the KPI

New subscriber acquisition is the primary performance indicator for operator health. Every click that doesn't contribute to acquisition works against the business objective.

Margins leave no room for waste

Operators work with capped ARPU and rising input costs. There is no margin to absorb 20% to 40% of PPC budget being consumed by non-revenue clicks.

Competition is intensifying

OTTs, MVNOs, and new entrants are eroding subscriber bases. Operators wasting budget on invalid traffic are effectively subsidising their competitors' growth.

Marketing fraud sits in a blind spot

The same operator running a dedicated fraud team for network threats often has zero visibility into how much digital advertising budget goes to bots and paid log-ins.

CPCs keep climbing

Brand and acquisition keyword costs have risen 10% to 20% year on year. Each wasted click costs materially more than it did even two years ago.

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04 Three threads draining your PPC budget

1 Competitor bots scraping plans & pricing

Competitor and aggregator bots actively target telecom landing pages, scraping plan details, device bundles, and pricing tiers. This bot traffic often represents 25% or more of visits to key acquisition pages.

The commercial damage goes beyond wasted clicks. You are funding competitor intelligence. Each scraped page informs their counter-offers before your promotions gain traction.

2 Paid log-ins from existing subscribers

Existing subscribers search your brand name, click your paid ad, and navigate to their login page. This can account for 15% to 30% of total paid search spend on brand keywords.

Google Ads cannot distinguish between a high-value prospect and a loyal subscriber checking their bill. Once paid clicks exceed ARPU, they become loss-making.

3 Outage-driven spend spikes

When a network goes down, traffic to brand terms can spike 2x to 4x within minutes. Automated bidding serves ads to this influx and burns through daily budgets at alarming speed.

Almost every click during an outage is from an existing customer. New subscriber acquisition during a disruption is effectively zero. Manual responses are always too slow.

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05 The hidden cost: Polluted optimisation signals

The budget waste is significant on its own. But the second-order effect is arguably worse.

When invalid clicks from bots, paid log-ins, and outage spikes mix with genuine conversion data, your automated bidding models learn from the wrong signals. Smart Bidding and Performance Max algorithms start optimising toward low-value returning users rather than high-value new subscribers.

20%+

CPA inflation from polluted bidding signals

Recovery takes weeks of clean traffic before performance stabilises.

The cascade effect

Polluted signals do not stay contained. They flow into Meta targeting audiences, remarketing lists, and broader demand generation. Cleaning your Search data has a compounding positive effect across every channel in your paid media stack.



The data you use to make optimisation decisions is only as good as the traffic feeding it. If a fifth of your clicks are invalid, a fifth of your insight is fiction.

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06 What a real audit reveals

MVNO case study

TrafficGuard examined an MVNO's PPC traffic over a two-week period.

20%

of 40K clicks were invalid

\$20K

of \$100K spend lost to IVT

50%

of IVT from bots, hosts & malware

44

clicks from 1 user on 1 ad in 12hrs

The biggest takeaway was not the money lost. The marketing team's campaign metrics were fundamentally unreliable. Conversion rates, CPAs, and ROI calculations were all built on data that included a significant layer of non-genuine engagement. Strategic decisions were being made on polluted numbers.

Zain KSA

First MENA telecom operator to deploy TrafficGuard for Google Search campaigns

27%

Reduction in invalid clicks

20%

Budget reinvested into acquisition

13x

Return on investment

It is more than just wasted media spend

Compromised campaign data

Optimisation decisions built on invalid traffic actively harm performance.

Misplaced resource investment

Spend flows toward sources that appear lucrative but produce nothing.

Eroded ARPU protection

Every paid click from an existing subscriber past break-even is margin lost.

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07 How TrafficGuard protects telecom operators

Bot & scraper blocking

Real-time identification and blocking of automated traffic before it reaches your landing pages. Competitor bots and pricing scrapers stopped at the source.

ARPU-aligned user validation

Caps paid behaviour once it exceeds subscriber value. Existing subscribers still reach your site via organic. Your paid budget stays focused on net-new acquisition.

Outage resilience

Automated surge protection activates instantly when traffic patterns signal a disruption. Abnormal click volumes absorbed in real time, no manual intervention needed.

Clean optimisation signals

Invalid traffic removed before it enters bidding models. Algorithms learn from genuine demand, stabilising CPA across Google Search and Performance Max.

Cross-channel coverage

Cleaning Search data improves retargeting audiences, remarketing lists, and Social performance. One fix compounds across your entire paid media stack.

Full transparency

Every blocked click is fully auditable. Complete visibility into what was stopped, why, and how much budget was protected.

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08 Start With a Free Traffic Audit

TrafficGuard's free two-week PPC traffic quality audit shows you the scale of the problem with no disruption to your live campaigns.

From there, the path is clear:

- Block what should not be there
- Cap what exceeds its value
- Protect your budget during disruptions
- Let your bidding algorithms learn from real demand

[Book a Free Audit](#)

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Trusted by telecom and connectivity brands worldwide:

