

FAKE NEWS

It is our belief... that education, verification and improved institutional trust are key to resolving the problem of fake news. Many organisations are looking at classifications to distinguish trusted sources from erroneous ones, but this must be backed up with education, and selective ad placement to make it effective. No advertiser wants to inadvertently fund fake news. Advertisers have a role to play, alongside online publishers and government to restrict the funding of sites which amplify ‘fake news’ and misinformation.

The leadership position

Advertising can support the fight against fake news by funding reputable online publishers, taking swift action against those publishers who disseminate fake news, and supporting public education around critical evaluation of media and content.

The commercial imperative

Content, whether online or in print, has always included an element of the subjective, misleading, and downright wrong. But digital has led to the proliferation of misleading content, some of which is driven by the desire to increase advertising revenues. For brands and advertisers, this presents both a commercial risk, and a potential opportunity.

Increasingly, consumers choose brands that align with their own values. Appearing alongside misleading content, especially intentionally misleading content, presents a reputational risk. Conversely, there is brand value on offer for organisations that take a leading, responsible position on this contentious and hotly discussed issue. Meanwhile, for advertisers, the use of misleading content to increase traffic falsely distorts the market; suppressing the fake news industry has the potential to level the playing field.

We believe organisations should make the following commitments to advertising and include the following criteria in all agency briefs:

Ad placement & transparency

This subject encompasses fake news, clickbait and intentionally misleading advertising content. Deception can be driven by a range of motives: often political or commercial. The [ASA](#) has a clear mandate to tackle deceptive advertising and clickbait, so this manifesto will focus predominantly on intentionally deceptive content:

- Publishers and agencies should comply with the existing/upcoming AOP Ad Charter around checking their supply chain. Avoiding misplacement of ads through rigorous use of ad-verification tools, whitelists, and manual vetting
- Agencies should reference and implement the Infringing Website List (IWL) from the City of London Intellectual Property Crime Unit (PIPCU)
- Agencies and publishers should comply with the existing/upcoming AOP Ad Charter around rebates and removal of offending content

Ad placement strategy

Given that many news organisations take a polarising position to identify themselves with a target user segment, the differentiation between subjective and fake is challenging and subjective decisions will have to be made. Advertisers should:

- Stop placing adverts on sites and outlets dedicated to commercialise intentionally fake news, create sensationalist false news, hoaxes or rumours for purely commercial gain. And report to the AOP and publications or platforms which do
- Stop supporting fake news creators and platforms that shift their narrative in order to maintain celebrity
- Track the accuracy of content and reporting on online publishers using a fact checking service such as Factmata