

Brand Safety Issues Are Widespread

Advertisers feel they're exposed to a range of potentially damaging content

ARTICLE | JANUARY 30, 2018

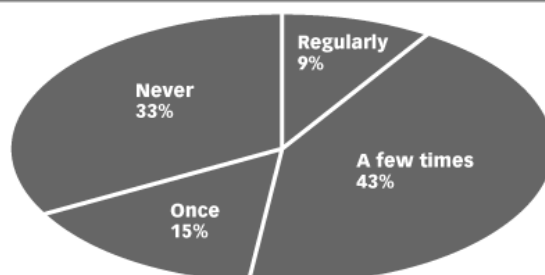
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Keeping an eye out for threats to brand safety is now a well-entrenched aspect of any marketer's portfolio.

New research from GumGum and Digiday reveals that more than two-thirds of US marketers polled in November 2017 said their brands—or brands they worked with—had been exposed to a brand safety issue at least once. And more than half had suffered from a brand safety threat more than once.

Frequency with Which Their Brand* Has Been Exposed to Brand Safety Issues According to US Marketers, Nov 2017

% of respondents



Note: includes agencies, brands and digital publishers; *or their clients
Source: GumGum, "The New Brand Safety Crisis" conducted by Custom (a Digiday Media Agency), Jan 23, 2018

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The top types of brand-unsafe content that marketers said they or their brands had been exposed to were disasters/tragedies (39%), divisive politics (39%) and fake news (39%). However, almost one-third also said their content had appeared too closely to that of a competitor, underscoring how broad a definition respondents had about unsafe content.

There were also some disparities between the top concerns marketers had and the types of unsafe content they were actually suffering from. For instance, hate speech was named as the top brand-unsafe factor by 34% of respondents — more than any other factor. But only 26% said their brands had been exposed to it.

Similarly, 17% of marketers worried about pornography, but just 7% had their content show up adjacent to such prurient material.

Although YouTube has had some high-profile problems with brand safety of late, GumGum and Digiday found that Facebook was considered the least brand-safe platform for advertisers. LinkedIn was at the other end of the spectrum, considered to be the most safe for digital advertisers.

GumGum and Digiday noted how the opaque nature and complex inventory supply chain of programmatic advertising transactions had added to the difficulty of brands protecting themselves from unsafe content. But advertisers also face threats to their brand equity from an increasingly polarized political climate that spills over into news coverage, as well as YouTube's sometimes unsavory—and unregulated—video content, according to the report.

But the report also highlighted some tools that brands can use to fight back. Among them are keyword detection, which allows for the filtering of publisher content with unwanted topics, such as a plane crash, from their available inventory. Publisher blacklists and whitelists can also help advertisers ensure a better grip on brand safety, the report concluded.