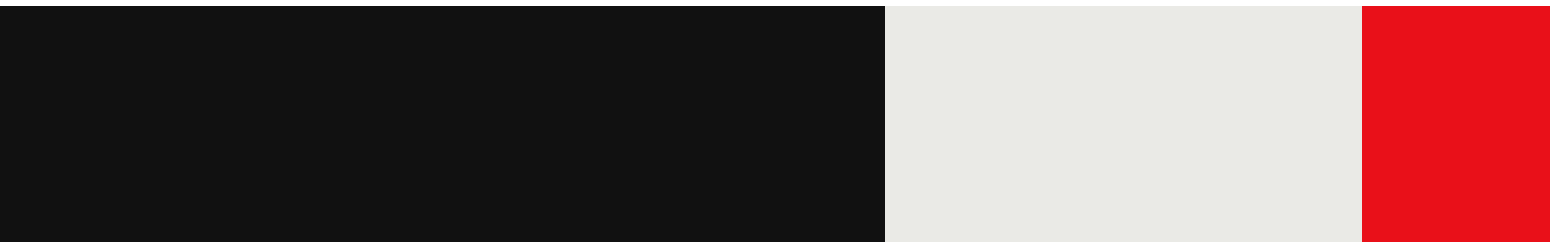



The made-for-advertising problem is here to stay

Article



The news: Made-for-advertising (MFA) schemes are becoming more complex and increasingly bypassing existing safeguards, per a DoubleVerify report shared with Wired.

- DoubleVerify found that networks of MFA sites are rapidly cropping up, often with misspelled variations of publisher domains, such as “BBCsportss.com.” These sites often copy content wholesale from the publishers they impersonate or use AI to produce similar material.
- Additionally, the report found that many MFA sites use bots to drive up pageviews in order to appear legitimate and increase the cost of ad space.

- “We’re seeing the velocity of fraud schemes double or triple year on year,” DoubleVerify CMO **Dan Slivjanoski** told Wired.

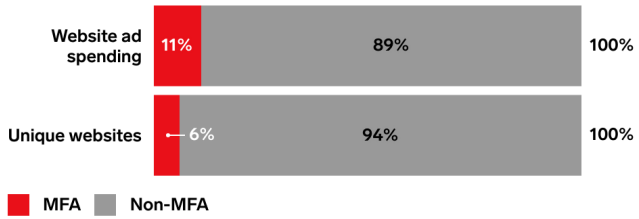
AI and MFA: The MFA problem has become a chief concern for digital advertisers, particularly as AI has made it easier to rapidly generate large volumes of fraudulent ad space.

- While there have been some gains in mitigating the MFA problem, AI’s output has made it difficult for publishers and ad marketplaces to keep up. Reports from Pixalate over the last several quarters found that **MFA sites captured 11% of open web programmatic ad dollars** in Q3 2024, 13% in Q2, and 10% in Q1, representing a multibillion-dollar problem.
- Ad exchanges and ad tech firms have started branding themselves according to their ability to detect and protect against MFA placements: **Yahoo** emphasized in 2023 that its newly launched ad exchange was named the largest supply source free of MFA content by Jounce Media, and **Google** says it has tightened parameters on its Google Video Partners program after it was criticized for including low-quality sites.
- While the MFA problem can lead to budget waste, it also means spending that would normally go to publishers is instead being siphoned by impersonators, worsening the digital news industry’s advertising woes.

Our take: MFA sites don’t appear to be going anywhere soon, so advertisers must understand the methods they use to circumvent safeguards to avoid wasted spending. Advertisers can attempt to avoid MFA sites by working with publishers directly, adjusting their KPIs to deprioritize single metrics like clickthrough rates, and ensuring the systems they use have protections in place.

Made-for-Advertising Websites Capture Over a Tenth of Open Web Programmatic Ad Dollars

made-for-advertising (MFA) % of open programmatic website ad spending vs. unique websites worldwide, Q3 2024



Note: read as 11% of open programmatic website ad spending worldwide went to sites flagged as MFA and 6% of websites with programmatic ad traffic were flagged as MFA; represents activity on the Pixalate platform, broader industry metrics may vary
Source: Pixalate, "Made-for-Advertising Websites Benchmark Report: Q3 2024," Dec 23, 2024

351991

EM | EMARKETER