Who's to Blame for Fake News Ads?

Most marketers point the finger at publishers and media companies

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With brand safety issues continuing to plague advertisers, publishers are stuck trying to figure out how to solve a pretty complicated problem.
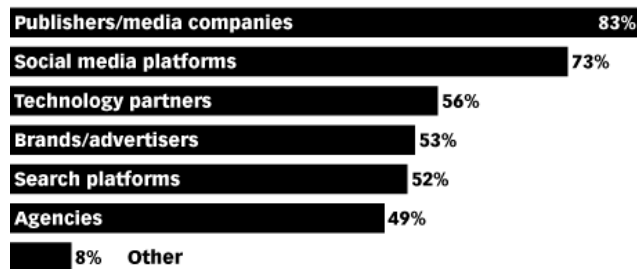
New research from Society for New Communications Research of The Conference Board (SNCR) reveals that US marketers hold publishers and media companies the most responsible for figuring out what to do about the impact of fake news on advertising.

The survey defined fake news as content that lacks sources and often users sensational headlines to encourage the consumption and spread of unverified or false information.

In fact, 83% of US marketers polled in November 2017 assigned the burden of solving the fake news ad problem to publishers and media companies. Social media platforms were blamed by 73% of respondents.

Sources that Should Take the Lead in Solving the Problem of Fake News* Ads According to US Marketers, Nov 2017

% of respondents

Publishers/media companies	83%
Social media platforms	73%
Technology partners	56%
Brands/advertisers	53%
Search platforms	52%
Agencies	49%
Other	8%

Note: *defined as content that lacks trusted sources and often uses sensational headlines to encourage the consumption and spread of unverified or false information
Source: Society for New Communications Research of The Conference Board (SNCR) as cited in company blog, Dec 7, 2017

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The survey also found that a relatively high number of marketers were divorced from their ad placements. Some 42% said they didn't know where all of their ads were running.

That's certainly a problem in a climate where fake news easily proliferates.

Nearly seven in 10 marketers said they had encountered fake news on some type of digital channel, while three-quarters had run into it on a social network.

The poll revealed that more than half of respondents thought that their technology partners also bore some responsibility for addressing the problem of fake news.

That's in line with a separate survey of programmatic decision-makers in North America carried out by BrightRoll in April 2017. That poll found that 55% of respondents planned to put more pressure on their programmatic tech partners to screen out fake news content in the name of brand safety.

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