

University of Minnesota Digital Advertising Guidelines

Overview

With the advent and infiltration of fake news and extreme alt sites (those that promote radical ideology on both ends of the spectrum) and this content making its way into mainstream digital media and social platforms, the University of Minnesota is tightening its media buying and placement policies. The goal is to ensure our advertising does not end up on these sites.

New policies and guidelines will help ensure that UMN ads do not appear on websites or apps that are counter to the University's mission or core values.

Our Mission

The belief that understanding enriches all people, is dedicated to the advancement of learning and the search for truth; to the sharing of this knowledge through education for a diverse community; and to the application of this knowledge to benefit the people of the state, the nation, and the world. (University of Minnesota Mission Statement, Board of Regents Policy, January 1994)

Our Core Values

- Integrity: Practicing honesty, fairness and respect
- Excellence: Supporting quality teaching, research and service
- Diversity: Respecting differences in ideas and community
- Innovation: Promoting discovery through creative and critical thinking
- Learner Centeredness: Promoting growth and leadership

Fake news sites intentionally undermine the University's search for truth. Extreme alt sites aggressively attack our values of integrity and diversity.

For those reasons, we do not select fake news or extreme alt sites with University media buys or placements. However, in today's automated digital media environment, that's not always enough to prevent our ads from finding their way onto some of these sites.

Our Approach

The University has a strong set of media buying guidelines in place, that include rules established to protect our brand messages from appearing alongside inappropriate and divisive content. All University media buys include the following language in the Purchasing Order:

"Media Company acknowledges that certain Advertisers may not want their Ads placed adjacent to content that promotes pornography, violence, or the use of firearms, contains obscene language, or falls within another category stated on the purchasing order ("Editorial Adjacency Guidelines")."

Specifically, the University directives strive to protect its brand from being associated with content that is:

- Sexual in nature
- Promotes drug/alcohol use
- Extreme politicization

However, given the rise of fake news and divisiveness of extreme alt sites the University has enhanced its approach.

- We have created a global “do not advertise” list (link to list) that all University media partners must adhere to. This sets the expectation that:
 - Our programmatic media partners will proactively block sites that they believe do not represent our interests
 - Along with other agency partners, we will proactively develop and implement a list of sites that will be blocked from all University media buys and placements (list will be provided to all communicators)
- The University will review and approve a list of sites from each and every media partner prior to approving any programmatic buys.
- We have engaged a third party, MOAT, to verify that University digital media buying parameters are being strictly adhered to in the market
- We have created a list of whitelisted sites that are pre-approved by the University, prior to placing any media buys (link to list)

This enhanced approach will strengthen the media rules we already have in place. In addition to protecting the University from appearing alongside inappropriate and divisive content, it will prevent us from associating with fake news and extreme alt sites that are out of step with our mission and values.

“Do Not Advertise” List Determination & Maintenance

To identify fake and alt news sites on which the University will not advertise, the University will:

- Review any sites proactively deleted by our programmatic media partners
- Ask media partners to model similar sites to those that have been deleted
- Review published lists of fake and extreme alt news sites that have been created by third-party, credible academics or other respected organizations (e.g. Melissa Zimdars, Assistant Professor, Merrimack College in Massachusetts, as well as other academically generated lists)
- Proactively review and update all sites prior to launching new campaigns and media efforts