

Online advertising industry extends self-regulation programme into mobile

Europe's online advertising industry last week unveiled a self-regulatory code of conduct aimed specifically at the growing mobile devices market

Launching the new 'mobile principles' for online behavioural advertising (OBA) at a summit in Brussels earlier this week, Nick Stringer from the European Interactive Digital Advertising Alliance (EDAA), said the new rules "reflected the growth of advertising spend on mobile devices across the EU. While EU legislators have been discussing new data protection laws, advertising businesses and industry have been implementing practical ways to give users greater transparency and control over behavioural or interest-based advertising." Stringer, Chair of EDAA's board, told attendees that the OBA industry, "wasn't reinventing the wheel", but merely "adapting their existing self-regulatory principles", which had been primarily developed for the desktop online environment. "In the UK for example", said Stringer, "mobile now accounts for around 27 per cent of total digital advertising spend. As this advertising spend shifts to mobile, we want to deliver greater transparency and control for users."

Also known as interests based advertising; OBA tracks a user's online activity, such as websites viewed, and then delivers advertising tailored to the user's interests. Stringer added that the OBA industry recognised that the mobile environment was different to that of the traditional desktop and therefore had adapted its principles to suit the mobile

environment. A Europe-wide mobile app will also shortly be released, with the aim of improving consumer choice on OBA mobile activities. EDAA Director-General Oliver Gray said that, "the dynamic of the global digital space is driving the need for the already established EDAA self-regulatory programme to apply beyond the desktop environment. The launch of the new mobile principles gives a clear industry signal to implement this in Europe over the next few months."

Sharing a platform with Stringer during a discussion on the issues of transparency, choice and control, Tim Abraham, a product strategist at data intelligence company Adbrain said,

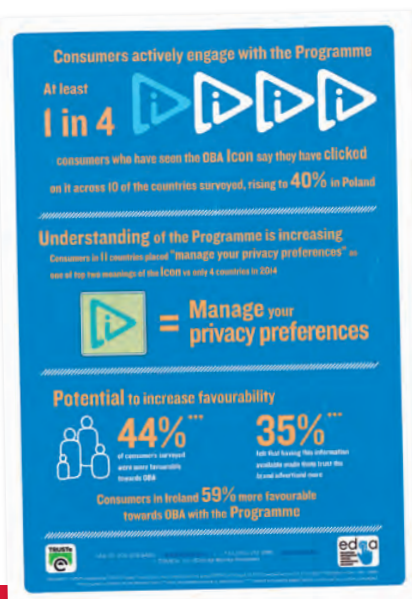
"mobile is a now more or less a near-ubiquitous way to access internet enabled content and applications and services for the vast majority of European citizens". Although this universality

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EDAA Director-General Oliver Gray

had opened up a new market for Europe's online advertisers, the new mobile principles recognised and acknowledged that, "with this value proposition comes great responsibility. Handling data for the purpose of serving more relevant advertisements based on the consumer's interests necessitates respect from users, and industry knows that transparency and user control are the tools with which this can be achieved."

Yves Schwarzbart from advertising funded internet advocates, IAB UK, one of the authors of the new mobile principles, said that digital privacy issues were at the forefront of consumers' thoughts. "The consumer is at heart of these mobile principles. They spend most of their time on their mobile devices and mobile is so special because it's the most personal



device that users own. The mobile advertising market is growing, but mobile is a different beast.” For Leigh Freund, President of US responsible data collection NGO the Network Advertising Initiative (NAI), the biggest challenge for the online advertising industry was “keeping pace” with mobile technology. Desktop; mobile; TV; we all live in a cross-device world. Providing guidance as technology evolves is the ultimate challenge, but consumers are key; without them there would be no industry. Internet advertising is not evil. We would be wise to keep this in mind. We should all be trying to do the right thing to help consumers and brands. But we must take as much of the industry with us as possible when issuing guidance.” Let’s not, she told attendees in a nod to 1980s mockumentary ‘This Is Spinal Tap’, “turn it up to eleven”

Vincent Poitier, COO of search intelligence company Captify, highlighted some of the issues that businesses face in adapting to the so called “mobile imperative”. “The mobile market is very different from other environments; it’s fragmented and it’s often carried by other sectors. Currently video is driving the market,” said Poitier. And although for the first time, mobile page impressions have overtaken those on desktop, making sense of those billions of daily searches was a formidable task. “Advertising technology is extraordinarily complicated,” said Poitier, adding “Advertisers will want to know that they are working within the law. Self-regulation is essential because what we do is so complex, the devil is as always, in the detail”

The European Interactive Digital Advertising Alliance (EDAA) was founded by a European industry coalition representing advertisers, the advertising agency sector, direct marketing and the media. Its principal purpose is to deliver and maintain a self-regulatory programme for the Online Behavioural Advertising



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(OBA) industry and to certify the ‘OBA icon’ to companies involved in online advertising. The OBA icon is an interactive symbol that also links consumers to an online portal (www.youronlinechoices.eu) where they can find easy-to-understand information on OBA. The OBA icon has been adopted by 159 companies across 33 European countries. Lou Mastria, director of the US-based Digital Advertising Alliance (DAA), outlined the impact that the industry’s self-regulatory programme and interactive OBA icon has had in the

US. He cited research showing that 51 per cent of internet users in the U.S were more likely to click on an online advert if it had an OBA icon than if it did not. “A few years ago all this was just an idea, a dream. But, today, we have got a comprehensive self-regulation programme. It is also one that’s nimble enough to deal with emerging technologies,” he told the packed Brussels audience. The European Commission’s Despina Spanou welcomed efforts by the online advertising sector to establish more trust and transparency with consumers saying that such measures were necessary because the majority of people felt “uncomfortable” about businesses using information about their online activities. Spanou, the director for consumer affairs in the Commission’s justice and consumers directorate, said, “Self-regulation is not always successful but it has great potential. We welcome business initiatives that seek to ensure the compliance of traders with existing rules. The EDAA can assist its members in this task.” ★