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Industry backed icon boosting public confidence in online advertising sector

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News

Conference told that self and co-regulation has helped build credibility among consumers in online advertising.

The first-ever international summit for the online advertising sector was told that a pioneering "quality label" is promoting trust in the industry across the globe.

However, the high-level conference in Brussels on Tuesday heard that there is still scope for further improvement across the online advertising industry.

The event was organised by the European Interactive Digital Advertising Alliance (EDAA).

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The 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 (OBA) industry and to certify the 'OBA icon' to companies involved in online advertising.

Also known as interests based advertising; OBA tracks a user's online activity, such as websites viewed, and then delivers advertising or marketing content that matches that activity.

The OBA icon is an interactive symbol that also links consumers to an online portal (http://www.youronlinechoices.eu/ [7]) where they can find easy-to-understand information on OBA.

It has been adopted by 159 companies in 33 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.

Presenting the picture in Canada, Julie Ford, executive director at the Digital Advertising Alliance of Canada (DAAC), said the programme had been similarly successful in her country.

She said 70 companies in Canada had signed up to the programme and several others were considering adopting it.

Looking to future challenges, Ionel Naftanalia, programme development director at the EDAA, cautioned that the industry was at "turning point."

He explained, "By this I mean that consumers nowadays are more aware than ever before. They are not fools."

"That is why we have to provide them with all the necessary tools. That is the challenge for the industry."

Further comment came from Stephan Loerke, CEO of the World Federation of Advertisers, who told summit attendees that the digital industry was in an "exciting place."

He pointed out that the digital share of the advertising market was expected to hit 35 per cent by 2017.

"Even so," he added, "there is more work to be done because people still do not fully trust marketing platforms."

He summed up the consensus by saying that consumer trust and ethical standards was of "utmost importance" to the online advertising industry.

About the author

Martin Banks is a Brussels-based freelance journalist

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