

SOFTWARE AND TECHNOLOGY

## Facebook looks to boost brand safety with publisher selection

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Facebook's Instant Articles load within the news feed. Image credit: Facebook

By SARAH JONES

Social network Facebook is aiming to give brands greater control over where their advertisements run by expanding its program that allows marketers to pick which publishers they wish to align themselves with.

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Facebook is furthering its existing feature that allows advertisers to block their campaigns from appearing on certain publishers' Web sites or applications, bringing the ability to ad units within its own Web and application experience. For luxury brands in particular, brand image is of the utmost importance, making this a potential boon to Facebook's prestige advertising partners.

"Luxury brands are even more concerned about placement of their ads than other advertisers," said John Anderson, president/CEO of **International Strategic Marketing, Inc.**, Broomfield, CO. "Specifically, their concern is not only about brand safety but only appearing on sites that not only have the right audience but also do not have other advertisers that are inconsistent with their image.

"For example, a high-end watch brand will not want to be on the same page where female hygiene products are advertised," he said. "This level of control may make them more willing to participate in network or programmatic advertising if they have more control over the sites and the content in which their advertisements are placed."

### Brand safety

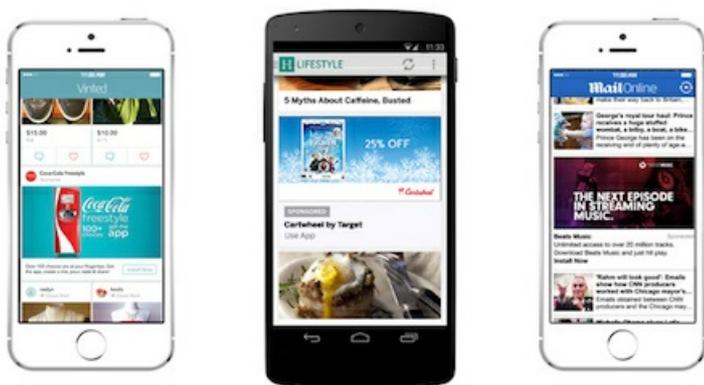
As Facebook began offering ad units that aligned with content, such as articles or videos, it also developed tools for brands to better control where their marketing was placed.

This included block lists, which allow advertisers to see a list of publishers that work with the platform and weed out those that do not fit their brand.

Facebook also allows brands to prevent their ads from appearing alongside potentially controversial or distressing categories. For instance, advertisers can avoid running campaigns alongside content about religion or politics, or keep ads from being associated with tragedy or conflict.

These tools were previously available for Facebook's Audience Network, which consists of external applications

and Web sites that run ads delivered from the social network.



*Facebook's Audience Network serves up ads to other apps and Web sites. Image credit: Facebook*

Now, Facebook is extending these brand safety measures to its own platforms. Advertisers will be able to see a list of which publishers monetize content through in-stream video, such as videos on Facebook Watch, as well as Instant Articles that are readable within the news feed.

Facebook is also rolling out publisher delivery reports to allow advertisers to see where their marketing ran across in-stream video, Instant Articles and the Audience Network.

"The people and businesses that use Facebook deserve a safe environment to share and connect," said Carolyn Everson, vice president of global marketing solutions for Facebook, in a statement. "We've been working with advertisers to build more controls and we're taking another step forward today.

"Now all advertisers, from global brands to local businesses, will have access to comprehensive publisher lists and delivery reports to better control where their ads appear," she said.

For luxury brands, this removes some of the advertising risks associated with Facebook, while leaving others.

"This is a great step by Facebook to ensure transparency and brand safety for luxury advertisers," said Vincent Krsulich senior vice president of **Martini Media**, New York. "The update, however, fails to take into account the actual content that is shared between friends.

"Facebook is a very unique communication platform," he said. "I am still very concerned about luxury brand ads appearing in between friend posts that include illicit or inappropriate content or even hate speech, etc. The problem of being positioned alongside negative content is still not solved."

#### Commercial control

Other software firms have sought to make advertisers feel more at ease through changes to their marketing programs.

Earlier this year, Google made sweeping changes to the way advertising works on YouTube after a year of controversies that concluded with a YouTube star filming a suicide victim in Japan.

The changes mostly affect the criteria videos will have to meet to be monetized, but the effects will be felt by any brand that uses the massively popular video-sharing site for advertising. Most notably, the change will allow brands greater control over what kinds of content their advertising is played in front of, which for luxury brands is of the utmost importance ([see story](#)).

"Brand safety has become a major issue for most brands and advertising agencies," Mr. Anderson said. "Facebook is now competing with other ad networks as they are acting to place ads not just on Facebook but on other Web sites and apps through including ads in articles and streaming videos.

"As the ability to block sites that are not consistent with the brand image has been available for several years through other networks services, this is an important addition for Facebook to be able to compete in the broader digital advertising market," he said.

Luxury brands have often partnered with Facebook to positive effect, leveraging the network's targeting capabilities.

Italian automaker Maserati recently wielded Facebook's advertising capability to drive direct sales for its Levante

SUV, leveraging custom audiences and data-driven pushes.

Maserati saw 127 vehicles sold directly from its recent two-phase Facebook campaign that built a targeted audience for those most likely to engage with the ads. The brand worked with outside data to discover Facebook users that were luxury SUV shoppers ([see story](#)).

"Facebook wants more 'television' dollars," Mr. Krsulich said. "When you combine the data that Facebook has on its audience along with scale and perceived safety, you have a very compelling story.

"Most advertisers already know the publishers they want to be associated with," he said. "If they can safely and more efficiently extend their borrowed brand equity within the Facebook ecosystem, great."

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