

Blog: Accidentally funding terrorism through online advertising

Date : July 11, 2014



Last night's BBC exposé of YouTube advertising and its links to terrorist organisations shows the way in which compliance concerns run throughout the online world.

The BBC's [Newsnight programme](#) found that adverts from leading charities and UK Government organisations appeared online on YouTube and other online video sites prior to extremist terror videos. Most of us have got used to these adverts on YouTube. They appear before the content you really want to watch and you have sit and watch them for a couple of seconds before the site allows you to skip. In many cases videos like this operate through a revenue share model – the site hosting the video (for example YouTube or Dailymotion) takes some of the ad revenue and the person who uploaded the content takes some too.

It is this revenue share that makes the problem even bigger than the BBC suggest. Many countries (including the US) rightly forbid organisations funding terrorism. If your company uses online advertising like this you will need to make sure that your money is not ending up in the wrong hands. You will need to look at the site's revenue share model, do due diligence and seek appropriate contractual assurances. This might be easier said than done given that it's not a perfect market and it might not be possible to vary the website provider's standard terms and conditions.

This form of advertising could as the BBC point out have real reputational issues. That's just part of the problem however. In light of the BBC's revelations most organisations will need to review their online advertising strategy.

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