

NATIVE ADVERTISING FAQs

What is native advertising?

In the principles, native advertising is defined as paid for content that is assimilated to appear like surrounding editorial content in the online environment.

What is native advertising used for, as opposed to traditional advertising?

Native advertising gives online advertisers a way to tell their stories in a more engaging way, and it provides audiences with an opportunity to interact with the content – by sharing it on social media, for example. As audiences become more and more demanding about how they engage with brands and what information they require, native advertising, through a wide range of current and emerging platforms, adapts to provide that information and interactivity.

Are advertorials and native advertising the same thing?

Yes, they are names for the same practice applied in different media. Advertorials or “special reports” are an editorial style which feature primarily in print media. Native advertising refers to a similar practice occurring online and on social media platforms, where the content may be interacted with and people can share it. In either case, it is crucial that the typical consumer should be able to discern that the content has arisen because of a commercial agreement and it is not straightforward editorial content.

Why have the native advertising principles been developed?

Earning brand trust can be a long process of consumer experience, with a brand having to demonstrate ongoing consistency, quality and reliability. Transparency is key to maintaining trust. Inserting advertising content into the stream of editorial content is proving to be successful with many native ads enjoying a similar amount of viewing time as editorial content. With the increase in such practices, comes a commensurate onus to make it clear that the content is a paid placement. This principle applies also to the online media outlet which relies on trust to build its audience. So it is in all stakeholders’ interests that there is transparency and that the nature of the relationship is adequately disclosed.

What is the objective of native advertising principles?

The AANA Code of Ethics sets the standard for marketing communications to be legal, decent, honest and truthful whatever the media and whatever the method. The objective of the native advertising principles is for a reasonable consumer to be able to distinguish between what is paid advertising content and what is editorial content.

What are the principles?

The key principles are to:

- Provide consumers with prominently visible cues to enable them to immediately understand that they are engaging with paid for marketing content that is not editorially independent.
- Ensure that publishers and/or providers of native content distribution use a prominently visible label that demonstrates in clear language that a commercial arrangement is in place.

Do the AANA Codes apply to native advertising?

Yes. The AANA Codes apply to advertising and marketing communications in any medium and complaints about the content of native advertising can be made to the Advertising Standards Bureau.

Do the native advertising principles form part of the AANA Codes?

The principles have been developed to provide best practice guidance to industry. They do not form part of the AANA Codes and complaints about the format of native advertising should be made to the advertiser and/or publisher.

And if consumers are not satisfied with a response from the advertiser or publisher what should they do?

It is in the commercial and reputational interest of both the publisher and advertiser to ensure transparency when it comes to communicating with consumers. So it is unlikely that they will not respond appropriately to such queries or complaints. This is particularly true as consumers are highly likely to exercise their option to raise their concern via a public comment on the publisher's site or via the brands' social media platforms.

But aren't there well-documented instances of inadequate disclosure in traditional media. For example, journalists accepting paid-for trips from companies to promote their products and not disclosing that? If such practices are rife in traditional media, how can consumers be confident that such practices will not be even more prevalent in the online/social media space.

Firstly, the evidence would suggest that instances of inadequate disclosure in traditional media are the exception rather than the rule. Given the consumer empowerment of social media and the ability for consumers to voice their dissatisfaction in a highly public way, it is less, not more likely, that such practices would thrive.

Why are advertisers using native advertising more now?

The reach of the internet and social media has changed the way advertisers communicate with people, opening up greater lines of communication. Audiences are much more demanding now, they want more than just one-way communication, they want to engage and interact and have a dialogue. Native advertising, through the internet and social media, provides brands with ways of doing this. It allows brand to tell their story in a way that resonates with their audience.

Isn't native advertising designed specifically to trick people into thinking it is editorial content?

No, it is a legitimate technique when executed properly. Trust is an essential aspect of the relationship that successful brands have with their consumers, brands can engage in story-telling and news delivery as long and consumers will welcome that engagement as long as it is transparent. Native advertising can run the risk of being confused with editorial content if best practice guidelines are not followed and this is not something that advertisers, or the platforms they advertise on, would not want to happen, as it would risk the all important trust relationship that they have with their audiences.

The native advertising principles provide a clear guide about how marketers can ensure that a typical consumer will be able to distinguish between what is paid advertising content and what is editorial content.