

[DE] State media authorities' advertising transparency check

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The GIM market research institute has published a study entitled "Transparenz-Check" (transparency check), commissioned by the *Direktorenkonferenz der Landesmedienanstalten* (Conference of State Media Authority Directors – DLM). Based on an online representative survey, the study investigates social media users' ability to identify commercial content and the importance of labelling commonly used on popular platforms. It clearly shows that, for half of those who responded, clear labelling is the most important factor in their ability to recognise advertising. People who are well informed about the media are also more likely to be able to recognise advertising.

Transparency is an important tool to safeguard media users' freedom to form opinions. In the fast-moving digital world in particular, a clear distinction between commercial and editorial media content can prevent users from being misled. Advertising must also be labelled on social media platforms in accordance with the advertising rules of the *Medienstaatsvertrag* (state media treaty – MStV) and *Telemediengesetz* (Telemedia Act – TMG). Instagram stories, TikTok clips and Facebook posts are increasingly influencing the formation of public opinion in Germany. Many providers of such content have become extremely influential in recent years. In order to help users distinguish between editorial content and advertising, advertisers are required to follow certain labelling rules. Through their supervisory role and their work to promote media literacy, the media authorities ensure that media usage is transparent.

Having focused in recent years on raising the awareness of influencer marketing, which is still a very recent phenomenon but one that is becoming increasingly important both economically and socially, the state media authorities are now turning their attention to the consistent enforcement of advertising rules online.

The "transparency check" on commercial advertising also examines so-called "brand stories". These advertorials resemble editorial content but are in fact advertising. Only 14% of respondents correctly recognised an example of this. Almost half (48%) thought it was journalistic information. This was mainly because it came from a well-known source, of which 61% of people said was the reason for their answer. Only a fifth of those who correctly identified the advertorial mentioned the "brand story" label, which does not meet the media authorities'

guidelines. Advertorials should be labelled as “advertising” or “advertisements”.

The “transparency check” on commercial advertising also shows that people who are more media-savvy can spot commercial content more easily. A post labelled as advertising was correctly identified by 90% of users with a high level of media knowledge, but only by 32% of those with low media knowledge. For the purposes of the study, media knowledge was measured using a quiz.

Influencers and advertisers can find out when and how content should be labelled by consulting the media authorities’ guidelines on labelling of advertising in online media, which are continuously updated.

Die medienanstalten, Transparency-Check zur kommerziellen Werbung - Wirkt die Kennzeichnung von Medieninhalten?

https://www.die-medienanstalten.de/fileadmin/user_upload/die_medienanstalten/Forschung/Transparenzcheck/Chart-Report_Transparenz-Check_kommerzielle_Werbung.pdf

The media authorities, Transparency Check on commercial advertising - Does labelling of media content work?

