

Protecting your brand from association with fake news

By [Alfie Jay](#), issued by [Algoa FM](#)

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In what appears to be a 'mad rush' away from traditional and proven ways of communicating with their customers, many companies are allowing their brands and messages to be placed between fake news and questionable posts.

Company reputations and brands run the risk of suffering collateral damage by being associated with the plague of fake news surrounding hot-off-the-press topics.

Do you really want your message to appear alongside a post which proclaims that it has been proven that the current pandemic escaped from a sample of pixie moon dust?

Having your brand in close proximity to sensationalised (clickbait) posts puts your credibility at risk.

Readers may assume that you placed your advertisement either ahead of or behind a particular post because you agree with its contents.

Ask yourself, is this third-party algorithm designed in such a way that it is making the right decisions for my brand?



Alfie Jay, managing director of Algoa FM

The veteran advertising executive, Chris Brewer, says in his latest "Brewers Droop": "Social media is like the parson's egg – good in places and disgusting in others. With a few (very few) exceptions, it disseminates fake news; hate; racism; extreme irritation and basically rubbish. A handful of our very good writers get published on the internet from time to time but who knows how many take any notice?"

As the head of Algoa FM, I am naturally biased towards radio, of which Brewer says 'it works'.

A station like Algoa FM 'works' for advertisers and listeners because we put credibility and their needs first. Our news team's maxim is 'we'd rather be right than first'.

Or, as historian and author Yuval Noah Harari put it in the opening line of his latest book, *21 Lessons for the 21st Century*: "In a world deluged by irrelevant information, clarity is power."

Our commitment to fact extends into our online presence.

We are among Brewer's 'very few exceptions' that share quality content and listeners have taken note.

A recent Colony Live study found that the majority (69%) of respondents rely primarily on the radio for their Covid-19 information, followed by television (53%), news websites or news mobile apps (46%) and then social media (41%).

At Algoa FM, the figures confirm that there is a strong correlation between the credibility of the radio station and its online presence.

Both we and our advertisers know just how many people take 'notice' of the content in our online presence.

Visits to the Algoa FM website and social media pages spike almost every time we report on a major announcement prior to the pandemic and now during the lockdown.

Online traffic to Algoa FM's social media pages has increased by 44% during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Visitors click through from the social media pages to our website, which has fact-checked and curated content that adds to the credibility of the advertising messages displayed on the site.

To answer the question posed earlier, the content in your feed is prioritised by the likelihood that you actually want to see it and we've seen results through our integrated and targeted approach.

Algoa FM listeners hear it on the news (which they know is credible), check their social feeds and then visit the website for more detail or to be able to spend more time analysing the information.

Advertisers who place careful and strategic thought into their image and how they spend their money are observing approaches of this nature that prove the success and are in a less questionable space because you get to choose where you go.

Our sales team is seeing a trend towards advertisers seeing the value in more integrated offerings.

Our clients are also realising that radio seamlessly integrates with their social media and digital strategies, thus creating more reach and frequency for their campaigns, a known fact from countless studies done the world over.

Thirty years ago, it would have sounded foreign for any brand other than air-conditioning manufacturers or air-conditioning retailers to sponsor weather reports.

But, over time, the advertising community realised that 'the point of connection' had nothing to do with the weather, but everything to do with the audience.

I've heard so many ad agencies and corporates say that they don't want their brand associated with the news because it is negative and filled with murder, rape and corruption.

But here's the thing: audiences with high levels of disposable income want to be informed, which is exactly why they 'tune in' to listen to the news or visit the news pages on our website.

Covid-19 may have amplified the figures but 'consumer behaviour' with respect to accessing their news was no different prior to the lockdown.

Radio, more so than other mediums, also carefully curates the content on our websites, which, as a result, attract millions of impressions to an environment free of fake news, questionable posts and random algorithm placement.

In an era where fake news is widespread, people are turning to brands they trust and Algoa FM's philosophy is to report the facts - do so fairly, accurately and within context; all the while serving the interests of the audience and advertisers and 'that isn't ever going to change!'

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alfie Jay is the managing director of Algoa FM

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