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META DISPUTES 10% OF THE ADS IT SERVES ARE SCAMS



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Published on: 10th November 2025 at 10:19 AM

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Meta has challenged the premise of a Reuters investigation that found around 10 per cent (\$16 billion) of its advertising revenue is generated from scam ads. Those kinds of ads include promotions for "fraudulent e-commerce and investment schemes, illegal online casinos and the sale of banned medical products".

Citing leaked internal documents from the social media company, Reuters reported that Meta serves users an estimated 15 billion "higher risk" scam advertisements every day, earning about \$7 billion in annualised revenue from this category.

ADVERTISING



The company only bans advertisers if its automated systems predict they are at least 95 per cent certain to be committing fraud. Meta will charge higher rates for ads that it believes are suspicious but do not meet the 95 per cent mark to act as a deterrent.

Documents seen by Reuters noted Meta was actively trying to reduce the prevalence of scam ads, including targets of cutting scam ads by 50 per cent in some markets.

A Meta spokesperson told B&T the company does not agree with the premise of the Reuters report and that it is investing more to tackle the problem.

"We aggressively fight fraud and scams because people on our platforms don't want this

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content, legitimate advertisers don't want it and we don't want it either. Scammers are persistent criminals whose efforts, often driven by ruthless cross-border criminal networks that operate on a global scale, continue to grow in sophistication and complexity," the spokesperson said.



"As scam activity becomes more persistent and sophisticated, so do our efforts. Unfortunately, the leaked documents present a selective view that distorts Meta's approach to fraud and scams by focusing on our efforts to assess the scale of the challenge, not the full range of actions we have taken to address the problem."

Meta said the 10 per cent figure was "a rough and overly-inclusive estimate rather than a definitive or final figure; in fact, subsequent review revealed that many of these ads weren't violating at all".

The spokesperson added: "The assessment was done to validate our planned integrity investments – including in combatting frauds and scams – which we did."

Meta said that in the last 15 months, reports from users about scam ads have declined by more than 50 per cent and that so far this year, Meta has removed more than 134 million pieces of scam ad content.

Scam ads have previously targeted several high profile Australians on Meta platforms, including mining moguls Andrew Forrest and Gina Rinehart, footballer Sam Kerr and TV personalities Eddie McGuire, Allison Langdon, Karl Stefanovic and David Koch.

Read next: [An update of Meta's efforts to tackle scam ads](#)

A 'balancing act'

Bench Media co-founder and CEO Ori Gold told B&T that Meta deserves credit for putting proper numbers on the scale of scam-ad revenue and for setting clear targets to reduce it. "Most platforms would never make that level of detail public," he said.

"At the same time, the internal documents point to a real tension in how priorities are set. When so much revenue comes from high-risk advertisers, enforcement turns into a balancing act that can easily work against user safety and overall platform quality. That shows up in what people see every day and in how much trust they place in the ads around them."

Gold said that Meta could put in more effort into supporting users and advertisers.

"The broader effect is hard to ignore. Scam ads create financial harm, push misinformation into the mainstream and weaken confidence in digital environments. Meta is putting effort into detection technology, which matters, yet the support experience still feels inaccessible for both users and advertisers. If the company wants to rebuild trust, improving the path to real support needs to sit alongside any technical improvements."

TrinityP3 founder and global chief executive Darren Woolley told B&T Meta's reporting of scam ads is part of a wider problem with advertising fraud in digital ecosystems.

"Ad Fraud is traditionally considered to be an issue for open programmatic. The walled gardens, who mark their own homework, have consistently maintained it does not impact them as they maintain control over either advertising environments. But this report shows that ad fraud has the potential to infect all aspects of advertising," Woolley said.

"Yet, it is considered by many to simply be a cost of doing business. Good business if you can get away with it at this scale. But it is what happens when suppliers get to mark their own homework – they always come out a winner."

The Global Anti-Scam Alliance, which researches scam trends and includes leaders from Meta, Google, and other platforms on its advisory board, estimates that victims collectively

meta, Google, and other platforms on its already [sobering](#) [situation](#) that remains consistently lost at least a trillion dollars last year. Its 2025 Global State of Scams report found 70 per cent of adults have encountered a scam in the last 12 months and nearly a quarter have lost money to a scam.

Over the weekend, [Woolley penned a piece in Campaign Asia](#) that questions why digital ad fraud is not taken more seriously by advertisers when it costs businesses more than \$100 billion annually.

“If a major bank lost 15 to 20 per cent of annual transactions to organised theft, heads would roll, regulators would step in and police forces would mobilise worldwide. Yet the programmatic ecosystem budgets for similar losses as inevitable. It’s this mindset that fuels the problem—and makes ad fraud the perfect side hustle,” he wrote.

“Cleaning up fraud would also force a painful reset of KPIs. If an agency’s impression volume suddenly dropped by 20 per cent because the invalid traffic was removed, marketers would panic, campaign performance reports would look catastrophic, and budgets would be questioned. The industry is addicted to inflated vanity metrics. Facing the truth requires collective bravery that few are willing to show.”

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