Twitter Thread by Nandini Jammi



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The biggest story in tech no one's talking about is Uber discovering they'd been defrauded out of $100M - or 2/3 of their ad spend.

And all bc Sleeping Giants kept bugging them to block their ads on Breitbart.

I was so surprised when Kevin Frisch, Uber's ex-Head of Acquisition reached out to me one day on LinkedIn to tell me he found this epic fraud bc they actually DID block their Breitbart ads but somehow the ads were still slipping thru. ■

Uber was in deep shit in 2017 because Sleeping Giants was on their case for their Breitbart ads, followed by #DeleteUber.

Kevin said in an interview last year that we were a pain in their ass and he wished we'd get hit by a bus lol

https://t.co/74s3AZPuHT

Uber DID actually quietly block their Breitbart ads early on, but our followers kept seeing them and so we kept tweeting @ CEO Travis.

Travis was seeing our tweets and would ping Kevin saying "WTF. Have you not handled this yet?"

So Kevin - who is embarrassed bc he had instructed all vendors to block Breitbart (!!) - figures out which ones are letting the ads slip thru & pauses them. It's ~10% of their total budget, $150M.

A significant % when they've already lost so many riders due to #DeleteUber.

He braced for a big hit to new user acquisition. But what happened was...nothing. No change in performance.

Let's do some math here. 10% of $150M is $15M. It seems like spending that $15M had NO impact at all on their business.

So where was this $15M going? For the first time, Kevin starts pulling log files & auditing vendors.

He begins seeing weird things like users clicking on ads and then being logged into Uber 2 seconds later...physically impossible.

Turns out their vendors were making shit up.

For ex, one ad network launched “battery saver” style apps in Google Play, giving them root access to your phone.

When you type the word “Uber” into your Google Play, it auto-fires a click to make it look like you clicked on an Uber ad and attribute the install to themselves.■

This shit is BRAZEN, right? So at this point, Kevin turns off 2/3 of their ad spend...and once again, no change in performance!!!

Over $100M worth of ads was doing jack shit. Uber’s customers were coming in organically, on the strength of their brand, WOM, referrals, etc.

After knocking out $100M in fraud, Kevin is now working with about $50M.

So now he turns to general campaign performance & optimization (the standard stuff) and realizes he can knock off another $20M in wasteful spend.

So in the end, Uber could have met all their growth & acquisition goals for about a little more than 1/10 of the price tag.

Lol.

Please listen to the whole extraordinary interview w/ Kevin & @themktgtoday!

Listen here:
https://t.co/gfZYQwyXy7

Btw, we’re uncovering the whole damn adtech grift in our newsletter, BRANDED.

Subscribe here!
https://t.co/kRChgX05Ic

The screenshots from my first tweet is from @AdContrarian’s newsletter. He keeps an eye on all the shenanigans.

Read more here:
https://t.co/PTvMZuSxHm