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**August 14, 2007**  
**On Glam and Publisher Branded Ad Networks**

The controversy about Glam's traffic stats just won't die. This week the debate reignited in a [VentureBeat story](#) and a [TechCrunch post](#) ("Is Glam a Sham?"), both evidently triggered by a rumor the company is pursuing a \$200 million private funding round.

Critics harsh on Glam for touting its "largest destination" status among aggregators of women online, when the bulk of its inventory comes from a big ad network -- and one that's not overwhelmingly female-centric at that. (The Glam Network has large traffic contributions from MyYearbook.com among other gender-neutral sites). Certainly Glam deserves some of the rough treatment it's getting, mainly for comparing itself to iVillage in the first place, which as ClickZ covered [earlier this summer](#) is off-base. Comparing it to Gawker Media's audience -- younger, more style conscious -- makes as much sense.

Yet Glam was the first small-time premium publisher I'm aware of (please [correct me if I'm wrong](#)) to experiment with repping off-site inventory to kick up display ad revenues. Of course, Google, Yahoo, AOL and Microsoft all long ago built ad networks while maintaining central properties, and they succeeded to the point where high-end publishers with direct sales forces almost seemed to have ceded the whole concept to them. Then Glam jumped in, and many others have followed suit, including WaPo, MSNBC.com, Heavy.com and, yes, iVillage.

Plenty of people dislike the model Glam pioneered, feeling publishers should own their ad inventory. Gawker's Nick Denton told me as much a few months back. However, I was also present weeks later when Tacoda Chairman Dave Morgan counseled Denton to ramp up an ad network of his own. (Denton's response: "You're evil, you know that?" Morgan's retort: "Hey, I'm all about enabling free content online.") Denton seemed half convinced by conversation's end, so look out for a Gawker extended ad network.

Does it matter that Glam's central brand is weak and its traffic sourced all over the Web? I like David Card's [relativist analyst](#). For big brand advertisers and the agencies that rep them: not if Glam can guarantee premium placement. For direct marketers: very little. For consumers: oh yeah. I'd add that it can be tough to court that first, most lucrative group of constituents if you haven't already built a strong consumer brand. Glam's trying to make up for that with lots of ad sales firepower. So far, the strategy seems to be working out fine.

Posted by Zachary Rodgers at August 14, 2007 1:07 PM

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