In 2016, social media was the **battleground**(поле боя) in the U.S. presidential election

as Republican and Democratic candidates **sought to win**(стремившийся победить) the hearts and minds of voters.

Four years later, as the nation takes to the polls again,

the role of social media and the influence of advertisers are taking center stage.

You have freedom of speech, but you **don't have a right to reach**(не имеют права дотянуться).

It's the idea that you can say hateful stuff on Facebook, but no one else should have to see it.

And no brand should ever be paying for it. And you should never profit from it.

Those are the lines you can draw and that these platforms are currently not taking responsibility for.

Facebook makes billions of dollars from advertising. In July, more than 1,000 companies

pulled their ads from the platform over concerns they were placed next to

racist or other harmful content, and were in effect funding it.

The move was part of the StopHateForProfit campaign

and included companies like Starbucks, Unilever and Coca-Cola,

which called on Facebook to do more **to tackle hateful posts**(для борьбы с ненавистническими постами) on the platform.

But there are no easy answers as to how this can be achieved,

especially since the content revolves around complex issues

such as politics, **misinformation**(дезинформация) and freedom of speech.

For years, social media platforms have resisted calls

to take tougher action against hateful and **divisive content**(противоречивое содержание).

As early as 2013, advertisers such as Japanese automaker Nissan

and British financial institution Nationwide **withdrew**(отозвал) their advertising on Facebook

after concerns about offensive content on the site.

Then, Facebook admitted that its “systems to identify and remove hate speech

have failed to work as effectively” and it remained committed

to make its platform a “safe and respectful place.”

In the years that followed, critics continue to heap pressure on the tech giants

as major events such as elections and human rights issues **unfolded**(развёрнутый) on social media.

These issues resurfaced in 2020 after a Black man named George Floyd

was killed in **police custody**(содержание под стражей в полиции) in Minneapolis in May.

After protests broke out across the country, U.S. President Donald Trump

took to Facebook and Twitter to suggest he would take military action and stated:

“when the **looting**(мародерство) starts, the shooting starts.”

Twitter hid Trump’s tweet for **glorifying violence**(восхваление насилия), saying it went against its policies,

but Facebook declined to act, saying that his speech should be “**scrutinized out in the open**.”( рассмотренный на открытом заседании)

In July, an audit suggested some of Facebook’s decisions were “**significant setbacks for civil rights**(существенные препятствия для гражданских прав).”

A Facebook spokesperson said in a statement to CNBC that the company is making investments

to keep its community safe and working with outside experts to review and update its policies.

"We know we have more work to do, and we’ll continue to work with civil rights groups,

the Global Alliance for Responsible Media, and other experts

to develop even more tools, technology and policies to continue this fight,” Facebook added.

Facebook has also had to deal with staff staging a virtual walkout

over its stance on the president’s post, as well as advertisers pausing campaigns.

**One estimate**(По одной из оценок) suggests that the ad boycott from large brands

only equated to about 1% of Facebook’s total ad revenue,

because most of its advertising dollars come from small-to-medium sized businesses.

What do brands want from Facebook, because they have anti-hate speech policies already?

Brands want Facebook to enforce those policies more strictly.

So, Mark Zuckerberg, the CEO of Facebook, has had a pretty open approach to speech on Facebook

and has been reluctant to censor all but **the most heinous sorts of speech**(самая отвратительная речь).

A lot of it is consumer driven. Consumers are starting to say that they want brands

that are socially responsible and want brands to advertise on platforms that are socially responsible.

Isn't the bigger picture about the risk of more regulation happening?

Some government could try to step in and start regulating them more.

So, I think Facebook is definitely paying attention to this

and trying to kind of please all parties the best they can.

In 2017, L’Oreal, Coca-Cola, Microsoft and others pulled advertising from YouTube

over the misplacement of ads next to extremist content.

And brands’ concerns over social media go back further than that.

Ann Mukherjee is the CEO and chairman of alcohol company Pernod Ricard North America,

which makes drinks like Absolut vodka and Jameson whiskey

and she’s previously held marketing roles at large companies.

I probably first started with social media way back, you know, ten, fifteen years ago,

when YouTube was just first starting and everyone was just **enamored**(очарованный)

by these technology platforms and the promise of them.

And I would tell you, in those very early days, there was a lot of talk, even then, about responsibility.

Are people doing, and using, the internet for the right reasons?

Pernod Ricard was one of the companies that took advertising off social media

as part of the StopHateForProfit campaign and has instead put some of those dollars

towards creating apps for people to report hate or misinformation online.

Mukherjee says it did so because people now want companies to take a stand on social issues.

We live in a world today where consumers are not just buying brands.

They want to buy into brands. They want to understand your values,

what you stand for and what you stand against.

Employees today want to join companies that they can also buy into.

So, this notion of understanding that doing good allows you to do well, I think is becoming very important.

And social responsibility as you build profit has to be tied together.

It isn't just about what the brand is doing from a product perspective.

It's about what the brand believes in from a values perspective.

So, this is a very different way of thinking about marketing

and thinking about it in a much more responsible way.

Amy Williams is tapping into that desire for a new type of marketing.

She left her job at an advertising agency to start Good-Loop, an online platform

that lets people donate to charity after they’ve watched at least 15 seconds of an ad online.

She founded the business in 2016, around the same time

that packaged goods company Unilever published a study showing that

its sustainable brands grew at a faster rate than others in its portfolio.

Unilever is one of the brands that took money away from Facebook,

took advertising money away from Facebook. What was your reaction when they did that?

It's a very powerful decision they've made, and it's really exciting to see that movement grow

and to see hundreds of brands around the world start to really think about what their ad money fuels.

At a time when we have protesters on the streets fighting for racial equality,

and they're wearing facemasks to protect from a global crisis,

the role of brands to help society has never been stronger.

It's really powerful to think about one of the biggest actions

a brand has in the world, which is the dollars they spend on media.

There is a huge volume of photos, videos and text that get uploaded every single day,

and it’s very difficult for the social media sites to monitor all of it.

Can they ever really police all of the content?

A social platform is like a microcosm of humanity. Humanity comes in all sorts of shades,

and you can never make it purely good. But I think it's more about intent

and what brands expect to see if they're going to fund a platform,

is an intent to protect their users and the most vulnerable.

And an intent to filter and prioritize the information that is valid.

So, what’s the future for the ad-funded internet? And how can the platforms find the balance

between freedom of speech and what some see as **censorship**(цензура)?

Advertisers are definitely moving their money online digitally. And that's going to continue, I think.

With things down turning now a bit, brands are spending less.

But I think that brands are going to start to spend more once the economy picks up

and possibly also after the election.

And how do the platforms navigate that line between freedom of speech and censorship?

People like President Trump are saying that the platforms have a liberal bias

and are really censoring conservative content rather than just censoring extreme content.

So, I think this is a really tricky issue moving forward, of how platforms are going to navigate this,

deciding what's hate speech and what is not.

For Amy Williams, advertisers might start to shift money to places taking positive action.

The evolution of that conversation has to be, what can we fund instead that's positive?

You know, I think there are some fantastic examples, like Brand Advance is a network of publishers

who are all written by diverse content producers.

So, it's a really great way for brands to get their ads in front of consumers

whilst supporting a much more diverse and inclusive publisher network.

Things may be set to change at Facebook, as an independent body

called the Facebook Oversight Board is set to be operational later this year,

with the power to review photos and videos posted on the company’s platforms.

But it might not be up and running until after one critical event: the U.S. presidential election.

Thanks for watching.

What do you think of brands taking their ads off Facebook?

Let us know in the comments below and don’t forget to subscribe.