

TECH

Facebook to Identify State-Run Media

Clear labeling on platform is one of several steps intended to protect integrity of 2020 U.S. elections



Facebook has faced widespread criticism of its political advertising policies and its handling of misinformation. PHOTO: ALASTAIR PIKE/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES

By Patrick Thomas

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Facebook Inc. [FB 2.09%▲](#) said it was taking additional steps to protect the integrity of the 2020 U.S. elections, including clearer identification of state-run media on its platform.

The social-media giant, which held a conference call Monday with reporters about election preparedness, also said it removed four networks of accounts—three of which originated in Iran—for inauthentic behavior.

The company said it took down dozens of Facebook accounts, pages and groups, as well as Instagram accounts targeting users in the U.S., North Africa and Latin America not for what was posted, but because the people spreading the information worked in coordination and used fake accounts to misrepresent themselves.

The social-media giant said it would begin flagging such outlets as being wholly or partially under the editorial control of their home government. In early 2020, the company plans to extend the labeling to specific posts and, as well, to its Instagram platform.

“We will hold these pages to a higher standard of transparency because they combine the opinion-making influence of a media organization with the strategic backing of a state,” Facebook said in a blog post on its website.

The company said it is also adding a security tool for political candidates to guard against hacking attempts.

Facebook has faced immense criticism of its political-advertising policies and its handling of misinformation. Earlier this month, Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D., Mass.) attempted to turn those policies against the company, running an ad with a false claim about Facebook Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg. In a speech last week, Mr. Zuckerberg said Facebook didn’t fact-check political ads because people should be able to see for themselves what politicians say.

“Even if we wanted to ban political ads, it’s not clear where we’d draw the line,” Mr. Zuckerberg said Thursday at Georgetown University.

However, Facebook said it would ban paid advertising that suggested voting was useless or meaningless, or advised people not to vote.

To reduce the spread of misinformation, Facebook pledged to put more prominent labels on posts proven false by third-party fact checkers.

The company also said it will also add more information about the owner of pages if it notices a failure to disclose the organization behind pages, leading people to think they are run independently. Facebook said it was adding a tab that included the organization’s legal name and verified city, phone number or website.

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