

★ Facebook Warned That It May Lose a Key Seal of Approval for Ad Measurement

https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-warned-that-it-may-lose-a-key-seal-of-approval-for-ad-measurement-11588350494?st=d92pciv2flk2dea&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink

Updated May 1, 2020 at 12:53 pm ET

- The media industry's measurement watchdog has warned Facebook that it could be denied accreditation due to deficiencies in how its reports on the effectiveness of advertising on its products, according to a letter reviewed by The Wall Street Journal.
- The letter highlights continued tension between the world's largest social network and advertisers, who are seeking to verify what they are getting in exchange for billions of dollars spent on Facebook's platforms.
- The notice from the Media Rating Council says that Facebook has failed to address advertiser concerns arising from a 2019 audit performed by Ernst & Young, most notably concerning how it measures and reports data about video advertisements.
- Accreditation from the watchdog is considered a signal of trustworthiness to advertisers.
- George Ivie, MRC's executive director, said the Facebook audit is "at an interim stage" and declined to comment further.
- The audit process arose after the revelation in 2016 that Facebook had overstated its video viewing statistics for more than two years.
- Among the issues is the company's failure to adequately separate statistics for video advertising from those for static display ads, which prevents advertisers from making meaningful comparisons among those platforms.
- The watchdog wants more information about Facebook's efforts to monitor fake accounts on the platform and data about ad impressions served to "invalid accounts."

Facebook-Backed Libra Project Gets New CEO

https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-libra-adds-new-ceo-as-cryptocurrency-project-gets-a-reboot-11588782600?st=ss4nxda3hglftz&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink

May 6, 2020 at 12:30 pm ET

- Facebook Inc.'s cryptocurrency project, Libra, is bringing on HSBC Holdings PLC's top attorney to lead the effort as it revamps following an icy reception last year.
- Stuart Levey, a former U.S. Treasury undersecretary who has spent the last eight years as HSBC's chief legal officer, said he would leave the bank this summer to become the Switzerland-based Libra Association's chief executive.
- The Libra project made a rocky public debut last June.
- After the first version of the proposal met a cool reception from regulators around the world, major payments industry partners including Visa Inc., Mastercard Inc. and PayPal Holdings Inc. dropped out of the project.
- The association is now seeking approval to launch from Swiss regulators, who are evaluating Libra in consultation with regulators from 20 different countries.

Vista Follows Facebook Into India's Jio With \$1.5 Billion Digital Bet

https://www.wsj.com/articles/vista-follows-facebook-into-indias-jio-with-1-5-billion-digital-bet-11588926647?st=9ixanx1p2tqqs1u&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink

May 8, 2020 at 4:30 am ET

- Indian telecommunications and technology titan Jio Platforms Ltd. said it is raising 113.67 billion rupees (\$1.5 billion) from U.S. private-equity firm Vista Equity Partners, the latest in a string of investments as the Mumbai-based firm trims its debt.

- The investment comes after Facebook last month said it would pay \$5.7 billion for just under 10% of Jio and days after another American private-equity firm, Silver Lake, said on Sunday that it is pouring \$750 million into Jio. "
- Reliance has said it is aiming to be net debt free by next year.
- Jio has attracted more than 388 million subscribers with inexpensive mobile-data plans, and is now moving into e-commerce as legions of people in the country of 1.3 billion begin transacting online for the first time.
- The Jio deal is Facebook's second-largest investment in an outside company behind its \$22 billion acquisition of WhatsApp in 2014.

● Facebook Messenger Kids: How Young Is Too Young for a Chat App?

https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-messenger-kids-brilliant-idea-or-big-mistake-11589275801?st=ejd6njaek8qio7d&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink

May 12, 2020 at 5:30 am ET

- With kids becoming increasingly antsy at home, many who are still too young to have their own phones are begging for a way to chat with friends during the coronavirus pandemic.
- The go-to app, not surprisingly, is Messenger Kids, which Facebook created in late 2017 for the 12-and-under set.
- The number of daily active accounts on Messenger Kids has grown by more than 3.5 times since the beginning of March, according to a Facebook spokeswoman. "
- Messenger Kids was downloaded 2.8 million times in April, compared with 1.9 million times in March, according to mobile data and analytics provider App Annie.
- Parents can restrict the hours when their children can use the app, and can view all activity.
- Parents are in full control of who their children can communicate with in the app.
- Through a dashboard in the parent's own Facebook app, parents can see when their kids are using the app and whether they are making video calls or texting.
- The 1998 Children's Online Privacy Protection Act was intended to prevent tech companies from collecting and disseminating the personal information of children under the age of 13 for marketing purposes.
- Facebook says it doesn't automatically migrate kids' accounts to regular Facebook accounts when they turn 13, and if they continue using Messenger Kids after that, their parents still retain full control of the account.
- But once 13, kids can create their own social-media accounts without their parents' permission. "
- With Messenger Kids, Ms. Elgersma and others point to concerns about privacy, given the breach of tens of millions of Facebook users' data by Cambridge Analytica, a data firm that Facebook suspended after learning it misled the social-media giant and violated its policy for handling user data during the 2016 presidential election. "
- Facebook pointed me to a blog written by the company's chief privacy officer, which said Messenger Kids collects children's names and all of the content they share through it—including the texts—solely to personalize the experience.
- The company says it might share information with third-party service providers, but only for the purpose of improving the app.
- It doesn't sell kids' data, and since there are no ads in the app, it isn't used for targeting either.
- The app has been a positive experience for her daughter and has even led her to communicate more frequently with family members, she said.
- What You Can Do Children's media experts say parents who allow their children to chat with friends using Messenger Kids can follow some guidelines to ease them into social media.
- Encourage your kids to be respectful of how often and at what time they are texting or video-calling friends.

● Facebook Buys Giphy, Will Make It Part of Instagram Operations

https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-buys-giphy-will-make-it-part-of-instagram-operations-11589561384?st=pfn1vylhgzikzpu&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink

Updated May 15, 2020 at 1:29 pm ET

- Facebook Inc. is buying Giphy, a popular online platform where users can search for animated pictures.
- Facebook said the graphics interchange format, or GIF, platform will be part of the company's Instagram operations but didn't disclose the terms of the deal.
- Facebook—which said its apps make up half of Giphy's traffic—is going to “further integrate their GIF library into Instagram and our other apps.”

Facebook to Shift Permanently Toward More Remote Work After Coronavirus

https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-to-shift-permanently-toward-more-remote-work-after-coronavirus-11590081300?st=jfm2dbmjtbf6nbf&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink

Updated May 21, 2020 at 3:16 pm ET

- The remote-work changes for new hires will roll out initially in the U.S. and apply only to senior engineers at first.
- With individual team leaders' approval, new recruits will be offered the choice to work from home, and current employees around the world with strong performance reviews will be able to apply to do so.
- Mark Zuckerberg said a potential upside to the policy change would be in enabling more demographic and ideological diversity within Facebook's workforce.
- Within 10 years, Mr. Zuckerberg expects as much as half of Facebook's employees—who currently number more than 45,000—to work from home, he said in an interview before the announcement.
- Mr. Zuckerberg's plan sets Facebook on a course for a long-term change at a time when companies across industries are rethinking how they function amid pandemic-induced remote-work requirements.
- San Francisco-based cryptocurrency exchange Coinbase Inc. on Wednesday said it also would remain "remote-first" after coronavirus restrictions are lifted, and e-commerce company Shopify Inc. said Thursday that most of its employees will work remotely in the future.
- Other tech leaders are less sanguine about staffers staying home.
- Evan Spiegel, CEO of messaging company Snap Inc., has joked with his team that he wants to work from home forever because he feels more productive and fulfilled being able to spend so much time with his family, according to a person familiar with his thinking.
- But he has also said that he thinks the idea of knowledge workers working from home indefinitely is dystopian, and expressed concern that some have found it miserable.
- Snap executives met to begin preparing their return-to-work plans when the shutdown started in March, the person said.
- Internal Facebook surveys show the option of working from home is popular with employees, Mr. Zuckerberg said, but only 20% said they were extremely or very interested in working remotely long-term.
- More than half of employees said they "really want to get back to the office as soon as possible," he said.
- Mr. Zuckerberg said that location would affect employee compensation, both for new hires and for those who relocate.
- He said that Facebook will monitor employees' locations and those who mislead the company would face "severe" penalties. "
- Overall, though, Mr. Zuckerberg said he doesn't expect Facebook to realize significant cost savings from the changes.
- A dispersed workforce, Mr. Zuckerberg said, will enable more demographic and ideological diversity if recruits aren't required to work in tech strongholds like the San Francisco Bay Area. "

- It might be closer to 10 years than five" before half of Facebook's employees are working remotely, Mr. Zuckerberg said.
- Mr. Zuckerberg said Facebook would also need to replicate what he called "some of the softer aspects" of workplace culture. "
- Facebook recently launched a new foray into group videoconferencing called Messenger Rooms, a feature Mr. Zuckerberg said on Thursday is being adapted for Facebook Workplace, its office collaboration tools.
- Workplace's paid users have risen from 3 million to 5 million during the pandemic, Facebook said Asked if he believed other major corporate players would eventually shift away from offices, Mr. Zuckerberg said he wasn't sure, adding that Facebook's reasons for starting now are specific to its business and employee base. "
- Mr. Zuckerberg suggested the change also could lead to an inversion of the standard corporate off-site meeting, saying that in the future remote employees may gather occasionally in the company's offices for "on sites" instead.

● Facebook Executives Shut Down Efforts to Make the Site Less Divisive

https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-knows-it-encourages-division-top-executives-nixed-solutions-11590507499?mod=Searchresults_pos20&page=1

May 26, 2020 at 11:38 am ET

- Our algorithms exploit the human brain's attraction to divisiveness," read a slide from a 2018 presentation. "
- If left unchecked," it warned, Facebook would feed users "more and more divisive content in an effort to gain user attention & increase time on the platform."
- That presentation went to the heart of a question dogging Facebook almost since its founding: Does its platform aggravate polarization and tribal behavior?
- Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg had in public and private expressed concern about "sensationalism and polarization."
- In essence, Facebook is under fire for making the world more divided.
- But 60% of Americans think the country's biggest tech companies are helping further divide the country, while only 11% believe they are uniting it, according to a Gallup-Knight survey in March.
- Mr. Pariser said that started to change after March 2018, when Facebook got in hot water after disclosing that Cambridge Analytica, the political-analytics startup, improperly obtained Facebook data about tens of millions of people.
- The shift has gained momentum since, he said: "The internal pendulum swung really hard to 'the media hates us no matter what we do, so let's just batten down the hatches.' "
- People who have heard him speak privately said he argues social media bears little responsibility for polarization.
- A 2016 presentation that names as author a Facebook researcher and Monica Lee, found extremist content thriving in more than one-third of large German political groups on the platform.
- Swamped with racist, conspiracy- minded and pro-Russian content, the groups were disproportionately influenced by a subset of hyperactive users, the presentation notes.
- Most of them were private The high number of extremist groups was concerning, the presentation says.
- Worse was Facebook's realization that its algorithms were responsible for their growth.
- The 2016 presentation states that "64% of all extremist group joins are due to our recommendation tools" and that most of the activity came from the platform's "Groups You Should Join" and "Discover" algorithms: "Our recommendation systems grow the problem."
- In a presentation at an international security conference in February, Mr. Zuckerberg said the company tries not to recommend groups that break its rules or are polarizing. "
- Hot-button issues One proposal sought to salvage conversations in groups derailed by hot-button issues, according to the people familiar with the team and internal documents.

- If two members of a Facebook group devoted to parenting fought about vaccinations, the moderators could establish a temporary subgroup to host the argument or limit the frequency of posting on the topic to avoid a public flame war.
- Another idea, documents show, was to tweak recommendation algorithms to suggest a wider range of Facebook groups than people would ordinarily encounter.
- Building these features and combating polarization might come at a cost of lower engagement, the Common Ground team warned in a mid-2018 document, describing some of its own proposals as "antigrowth" and requiring Facebook to "take a moral stance."
- Taking action would require Facebook to form partnerships with academics and nonprofits to give credibility to changes affecting public conversation, the document says.
- People don't trust us," said a presentation created in the summer of 2018.
- Every significant new integrity-ranking initiative had to seek the approval of not just engineering managers but also representatives of the public policy, legal, marketing and public-relations departments.
- Lindsey Shepard, a former Facebook product-marketing director who helped set up the Eat Your Veggies process, said it arose from what she believed were reasonable concerns that overzealous engineers might let their politics influence the platform. "
- Negative policy-team reviews killed efforts to build a classification system for hyperpolarized content.
- Likewise, the Eat Your Veggies process shut down efforts to suppress clickbait about politics more than on other topics.
- Accounts with hyperactive engagement were far more partisan on average than normal Facebook users, and they were more likely to behave suspiciously, sometimes appearing on the platform as much as 20 hours a day and engaging in spam-like behavior.
- Facebook's data scientists believed it could bolster the platform's defenses against spam and coordinated manipulation efforts of the sort Russia undertook during the 2016 election.
- Mr. Kaplan and other senior Facebook executives pushed back on the grounds it might harm a hypothetical Girl Scout troop, said people familiar with his comments.
- Mitigating the reach of the platform's most dedicated users would unfairly thwart them, he said.
- Mr. Kaplan in the recent interview said he didn't remember raising the Girl Scout example but was concerned about the effect on publishers who happened to have enthusiastic followings.
- The tug of war was resolved in part by the growing furor over the Cambridge Analytica scandal.

★ Facebook Tries to Friend Small Businesses Crippled by Coronavirus

https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-tries-to-friend-small-businesses-crippled-by-coronavirus-11591876800?st=m57kxb4vyomaks3&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink

June 11, 2020 at 8:00 am ET

- Enrique Marquez stopped advertising his dog-obedience classes on Facebook during the pandemic, and instead started using the platform to live-stream sessions and conduct training via chat.
- That is a trade Facebook Inc. is increasingly willing to make as it tries to turn itself into a go-to e-commerce and communication platform for small businesses crippled by the coronavirus.
- After years of moving tentatively on e-commerce, the social-media giant in recent months has announced new services aimed at helping smaller businesses such as DogWorx, Mr. Marquez's Savannah, Ga.-based company.
- Other new small-business focused products Facebook has recently launched include a click-for-delivery feature for restaurants, gift-card options and fundraisers for coronavirus-stricken businesses.
- Facebook has moved slowly on commerce in the past.
- Facebook has largely couched its efforts less as a corporate opportunity than as a chance to aid suffering businesses.
- Facebook has promoted applications to government-relief programs, paid for surveys showing that nearly a third of small businesses aren't operating and pledged \$100 million in grants and ad credits to small businesses in cities world-wide where Facebook has physical operations.

- Some of Facebook's new products might seem familiar.
- Facebook's e-commerce efforts could benefit from its other business lines.
- Most of the tools Facebook has announced are free to use.
- Its only charge for sales through Facebook Shops is a 5% payment-processing fee, lower than many online-shopping platforms.

★ Zuckerberg Lieutenant Returns to Facebook, a Year After Departure

https://www.wsj.com/articles/zuckerberg-lieutenant-returns-to-facebook-a-year-after-departure-11591899761?st=msztcxyk0ggow3q&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink

Updated June 11, 2020 at 4:39 pm ET

- Former top Facebook Inc. deputy Chris Cox is returning to the social-media giant, just over a year after leaving amid disagreements with CEO Mark Zuckerberg over the company's direction.
- Mr. Cox, who was one of Facebook's earliest engineers, announced his plans to return as the company's head of product, the job he resigned in March 2019.
- Mr. Cox, 37 years old, told people that he worried that the shift to encryption would impede detection of such criminal activity as terrorism and child trafficking, The Wall Street Journal reported in April.
- Mr. Cox also championed a push within Facebook to examine its culpability in spreading misinformation and divisive content in the years before he left, work that the company deprioritized, the Journal reported last month.
- Chris's return is the best news I could imagine for the company."
- Facebook has been roiled by employee protests, including a walkout and resignations by a handful of staffers, over its handling of content moderation issues and President Trump's use of its platform.
- Since leaving Facebook, Mr. Cox told people that he was going to focus on climate change and progressive politics.
- The header on his personal Facebook page features a Black Lives Matter stamp.
- Last year he donated money to Acronym, a Democratic digital firm, according to people familiar with the matter.
- At a conference last year, Mr. Cox told an audience that he wanted Mr. Trump out of office, but still defended the company's hands-off approach to the president on the platform. "

Facebook Aims to Register 4 Million U.S. Voters

https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-aims-to-register-4-million-u-s-voters-11592359467?st=dgkppamy1ov1lq&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink

June 16, 2020 at 10:04 pm ET

- Facebook Inc. aims to register 4 million voters before the November presidential election, as well as offer voting information and political ad controls as the social media giant grapples with ongoing controversy over what to allow on its platforms.
- Facebook said Tuesday night it would launch a Voting Information Center later this summer, with details on when and how to vote as well as relevant deadlines, ballot specifics and verified information from state and local election officials.
- Operators of online platforms are under increasing pressure to curb the spread of misleading or false information in the wake of the 2016 presidential campaign, which U.S. intelligence agencies have said was subject to foreign meddling online.
- Facebook is planning to launch a Voting Information Center (seen here in images provided by the company) later this summer.
- Mr. Zuckerberg has staunchly defended freedom of speech on the platforms. "
- Representatives of Facebook and other tech giants are scheduled to appear Thursday in a hearing before the House Intelligence Committee on election security and foreign influence.
- Dalton Smith, who is leading the Voting Information Center efforts, said Facebook has planned for months to start rolling it out in July and August, gearing up for the November election.

- Facebook registered 2 million voters leading up to the 2016 presidential election and 2 million voters ahead of the 2018 midterm elections, she said.
- Mr. Zuckerberg wrote in USA Today that Facebook surveyed U.S. adults, and more than half said they think people will need more information on how to vote this November compared with prior elections.
- Some research has shown that Facebook reminders can play a powerful role in mobilizing voters.
- On Wednesday it launches the ability for Facebook users to better control whether they see political ads, an initiative it announced in January.
- Facebook will also track spending for every U.S. Senate and House race and will launch a custom tracker for any advertiser or organization running U.S. or political issue ads in the Facebook ad library, which launched in 2018.

★● Ad Agency Encourages Clients to Join Facebook Ad Boycott

https://www.wsj.com/articles/ad-agency-encourages-clients-to-join-facebook-ad-boycott-11592517885?st=9wksbszy36kyga9&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink

Updated June 18, 2020 at 7:33 pm ET

- A prominent advertising agency is advising clients to support an ad boycott against Facebook Inc. that was recently called for by civil-rights groups, a move that comes amid growing tensions between Madison Avenue and the social network over how it polices its content.
- In an email to clients on Thursday, 360i, a digital-advertising firm owned by ad giant Dentsu Group Inc., said it supports the July ad boycott that groups including the Anti-Defamation League and the NAACP called for against Facebook on Wednesday.
- The groups urged big advertisers to pull spending from Facebook for July to protest the lack of progress the social-media giant has made enforcing its policies around hate speech and misinformation.
- Tensions between Madison Avenue and Facebook have quickly escalated because of the company's handling of some posts made by President Trump last month.
- and to better police its platforms, resulting in improvements in the removal of hate speech and other objectionable content.
- it was time for marketers to hold Facebook's leadership team accountable.
- In an interview, Mr. Harris said the way Facebook handled Mr. Trump's posts was the "tipping point" that made him speak out.
- Mediabrands said it isn't advising clients to pull their dollars from Facebook.
- Facebook's U.S. revenue from digital advertising is expected to rise about 5% this year to \$31.43 billion, according to eMarketer.
- One major marketer said it is considering suspending its Facebook ads because of the social-media company's stance.

★● Facebook Removes Trump Campaign Ads for Violating Policy on Use of Hate Symbol

https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-removes-trump-campaign-posts-ads-for-violating-policy-11592504003?st=j4o612cpurvk50l&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink

Updated June 19, 2020 at 3:32 am ET

- Facebook Inc. said it took down posts and ads for President Trump's reelection campaign because they violated the social-media giant's policy against "organized hate," marking the latest confrontation in an escalating battle over how tech companies handle controversial political content.
- A Facebook spokeswoman said the Trump campaign content had violated its standards by including a banned hate group's symbol without giving context that condemns or discusses the symbol.
- The inverted red triangle is a marking Nazis used to designate political prisoners in concentration camps, according to the Anti-Defamation League and other groups.

- The latest skirmish comes a day after the Justice Department proposed sharply curtailing longstanding legal protections for online platforms contained in a provision known as Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act of 1996.
- Twitter shielded the same message from public view and posted a label saying it glorified violence, while Facebook took no action on that post.
- Facebook Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg has said he found Mr. Trump's post offensive, but that he doesn't believe private companies should regulate political speech.
- Twitter on Thursday took a new step in moderating Mr. Trump's tweets, labeling as "manipulated media" his post carrying a doctored video that targeted CNN.
- Earlier this year, Facebook removed Trump campaign ads that referred to a census, saying they violated a company policy aimed at preventing disinformation and other interference with the nationwide 2020 census.
- Nathaniel Gleicher, Facebook's head of security policy, said during a congressional hearing Thursday that the removal of the Trump campaign content took place under the company's existing rules against hate speech. "
- Facebook previously has taken down other ads using hate group symbols, such as a swastika, a spokeswoman said.
- There are at least 30 versions of the most recent Trump campaign ads that were taken down, according to Facebook's ad library.
- Asked about its use of the inverted red triangle, the Trump campaign said the symbol is widespread.
- Brian Levin, director of the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino, said the inverted red triangle, given its history, can be used as a signal for hate groups.
- Both Messrs. Bray and Levin said they agreed with Facebook's decision to take down the Trump campaign content.
- But Eric Wilson, a Republican digital strategist, said he disagreed with Facebook's move. "

★● Public-Health Officials Targeted, Live and on Facebook

https://www.wsj.com/articles/public-health-officials-targeted-live-and-on-facebook-11592941006?st=eixcbp6ferqj8mw&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink

June 23, 2020 at 3:36 pm ET

- Opponents of social-distancing rules are using Facebook Inc. to organize and broadcast protests at the homes of health officials, sometimes using violent rhetoric, in campaigns that health authorities say amount to harassment.
- Some of the campaigns against health officials also appear to violate the social-media giant's rules against spreading coronavirus misinformation, by encouraging people to defy public-health directives on mask use that are based on widely accepted scientific thinking on combating the virus.
- Facebook told The Wall Street Journal that live-streaming protests held at health officers' homes violates its privacy rules and removed three such posts from the group.
- Facebook's rules ban harassment and doxxing, the practice of putting people's personal information on the internet so they can be harassed by others.
- An increasing number of public-health officials, across the country—myself included—are threatened with violence on a regular basis," said director of Los Angeles County's public-health department.
- In the debate about reopening the U.S., masks have emerged as a flashpoint, with some saying mandates either a manifestation of the nanny state or a slippery slope toward increasingly totalitarian conditions.
- There is no evidence that the masks are harmful for adults, and scientists have reported such measures are essential for society to reopen without a spike in disease and deaths.
- Ohio's top public-health official, Amy Acton, also resigned this month after armed protesters showed up at her house to register their displeasure with her role in the state's efforts to stop the spread of the coronavirus.
- "There's definitely a place for public comment, but this has crossed into intimidation," Ms. DeBurgh said about the protests at her members' family residences.


- The outpouring of anger toward public-health officers has caught the profession by surprise, said Lori Freeman, chief executive of the National Association of County and City Health Officials.
- Public-health officers are trying to take criticism of coronavirus restrictions into account, she said, calling protests at their homes inappropriate. "
- We've had instances in Colorado where protesters have thrown rocks through the local health department window," she said.
- In a Facebook video, one of the Freedom Angels organizers called the tactics directed at Dr. Quick generally appropriate. "
- On June 14, the Freedom Angels held a protest in front of the home of Chris Farnitano, the public-health officer for Northern California's Contra Costa County.
- Citing concessions won following the protests in Orange County, the group asked viewers on Facebook to sign up as "boots on the ground."

★● Facebook Tries to Contain Damage as Verizon Joins Ad Boycott

https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-looks-to-contain-advertising-boycott-over-hate-speech-11593120639?st=hnw0433ziwjze5&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink

Updated June 26, 2020 at 7:24 am ET

- Facebook executives in emails and calls with advertisers and ad agencies over the past week have conveyed that they are taking seriously the concerns of civil-rights groups about the proliferation of hate speech and misinformation on its platform.
- But they are also maintaining that business interests won't dictate their policies, according to people familiar with the discussions. "
- We set our policies based on principles rather than business interests."
- Facebook executives are also vowing to invest more to tackle hate on the platform including continuing the development of artificial-intelligence technology that can detect hate speech, according to the email.
- Several advertisers such as ice-cream maker Ben & Jerry's, Patagonia Inc., VF Corp.'s North Face, Eddie Bauer and Recreational Equipment Inc. (REI) have said they would halt advertising on the platform.
- Their decisions came after a call from civil-rights groups including the Anti-Defamation League and NAACP last week to pull ad spending from Facebook for the month of July.
- The pullback extended to large advertisers Thursday, with telecommunications giant Verizon Communications Inc. announcing it was pausing its Facebook and Instagram advertising.
- In a letter to advertisers Thursday, the Anti-Defamation League said Facebook has repeatedly refused to remove political ads that contained "blatant lies," and has been slow to respond to calls to take down conspiratorial content.
- Sheryl Sandberg, Facebook's chief operating officer, also joined the client council meeting, which had been scheduled before the civil rights groups called for the boycott and was reported earlier by Business Insider.
- So far, many of the biggest advertisers haven't joined the boycott, but several are seriously considering it, according to ad executives. "
- Consumer goods giant Procter & Gamble Co., a trendsetter in the ad world, said it is reviewing all platforms on which it advertises for objectionable content.
- The company's marketing chief, Marc Pritchard, on Wednesday vowed that it wouldn't advertise "on or near content that we determine is hateful, denigrating or discriminatory."
- P&G met with civil-rights group Color of Change this week to discuss Facebook's track record of removing content that violates their standards, according to people familiar with the matter.
- Color of Change joined the ADL and NAACP in calling for a Facebook boycott.
- In her weekend email to advertisers, Facebook's Ms. Everson said 89% of the content Facebook removed for violating its hate-speech policies in the six months to March was detected by its systems before anyone reported it to the company.

- Some ad buyers say they are busy making contingency plans in the event that clients decide to participate in the advertising boycott.
- Facebook's U.S. revenue from digital advertising is expected to rise about 5% this year to \$31.43 billion, according to eMarketer.
- In 2017, several companies—including P&G—pulled their spending from Alphabet Inc.'s YouTube after they found their ads running alongside extremist and racist content on the site.
- Still, advertisers believe that the YouTube boycott did cause Google to work more aggressively at policing its content, ad executives said.
- Google declined to comment. —
-  Lookup impact on bottom line of this boycott for Google.

Facebook's Politics Aren't Aging Well

https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebooks-politics-arent-aging-well-11593446127?st=n156j6gqb4f3fbp&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink

June 29, 2020 at 11:55 am ET

- Since the Cambridge Analytica scandal in 2018, Facebook has been no stranger to controversies ranging from election misinformation, security breaches, violent content and more.
- Meanwhile, advertising revenue grew an average of 32% annually over the last two calendar years.
- Ahead of the 2020 election, Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg has held firm in his belief that it isn't the job of his platform to fact check political ads or exclude anything but the most outright harmful points of view from the social conversation.
- News of major companies including Unilever and Coca-Cola pausing ad spending on the platform on Friday got everyone's attention.
- Facebook said in a statement regarding the boycott that it finds nearly 90% of hate speech on its platform, but it knows it has more work to do.
- A website for the "stop hate for profit" movement lists 10 suggested policy changes, including that Facebook refund advertisers whose ads ran alongside what was later removed as a violation of Facebook's terms.
- The company says it will work with civil-rights groups and experts to continue to fight against hate.
- UBS analyst Eric Sheridan says the brands involved in the boycott so far don't make up a significant percentage of Facebook's revenue, even jointly.
- Still, the near-term threat is real.

★● Where Advertisers Boycotting Facebook Are Spending Their Money Instead

https://www.wsj.com/articles/where-advertisers-boycotting-facebook-are-spending-their-money-instead-11593467895?st=me718bxy9i749gg&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink

June 29, 2020 at 5:58 pm ET

- Growing list of companies are pausing their advertising with Facebook for July or longer, responding to civil-rights groups' call for a boycott over what they say is a lack of progress in preventing hate speech and misinformation.
- As such, we will shift the planned launch of our July back-to-school campaign to YouTube and TikTok."
- YouTube, part of Google, and video-sharing social networking service TikTok, which is owned by Bytedance Ltd., are already part of the JanSport campaign but will assume a larger role, a spokeswoman said.
- Apparel brand North Face, also owned by VF, is likely to increase ad spending with current partners such as Google and Pinterest Inc., a spokeswoman said.
- Password manager Dashlane Inc. will spend more on sponsored content, online display ads and social media platforms such as Pinterest, said Joy Howard, chief marketing officer at the company.

- Outdoor apparel company Eddie Bauer will redirect some money to tools that it already uses, like the ads that show up when consumers search Google or Amazon for terms such as "hiking shorts," according to Damien
- Eddie Bauer also plans an updated test of advertising within Gmail, something it tried previously, plus new territory for the brand such as TikTok and Snap Inc.'s Snapchat.
- Clothing and design brand Eileen Fisher Inc. said it would increase spending on current tactics such as using Google Display Network and Rakuten Inc., the Japanese online merchant, to attract new customers and re- contact existing ones with online display ads, for example.
- Company executives are also exploring the use of streaming TV services for later in the year, drawn in part by increased viewing as lockdowns during the virus pandemic forced people to stay home, said Jamie Habanek, director of brand marketing. "
- Not every boycotter will reallocate its Facebook and Instagram ad spending to other advertising and marketing channels: REI, the outdoor retailer, said it will spend the money elsewhere in its business instead.

★● Facebook Sees Growing Ad Boycott in Protest Against Handling of Speech

https://www.wsj.com/articles/clorox-to-halt-facebook-ads-through-year-end-joining-advertiser-push-on-content-11593459934?st=nr586vzryxugpa9&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink

Updated June 30, 2020 at 11:43 am ET

- Ford Motor Co., Clorox Co. and Denny's Corp. are joining a parade of companies that have moved to halt advertising spending on Facebook Inc., citing how the social-media giant has handled speech on its platforms.
- Ford said Monday it will suspend its national social-media advertising for 30 days, as it re-evaluates spending on sites.
- Restaurant chain Denny's said it is pausing paid advertising on Facebook starting Wednesday.
- The move is to act against hate speech, "which we believe will increase through the balance of the year," the company said in a statement.
- Civil-rights groups like the NAACP have been pushing advertisers to pull spending from Facebook to protest what they describe as a failure to halt hate speech and misinformation on its platform.
- The company has banned 250 white supremacist organizations from Facebook and Instagram, she said, adding that artificial intelligence allows Facebook to find close to 90% of hate speech before users report it.
- Facebook Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg has said the company was making further changes to its platform.
- Within the past week, Verizon Communications Inc., Coca-Cola Co., Unilever PLC, Levi Strauss & Co. and Denny's Corp. were among companies announcing they would pause spending on Facebook.
- Coca-Cola Co. said it would temporarily halt spending on all social-media platforms for 30 days starting in July.
- Meanwhile, a Microsoft Corp. spokesperson said the tech giant has paused spending on Facebook and Instagram.

Facebook Bans Large Segment of Boogaloo Movement

https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-bans-large-segment-of-boogaloo-movement-11593548354?st=5i895we3okne4j2&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink

Updated June 30, 2020 at 5:18 pm ET

- Facebook Inc. has classified a large segment of the boogaloo movement as a dangerous organization and banned it from its network, in the tech company's broadest move yet against the group.
- The company said in a blog post it removed more than 300 Facebook and Instagram accounts and 106 groups tied to a boogaloo-affiliated network "that actively seeks to commit violence."

- The removals came alongside an additional takedown of 400 groups and 100 pages that hosted content broadly supportive of the boogaloo movement.
- Composed mostly of young white males who often call themselves "boogaloo bois," the loose-knit movement grew its ranks in recent years on social media, mainly Facebook.
- Facebook removed the boogaloo accounts after a targeted investigation by human analysts, officials said.
- The company said it sought to ban a wide-ranging boogaloo network that is nonetheless "distinct from the broader and loosely-affiliated boogaloo movement because it actively seeks to commit violence."
- The social-media giant expects many of the boogaloo users to move their discussions to other companies' platforms but is limiting its help to other companies, said a Facebook official familiar with the operation.
- Facebook also hasn't shared that information with the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism, a private-public consortium designed to prevent extremists from exploiting tech platforms, because it focuses on individuals and groups designated on the United Nations' consolidated sanctions list.
- In recent months, Facebook took steps to remove boogaloo-related content as the movement gained public attention.
- The company removed 800 posts that called for violence in the past two months and also removed boogaloo-linked pages and groups from Facebook's recommendations.

The Boycott Got Facebook's Attention, but a Real Fix Is Nowhere in Sight

https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-boycott-got-facebooks-attention-but-a-real-fix-is-nowhere-in-sight-11593723979?st=k3u4020a3nggwzl&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink

July 2, 2020 at 5:06 pm ET

- Companies like Coca-Cola and Unilever are pausing their social-media spend, citing a variety of reasons, most commonly their view that Facebook is not doing enough to eliminate hate speech, and the way the company's products polarize and divide us all.
- But it's not Facebook's first "we can do better" moment—there have been many, and there will probably be many more.
- The Anti-Defamation League, part of a coalition that pushed many advertisers toward a boycott, compiled several examples of the type of typically right-leaning hate speech and misinformation it says is still often accompanied by ads from big-name brands.
- But the current backlash owes in large part to Facebook's handling of President Trump's posts on Twitter and Facebook saying "When the looting starts, the shooting starts."
- Facebook would like to depend on users and algorithms, but it is increasingly dependent on thousands of low-paid contractors to interpret its myriad guidelines about what constitutes permissible content.
- All of which helps explain why, to the question of who should draw lines around what exactly is and isn't acceptable speech, Mr. Zuckerberg has long favored the answer: "Not us."
- After years of being frustrated by Facebook's perceived inaction, a few groups of academics and civil-rights activists began last November to discuss encouraging advertisers to boycott Facebook, says Tristan Harris, president and co-founder of the nonprofit Center for Humane Technology.
- He's been advising the boycott movement, called "Stop Hate for Profit," which, in addition to the ADL, includes the NAACP, Color of Change and others.
- Some advertisers have said that pausing spending on Facebook is solely about "brand safety," making sure their ads don't appear with objectionable content.
- Verizon, for example, has clarified that it is not joining the Stop Hate movement.
- Facebook has said it plans to work with the Global Alliance for Responsible Media, an initiative of the World Federation of Advertisers, which is working on creating standards for what constitutes hate speech and other advertiser-unfriendly content.
- Facebook will also submit to its first-ever audit by the Media Ratings Council.
- The businesses withholding ad dollars represent only a fraction of Facebook's revenue, however.

- Proposals to curtail or end those protections for Facebook and its rivals have come from both the right and the left.
- Facebook has never been a company that stands mute in the face of criticism.
- The company has in the past commissioned independent human-rights assessments and promised sweeping changes.
- One of the Stop Hate For Profit movement's key requests is for Facebook to appoint a C-level executive with deep civil-rights expertise who examines products and policies for evidence of discrimination and hate.
- Facebook has had senior executives with the power to do such reviews, including Joel Kaplan, head of global public policy, and Chris Cox, head of product, who just returned to Facebook a year after departing over disagreements with Mr. Zuckerberg.
- Nick Clegg, Facebook's vice president of communications, wrote on July 1 that the company has a zero-tolerance policy toward hate speech, but that finding hate on Facebook's 100 billion daily messages is like finding a needle in a haystack.
- The company has tripled its safety and security team to 35,000 people, he added.
- The company also posted a list of responses to the specific demands of the Stop Hate movement.
- Among these are expanding a "brand safety hub" to let advertisers view their ads next to more types of Facebook content.
- Mr. Zuckerberg has also agreed to meet with organizers of the boycott.
- The boycott managed to depress Facebook's stock price, but only temporarily.

★ Facebook Boycott Organizers Want a Civil Rights Expert in the Company's Executive Suite

https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-boycott-organizers-want-a-civil-rights-expert-in-the-companys-executive-suite-11593730015?st=aohursngqcgpsq&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink

July 2, 2020 6:46 pm ET

- Facebook Inc. leaders including Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg and Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg are set to meet early next week with civil rights groups that called for an advertising boycott against the company over its handling of hate speech and misinformation.
- Among the top requests from the groups will be for Facebook to hire an executive with civil rights expertise for a post in the social-media giant's C-suite. "
- Leaders of civil rights groups are meeting with Facebook executives after calling for an ad boycott of the platform for the month of July.
- We share the goal of these organizations; we don't benefit from hate and we don't want it on our platforms," a Facebook spokeswoman said in a statement. "
- The civil rights leaders want Facebook to make meaningful changes and be more accountable at the top echelons of its leadership structure.
- But they have a conflict of interest because they also are looking to curry favor with politicians who may have their own opinions about content on Facebook, said Mr. Robinson. "
- Some employees say some of these missteps stem from the lack of diversity at the top of the company.
- Thursday, a Black Facebook employee and two job candidates filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission saying Facebook is biased against Black employees and makes it more difficult for them to get hired and promoted.
- Among other issues, the employee said he heard the N-word said at work. "
- We take any allegations of discrimination seriously and investigate every case," a Facebook spokesman said in a statement.

- The civil-rights groups have listed 10 steps they would like Facebook to take, and say each one is important.
- But Mr. Greenblatt said another priority among them is for regular, outside audits of identity-based hate speech and misinformation on the company's platforms, with the results made available publicly.
- Other steps requested of Facebook by the boycott organizers include the creation of an internal system to automatically flag hateful content in private groups for human review, and the finding and removing of public and private groups focused on white supremacy, violent conspiracies, vaccine misinformation and other objectionable content.
- Facebook addressed some of the groups' requests in a blog post on Wednesday, describing some of the steps it has taken and its plans for countering hate speech and misinformation, as well as for ensuring a safer environment for advertisers.
- The company said it already generates reports on suspected hate speech and funnels them to reviewers with training in identity-based hate policies in 50 markets and 30 languages.
- It also said it is exploring ways to make users who moderate groups on Facebook more accountable for the content in those groups.
- On Tuesday, Facebook also classified a large segment of the boogaloo movement as a dangerous organization and banned it from its network for "actively promoting violence against civilians, law enforcement and government officials and institutions."
- Civil rights leaders said they had notified Facebook earlier about the presence of this movement on its platforms. "
- Facebook said it has removed boogaloo content when it has identified a clear call for violence, including pulling more than 800 posts in the last two months.
- Facebook has said that 90% of the hate speech it removes is found by its artificial-intelligence tools before users report it.

★● Civil-Rights Groups Express Disappointment With Facebook Meeting

https://www.wsj.com/articles/civil-rights-groups-express-disappointment-with-facebook-meeting-11594161841?st=98ut1dq99zpnwxc&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink

Updated July 7, 2020 at 9:13 pm ET

- Civil-rights advocates came out of a meeting Tuesday with Facebook Inc. Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg saying they didn't make progress on their demands over how the social-media giant polices the platform.
- The organizers said they are asking more advertisers to pause their spending on Facebook globally. "
- Facebook said in a statement after the meeting that it has invested billions of dollars in content moderation and taken hundreds of white-supremacist entities off its platforms. "
- They want Facebook to be free of hate speech and so do we," the company said.
- After years of simmering discontent and requests for change, a coalition including the Anti-Defamation League and Color of Change are arguing that Mr. Zuckerberg and Facebook haven't combated racism and misinformation on its platforms in good faith.
- Companies including Unilever and Clorox have agreed to pause advertising on the platform in a show of solidarity with demands that Facebook do more.
- Both agree that incitements to violence have no place on Facebook, that hate speech should be suppressed and that the company should vet its products for potential bias.
- Among other things, the civil-rights leaders have pushed Facebook to remove public and private groups that allow white nationalism to thrive.
- Jonathan Greenblatt, chief executive officer of the Anti-Defamation League, which is devoted to combating anti-Semitic speech, said the ADL had previously flagged the growth of these groups on Facebook to no avail. "
- And as we said to him, 'there is no nuance in white nationalism.'"
- Facebook said in its statement: "We know we will be judged by our actions not by our words and are grateful to these groups and many others for their continued engagement."

- The civil-rights groups' other demands include that Facebook create a C-suite-level executive position staffed by someone with civil-rights expertise to ensure greater attention to their concerns, and that it provide refunds to advertisers whose ads are shown next to content that is later removed for violations of its policies.
- The meeting precedes the anticipated Wednesday release of a civil-rights audit commissioned by Facebook from outside attorneys.
- In progress for two years, the audit has already resulted in changes at the company, Ms. Sandberg said in a Facebook post. "
- While we won't be making every change they call for, we will put more of their proposals into practice soon," she wrote.
- Civil-rights groups' criticism of Facebook grew in the wake of a free-speech talk Mr. Zuckerberg gave at Georgetown University in October, when the executive framed Facebook as a democratically essential "fifth estate."
- Mr. Zuckerberg framed progressive calls to restrain rhetoric on the platform as a greater risk than civil-rights' leaders concerns about the platform's misuse.
- After Twitter labeled Mr. Trump's tweet—that "when the looting starts the shooting starts"—as an incitement to violence, civil-rights groups seized on Facebook's unwillingness to do the same.

★ Facebook Is Doing Too Little on Civil-Rights Concerns, Auditors Say

https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-is-doing-too-little-on-civil-rights-concerns-auditors-say-11594198537?st=q3ucaby5qcqr2s1&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink

Updated July 8, 2020 at 7:56 pm ET

- Facebook Inc. and its detractors tried to win over advertisers Wednesday, after a company-commissioned audit found continued problems with how the social-media giant polices hate speech and other problematic content on its platform.
- Unfortunately, in our view Facebook's approach to civil rights remains too reactive and piecemeal," says the report, released the day after Facebook Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg met with civil-rights advocates who have organized an advertiser boycott of the platform. "
- The groups said Facebook has taken some steps in the right direction but has broadly failed to properly enforce its policies and allowed hate speech to proliferate on its platform.
- The organizers said nearly 1,000 companies were pausing advertising on Facebook, including those offering public support for the boycott and those taking action behind the scenes.
- Facebook has long struggled to placate critics who say it does too little to police harmful content—while also seeking to assuage those, especially on the right, who say its moderating practices are too aggressive and prone to bias.
- On Wednesday, Facebook highlighted areas where auditors said it improved, including expanded policies against census misinformation and voter suppression, settlement of a long-running case over discrimination in ad targeting, and efforts to increase diversity in its upper ranks.
- The report faulted Facebook for not investing more in fighting organized hate against Muslims and Jews, inadequately policing political speech, and failing to root out many strains of white nationalist activity.
- but also posts that contain the same messages phrased in different words.
- The report calls out the company's choice not to take action against posts by President Trump that allegedly threatened violence or were allegedly meant to suppress voting.
- More broadly, the auditors said Facebook "has failed to grasp the urgency" of the threat that voter-suppression efforts on its platform pose as the 2020 election approaches.
- The report ends a two-year review that Facebook commissioned of how it handles of civil-rights issues.
- Ms. Sandberg wrote Wednesday that Facebook would hire a civil-rights leader to help guide its efforts and consider other recommendations of the auditors. "

Why Some Hate Speech Continues to Elude Facebook's AI Machinery

https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-artificial-intelligence-doesnt-eliminate-objectionable-content-report-finds-11594287000?mod=Searchresults_pos9&page=2

July 9, 2020 5:30 am ET

- An audit commissioned by Facebook Inc. urged it to improve artificial intelligence-based tools it uses to help identify problematic content such as hate speech, showcasing the current limits of technology in policing the world's largest social media platform.
- Facebook says that as of March those tools helped zap 89% of hate speech removed from the platform before users reported it, up from about 65% a year earlier, according to the report. But outside researchers argue it is still impossible to gauge just how many posts escape the dragnets on a platform so large.
- As powerful as Facebook's AI-based tools are, removing objectionable posts isn't as easy as hitting a delete button.
- Training machine-learning tools to review content as human moderators would takes time, expertise and reams of data to identify new words and imagery. Hate groups have also grown more adept at avoiding the platform's automated censors. Then there is Facebook's scale—2.6 billion users split between numerous languages and cultures—and an advertising business that relies on it.
- Facebook Chief AI Scientist Yann LeCun said in a March interview that he is working to develop self-supervised AI that can help mimic human attempts to grasp it all.
- Executives have pointed to Facebook's growing ability to remove such content proactively as evidence of improvement, and a company spokeswoman said Wednesday the Dangerous Organizations team has increasingly focused on this area. Still, activists and advertisers have renewed their criticisms of the company's approach to content moderation amid a national dialogue about race following the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis police custody in May.
- "We have made real progress over the years," Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg said in a blog post responding to the civil rights audit on Wednesday. "But this work is never finished and we know what a big responsibility Facebook has to get better at finding and removing hateful content."

★ Facebook Q&A: Where Civil Groups and the Social Media Giant Agree and Disagree

https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-q-a-what-civil-rights-groups-want-the-social-media-giant-to-change-11594318755?st=o9lw9jgkzj3ge4u&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink

July 9, 2020 at 2:19 pm ET

- Civil-rights advocates are increasing pressure on Facebook Inc. advertisers to halt spending on the company's platforms, saying it has done too little to police hateful and other problematic content.
- Groups including the Anti-Defamation League and the NAACP have enlisted hundreds of companies in the boycott campaign, while lawyers Facebook hired to audit its handling of civil-rights issues issued a report this week saying the company made progress on several fronts but has more work to do.
- Facebook has acknowledged its shortcomings and pointed to new policies, additional spending and other efforts aimed at trying to address concerns.
- What specific demands are civil-rights groups making of Facebook?
- Stop Hate for Profit, the name of the coalition behind the boycott effort, has on its website 10 recommendations for Facebook, ranging from the specific to the sweeping.
- Facebook has broadened its definition of hate speech and who is protected over time.
- Civil-rights advocates say the rules remain too narrow, allowing white supremacists to dodge crackdowns by avoiding certain keywords that would surface in searches for hate speech.
- The Anti-Defamation League last month listed several examples of hateful or extremist posts on Facebook that still appear near major companies' ads on the platform.

- The Facebook spokeswoman said it takes aggressive action against groups and people who promote hate.
- The company last month said it banned hundreds of accounts deemed to have links to white supremacist organizations or groups that promote violence.
- Some of the biggest recent battles over content have involved President Trump's social-media posts.
- Facebook would have to decide whether non advertising content that is reported as abusive toward immigrants should be removed.
- Facebook also uses artificial intelligence to detect prohibited content, and says it removes most of that content before there is a user report.
- **The civil-rights groups say the company has enormous financial resources but still routinely fails to catch toxic content posted within group pages and elsewhere.**
- To help address where lines should be drawn on hate speech, Facebook has created an independent content governance board that includes human-rights lawyers and free-speech advocates.
- The company's most recent transparency report, released in May, says Facebook removed 9.6 million pieces of content with hate speech in the first quarter, up from 5.7 million in the fourth quarter of 2019.
- **The civil-rights groups say they don't trust Facebook to check its own work.**
- They say its report doesn't address hate speech that isn't reported or whether it dismisses concerns about content that is reported as abusive but isn't removed.
- Does Facebook remove whole groups from its platform?
- Facebook has struggled to articulate exactly when a private group becomes a threat to other users, but it is a sliding scale.
- Groups that Facebook considers spreaders of misinformation or vitriolic content can be removed from its algorithmic recommendation systems.
- Permanent removal is a possibility for entities deemed a threat to others, but Mr. Zuckerberg has voiced reluctance to entirely prevent users from forming communities around subjects they care about.
- Facebook also removes groups and pages it identifies as part of coordinated inauthentic behavior.
- Who is ultimately in charge of what types of content are allowed on the company's social-media platforms?
- Mr. Zuckerberg has final say on content policy matters.
- The Facebook spokeswoman said that the company makes tens of thousands of decisions about content daily and that the process depends on its roughly 15,000 content reviewers world-wide.

Spotify, Tinder, Other Apps Suffer Outages Due to Facebook Glitch

https://www.wsj.com/articles/spotify-tinder-other-apps-suffer-outages-due-to-facebook-glitch-11594387400?st=3aaop6hhapbkmao&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink

Updated July 10, 2020 at 4:12 pm ET

- A number of popular apps such as Spotify and Tinder experienced outages for several hours on Friday because of what Facebook Inc. said was a bug in its software for iPhone users.
- The issue relates to Facebook's software development kit, or SDK, which many developers embed in their apps to allow people to log into apps through their Facebook accounts. "
- A Facebook spokesman said the company is working to determine exactly when the outages began.
- In May, a number of high-profile apps including Spotify, TikTok and Pinterest crashed upon opening.
- The Facebook spokesman said Friday's problem was related to an update with its SDK for apps on Apple Inc.'s mobile- operating system, but the company doesn't yet know if the exact cause.
- Facebook's kit is among the most widely used by app developers for this purpose.
- Facebook's SDK helps apps with user on-boarding and retention, said Adam Blacker, vice president of insights at Aptopia, an app-analytics firm.
- App makers see risks, such as outages, in using Facebook's SDK as worth taking, Mr. Blacker said.
- Software-development kits for apps have presented other problems for users.

- A 2019 investigation by The Wall Street Journal found that apps sometimes shared phone users' personal information with Facebook even if a Facebook account wasn't used to log into the app and the user wasn't a Facebook member.

FTC Considering Deposing Top Facebook Executives in Antitrust Probe

https://www.wsj.com/articles/ftc-considering-deposing-top-facebook-officials-in-antitrust-probe-11595019047?st=u8o4irbgklek35j&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink

Updated July 17, 2020 at 5:57 pm ET

- The Federal Trade Commission is considering taking sworn testimony from Facebook Inc. Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg and Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg as part of its investigation into whether the social-media giant has violated U.S. antitrust laws, according to people familiar with the matter.
- Top Facebook officials are preparing for potential depositions and some are worried about the possibility, a person familiar with the matter said.
- However, the company now is most immediately planning for Mr. Zuckerberg's scheduled July 27 appearance before the House Judiciary antitrust subcommittee, where he and other top tech executives are expected to be grilled by lawmakers.
- The executives weren't deposed in the FTC's prior probe of Facebook for alleged consumer-privacy violations, a matter that resulted in a \$5 billion settlement a year ago.
- But the department for now has been more focused on Alphabet Inc.'s Google, people familiar with the matter said.
- The Journal reported in May that Justice Department was preparing to sue Google as soon as this summer.
- Most state attorneys general also are investigating Facebook for possible antitrust violations.
- There are no active settlement talks with the FTC on antitrust matters now, the person added.

★ Disney Slashed Ad Spending on Facebook Amid Growing Boycott

https://www.wsj.com/articles/disney-slashed-ad-spending-on-facebook-amid-growing-boycott-11595101729?st=8tsy10b8b1axg25&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink

Updated July 18, 2020 at 6:40 pm ET

- Walt Disney Co. has dramatically slashed its advertising spending on Facebook Inc., according to people familiar with the situation, the latest setback for the tech giant as it faces a boycott from companies upset with its handling of hate speech and divisive content.
- Disney was Facebook's top U.S. advertiser for the first six months of 2020, research firm Pathmatics Inc. estimates.
- Civil-rights groups including the Anti-Defamation League and NAACP called on advertisers to pull ad spending for July, arguing Facebook hasn't made enough progress enforcing its policies on hate speech and misinformation.
- In the first half of this year, Disney spent an estimated \$210 million on Facebook ads for Disney+ in the U.S., according to Pathmatics.
- #2 Facebook advertiser in the U.S., behind Home Depot Inc. Disney also paused spending on Facebook-owned Instagram for its sister streaming service Hulu,
- "We know we have more work to do," Facebook said in a statement, adding that it would work with civil-rights groups, a leading ad trade group and other experts "to develop even more tools, technology and policies to continue this fight."
- Facebook has said it invests billions of dollars to keep its platforms safe and has banned 250 white-supremacist organizations from Facebook and Instagram.
- Facebook has around \$70 billion in annual advertising revenue, generated from over eight million advertisers.

- Some marketers are reducing ad spending broadly because of financial pressures caused by the coronavirus pandemic.
- Many brands prefer not to cut Facebook ad spending, because they regard it as an especially effective marketing vehicle.
- Disney's movie studio, which is typically a heavy ad spender, has been forced to delay the release of new movies because of theater closures.
- Marketers are demanding that Facebook find ways to keep their ads away from objectionable content.
- The audits will be handled by industry measurement watchdog Media Rating Council.
- Civil-rights groups met virtually with Facebook executives on July 7 and came away from the Zoom call feeling the tech company wasn't taking sufficient steps to address their concerns.

★ Facebook Creates Teams to Study Racial Bias, After Previously Limiting Such Efforts

https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-creates-teams-to-study-racial-bias-on-its-platforms-11595362939?st=qxi8011xewccj7p&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink

Updated July 21, 2020 at 5:47 pm ET

- Facebook Inc. is creating new teams dedicated to studying and addressing potential racial bias on its core platform and Instagram unit, in a departure from the company's prior reluctance to explore the way its products affect different minority groups.
- The newly formed "equity and inclusion team" at Instagram will examine how Black, Hispanic and other minority users in the U.S. are affected by the company's algorithms, including its machine-learning systems, and how those effects compare with white users, according to people familiar with the matter.
- The move comes amid a continuing advertiser boycott related to how the social-media giant polices its platforms and employee unrest over how it deals with racial issues.
- In a statement, Facebook said the company had been concerned that using multicultural affinity as a proxy for race was unreliable, and had required high-level approval for race-related research to ensure it was done responsibly.
- As part of the formation of the new teams studying minority users' experiences, Facebook is talking to outside experts and civil-rights groups about how to reliably and consistently study race.
- The Facebook team is being called the Inclusivity Product Team and will consult with a council of Black users and experts on race, the company said.
- Facebook has been criticized for its handling of race in the past.
- Facebook's handling of the Trump post sparked rare public opposition from employees, some of whom aired their concerns on rival social-media site Twitter Inc. Others opted to stage a "virtual walkout" on June 1.

★ Facebook's 'Destroy Mode'—Myth or Reality?

https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-destroy-mode-myth-or-reality-11596068322?st=3ayepsoxtr9sdnc&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink

Updated July 29, 2020 at 9:10 pm ET

- That question of how Facebook used its considerable market power to grow through strategic acquisitions was a big one in Wednesday's antitrust hearings, with the Instagram deal as the starring episode thanks to new documents released by the House antitrust subcommittee.
- The allegation from several lawmakers, antitrust critics and competitors broadly is that Facebook has long adopted a "copy, acquire, and kill" strategy—as one lawmaker described it—when rivals emerge.
- The giant threatens to mimic startups and possibly squash them if they don't submit to a deal.
- Facebook officials were taken aback that the House released the documents on Twitter, according to people familiar with the matter.
- He added that the Federal Trade Commission reviewed the relevant documents in 2012 when they examined the Instagram purchase and voted not to challenge the deal.

- The Instagram acquisition for \$1 billion, considered one of the bargains of the century, has increasingly become controversial among those who believe Facebook has gained too much power, and the documents released Wednesday paint a picture of a company keenly aware of competitive threats.
- Mr. Ebersman laid out several reasons for doing such a deal, including neutralizing a competitor, acquiring talent or integrating another product with Facebook. (referring to IG deal)
- By that point, Mr. Zuckerberg was already contacting friends and former colleagues about buying Instagram.
- That included former Facebook executive and venture capitalist Matt Cohler, according to the documents.
- Mr. Cohler, who was an investor in Instagram, then messaged Mr. Systrom about a potential deal.
- In 2013, Facebook purchased a security app called Onavo, which gave Facebook access to private data showing how apps were performing relative to others.
- Onavo data was used to help Facebook determine whether or not to buy WhatsApp in 2014, Mr. Zuckerberg said Wednesday in the hearing.
- In an internal Q&A in early April 2012, Mr. Zuckerberg addressed the growing threat of Instagram. "The bad news is that they are growing really quickly, they have a lot of momentum, and it's going to be tough to dislodge them," he said in a video recording. "
- On April 9, 2012, Facebook announced a deal with Instagram, which had about a dozen employees and no revenue.
- It now has more than 1 billion monthly users and is considered a key driver of Facebook's growth, Appeared in the July 30, 2020, print edition.

★ Facebook Posts Revenue Growth Despite Pandemic

https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-fb-2q-earnings-report-2020-11596138406?st=uvgae6p1wabjrx&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink

Updated July 30, 2020 at 7:24 pm ET

- The company, nonetheless, posted a significant decline in its revenue growth rate and warned that growth will remain muted amid continued economic fallout from the pandemic, an advertiser boycott and reduced efficacy of ad targeting.
- On Thursday, it said that in the first weeks of the current quarter revenue grew at a 10% clip year over year, a rate it predicted would hold through September.
- Facebook, which traditionally hasn't offered such guidance, said the forecast reflected uncertainty about the economy, the current ad boycott and limitations on Facebook's ad-targeting business applied by California's data privacy law as of the start of this month.
- The ad boycott, which was rooted in frustrations from civil-rights groups about how Facebook handles hate speech, began in July and thus didn't affect second-quarter results.
- The monthlong boycott is scheduled to end Friday though some advertisers may continue to limit spending on Facebook's platforms.
- While Facebook cited the boycott as a likely contributor to lower revenue growth in the third quarter, both Mr. Zuckerberg and Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg played down its impact on the company's actions.
- Facebook would continue engaging with civil-rights groups and working to combat hate speech "not because of pressure from advertisers, but because it is the right thing to do," Ms. Sandberg said.

★ Some Facebook Ad Boycotters Return—but Plenty of Big Players Are Staying Away

https://www.wsj.com/articles/some-facebook-ad-boycotters-returnbut-plenty-of-big-players-are-staying-away-11596189600?st=ds2we6zi9e5jtwr&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink

Updated July 31, 2020 at 4:10 pm ET

- Some advertisers that left Facebook Inc. for July to protest its handling of hate speech on its platforms say they are coming back, while the tech giant's financial outlook suggested the boycott isn't taking a major financial toll.
- VF Corp.'s North Face, arguably the first widely known brand to join the campaign, said it would resume doing business with Facebook in August. "
- Marketers including brewer Heineken, sportswear maker Puma SE and spirits giant Pernod Ricard SA also said they would return to Facebook.
- Other brands said they would extend their planned July boycotts into August at least, however, calling Facebook's moves insufficient.
- They include packaged-goods marketer J.M. Smucker Co., spirits maker Beam Suntory Inc., retailer Eddie Bauer LLC, business-software company SAP SE and Boston Beer Co. Volkswagen AG said Friday that it will resume advertising with Facebook everywhere but the U.S., where it will extend its boycott.
- In June, civil-rights groups including the Anti-Defamation League and NAACP asked marketers to pull ad spending on Facebook and Facebook-owned Instagram for July, recommending 10 steps that they said Facebook should take to reduce hate speech and misinformation on its platforms.
- In a call Thursday afternoon to discuss second-quarter earnings, Facebook Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg said the company valued all of its advertisers but wasn't dependent on major brands.
- Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg said the company is working on civil rights "not because of pressure from advertisers, but because it is the right thing to do."
- Facebook said ad revenue in the first three weeks of July, when the boycott was in effect, increased at roughly the same 10% year-over-year rate as it did in the second quarter.
- Facebook had more than 9 million advertisers in the second quarter, it said.
- More than 1,100 advertisers participated in the boycott, according to organizers.
- Coca-Cola, which pulled back from all social-media advertising on July 1, said it was returning to YouTube and LinkedIn on Aug. 1 but not Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.
- Verizon didn't join the "Stop Hate for Profit" campaign but suspended Facebook and Instagram ads in June after the Anti-Defamation League released a screenshot showing a Verizon ad next to a Facebook post alleging FEMA was preparing to put people in concentration camps.
- That is particularly true within Facebook's news feed, where advertisers don't have controls to limit what type of content or posts their ads might appear next to.
- Facebook said it is looking into the issue, but advertisers want concrete actions and results, according to two senior ad buyers who have had discussions with Facebook executives on the matter.
- In a sign of Facebook's continued importance and consumer reach, Unilever-owned Ben & Jerry's Homemade Inc. said it won't advertise its products on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter for the rest of the year—but it will still buy ads from the companies for its social-justice and election-related work. "