

Facebook, social media under more pressure from brands over hate speech

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Starbucks on Sunday joined the drumbeat of brands pledging to pull advertising from Facebook and other social media platforms or taking other actions, putting economic pressure on the companies to address

concerns about containing hate speech.

The coffee chain joins big brands including Coca-Cola, Unilever, Hershey, Honda, Eddie Bauer, The North Face, Levi's, Ben & Jerry's and Verizon in taking various steps.

Much of the activity stems from the #StopHateForProfit campaign, which includes the NAACP, Anti-Defamation League, Sleeping Giants, Color of Change, Free Press and Common Sense.

While some of the brands have pledged to halt advertising in July, some are taking additional steps or different approaches.

"We will pause advertising on all social media platforms while we continue discussions internally, with our media partners and with civil rights organizations in the effort to stop the spread of hate speech," Starbucks said in a statement. The company said it's not part of the boycott.

Hershey said it will cut spending on Facebook and Instagram by a third for the rest of the year. Coca-Cola said it plans to pause advertising on all [social media platforms](#) for at least 30 days while it revisits its advertising policies.

"We also expect greater accountability and transparency from our social media partners," reads a statement from James Quincey, chairman and CEO of Coca-Cola.

Patagonia, REI, Mozilla and Upwork and about 100 smaller companies have said they are committed to the advertising boycott.

After Coke joined the boycott, Rashad Robinson, president of civil rights organization Color Of Change, tweeted: "One of the most

recognizable global brands in the world is halting their @Facebook advertising. Coke's commitment to #StopHateForProfit, along with Unilever and Verizon just in the last 24 hours, is a warning sign for Facebook."

On Friday, CEO Mark Zuckerberg outlined in a livestream several steps he said the social network will take ahead of the 2020 presidential election to combat hate speech. Among the planned steps: pushing back against voter suppression, boosting standards for hateful content in ads, and labeling content deemed newsworthy.

Facebook's policies surrounding divisive posts have been scrutinized after the platform left published a post from President Donald Trump following protests over the death of George Floyd. In the post, Trump said "when the looting starts, the shooting starts."

Zuckerberg has defended leaving the post untouched, saying Facebook should allow for as much free expression as possible. A similar post published to Twitter carried a warning the tweet was "glorifying violence."

"I'm optimistic that we can make progress on public health and racial justice while maintaining our democratic traditions around free expression and voting," wrote Zuckerberg Friday. "I'm committed to making sure Facebook is a force for good on this journey."

How much the campaign hurts Facebook depends on how many companies get involved.

"If we're limited to 10 to 15 big-name advertisers who join the boycott, I think it's more symbolic and it would have limited impact on Facebook's business," said Baird analyst Colin Sebastian. "The fear is that this snowballs into something much larger."

Last week, during a speech at Cannes Lion Live, Marc Pritchard, chief brand officer for P&G, said the company would conduct a "comprehensive review" of where it is advertising. "Where standards of responsibility and civility are not met, we will stop our spending, just like we've done before," he said.

Among the steps outlined by Zuckerberg Friday: posts that would typically violate its policies but remain on the platform will include a label noting the content they are sharing may violate their policies. He also said the company would not provide any exemptions to content that incites violence or suppresses voting.

"Even if a politician or government official says it, if we determine that content may lead to violence or deprive people of their right to vote, we will take that content down," he said. "Similarly, there are no exceptions for politicians in any of the policies I'm announcing here today."

"People can agree or disagree on where we should draw the line, but I hope they understand our overall philosophy is that it is better to have this discussion out in the open, especially when the stakes are so high," Zuckerberg said earlier this month.

The decision prompted outcry from both current and former employees urging more action. Several employees went on Twitter to protest the decision, while a group of former Facebook employees wrote an [open letter](#) published by The New York Times calling the company's move "cowardly."

Zuckerberg said Friday Facebook plans to expand what qualifies as hateful content in ads, prohibiting "claims that people from a specific race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, caste, sexual orientation, gender identity or immigration status are a threat to the physical safety, health or survival of others."

The policies will also focus on ads targeting immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. "We already restrict certain types of content in ads that we allow in regular posts, but we want to do more to prohibit the kind of divisive and inflammatory language that has been used to sow discord," said Zuckerberg.

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