

X says Walmart pulled ads in October, weeks before Media Matters hate speech report and Musk rant

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A sign encouraging customers to order grocery items online and pick them up at a store is displayed at a WalMart Neighborhood Market in Bentonville, Ark., Thursday, June 4, 2015. Walmart is the latest company to join the growing flock of major advertisers to pull spending from X, Elon Musk's beleaguered social media company, amid concerns about hate speech — as well as reaching a sizeable audience on the platform. Credit: AP Photo/Danny Johnston, File

Walmart is the latest company to publicly join the growing flock of major advertisers to pull spending from X, Elon Musk's beleaguered social media company, amid concerns about hate speech—as well as reaching a sizeable audience on the platform.

"We aren't advertising on X as we've found some other platforms better reach our customers," Walmart said in a statement.

While Walmart went public with the pullout on Friday, Joe Benarroch, head of operations at X, said the company has not advertised on the platform since October. The company, he added, "has just been organically connecting with its community of more than one million people on X."

Walmart did not immediately respond to a message for further comment on Friday afternoon.

The announcement comes two days after Musk went on an expletive-ridden rant in an on-stage interview with journalist Andrew Ross Sorkin about companies halting spending on X, formerly known as Twitter, in response to antisemitic and other hateful material. Musk said advertisers pulling out are engaging in "blackmail" and, using a profanity, essentially told them to go away.

"Don't advertise," Musk said.

Besides Walmart, the Walt Disney Co., IBM, NBCUniversal and its parent company Comcast have also decided to stop spending on X. Many pulled out earlier this month after the liberal advocacy group Media Matters issued a report showing their ads were appearing alongside material praising Nazis. X has sued the group, saying it "manufactured"

the report in order to "drive advertisers from the platform and destroy X Corp."

X's CEO, Linda Yaccarino, is a former NBCUniversal executive who was hired by Musk to rebuild ties with advertisers who fled after he took over, concerned that his easing of content restrictions was allowing hateful and toxic speech to flourish and that would harm their brands. But X's relations with advertisers don't appear to be improving.

"Walmart has a wonderful community of more than a million people on X, and with a half a billion people on X, every year the platform experiences 15 billion impressions about the holidays alone with more than 50% of X users doing most or all of their shopping online," Benarroch said in a statement.

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