

Rassegna del 18/03/2017

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Advertising giant drops Google in storm over extremist videos

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One of the world's largest advertising agencies pulled all of its UK clients from Google yesterday because of its failure to prevent adverts appearing next to extremist content.

Havas, one of the "big six" agencies, suspended advertising for 240 clients including O₂, EDF and the Royal Mail across Google's websites, including YouTube. Revelations in *The Times* that antisemites and banned hate preachers were receiving payouts from YouTube commercials has already led to dozens of organisations pulling their advertising on the video platform, including the Cabinet Office, Sainsbury's and *The Guardian*.

Havas, which also represents Dominos and Hyundai, spends about £175 million a year on digital advertising in the UK. Of this about £35 million goes to Google. The company said that talks with Google had broken down when it was "unable to provide specific reassurances, policy and guarantees that their video or display content is classified either quickly enough or with the correct filters". "We have a duty of care to our clients in the UK marketplace," Paul Frampton, Havas UK chief executive, said. "Our position will remain until we are confident in the YouTube platform and Google Display Network's ability to deliver the standards we and our clients expect."

Other brands to pull adverts from YouTube yesterday included Audi, the BBC and McDonald's, all of whose adverts had appeared next to extremist content. Audi's R8 supercar commercials were displayed next to videos posted by Roosh V, a controversial blogger, entitled "Every man is a rapist", and others by Steven Anderson, a homophobic preacher banned from entering the UK.

"This is clearly Google's responsibility and is affecting many brands," an Audi spokesman said. "YouTube safeguards have not proven as robust as they need to be." McDonald's said it was disappointed that safeguards to protect its advertising had "fallen through". It had removed advertising from the

channel while discussions with Google continued.

BBC programmes including *The Last Kingdom* were promoted on videos posted by David Duke, the former Ku Klux Klan member, and by Wagdi Ghoneim, an Islamist preacher banned from the UK for inciting hatred. A BBC spokesman said that it expected Google to ensure that advertising appeared only alongside appropriate content. Transport for London, the Financial Conduct Authority, Channel 4 and L'Oréal have also pulled advertising from YouTube.

The dozen extremists named by *The Times* could have made about £250,000 from adverts running alongside their YouTube videos, according to Influencer Marketing Hub. Google strongly disputes these estimates.

Yesterday Google executives apologised to Whitehall officials after government adverts appeared next to hate content. "It is totally unacceptable that taxpayer-funded advertising has appeared next to inappropriate internet content," a government spokesman said. "That message was conveyed very clearly to Google."

As pressure mounted on the internet giant, members of the Commons home affairs committee wrote to Peter Baron, its head of communications, to demand that advertisers be refunded.

Ronan Harris, managing director of Google UK, said that the company had "begun a thorough review of our ads policies and brand controls, and we will be making changes in the coming weeks to give brands more control over where their ads appear across YouTube and the Google Display Network."

Mr Harris said Google had removed nearly two billion "bad ads" last year and had prevented adverts on more than 300 million YouTube videos. Sky and BT stopped short of pulling advertising from the site but said they were investigating the issue with Google.

Un colosso della pubblicità lascia Google nell'ambito del caos sui video estremisti



Shaming of Google

Technology companies must face up to their obligations as publishers and remove hateful material that incites violence and breaks the law

A moment of truth is approaching for giant internet companies that publish hateful and racist material without accepting responsibility for doing so. These firms, chief among them Google, Facebook and Twitter, can choose to devote more resources to policing their websites and taking down the outpourings of fanatics. If so they would be playing their part in curbing hate crime and extremism. Alternatively, they can cling to the view that as mere "platforms" they are powerless to control what they publish. In that case they are complicit in disseminating hatred and enriching hatemongers.

Today we report that Google has hosted hundreds of viciously antisemitic videos on YouTube, which it owns, even though they seem to violate the company's own terms of service and to break the law. At least one of the videos appeared to endorse the murder of Jews. Another was an hour-long rant repeating the ancient blood libel that Jews use the blood of Christians in religious rituals. This has been up for years and has been viewed by almost a million people. A third, urging white people to "organise against Jewish tyranny", was entitled "Hitler was right!".

The Times anonymously reported six such videos to YouTube, which claims not to permit hate speech. By any reasonable definition the videos qualify as such and should have been removed from the site within 24 hours. None was. Only when notified by *The Times* did YouTube take down four out of six of the videos. In stark contrast, content that violates copyright law or includes child pornography is taken down in short order.

This shows that there are no technical obstacles to monitoring even vast amounts of material for offensive or illegal content. On the contrary, hundreds of antisemitic sites can be found high on Google or YouTube search rankings simply by entering the term "Jews".

Silicon Valley's tech giants have profited prodigiously from a business model that relies on software to do its heavy lifting. Google reported revenues of more than \$90 billion last year alone.

Even so, it relies on users rather than its employees to flag up offensive material which, as our investigation shows, it cannot be relied on to remove. The company says of YouTube that it "cannot police the site proactively". Of course it can. If it does not, the vast swathes of cyberspace that it controls will become the online equivalent of a failed state.

When it suits Google, the company is quick to assume the mantle of protector of free speech. "We try to defend your right to express unpopular points of view," its hate-speech policy states. The aim is worthy, but material brought to its attention this week by the House of Commons home affairs select committee and our reporters consists of blatant falsehoods, not points of view. It is precisely the sort of "malicious" material "about a group of people based solely on their race" that the company claims to proscribe.

In this context the argument about what constitutes online hate speech is not between two legitimate views of what is acceptable in the public sphere. It is between society at large and a group of companies whose profitability is at stake.

Earlier this week we revealed how programmatic advertising software was placing ads for government departments, as well as well-known brands, alongside videos produced by Isis and other terror groups. Those groups are enriched in the process. A boycott by advertisers has already begun. Havas, the global agency, yesterday suspended all UK digital advertising on Google. Channel 4, Transport for London, BT and the Cabinet Office had already pulled out. Perhaps they will force Google to accept its responsibilities as a publisher. The alternative is not the bracing rough edges of free speech. It is an unacceptable role for tech firms and publishers as accessories to barbarism.

La vergogna di Google



dal 1980 monitoraggio media



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pagine ebraiche

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Clean up YouTube or face fines, bosses told

Alexi Mostrous

Google must take "proactive steps" to remove extremist material or face regulation and large fines, Labour and Conservative MPs warned yesterday.

Yvette Cooper, chairwoman of the Commons home affairs committee, said it was completely disgraceful that the internet giant had hosted antisemitic videos on YouTube identified by *The Times*, including one entitled "Adolf Hitler was right!"

In another case, a YouTube video repeating the libel that Jews use the blood of Christians in religious festivals was posted four years ago and removed only when this newspaper brought it to Google's attention.

Ms Cooper herself identified videos posted by supporters of National Action, a proscribed pro-Nazi group, including one where masked men shout: "They fear us because they think we will gas them, and we will."

She warned the company that it faced financial penalties if it failed to act. "Google is one of the richest companies on the planet with huge resources and sophisticated technology," she said. "It is quite capable of sorting this."

Tim Loughton, a Tory former children's minister, said social networks abided by "completely different standards". He said: "If you are an employer and you take on an illegal immigrant and they are discovered, saying 'I had no idea' is not a defence, and you'll be fined. Why should it be any different?"

Mr Loughton said the government had to "very clearly threaten" the digital industry to self-regulate. "If the industry doesn't get its act together within a limited timescale then the option for voluntary regulation will no longer be there," he said. "If they cannot show they have taken reasonable measures to prevent [hate speech] then they will be subject to prosecution and substantial fines. There's a momentum building for change."

Peter Barron, Google's vice-president for communications, told the committee this week that the company did not look for hate content on YouTube, but relied on users to notify it.

A draft law in Germany imposes fines of up to £47 million if such content is not removed within a short timescale. Ms Cooper said she would examine if the case for fining social media companies for failing to remove hate speech or illegal content could apply in the UK.

I responsabili sono avvisati: ripulite YouTube o sarete multati

