X sues hate speech researchers whose “scare campaign” spooked Twitter advertisers

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As Twitter continues its rebrand as X, it looks like Elon Musk hopes to quash any claims that the platform under its new name is allowing rampant hate speech to fester. Yesterday, X Corp sued a nonprofit, the Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH), for allegedly “actively working to assert false and misleading claims” regarding spiking levels of hate speech on X and successfully “encouraging advertisers to pause investment on the platform,” Twitter’s blog said.

In its complaint, X Corp. claims that CCDH’s reports have caused an estimated tens of millions in advertising revenue loss. The company said it’s aware of “at least eight” specific organizations, including large, multinational corporations, that “immediately paused their advertising spend on X based on CCDH’s reports and articles.” X also claimed that “at least five” companies “paused their plans for future advertising spend” and three companies decided not to reactivate campaigns, all allegedly basing decisions to stop spending due to CCDH’s reporting.

X is alleging that CCDH is being secretly funded by foreign governments and X competitors to lob this attack on the

platform, as well as claiming that CCDH is actively working to censor opposing viewpoints on the platform. Here, X is echoing statements of US Senator Josh Hawley (R-Mo.), who accused the CCDH of being a "foreign dark money group" in 2021—following a CCDH report on 12 social media accounts responsible for 65 percent of COVID-19 vaccine misinformation, Fox Business reported.

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"This is the same dark money group that tried to have the conservative @FDRLST deplatformed last year. And they've gone after other conservative sites as well, like @BreitbartNews," Hawley said. "But who is funding this overseas dark money group—Big Tech? Billionaire activists? Foreign governments? We have no idea. Americans deserve to know what foreign interests are attempting to influence American democracy."

The CCDH's website says that it's funded by "philanthropic trusts and members of the public." A website dedicated to tracking funding sources of progressive organizations, InfluenceWatch, reported that the CCDH, which has offices in the US and the United Kingdom, has ties to the left-wing British Labour Party.

CCDH founder and CEO Imran Ahmed claims that Musk is attempting to censor the CCDH. Ahmed said in a statement provided to Ars that "Elon Musk's latest legal threat is straight out of the authoritarian playbook."

"He is now showing he will stop at nothing to silence anyone who criticizes him for his own decisions and actions," Ahmed said.

Reuters reported that CCDH's lawyers said X's allegations had no legal basis and accused X of "intimidating those who have the courage to advocate against incitement, hate speech, and harmful content online."

X's lawyer, J. Jonathan Hawk, did not immediately respond to

Ars’ request for comment.

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