X suspends pro-Nazi account after two brands halt advertising

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Throughout Twitter’s rebrand into X, advertisers have started becoming more confident using the platform, CEO Linda Yaccarino recently told CNBC. To bring more advertisers back, X has added new brand safety controls to stop ads from appearing where advertisers don’t want them to appear. However, amid these improvements, at least two brands have once again suspended advertising on X, CNN reported—after a Media Matters report shared screenshots of their ads appearing next to posts from a verified pro-Nazi account.

According to CNN, the pharmaceutical company Gilead Sciences and NCTA-The Internet and Television Association “immediately paused their ad spending on X after CNN flagged their ads on the pro-Nazi account.” This account—which was verified in April and has now been suspended—”shared content celebrating Hitler and the Nazi Party,” with some posts garnering “hundreds of thousands of views,” CNN reported.

Before its suspension, other brands appeared in this account’s feed, including The Athletic, MLB, the Atlanta Falcons, Sports Illustrated, USA Today, Amazon, and Office Depot, Media Matters reported.

On X, some accounts violating community guidelines get suspended, while others posting so-called “lawful but awful” content get marked as Not Suitable For Advertising. This pro-Nazi account should have been suspended but had not yet been caught by X. By delaying action on the account for months, every unique visit to the profile generated different ads from a variety of brands, so it’s unclear just how many brands had ads placed next to the account’s offensive posts.

Advertisement
According to X, ad impressions on this account were very low, though, registering far less than 1 percent before the account was suspended. Media Matters’ report suggests that even this low amount of impressions is still too much, given that X had verified the account months ago and acknowledged that it was posting antisemitic content.

“The suspension came only after the company verified the account; allowed it to repeatedly post antisemitic content; and monetized it by placing advertisements for major brands on the account,” Media Matters reported. “X’s monetization of the account also happened even though the company had reportedly acknowledged that the antisemitic account engaged in ‘violent speech.’”

X adds brand safety controls

Reacting to concerns over ad placements in the pro-Nazi feed, X emailed advertisers that the company is ramping up efforts to give advertisers more brand safety controls.

Recently, the company announced adjacency controls to stop ads from appearing next to posts containing certain keywords, as well as new sensitivity settings that allow brands to limit or maximize the reach of ads according to their brand’s identity.

“Your ads will only air next to content that is appropriate for you,” Yaccarino said on CNBC.

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