

Shell climate change ads axed from Facebook

Some Shell advertisements, including for its US electric vehicle-charging firm Greenlots, have been removed from Facebook over concerns around transparency of environmental policies and climate change.

The platform recently made efforts to crack down on the spread of misinformation around environmental, social and political issues. Featured ads, checked by humans and algorithms, must be granted authorisation and are required to carry a disclaimer. Shell's advertisements – part of rebranding efforts to place emphasis on its renewable energy divisions – were labelled as sponsored, but did not include a disclaimer stating they were paid for by the firm.

Why does this matter?

While this example of advertisement removal stems partially from a technicality, it mirrors other examples of fossil fuel companies running, and then ceasing to run, adverts based around their climate-friendliness.

This also isn't the first time Shell has been involved in controversial advertising – a [campaign](#) earlier this year at petrol pumps indicating that consumers could “drive carbon neutral” drew complaints over misleading information, given oil's contribution to climate change.

Aside from Shell, other corporates in high-emitting sectors are being held to

tighter standards. Saudi Aramco took down an advertising campaign that positioned its oil as sustainable after receiving significant backlash. Similarly, bp pulled its global “Possibilities Everywhere” campaign highlighting the firm’s solar and wind energy projects after legal complaints were lodged. This was followed by an announcement that the firm would cease its corporate reputation advertising.

Meanwhile, social media platforms have been called out for allowing fake news to circulate through loopholes that bypass fact-checking procedures. Seen most recently with content related to the US election, platforms like Twitter have taken steps to address this problem by upping moderation activity and adding warning labels for audiences.

Such actions raise questions around whether similar action could be taken over “greenwashing” – often used by firms to exaggerate their green credentials and appear more appealing to consumers. If this is the case, could we see social media platforms extend their action on misinformation – to potentially label content from fossil fuel firms with eco-warnings that outline their total contribution to climate change? Coupled with an increasingly conscious public, such action could even discourage future marketing activity and, in turn, encourage companies to instead focus spend in this area on quickening their transitioning to renewable energy.

Lateral thought from Curation

On the other side of the equation, confronting the advertising of polluting products could be a strategy to lower emissions. We’ve previously highlighted the idea of banning the advertising of high-emitting vehicles such as SUVs to reduce demand and emissions. Could this idea be extended to other high-emitting products?

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