

Facebook requires UK political ad buyers to reveal identity

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In this June 7, 2013, file photo, the Facebook "like" symbol is on display on a sign outside the company's headquarters in Menlo Park, Calif. Facebook says it has purged more than 800 U.S. pages and accounts for spamming users with garbage links and clickbait. (AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez, File)

Facebook says that anyone who takes out a British political ad on the social media platform will now be forced to reveal their identity, in a bid to increase transparency and curb misinformation.

The company said Tuesday that it will require any British political advertisement to carry a disclaimer explaining who paid for it. Other data on the ad buyers, such as the budget and number of people reached, will be archived for seven years in a publicly accessible database .

Facebook users can also flag for review any unlabeled ad. If it's deemed political, the company will take it down and add it to the database.

The company is already applying a similar system in the United States, which is holding midterm elections this year, and Brazil, which held a general vote this month.

British lawmakers have called for greater oversight of social media companies and election campaigns to protect democracy in the digital age. A House of Commons report this year said democracy is facing a crisis because data analysis and social media allow campaigns to target voters with messages of hate without their consent.

"While the vast majority of ads on Facebook are run by legitimate organizations, we know that there are bad actors that try to misuse our platform," Facebook said in a statement. "By having people verify who they are, we believe it will help prevent abuse."

Facebook said it's up against "smart and well-funded adversaries who change their tactics as we spot abuse," but it believes that increased transparency is good for democracy and the electoral process.

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