

## Starting up

- Which social media platforms, if any, do you use regularly?
- If you use social media, do you notice advertising on any of the platforms?
- Do you ever see content on social media that bothers you?

## Vocabulary 1 – language on social media

Match the words in bold (1-7) with the correct definition (a-g).

Social media is a great place to share ideas and spread messages, but <sup>1</sup>**divisive** content online can soon turn polite debates into angry fights. <sup>2</sup>**Intolerance** of people who are ‘not like us’ can lead to <sup>3</sup>**hate speech** directed at people because of their race, religion, nationality or other characteristic, which sometimes encourages violence. Up to now, platforms have been <sup>4</sup>**reactive** to these problems, dealing with them one at a time when they happened. However, many people believe they should be more <sup>5</sup>**proactive** about harmful online content and stop it before it happens. Some advertisers have organised a <sup>6</sup>**boycott** of social media, which means they will stop advertising on Facebook and other platforms. The brands are demanding that social media deal with <sup>7</sup>**racism** and other bad online behaviour on their platforms.

- a unwillingness to accept ways of thinking and behaving that are different from your own
- b responding to events or situations rather than starting or doing new things yourself
- c causing a lot of disagreement between people
- d making things happen or change rather than just responding to events
- e speaking or writing that expresses prejudice against a particular group
- f unfair treatment of people, or violence against them, because they belong to a different race from your own
- g an act of refusing to buy something, use something, or take part in something as a way of protesting

## Reading 1

Read the article. Are these statements true or false?

- 1 Only a small number of companies have joined the boycott.
- 2 Advertisers want social media platforms to stop blocking certain advertisements.
- 3 Facebook has already reacted to the boycott.
- 4 The boycott is likely to solve the hate speech problem very quickly.

## Third of top brands likely to suspend social media spending, survey finds

- 1 Almost a third of the world's biggest brands will suspend spending on social media or are likely to do so, according to a survey of top advertisers that reveals the scale of the <sup>1</sup>**revolt** facing platforms such as Facebook, Snapchat and Twitter.

- 5 According to the World Federation of Advertisers, a trade body that covers 90 per cent of the world's advertising spending, an additional 41 per cent of respondents were still undecided about whether to pause digital campaigns because of divisive content and hate speech on the platforms.

The findings of the previously <sup>2</sup>**undisclosed** survey suggest the boycott against Facebook and other platforms has the potential to extend to the majority of blue-chip advertisers. The poll covered 58 WFA members responsible for more than \$90bn of ad spending worldwide.

- 10 "In all <sup>3</sup>**candour**, it feels like a turning point," said Stephan Loerke, chief executive of the WFA. He expects the movement to have a more lasting impact across social media than the one-month Facebook boycott first launched by the #StopHateForProfit campaign.

- 15 "What's striking is the number of brands who are saying they are reassessing their longer-term <sup>4</sup>**media allocation strategies** and demanding structural changes in the way platforms address racial intolerance, hate speech and harmful content," he added.

Even though Facebook generates more than three-quarters of its revenues from small and medium-sized advertisers, the boycott joined by dozens of household brands has represented a costly hit to its reputation, sending its share price down 9 per cent this week.

- 20 Advertisers pausing social media spending include Unilever, Verizon, Adidas, Starbucks, Coca-Cola, Ford and HP. Some brands are taking part in a one-month boycott of Facebook, while others are pulling back from social media more broadly for periods of up to six months.

- 25 After Facebook's share price dived, Mark Zuckerberg, the company's chief executive, announced plans on Friday to prohibit hate speech in ads and better protect groups such as immigrants from attacks. But since then the big-brand boycott has gathered pace.

Mr Loerke said the advertising industry was seeking more fundamental changes from all social media platforms. These would include cross-platform tools to allow marketers to better control where their advertising was placed, consistent classifications of harmful content, and external <sup>5</sup>**auditing** of the related data.

- 30 "Across the industry, it's moved from being a reactive media-driven conversation to a proactive boardroom concern," Mr Loerke said. "The conversation is moving from media technicians to [chief marketing officers] and the chief executives too."

- 35 Some in the marketing world remain <sup>6</sup>**sceptical** about the motivations and long-term significance of a boycott that has generated positive press for participating big brands, while allowing them to trim budgets under pressure from the pandemic.

"Racism isn't going to be solved in 30 days — these companies need to take a harder look at their executive boards and the role of women and people of colour in their organisation," said Greg Paull, co-founder of marketing consulting firm R3 Worldwide.

- 40 "Facebook have 8m customers and the reality is that the top 100 represent less than 20 per cent of its advertising revenue — the financial impact will be nothing like the market cap decline."





### Grammar – ways to avoid repeating words

What do each of the following refer to in the article?

- a line 6: the platforms .....
- b line 10: He .....
- c line 21: others .....
- d line 27: These .....
- e line 34: them .....
- f line 36: these companies .....
- g line 39: its .....

### Further discussion

Work together to answer these questions.

- 1 Do you think social media content has an effect on wider society? Why or why not?
- 2 What are the challenges of controlling divisive online content?
- 3 Do you think the boycott is an effective way of addressing a real problem? Why or why not?

## ANSWER KEY

### Starting up

Students' own answers

### Vocabulary 1

- |     |     |
|-----|-----|
| 1 c | 5 d |
| 2 a | 6 g |
| 3 e | 7 f |
| 4 b |     |

### Reading 1

- |     |     |
|-----|-----|
| 1 F | 3 T |
| 2 F | 4 F |

### Reading 2

- |     |     |
|-----|-----|
| 1 c | 4 b |
| 2 a | 5 c |
| 3 b |     |

### Vocabulary 2

- |     |     |
|-----|-----|
| 1 a | 4 a |
| 2 b | 5 a |
| 3 b | 6 b |

### Grammar

- |                                  |              |
|----------------------------------|--------------|
| a Facebook, Snapchat and Twitter | e big brands |
| b Stephan Loerke                 | f big brands |
| c brands                         | g Facebook's |
| d more fundamental changes       |              |

### Further discussion (possible answers)

- Students' own answers
- The challenge is to monitor such a large quantity of information in many different languages and to decide what is and isn't a problem. It isn't necessarily always easy to understand exactly where the line is between content that's OK and content that's not OK.
- Students' own answers

Articles sourced from the Financial Times have been referenced with the FT logo. These articles remain the Copyright of the Financial Times Limited and were originally published in 2020. All Rights Reserved. FT and 'Financial Times' are trademarks of The Financial Times Ltd. Pearson ELT is responsible for providing any translation or adaptation of the original articles.

With a worldwide network of highly respected journalists, the Financial Times provides global business news, insightful opinion and expert analysis of business, finance and politics. With over 500 journalists reporting from 50 countries worldwide, our in-depth coverage of international news is objectively reported and analysed from an independent, global perspective.

For more information: <http://membership.ft.com/pearsonoffer/>