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News Item

How Google’s Ad Business Funds Disinformation | ProPublica

By Craig Silverman,Ruth Talbot, Jeff Kao, and Anna Klühspies
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> Google is funneling revenue to some of the web’s most prolific purveyors of false information in Europe, Latin America and Africa, a ProPublica investigation has found.
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> The company has publicly committed to fighting disinformation around the world, but a ProPublica analysis, the first ever conducted at this scale, documented how Google’s sprawling automated digital ad operation placed ads from major brands on global websites that spread false claims on such topics as vaccines, COVID-19, climate change and elections.
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> In one instance, Google continued to place ads on a publication in Bosnia and Herzegovina for months after the U.S. government officially imposed sanctions on the site. Google stopped doing business with the site, which the U.S. Treasury Department described as the “personal media station” of a prominent Bosnian Serb separatist politician, only after being contacted by ProPublica.
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> Google ads are a major source of revenue for sites that spread election disinformation in Brazil, notably false claims about the integrity of the voting system that have been advanced by the incumbent president, Jair Bolsonaro. Voters in Brazil are going to the polls on Sunday with the outcome in doubt after Bolsonaro’s unexpectedly strong showing in the first round of voting.
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