

Presentation: Richard Wilson, Stop Funding Hate

Promoting inclusion and countering anti-immigrant narratives: Leveraging the role of businesses, 27 Nov 2017

Thank you very much for inviting me to speak.

I hope that video gives a sense of the basic idea behind the Stop Funding Hate campaign

It's now been shared over 280,000 times on FB and had over 8.8 million views

We think that reflects the huge concern among consumers about these issues

The idea that follows on from this is the idea of Ethical advertising: That companies need to think about the social impact of the media that they are funding

We'd suggest that one of the most important ways that companies can help to defuse this very toxic culture of hate towards migrants

Is to ensure that they are not advertising with media that are fuelling that culture of hate

Because unfortunately, up until now, advertising has sometimes been part of the problem

In the past few years we've seen a huge rise in the volume of anti-migrant media coverage around the world

This in turn has contributed to the rise in xenophobia within our societies.

In the UK, hate crime is at record levels, and experts have warned that parts of our media have helped to fuel this.

Advertising matters because part of the reason these anti-migrant stories have been happening is that hate is part of the business model: Xenophobia sells.

An anti migrant story may be inflammatory and divisive, but it can also be a very effective way of getting people to click on your website or buy your newspaper

And this in turn boosts advertising revenue

So if we want to change this, we have to find a way to turn those financial incentives around and make hate unprofitable.

Stop Funding Hate is suggesting that the key to this is for companies to start to apply an ethical check to where they advertise.

If enough companies will publicly commit to advertising ethically - to make it a part of their corporate social responsibility policy that they will not advertise in publications that incite hatred - this could change those financial incentives and have a transformative effect on the media.

In the UK Stop Funding Hate has made some progress on this issue.

Our big breakthrough came around this time last year when Lego decided to rethink the relationship with the Daily Mail newspaper.

A number of other companies have since followed suit, most recently the stationery store Paperchase.

We've found that the key to getting this issue on the agenda has been to mobilise consumer power

One of our core ideas:

If you are affected by media hate, or concerned about media hate, then you have a right to use your voice as a consumer, and ask the companies you shop with not to fund publications that are running these divisive stories.

So there's something all of us can do as an individual to push back against the culture of hate.

This idea has really caught people's imagination

We've now got over 239,00 followers on Facebook and 82,000 on Twitter

And what's really interesting is that in the past year similar campaigns have sprung up around the world.

The stand out example is the Sleeping Giants campaign in the United States, which has persuaded around 3,500 companies to pull their advertising from a notorious website called Breitbart.

But there have been similar campaigns in Germany, Denmark, Spain and many other countries.

There are now Sleeping Giants groups across Europe, including here in Switzerland

So it feels like Ethical Advertising is an idea whose time has come

One estimate I've seen is that over \$194 billion dollars per year is spent on digital advertising alone

If even a small proportion of this could be redirected away from publications that incite hatred and towards those many outlets that report accurately and fairly, this could have a truly transformative effect.

To reach that point, Ethical Advertising needs to become an established business norm.

For that to happen, advertisers and advertising professionals need to be at the heart of the discussion.

We've already started some very positive conversations with advertising agencies who are interested in this. And if you'd like to find out more please do come and speak to me.

To conclude: Yes the global rise in xenophobia has been very disturbing, but we are not powerless.

If advertisers and consumers work together, we can make hate unprofitable, and bring about a healthier and fairer media worldwide.