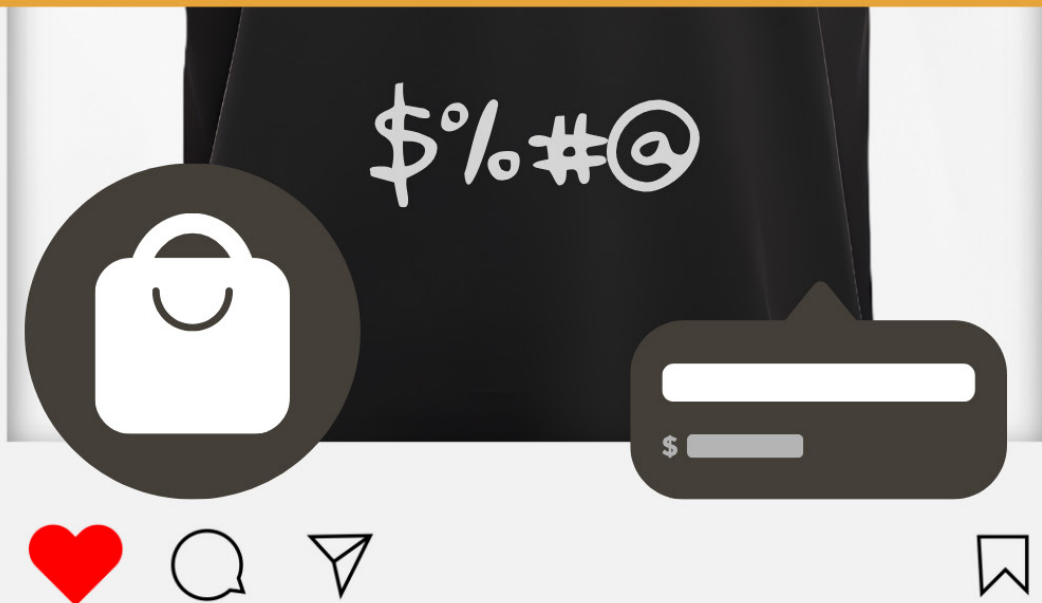




How Instagram enables sellers of hateful merchandise to reach a billion views





The Center for Countering Digital Hate works to stop the spread of online hate and disinformation through innovative research, public campaigns and policy advocacy.

Our mission is to protect human rights and civil liberties online. Social media platforms have changed the way we communicate, build and maintain relationships, set social standards, and negotiate and assert our society's values. In the process, they have become safe spaces for the spread of hate, conspiracy theories and disinformation.

Social media companies erode basic human rights and civil liberties by enabling the spread of online hate and disinformation.

At CCDH, we have developed a deep understanding of the online harm landscape, showing how easily hate actors and disinformation spreaders exploit the digital platforms and search engines that promote and profit from their content.

We are fighting for better online spaces that promote truth, democracy, and are safe for all. Our goal is to increase the economic and reputational costs for the platforms that facilitate the spread of hate and disinformation.

If you appreciate this report, you can donate to CCDH at counterhate.com/donate. In the United States, Center for Countering Digital Hate Inc is a 501(c)(3) charity. In the United Kingdom, Center for Countering Digital Hate Ltd is a non-profit company limited by guarantee.



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They raise and distribute more than \$2 billion annually and through planned giving and endowment programs support the infrastructure of Jewish communal life at home, in Israel, and around the world.

The 141 local Jewish Federations across North America are on the front lines of responding when antisemitism strikes in their communities, mobilizing the communal response, working with law enforcement, and coordinating with government.

Jewish communities cannot flourish if they do not feel safe to gather together; they cannot participate in their synagogues and schools, their camps and community centers, their gatherings, and their everyday life without unless we are confident in our security. To learn more about Jewish Federations, our work on antisemitism, or find your local Federation to make a donation, please visit www.jewishfederations.org.

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Content Warning: Please Read

This report includes content on the following themes which may be distressing to readers:

- ▶ Antisemitism
- ▶ Holocaust denial
- ▶ Racism

Reader discretion is advised.

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media once promised to bring us closer together. While social media plays a positive role in many people's lives, it has also become the hub of a booming hate-fueled digital economy where algorithms amplify hate, normalize it through repeated exposure, and help bad actors turn it into sales. We are also witnessing the rise of antisemitic violence across the world, including the recent attack on a synagogue in the United Kingdom. These attacks are connected to broader terrorist activities that put Jewish people at risk in this country and abroad.

This summer, Jewish Federations of North America released a Six-Point Policy Plan on Securing the Jewish Community, which is supported by 46 Jewish organizations across the political spectrum under the "United for Security" umbrella and calls upon the U.S. government to take action. Number six on the policy plan calls on the government to hold "social media, gaming, messaging, and other online platforms accountable for amplification of antisemitic hate, glorification of terrorism, extremism, disinformation, and incitement."

This report, conducted in partnership between CCDH and Jewish Federations of North America, examines 11 Instagram accounts openly selling antisemitic "hate merch" on e-commerce systems such as Shopify, Wix, and Payhip that collectively drew 1.5 billion views. Since Meta's recent rollback of key safeguards, the views of these accounts have nearly quadrupled, jumping from 220 million to 826 million over six months.

This content glorifies Nazis and their antisemitism, demonizes African Americans, and spreads antisemitic conspiracies that are being rewarded and monetized. And it's raking in substantial amounts of money. One account links to a web store claiming 30,000 fulfilled orders estimated at \$839,700 in sales. Another online site reports 25,000 sales earning approximately \$499,750.

What changed? Meta's moderation rules and protections did, making it easier for hateful content to spread. At the same time, Instagram's own algorithms promoted every one of the 11 accounts we studied, boosting their visibility instead of limiting it. That combination has turned fringe hate into a business.

Meanwhile, three systemic trends have come together to drive this explosion of harmful content. First, systemic, platform-enabled monetization: most of the shops connected to these accounts rely on mainstream e-commerce systems such as Shopify, Wix, and Payhip, despite them having policies banning hateful content.

Second, professionalized production, likely created using AI: these operations function like small content studios, frequently generating viral posts and likely using AI to assist in the generation of content. Six of the accounts posted what appears to be AI-generated hate content, none of which was labelled as such by Meta.

Third, algorithmic amplification: our research shows that Instagram’s “related accounts” feature is actively promoting the accounts pushing the hate content, despite the policies against it. Instead of diverting users elsewhere, they are being steered directly to hate-filled content.

The business model is brutally straightforward: extreme content drives engagement, which boosts reach, leading to merchandise sales, which then fund even more sophisticated hate. Post. Promote. Profit.

Every t-shirt sold isn’t just profit for extremists but also a stain on the social media platforms that fail to follow their own policies. But they can reverse course. Use effective safeguards. Stop recommending accounts that monetize hatred against Jews. Consistently label AI posts. Require e-commerce platforms to enforce their bans on hateful products. None of this is inevitable. If we act, we can dismantle the business model of hate. If we don’t, monetized extremism will become the new normal, eroding democratic institutions.



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North America ●

Post-Research Development:

CCDH contacted the e-commerce companies—Wix, Shopify, and Payhip—to alert them to the “hate merch” sold on their platforms. Wix and Payhip replied saying they made the independent decision to remove the identified merchandise.

2. REPORT SUMMARY

This study identifies Instagram accounts selling racist, hateful, and antisemitic merchandise. It shows that Instagram's algorithm promotes these hateful accounts in "related accounts" suggestions and points to Instagram's failure to label AI-generated hate and conspiracies on its platform. Once the hateful merchandise is marketed on Instagram, this report then shows how leading e-commerce platforms enable the sale of hate merchandise despite such sales being prohibited on their platforms.

META POLICY CHANGES APPEAR TO HAVE INCREASED VIEWS OF HATE ON INSTAGRAM

Earlier this year, Instagram's parent company Meta introduced sweeping changes to its content moderation and automatic detection policies.¹ This report examines the impact of those changes on Instagram, comparing the viewership figures for hateful accounts in the six months prior to and six months following Meta's policy changes.

It finds that six hate merchandise accounts amassed 826 million views in the months following Meta's policy changes, compared to 220 million in the six months prior. This near-quadrupling of views indicates that Meta's slashing of content moderation and automatic detection policies has had a turbocharging effect on the visibility of hateful content on Instagram.

E-COMMERCE PLATFORMS ARE ENABLING SALES OF HATE

Our research finds that the e-commerce platforms Shopify, Payhip and Wix are all involved in the sale of racist merchandise promoted on Instagram. Examples of the hateful merchandise for sale includes clothing with Nazi symbolism, racist slogans, and calling for black people to go "back to the field".² Instagram's algorithm promotes and recommends these accounts, linking to e-commerce platforms that enable the sale of hateful merchandise.³

This report shows how hate is becoming increasingly lucrative. In just one example, an account in our study claims to have processed 30,000 orders, suggesting revenue of roughly \$839,700 in merchandise sales.⁴ Shopify, Payhip and Wix, have specific policies that prohibit the use of their services for the sale of hateful content, but this report finds scant evidence that these prohibitions are enforced.

BREAKING THE ONLINE HATE TO PROFIT PIPELINE

Hateful merchandise is a lucrative industry. This research evidences the failure of Instagram to enforce its own rules on hateful conduct and exposes the industry of hateful, racist merchandise that has arisen because of Instagram's failure. This is further compounded by e-commerce platforms Shopify, Payhip, and Wix that fail to uphold their prohibition on the sale of hateful content. Social media and e-commerce platforms must cease to provide the service that turns hate into profit.

3. KEY FINDINGS

11 HATEFUL ACCOUNTS SELLING “HATE MERCH” ON INSTAGRAM HAVE ACCRUED 1.5 BILLION VIEWS

- ▶ This study identifies 11 accounts recommended by Instagram’s algorithm that post racist or antisemitic content while promoting shops selling hateful merchandise.
- ▶ Examples of viral hate posted by the accounts include:
 - ▷ Describing Jewish people as the “root of all problems”.¹
 - ▷ Calling for black people to go “back to the field”.²
 - ▷ Racist references about the death of George Floyd.³
- ▶ Despite each posting numerous posts containing hate, the accounts have been able to reach a combined 1.5 billion views across all content since their creation.

VIEWS ON HATE ACCOUNTS NEARLY QUADRUPLD SINCE META WEAKENED HATE SPEECH POLICIES

- ▶ Meta made sweeping changes to its hate speech policies this year.⁴
- ▶ Six out of the 11 accounts were old enough to allow for a comparison of their performance in the six months before and after the policy announcement.
- ▶ These six accounts reached 3.75 times more views after the announcement:
 - ▷ In the six months before, they had a combined 220 million views
 - ▷ in the six months after, they had a combined 826 million views

EACH OF THE 11 ACCOUNTS USE THEIR INSTAGRAM PROFILES TO SELL “HATE MERCH”

- ▶ Each account included links to online shops that sold hateful merchandise.
- ▶ Examples of “hate merch” sold by the online shops include t-shirts with:
 - ▷ Nazi-themed images including nazi salutes and depictions of Hitler.⁵
 - ▷ Racist tropes such as linking black people with criminality.⁶
 - ▷ A slogan stating “Life is a race. Be a racist”.⁷
- ▶ One account claims to have fulfilled 30,000 orders, an estimated potential revenue of \$839,700. Another says it has fulfilled 25,000, a potential revenue of \$499,750.⁸
- ▶ These online shops rely on e-commerce platforms Shopify, Payhip and Wix despite them having policies prohibiting hateful content.⁹

INSTAGRAM’S ALGORITHM PROMOTES ACCOUNTS SHARING HATEFUL CONTENT

- ▶ Despite posting hate, all 11 hate accounts identified as part of this study are algorithmically promoted through Instagram’s “related accounts” feature.

INSTAGRAM IS FAILING TO CONSISTENTLY LABEL AI-GENERATED HATE AND CONSPIRACIES

- ▶ 6 out of the 11 hate accounts shared an image or videos generated using AI.
- ▶ Meta claims to add AI labels to content but does not do so consistently.¹⁰

4. META POLICY CHANGES

Meta rolled back policies targeting hate speech this year

This year, Meta announced sweeping changes to its policy environment on harmful content, including changes to its policy enforcement mechanisms.¹⁵ The announcement marked a sharp rollback of safeguards that were designed to prevent the spread of harmful content across its platforms.

In the context of these changes, this report documents a surge in the reach of hate accounts on Instagram, showing how a series of accounts have been able to expand dramatically and convert this reach into revenue. It follows CCDH's report [More Transparency and Less Spin](#) published earlier this year exploring each element of Meta's policy shift, including the following three key changes:¹⁶

1. DILUTION OF WRITTEN POLICIES ON HATE SPEECH

Meta is dropping certain policies on hateful conduct, leaving more room for racist and antisemitic claims.¹⁷ Leaked internal moderator guidance shows Meta will now permit statements such as: "Black people are more violent than Whites", "Immigrants are grubby, filthy pieces of shit," and "Jews are flat out greedier than Christians".¹⁸

2. ENDING PROACTIVE ENFORCEMENT

Meta said that, for some types of harmful content, it will no longer automatically detect and take action where violations have taken place.¹⁹ Instead, enforcement actions will only follow if a user reports a post.²⁰ Proactive detection technology has previously been credited by Meta as a key factor in reducing the prevalence of harmful content on its platforms, with Mark Zuckerberg naming it the "single most important improvement in enforcing our policies".²¹ The impact of this change has the potential to be vast: in 2023–24, 97% of Meta's enforcement against key policy breaches like hate speech and violent incitement was proactive.²²

3. ENDING DEMOTION OF CONTENT THAT "MIGHT VIOLATE OUR STANDARDS"

Meta is also withdrawing the policy of algorithmically demoting posts that its systems predict could violate rules, also known as "borderline content".²³ This policy had previously been framed as a way of preventing sensationalist and provocative content from going viral and providing a "safer experience" for users.²⁴

Meta has provided little additional clarity on the details of these changes, failing to specify what assessment, if any, has been made of their real-world consequences.²⁵ However, the combined effect of loosening standards, halting proactive enforcement and ending demotions have the potential to considerably expand the space for racist, antisemitic, and other forms of hate to flourish.

5. NUMBER OF VIEWS

Instagram accounts profiting from “hate merch” have 1.5 billion views

An analysis of 11 Instagram accounts that post hateful content while profiting from “hate merch” shows that their posts are receiving enormous reach on Instagram, together reaching an all-time cumulative total of 1.5 billion views across their Reels and videos.

INSTAGRAM IS RECOMMENDING RACIST “HATE MERCH” ACCOUNTS

This study focuses on large algorithmically promoted accounts that push antisemitic and racist content while simultaneously directing users to online shops selling racist and antisemitic merchandise. The accounts were identified by starting with a small seed list of accounts and looking at accounts recommended by Instagram’s “related accounts” feature to find other similar accounts. While not all content posted by the 11 accounts is racist or antisemitic, researchers identified multiple examples of hate content posted by each one, such as:

- ▶ A post depicting Jewish people as the “root of all problems” and featuring the happy merchant meme, an antisemitic caricature of a Jewish person.¹¹
- ▶ A post with 28 million views captioned “When the family is arguing about politics and they ask for my expert opinion.” above a clip portraying a Nazi SS officer.¹²
- ▶ A post that features the creation of a t-shirt with images of black people and the caption “Back to the field”.¹³

SOME “HATE MERCH” ACCOUNTS COULD BE EARNING UP TO \$840,000

The accounts all sell “hate merch” such as racist t-shirts through online shops advertised on their Instagram profiles. Examples of such products include:

- ▶ A shirt with Nazi salutes styled in the shape of the Adidas logo.¹⁴
- ▶ A shirt depicting Adolf Hitler with a muscular body and the caption “Adolf Lifter”.¹⁵
- ▶ A shirt that says “Life is a race. Be a racist”.¹⁶

Two of the accounts have boasted that their shops have fulfilled tens of thousands of orders. One account claims to have over 30,000 orders fulfilled, which amounts to an estimated sales value of nearly \$839,700, assuming each order consisted of a single t-shirt at the standard price.¹⁷

This report shows the reach of hate accounts that have emerged on Instagram with a clear business incentive to expand their visibility to generate revenue through shops. It also highlights Instagram’s role in enabling them to achieve such visibility, particularly in the context of a new policy environment with weaker enforcement on harmful content.¹⁸

6. GROWTH

Reach of “hate merch” accounts nearly quadrupled since Meta’s policy changes

An analysis of six established “hate merch” accounts – those that have been active long enough to analyze over time – shows their reach has nearly quadrupled since Meta’s policy announcement this year.

Six out of the 11 accounts in this study were set up before or up to July 2024, making them old enough to compare performance six months before and six months after Meta’s announcement.¹⁹ The analysis focused on views on Reel and video posts over time.

Combined, these six accounts reached 220,099,868 views in the six months before the policy announcement, and 825,679,144 six months afterwards, a multiple of 3.75. Every one of them increased their views over the period by at least double.

Account	Views six months before announcement	Views six months after announcement	Multiple
Forbiddenclothes	106,201,679	365,914,957	3.45
Shoptrendfits	42,959,262	151,177,640	3.52
Bruhtees.co	69,255,944	151,601,149	2.19
Retrogarms.rg	344,941	77,296,004	224.08
Beholdentotruth	1,286,796	37,124,236	28.85
Clothingyouneed2	51,246	42,565,158	830.60
Total	220,099,868	825,679,144	3.75

This analysis shows that the accounts are reaching substantially larger audiences since the policy announcement than they did before, an increase which suggests that Meta’s new policy environment may have helped create conditions in which hate-driven accounts can grow their reach and influence with fewer barriers.²⁰

NEWCOMER ACCOUNTS PUSHING “HATE MERCH” HAVE GROWN RAPIDLY

The five remaining newcomer “hate merch” accounts – those that have been active for less than a year – have been able to quickly accumulate views in a short time, collectively reaching 131 million views. This rapid expansion further points to a policy environment in which hate accounts are facing few barriers. Some accounts went viral almost immediately: dripytees, for example, has accumulated nearly 48.5 million views after launching in March 2025, while jakeshieldspod has accrued over 38 million views since August 2024. Even smaller pages, such as forbiddennetwork and unchained_deception, have quickly amassed millions of views.

7. “HATE MERCH” SALES

“Hate merch” is sold using e-commerce platforms including Shopify

Online “hate merch” shops promoted by Instagram accounts in this study appear to rely on mainstream e-commerce platforms Shopify, Wix and Payhip, despite these platforms having policies against hate speech.²¹ The e-commerce platforms Wix and Payhip removed the identified merchandise upon notification.

This study focuses on 11 “hate merch” accounts that sell merch through online shops linked in their profile bios, either directly or using a link-in-bio tool. These accounts together promoted 10 unique shops, each with at least one product listing with hateful content. By analyzing the online shops’ websites and their source code, researchers were able to identify where e-commerce platforms were being used to support each shop.

This showed that six of the 10 shops appear to use the e-commerce platform Shopify, despite the fact it has a policy that bans products “promoting hateful content”.²² Wix and Payhip were being used by one shop each, despite both also having hate speech policies.²³ Examples of hateful products for each platform can be found in the appendix.

Platform	Hate Shop	Instagram Account	Hate Speech Policy
Shopify	Retro Garms	retrogarms rg	Shopify’s shop merchant guidelines state that prohibited products include those “promoting hateful content, violence, gore, profanity or offensive content”. ²⁴
	Shop Trend Fits	shoptrendfits	
	Dripy Tees	dripytees	
	Jake Shields Fight Back Podcast	jakeshieldspod	
	Forbidden Clothes	forbiddenclothes	
	Bruh Tees	bruhtees co	
Unknown	AppleJuice Webshop <i>Shop No Longer Active</i>	applejuice_daily	
	Clothing You Need	clothingyouneed2	
Wix	Beholden to Truth <i>Content Removed</i>	beholdentotruth	Wix prohibits content that is “abusive, racist, offensive” or “related to or deemed as hate speech”. ²⁵
Payhip	UXD Nation Supply Co <i>Content Removed</i>	unchained_deception	Restricted products include those “promoting racism, hate, violence, or religious persecution” ²⁶

8. CASE STUDY: FORBIDDEN CLOTHES

Forbidden Clothes earned an estimated \$840,000 from “hate merch” shop

The account Forbidden Clothes has over 396,000 followers and links to an online shop in their bio with “hate merch” featuring racist and antisemitic designs, as well as homophobia and conspiracies about vaccines.²⁷

Along with the link advertising the Shopify store, the bio of Forbidden Clothes claims they have “over 30,000 orders fulfilled”.²⁸ If each order involved the purchase of one t-shirt at \$27.99, their standard price for a t-shirt, this would amount to total sales worth \$839,700.²⁹ Examples of their hateful shop listings include:



This t-shirt depicts a caricature of an older Jewish man with a screaming child and the text “Brooklyn Tunnels – Underground Horrors”.³⁰ This is a reference to the blood libel conspiracy that Jewish people sacrifice children.³¹



This t-shirt, which features in a post by the Instagram account, depicts Larry Silverstein saying “Pull it”, a reference to the conspiracy that he orchestrated 9/11 echoing the antisemitic trope that Jewish people manipulate world events.³²



This t-shirt has the text “(((They))) don’t really care about us”.³³ Triple parentheses are a form of coded antisemitism described by the CEO of the Anti-Defamation League as the “online equivalent of” of “taunting someone verbally”.³⁴



This t-shirt, which features in a post by the Instagram account, shows a juice box and the text “I want to notice”, which is an antisemitic dog whistle for when people “notice” Jewish control, an antisemitic conspiracy.³⁵

9. CASE STUDY: CLOTHING YOU NEED

Clothing You Need earned an estimated \$500,000 from “hate merch”

The Instagram account Clothingyouneed2 made an estimated \$500,000 from selling merchandise, including “hate merch”, through a link advertised in their Instagram bio.

The account’s bio states that they have “25,000+ Satisfied Customers”.³⁶ Assuming their t-shirts sold at a standard price of \$19.99, this would amount to an estimated total revenue for the online shop of \$499,750.³⁷ Examples of hateful and racist shop listings include:



This shirt depicts black people along with the caption “Back to the field”, which is a reference to slavery.³⁸ A post advertising this shirt on their Instagram account received almost 200,000 likes.³⁹



This shirt depicts two black men as Batman and Robin with the caption “Blackman and Robbing”, which stereotypes black people as criminals.⁴⁰ A post advertising this shirt on their Instagram account has 24k likes.⁴¹



This shirt, which features in a post by the Instagram account, has the caption “Just pick it”, and depicts the Nike logo as balls of cotton, referencing the forced cotton-picking of enslaved black people to make a racist joke.⁴²

This listing was removed as of the date of publication.



This shirt, which features in a post by the Instagram account, depicts the adidas logo as three Nazi salutes with the caption “adidolf”.⁴³

This listing was removed as of the date of publication.

10. CASE STUDY: AI-GENERATED HATE

Instagram is failing to consistently label AI-generated hate and conspiracies

Six of the 11 accounts studied have posted hate content that appears to have been generated using AI, but Meta has failed to consistently mark such posts with “AI info” labels.⁴⁴

In April 2024, Meta announced that the platform would begin adding “AI info” labels to posts where they had detected that content was generated using AI.⁴⁵ To test the effectiveness of this labelling system, researchers reviewed recent content from the accounts and selected one relevant post for each account where it appeared likely that AI was being used to generate hateful content.

Researchers then further assessed the posts, which contained both video and image content, for features typical of generative-AI and tested them digitally using Hive, a tool for detecting AI-generated content.⁴⁶ Content was classed as AI-generated when the tool detected AI-use and, on review, two researchers agreed the content showed signifiers of generative AI.⁴⁷

This analysis identified six posts as being AI-generated, showing that six out of the 11 accounts appear to have posted hateful content generated using AI. Out of the sample of six posts analyzed, none displayed “AI info” labels.⁴⁸ This indicates that Meta is failing to consistently add “AI info” labels. The post examples below show how AI appears to have been used by the accounts.



This video from Forbidden Network shows Jewish people dancing in anticipation of 9/11, depicting a conspiracy about Jewish people being behind 9/11.⁴⁹



This post from Dripy Tees shows a shirt design featuring Star Wars characters with money and the Star of David along with the caption “Start Wars”.⁵⁰



This deepfake of Kash Patel from Forbidden Clothes depicts him as a racist stereotype of a South Asian call center worker.⁵¹

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

When Meta announced vast changes to content moderation and fact-checking policies this year, CCDH raised concerns about what those changes would mean for the safety of Meta platforms, including Instagram. We warned that halting proactive enforcement, demoting less harmful content, and replacing independent fact-checking with Community Notes could strip away critical safeguards against the proliferation of online hate.

Six months on, this report provides stark evidence that those concerns were justified. Since Meta's announcement, views on hateful Instagram accounts we studied have almost quadrupled, rising from 220 million views before to 826 million afterwards over a period of six months. Looser rules appear to have created a fertile environment for antisemitic, and racist accounts to grow their audiences and monetize their hate.

These findings suggest that the spread, reach, and monetization of online hate have accelerated following Meta's policy rollback. Without stronger protections, and enforceable transparency, these harms may continue to grow.

Meta must urgently establish and enforce effective policies to curb harmful content. That means ensuring proactive enforcement, adopting stronger safeguards, and applying its rules consistently across platforms.

E-commerce platforms must enforce their policies on the sale of hateful products. Instagram influencers monetize hate through merchandise sales on e-commerce platforms such as Shopify, Payhip, and Wix. These companies have explicit policies against the sale of products promoting hateful content. These policies should be enforced, not ignored.

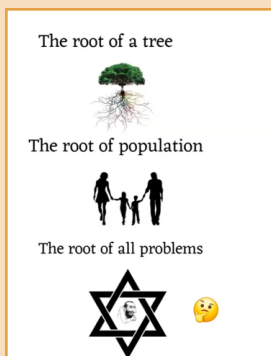
Meta must apply AI labels consistently with independent oversight. Our research exposes Meta's failure to enforce its own policy on labeling AI-generated content. Half of the accounts in this study shared AI-generated images of hateful or conspiracy theory material, yet none carried labels indicating their synthetic origin.

Regulators and policymakers must demand action. In jurisdictions like the UK and EU, regulators have the power to force Meta to uphold their own terms of service and must do so. Shopify and Wix must be pressed into enforcing their policies that prohibit the use of their e-commerce platform for the sale of hate.

Transparency is needed from Meta on the impact of policy changes. The shrouded nature of Meta's platforms makes it problematic for researchers to fully understand the online harms resulting from their sweeping policy changes this year. Despite this lack of transparency, this report shows that views on six hate accounts have almost quadrupled since Meta changed its hate speech policies, suggesting an enormous impact for the billions of users on Meta platforms.

APPENDIX 1: EXAMPLES OF HATE POSTS

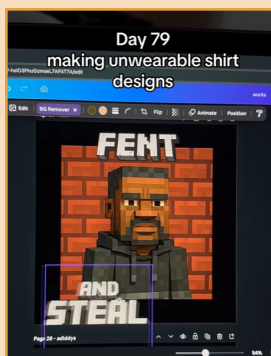
The following section contains examples of hateful content posted by the Instagram accounts featuring antisemitism and racism.



This post from applejuice_daily characterizes Jewish people as the “root of all problems”. To represent Jewish people, it depicts the “Happy Merchant” meme, an antisemitic caricature, inside the star of David.⁵²



This post from Forbidden Network uses AI to create an antisemitic video of somebody dressing up to pretend to be Jewish, including an exaggerated fake nose, along with a caption implying they’ll get a 0% interest loan.⁵³



This post from Retro Garms depicts George Floyd as a Minecraft character with the caption “Fent and Steal”, playing on racist conspiracies about his death.⁵⁴



This post from Shop Trend Fits references Morpheus from The Matrix holding a red and blue pill which complete a word to either say “Rapist” or “Racist”.⁵⁵



This post from Bruh Tees features black people dressed as Superman along with images of fried chicken and watermelon, along with the caption “Man of Steal”, playing into racist stereotypes.⁵⁶



This post from Forbidden Clothes edits various photos of US presidents visiting the Western Wall, employing the antisemitic conspiracy of Jewish control over the US.⁵⁷



This post from Forbidden Clothes features Holocaust denial by referencing conspiracies about the use of crematoria alongside the caption "It's not denial, it's data analysis".⁵⁸



This post by Shop Trend Fits depicts Jewish people doing martial arts and edited to hold stacks of cash, which is an antisemitic stereotype about Jewish people being greedy.⁵⁹

APPENDIX 2: EXAMPLES OF “HATE MERCH”

This appendix contains examples of hateful merchandise sold by the online shops promoted by Instagram accounts highlighted in this study. The items contain imagery and slogans reflecting antisemitic or racist hate.



This shirt, sold by Bruh Tees using the Shopify platform, is a riff on the Jaws poster which instead says “Jews” above a large nose and money in the water.⁶⁰



This shirt, sold by Dripy Tees using the Shopify platform, has an image of black people along with the phrase “Back to the field”.⁶¹



This shirt, sold by Bruh Tees using Shopify, depicts George Floyd as a woman with the transgender flag and the caption “I can’t breed”.⁶² The caption mocks Floyd’s final words.⁶³



This shirt, sold by Fight Back Podcast using the Shopify platform, says “((((they)))” killed JFK, with the triple parentheses as code for Jewish people.⁶⁴



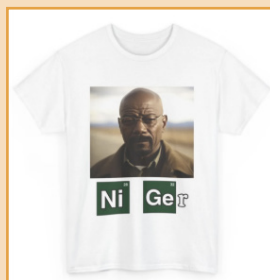
This shirt, sold by Retro Garms using the Shopify platform, depicts the adidas logo as three Nazi salutes.⁶⁵ *This listing was removed as of the date of publication.*



This shirt, sold by the account Retro Garms using the Shopify platform, depicts Hitler as a Minecraft character along with the text “Neinkraft”.⁶⁶



This t-shirt, sold by Clothing You Need, depicts the silhouette of a person with their hands up and the caption “Don’t shoot, I’m white”.⁶⁷



This shirt, sold by Bruh Tees using the Shopify platform, depicts the Breaking Bad poster with a black man alongside the slur “N*****” in the style of the show logo.⁶⁸ *This listing was removed as of the date of publication.*



The shirt, sold by Clothing You Need, plays on racist tropes about absent Black fathers by depicting Arnold Schwarzenegger as a Black man getting milk with the caption “I won’t be back”.⁶⁹



This shirt, sold by Shop Trend Fits using the Shopify platform, features a glorified version of Hitler with gym equipment and the caption “Adolf Lifter”.⁷¹



This shirt, sold by Beholden to Truth using the Wix platform, features the acronym ZOG (Zionist Occupied Government), which is antisemitic code implying Jewish power over the United States government.⁷³ *This listing was removed as of the date of publication.*



This shirt, sold by AppleJuice Webshop using the Shopify platform, features a juice box at a news desk.⁷⁵ Juice is an antisemitic dog whistle meant to represent Jews.⁷⁶ *This listing was removed as of the date of publication.*



This shirt, sold by Dripy Tees using the Shopify platform, with the caption “The Hunger Games” alongside an image of Black children and watermelon, which is a racist stereotype.⁷⁰



The shirt, sold by Clothing You Need, features the characters from the movie “The Incredibles” as Black people with the caption “The Arrestables”.⁷²



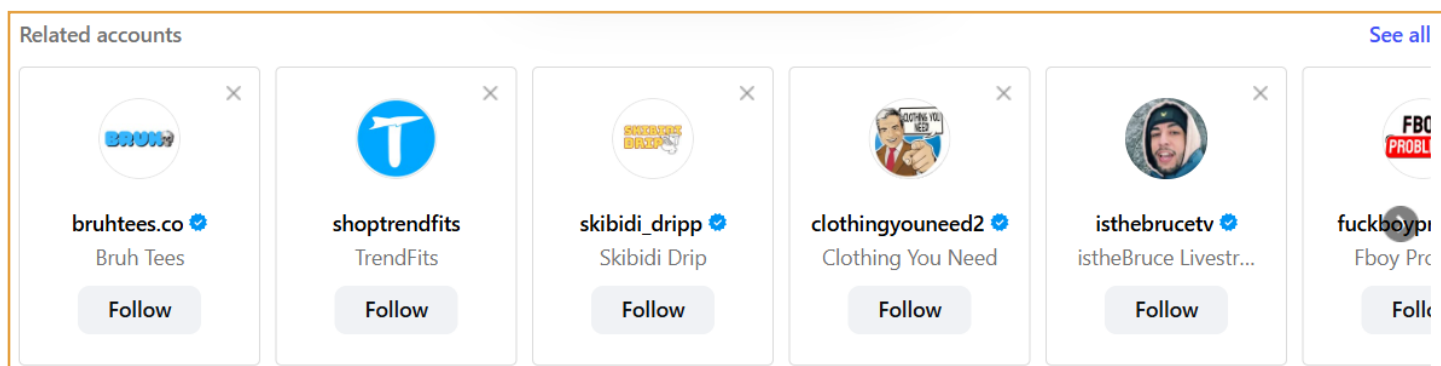
This shirt, sold by UXD Nation Supply Co using the Payhip platform, features a Star of David along with text that says, “Cut the puppet strings”, which refers to an antisemitic trope about Jewish control.⁷⁴ *This listing was removed as of the date of publication.*

APPENDIX 3:

ALGORITHMIC PROMOTION

This study focuses only on hate accounts that are being algorithmically promoted through Instagram’s “related accounts” feature. The accounts were identified by starting with a small seed list of accounts and looking at “related accounts” to find other large accounts of a similar nature.

Instagram’s “related accounts” feature appears when viewing the profile of an account, surfacing similar accounts in a way that makes them easier to discover. It appears when not logged in, meaning it is not influenced by a specific person’s user history.



Researchers were able to confirm that all accounts, including seed accounts, were being recommended in this way by analyzing the list of “related accounts” on each of the profiles, finding that every account was promoted in the list by at least one other account.

The fact that the accounts are being algorithmically promoted shows that, rather than diverting people away from hateful content, Instagram is helping them discover more, which could be contributing to their success in reaching large numbers of views.

While Meta hasn’t clarified if its new policies would impact account recommendations, the company has committed to broader algorithmic changes such as the decision to demote less content “that might violate our standards” and to halt the use of automated systems to scan for certain types of policy violation.⁷⁷

Instagram Accounts	Followers	Total Views on Reels & Videos (All Time)	Recommended
forbiddenclothes	396,623	631,749,800	✓
shoptrendfits	109,830	335,224,620	✓
bruhtees.co	173,863	235,712,240	✓
retrogarms.rg	59,366	77,984,788	✓
beholdentotruth	81,336	59,876,531	✓
dripytees	36,478	48,475,033	✓
clothingyouneed2	40,634	47,846,223	✓
jakeshieldspod	46,464	38,439,264	✓
applejuice_daily	27,686	21,419,240	✓
forbiddennetwork	32,649	16,015,937	✓
unchaineddeception	24,661	6,917,185	✓
Total	1,029,590	1,519,660,861	

APPENDIX 4:

METHODOLOGY

The following section sets out the methodology for this study detailing the process for identifying hateful accounts selling “hate merch”, identification of AI content, analysis of e-commerce providers and data collection.

HOW WE COMPILED A LIST OF HATEFUL ACCOUNTS SELLING “HATE MERCH” ON INSTAGRAM

To study the monetization of hate on Instagram, researchers identified 11 accounts recommended by Instagram’s algorithm that promoted antisemitism or racism in both posts and on merchandise that is sold through their online store, a link for which is provided in their Instagram bio or link-in-bio tool.

To identify the list of 11 accounts, researchers first collected a smaller ‘seed’ list of hate accounts with online shops. This ‘seed’ list was compiled through a process of scrolling on Instagram’s Feed and scrolling through the recommended Reels shown under hateful posts, noting any accounts that posted hate while promoting online shops.

This list was expanded by looking at accounts identified through Instagram’s “related accounts” feature and selecting those that had also posted hate and promoted online shops, creating a ‘longlist’ of accounts. This longlist was then filtered to the final set of 11 accounts by including only those that met the following criteria:

1. The account had posted at least five hateful posts to Instagram in the last year, where the nature of the hate consisted of either antisemitism or racism.
2. The account profile contained a shop link either directly on their profile or through a link-in-bio tool such as Linktree.
3. The listed shop had at least one merchandise item assessed by researchers as hateful, where the hate consisted of either antisemitism or racism.
4. The account appeared in the “related accounts” list of another hate account at least once, showing it is being algorithmically promoted by Instagram.

Hateful merchandise was only categorized as such when two researchers had agreed on its classification as hateful based on the inclusion of racist or antisemitic designs.

Hateful posts were categorized as such when two researchers had agreed that they breached Meta’s own policies on either “hateful conduct” or on “dangerous organizations and individuals”.⁷⁸ All examples of hateful content, including posts and merchandise listings, were recorded with a screenshot.

Data collection to compile this list of accounts, including analysis of hateful content, merchandise listings and “related accounts” lists took place between June 15, 2025 and August 29, 2025. The listings and accounts studied were all live at the time that the analysis took place.

HOW WE ESTABLISHED THAT THE ACCOUNTS ARE BEING ALGORITHMICALLY PROMOTED BY INSTAGRAM

Researchers analyzed whether accounts were being algorithmically promoted by checking if they appeared in Instagram’s “related accounts” list of other accounts in the study. The “related accounts” list is displayed by Instagram beneath profiles when they are accessed without logging in.

To support this analysis, researchers collected data on all the accounts “related accounts” lists using a specialized tool for collecting profile information developed by Bright Data, the data infrastructure layer for BI and AI industry.⁷⁹

Starting with the wider longlist of potential accounts, researchers analyzed which accounts appeared in these lists of “related accounts” and removed any accounts from the study that weren’t promoted algorithmically in this way.

This process provided evidence that each of the 11 accounts that form the core of this study are being promoted algorithmically by Instagram through the platform’s “related accounts” lists – with each account listed by Instagram as being “related” to at least one other from the study.

HOW WE COLLECTED POST DATA, VIEWS FIGURES AND LIMITATIONS OF DATA COLLECTION

Researchers used a specialized tool to collect posts from the 11 accounts, which returned a dataset of posts alongside metrics like views, likes and post-dates. The tool was developed by Bright Data, the data infrastructure layer for BI and AI industry.⁸⁰ All available historic posts were collected from the accounts up to the date of July 31, 2025, with the earliest post in the dataset being from May 21, 2016.

The data collected for “views” aligns with the view count that is displayed publicly on Instagram profiles on the bottom left hand corner of posts when viewing the main grid or Reels tab of a profile. Instagram states that “view” figures reflect the number of times content has been played or displayed, and that Reel replays are also included.⁸¹ All data collection for this analysis took place between July 25, 2025 and August 11, 2025.

Researchers estimate that the data collection process captured 95% of the total posts from all the accounts. This reflects the fact that there was a small discrepancy between the number of posts collected using the tool and the post count displayed on profiles.

Researchers were able to estimate the scale of this discrepancy by comparing the number of posts collected and the post counts on profiles. Overall, the tool returned a total of 7,677 posts across the 11 accounts over the period specified, compared to 8,123 posts listed in the accounts’ post counts combined – an overall coverage of 95%. This indicates that only a small share of posts was affected by this gap in coverage.

The dataset of posts was reduced slightly to 7,403 posts after removing posts where the accounts were tagged as co-authors but not listed as the primary author.⁸² This decision was made in order to focus the analysis on posts for which the accounts studied were the original author and to remove duplicates where posts had been co-authored by two accounts in the study.⁸³

Analysis of views using this dataset of posts was restricted to just Reel and Video posts, of which there were 5,667, since view data was not available for Image and Carousel posts. A small number of Reel and Video posts also did not hold any data for views, leaving a final dataset of 5,255 Reel and Video posts with view data.

HOW WE ANALYZED HOW VIEWS CHANGED OVER TIME

Researchers analyzed the dataset of Reel and Video posts, collected as described above, to measure the change in views accrued by a subset of six longstanding accounts before and after Meta's policy announcement. The analysis compared views accrued in the six months before the policy announcement to views accrued in the six months after the policy announcement.

Only six accounts were included in this over time analysis because only six accounts had been active long enough to have been in existence for the six months before and after the announcement. The accounts included were beholdentotruth (established May 2016), Bruhtees.co (established April 2023), Clothingyouneed2 (established Feb 2021), Forbiddenclothes (established May 2020), Retrogarms.rg (established July 2024), Shoptrendfits (established December 2023).

For the analysis, we defined the pre-announcement window as July 8, 2024 to January 7, 2025 and the post-announcement window as January 8 to July 7, 2025.

HOW WE IDENTIFIED ACCOUNTS CONTAINING AI-GENERATED CONTENT

Researchers analyzed the 11 accounts for hateful videos or images made using generative AI. For each account, researchers reviewed recent content to see if any images or videos appeared likely to be made using generative AI. They then selected one post for each account where they suspected AI-generated content had been used within hate posts. This way, they identified the likely use of AI-generated hate for six of the 11 accounts. The remaining five had not posted content that appeared to use generative AI.

To come to a firmer conclusion whether the images were made with AI, each of the six selected posts were then independently assessed by two researchers who agreed that they contained features typical of AI images, such as distorted or blurred anatomy, text, or vague backgrounds.⁸⁴

In addition, the content of the six posts was checked using a tool by Hive Moderation that is designed to identify whether digital content, including images and videos, were generated by AI.⁸⁵ While AI detector tools are imperfect and do not always correctly identify the use of AI, they can provide useful additional evidence when combined with human analysis.⁸⁶ Researchers used the AI detector developed by Hive for this purpose because it has been shown to perform relatively well when compared to other similar tools.⁸⁷ A study comparing different AI detection tools found that Hive performed best on detecting AI images and was the only tool that did not misclassify human art as AI, with the authors ultimately recommending combining the use of Hive with human experts.⁸⁸

For purposes of the analysis, content was classed as AI-generated when it was both flagged as being “likely to contain AI-generated or deepfake content” by Hive and assessed by researchers to show signifiers of generative AI.⁸⁹ In each case, Hive agreed with the assessment of the researchers.

HOW WE IDENTIFIED WHEN E-COMMERCE PLATFORMS WERE BEING USED BY ONLINE SHOPS

For each online shop selling hateful merchandise, researchers identified which e-commerce platform was being used based on embedded statements at the bottom of the webpage which said “Powered by Shopify” or, where such statements were not available, by inspecting the HTML source code.

When looking at the source code, researchers looked for links or other mentions of the platforms in the code to indicate which of those platforms had been used. In each case, the relevant evidence was recorded with a screenshot.

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