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# A MONTH IN MEDIA

April 2017

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## GOOGLE PLANS AD-BLOCKING FEATURE FOR CHROME

Google plans to introduce an ad-blocking feature in the mobile and desktop versions of its Chrome browser. The feature, which could be switched on by default, would filter out certain ad types deemed to provide bad experiences for users. It is expected that Google are to announce the feature within weeks though people closer to the plans have also reported that they may still not go ahead.

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## IMPLICATIONS

Ad formats such as pop-ups, auto-playing video ads with sound, and prestitial ads with countdown timers are deemed to be of too low a quality. Google's plans could be seen as defensive; by switching on its own ad filter, it is hoping to quell further growth of 3<sup>rd</sup> party blocking tools, some of which charge fees for letting ads pass through their filters. Chrome's high portion of web browsing (in the US it has 47.5% of the browser market) means this feature would give Google more control of the ad-blocking debate.

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## FACEBOOK LAY DOWN 10 YEAR PLAN, DRIVEN BY AI & AR

Facebook's annual developers event took place on April 19<sup>th</sup>. The event allowed people who work with the site to come together and create/discuss new apps and features to be used in the future. 3 items in particular stood out at the event.

- 1) AR studio- Facebook is looking to develop its AR features to challenge Snapchat even further.
- 2) Messenger development- The app is to be upgraded including new features like Spotify integration and a partnership with Mastercard and Moneygram to develop In-app financial services.
- 3) Workplace- There will be a new and improved version of 'Workplace' available by the end of the year. This will demand a premium but will better rival collaboration tool 'Slack' with better cloud file sharing and storing software.

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## IMPLICATIONS

In the short term, Facebook's play for AR will look like a direct competition with Snapchat, and in a roundabout way it is. But it also points to the longer term direction Facebook is taking alongside the development of its other tools. F8 saw Facebook lay down a 10 year plan with artificial intelligence, ubiquitous internet connectivity and virtual and augmented reality at the forefront of its business. They will tread on other brands territory but they must keep developing in order to (maintain) and grow their global brand.

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## WEB'S CREATOR DEFENDS MESSAGING ENCRYPTION

Earlier this month, the web's creator attacked any UK plans to weaken encryption and promised to battle any moves by the Trump administration to break down net neutrality. Following the Westminster attack in March, Amber Rudd, the British home secretary has called for the police and intelligence agencies to be given access to WhatsApp and other encrypted messaging services.

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## IMPLICATIONS

Sir Tim Berners-Lee said any moves to undermine encryption would be a bad idea, and, "if you break that encryption then guess what - so could other people and guess what - they may end up getting better at it than you are." He was speaking following the news that he had received the Turing Award for inventing the world wide web and the first web browser 28 years ago.

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## YOUTUBE TO IMPOSE AD LIMITS ON SMALLER CHANNELS

YouTube has been under large pressure recently over the placement of ads on inappropriate sites and channels. The company announced early in April that it will be changing the terms of its YPP (YouTube Partner Programme) to build extra safeguards for advertisers. This included new legislation that stated they “will no longer serve ads on YPP videos until the channel has reached 10,000 lifetime views”. The move will mean that once a creators channel reaches 10,000 views they will have their channel checked by a moderator.

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## IMPLICATIONS

By managing the less popular sites in this way, YouTube expects to be better placed to cover themselves from any inappropriate ad placements. Their watch over smaller sites is not as vigilant as it is over the larger, where content can be more varied and therefore risky. This is generally good news for advertisers as the quality of placements will go up. YouTube has been in the news around brand safety recently and this development is focused on stopping unlicensed re-uploads of popular videos, or so-called “freebooting.”

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## QUORA HIGHLIGHT BIG AD INTENTIONS

Quora, a question and answer website has raised \$85 million in order to expand internationally and launch an ad business. Despite often being compared to Wikipedia, CEO Adam D'Angelo insists that Quora is a qualitative discussion site for primary information, in contrast he considers Wikipedia as a purely secondary source. Backers in the latest round of funding include Y Combinator, Benchmark Capital and Peter Thiel.

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## IMPLICATIONS

This investment by some big industry players shows how seriously Quora should be taken. It has grown steadily but without much fanfare in recent years, and has roughly 190 million monthly active users. With high user numbers and an ad offering in the pipeline, it is an interesting company to keep a close eye on, particularly around new opportunities for brands to participate.

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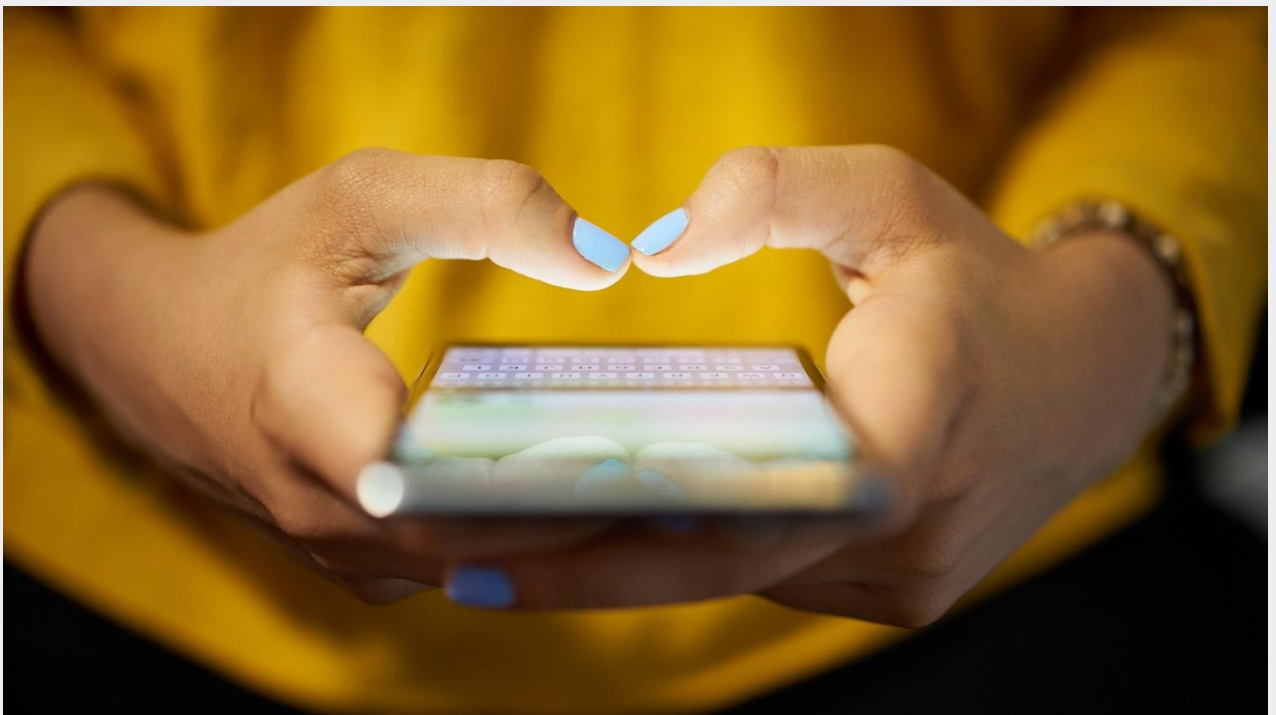
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## GROWING FACEBOOK AND GOOGLE DUOPOLY

There is an ongoing debate around the power that Google and Facebook have in the mobile ad world. By the end of the year, they will have a combined market share of 60%, according to eMarketer. US digital ad spend will grow 16% to \$83bn this year with Google and Facebook's revenues expected to rise 15% and 32% respectively.

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## IMPLICATIONS

This discussion could go on for a while, especially as the 'duopoly' looks likely to continue to grow. In reality Facebook and Google provide great opportunities to their partners, but the concern will naturally continue to grow within the press as they (the press) don't currently have the ability to rival Google and Facebook's digital advertising offerings.