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Removing Journalism from Google Is Not Neutral—It Undermines Trust, Credibility, and Long-Term Value

Zuerich (ots) -

FehrAdvice Responds to Google News Removal Test: Study Finds Journalism Is a Strategic Trust Asset, Not Just a Cost

Google's recent real-world test of removing journalistic content from its platforms may have yielded minimal short-term revenue loss—but a parallel independent study by Swiss research firm FehrAdvice points to a more profound strategic risk: the **erosion of user trust** when news content is no longer provided by the platform.

Google's own experiment across eight European countries (Spain, Italy, Poland, Denmark, Netherlands, Belgium, Greece, and Croatia) showed an immediate drop in engagement after removing news content:

- Search daily active users (DAUs) fell by **0.77%**
- Discover DAUs dropped by **5.47%**

While Google focused its analysis on direct, short-term behavioral and revenue shifts, it did not ask a more crucial question: **Why do users disengage when journalism disappears?**

FehrAdvice's Behavioral Study Provides the Answer

"Removing journalistic content doesn't just strip away information—it erodes trust," says the FehrAdvice research team.

"Users rated Google as less credible, less trustworthy, and less complete without news—leading to lower satisfaction and a decreased likelihood of returning."

Their findings show that news content functions not just as information, but as a **structural signal of platform quality**—a critical input for user trust, long-term engagement, and brand strength.

Key Findings from FehrAdvice's Behavioral Research

- When news content was removed, **credibility, trustworthiness, and completeness scores** dropped.
- These shifts in perception significantly **reduced user satisfaction** and **willingness to return** to the platform.
- News content functions as a **signal of reliability**, not just content consumption.
- The impact on platform perception goes **far beyond short-term engagement metrics**.

Short-Term Revenue Stability ≠ Long-Term Platform Resilience

FehrAdvice warns that Google's interpretation of minimal revenue loss after removing journalistic content is **misleading**. The short-term resilience is held up by **temporary stabilizers**: user habit, ad system flexibility, keyword targeting, and market dominance. But these forces mask deeper vulnerabilities.

"Trust doesn't vanish overnight—but it erodes cumulatively," the study emphasizes.

"Google's test misses the strategic point: **news is a long-term trust infrastructure.**"

When the Cracks Show: Key Triggers of Trust Erosion

FehrAdvice outlines scenarios where the absence of news becomes a strategic liability:

- **Political or global crises**, when trust is paramount
- **Increased use of alternative platforms** like ChatGPT, TikTok, or Bing with Copilot
- **Declining ad performance**, as lower trust affects engagement and click-through rates
- **News-centric moments**, such as elections or breaking stories, when professional journalism is essential

Quantifying the Value of Journalism: Up to €1.17 Billion at Stake

FehrAdvice developed a transparent model to estimate journalism's indirect revenue contribution to Google across the eight EU countries of the Google Study - Spain, Italy, Poland, Denmark, Netherlands, Belgium, Greece, and Croatia:

- Google earns ~€6.22 billion in paid search revenue in these markets
- **70% of users prefer journalistic sources** for informational searches
- A fair publisher share would range between €766 million and €1.17 billion annually

FehrAdvice's Call to Action: Don't Mistake Short-Term Revenue for Long-Term Stability

FehrAdvice urges policymakers, media stakeholders, and tech platforms to recognize that journalism's value goes **far beyond direct monetization**.

"Effective economic and policy decisions must account for the indirect—but measurable—contribution of journalism to digital platform integrity," the report concludes.

For Further Information, contact:

FehrAdvice & Partners AG, Zurich.

info@fehradvice.com

<https://fehradvice.com/valueofmedia/>

FehrAdvice: Value of News [Study Download](#)

Pressekontakt:

FehrAdvice & Partners Austria

Alexis Johann

Telefon: +43 676871970254

E-Mail: alexis.johann@fehradvice.com

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