



Tom Morrison-Bell
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21 July 2020

Dear Mr Morrison-Bell,

Thank you for your reply on behalf of Google to my letter of 25 June. I am writing to ask you three further questions.

1. Please confirm that there is no precedent for Google's role in the open display advertising market.

In the oral evidence session on 23 June, when discussing Google's role in the open display advertising market, you were unable to name any other market in which one company would be allowed to play multiple roles on both the demand and the supply side. In our letter, we asked whether any markets had since come to your attention.

You told us: "Regarding analogous markets, Google works hard to balance the interests of advertisers and publishers, as the examples above, and also below, show."

For clarity, please could you confirm that Google is not able to cite any precedent?

2. Please provide further details on the process of designing algorithms.

Thank you for the explanation you provided of the way your algorithm ranks news stories. Although you say that the algorithm is not intended to favour one point of view over another, the factors on which it makes decisions are ultimately the product of human value judgments. Please could you tell us what safeguards Google has in place to stop algorithms reflecting the biases of their designers? How do you ensure that there is diversity of thought among those designing the algorithm? Is there a process of external consultation or auditing?

On 'authoritativeness', please could you also provide further details on the "signals that can help determine which pages demonstrate expertise, authoritativeness and trustworthiness on a given topic"? For example, do they include an assessment of the authoritativeness of the author of an article and the sources an article refers to? You say that one factor is "whether

other people value the source for similar queries”. Please could you explain how you determine whether people value a source?

3. What is your reaction to the findings of the CMA market study on online platforms and digital advertising?

You may have seen that the Committee is considering the findings of the CMA market study and on Wednesday 8 July held evidence sessions with the CMA and two academic experts on the subject. We would be interested to read your thoughts on the CMA’s proposals and your response to points made by witnesses in those sessions,

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Lord Gilbert of Panteg
Chair of the House of Lords Communications and Digital Committee