

YouTube does not like "care"

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Over the last few days, we have put out videos with the word "care" in the thumbnail, title, or description. None has worked well, especially when we thought there was nothing much wrong with any of them. In each case, we expected them to get much more traffic than they did.

When analysing this situation, that word "care" jumped out as the common feature we were looking at, and this is important for us, as I spend a lot of time talking about the politics of care. The obvious question we asked is whether this is the wrong term for the thinking I am developing.

I decided to ask ChatGPT, and got this answer:

"Is there a YouTube trend around words like "care"?"

Yes. And it is not primarily ideological censorship. It is semantic saturation plus behavioural signalling.

Words like **care**, **kindness**, **well-being**, **compassion**, **community**, **empathy**, and **hope** have acquired three properties that algorithmic systems dislike:

First, they are overused by low-engagement content.

A great deal of corporate DEI material, NGO messaging, HR videos, lifestyle coaching, and generic "uplifting" content uses these terms. Most of that content performs poorly in watch time and retention. The algorithm learns this association.

Second, they signal **low urgency**.

"Care" sounds worthy, reflective, and slow. YouTube's system prioritises **anticipated watch duration and emotional arousal**. Words that imply calm, repair, or

thoughtfulness correlate statistically with early drop-off.

Third, they are politically ambiguous.

Unlike “tax”, “crisis”, “failure”, or “collapse”, “care” does not clearly indicate **conflict**. The algorithm favours content that implies tension, stakes, or opposition, because that predicts comments, rewatches, and sharing.

So the issue is not that YouTube dislikes care in a moral sense. It is that **the platform has learned that videos labelled with those words usually do not keep people watching**.

That is a structural, not personal, judgement."

What does this mean? Three things, I think.

First, as our further research has shown, there is nothing wrong with the term "politics of care," but we need another term to flag the thinking. The politics of care can be the theoretical spine of what I am talking about, but another name is required for marketing purposes, or the idea will not travel.

Second, we are working on the marketing name and already have some strong ideas. This is the advantage I now have of working with a team, none of whom is the slightest bit worried about challenging me on anything.

Third, when we do start refining the message, you will know why.