

It's too late to stop QAnon with fact checks and account bans | MIT Technology Review

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The traditional understanding of QAnon was that its ideas are spread by a relatively small number of adherents who are extremely good at manipulating social media for maximum visibility. But the pandemic made that more complicated, as QAnon began merging more profoundly with health misinformation spaces and rapidly increasing its presence on Facebook.

At this point, QAnon has become an omniconspiracy theory, says DiResta—it's no longer just about some message board posts, but instead a broad movement promoting many different, linked ideas. Researchers know that belief in one conspiracy theory can lead to acceptance of others, and powerful social-media recommendation algorithms have essentially turbocharged that process. For instance, DiResta says, research has shown that members of anti-vaccine Facebook groups were seeing recommendations for groups that promoted the Pizzagate conspiracy theory back in 2016.

In this information ecosystem Twitter functions more like a marketing campaign for QAnon, where content is created to be seen and interacted with by outsiders, while Facebook is a powerhouse for coordination, especially in closed groups.

[...]

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