News Item

Covid disinformation sites often use tools from Google, Facebook and Apple, report finds | The Washington Post

By Craig Timberg

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> Google, Facebook, Apple and other technology companies that try to keep covid-19 disinformation and fraud off their own platforms are enabling their spread through online services, tools and code used by websites that push such content, according to a new report from Oxford University.
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> The 120 websites studied by the Oxford researchers support protests against government health restrictions or spread misleading information about the disease caused by the coronavirus — false cures, fake charities or misleading health advice. These sites use web hosting, ad-tracking services, web development tools and social media links from leading technology companies.
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> Some of the tools are free "widgets" or bits of computer code that allow web designers to expand the capabilities of their sites and are used widely across the Internet, often without the companies that produce them knowing who is deploying them. Several problematic sites, for example, support financial transactions through Apple Pay, use Apple's affiliate links or enable compatibility with Apple devices such as the iPhone, the Oxford researchers said.
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