

Don't blame Russian trolls for America's anti-vaxx problem. Our misinformation is homegrown | The Guardian

By Sophie Zhang

August 19, 2021

On 18 May 2021, German YouTuber Mirko Drotschmann tweeted an unusual message: a marketing agency was asking him to share allegedly leaked documents on Covid-19 vaccine deaths. Within a week, French YouTuber Léo Grasset shared similar news. News reports followed: Fazze, a London-based marketing firm with ties to Russia, was offering money to influencers to falsely disparage a Covid-19 vaccine.

This month, Facebook announced that it was banning Fazze. In addition to bribing influencers, Fazze had created misleading anti-vaccine content off-platform and used fake accounts to spread it on Facebook.

Before we continue, let's clear up some common confusion between inauthentic behavior and misinformation. Misinformation refers to what someone says: "The Earth is flat" is misinformation regardless of who says it. Inauthenticity is about the identity of the speaker: if 1,000 fake accounts say "The Earth is round", this is still inauthentic.

Facebook banned Fazze not because of their message, but because of the shady methods they used to spread it. In contrast, users spreading misinformation authentically are generally left alone by FB.

[...]

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