

Follow the Money: How the Online Advertising Ecosystem Funds COVID-19 Junk News and Disinformation | The Computational Propaganda Project

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As people around the world turn towards search engines to access information about COVID-19, it is important to understand why and how users are being exposed to junk news content. In this memo, we examine the role of search engines and their optimization processes in directing traffic towards junk news & disinformation about COVID-19, and how these sites, in turn, monetize that traffic through digital advertising. We ask:

- How do the search engine optimization strategies of professional news sources compare to those of junk news & disinformation sources?
- In what way do third party sites boost the online reputation of junk news and disinformation on COVID-19 through backlinks?
- How and to what extent do major advertising platforms monetize junk news & disinformation around COVID-19?

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