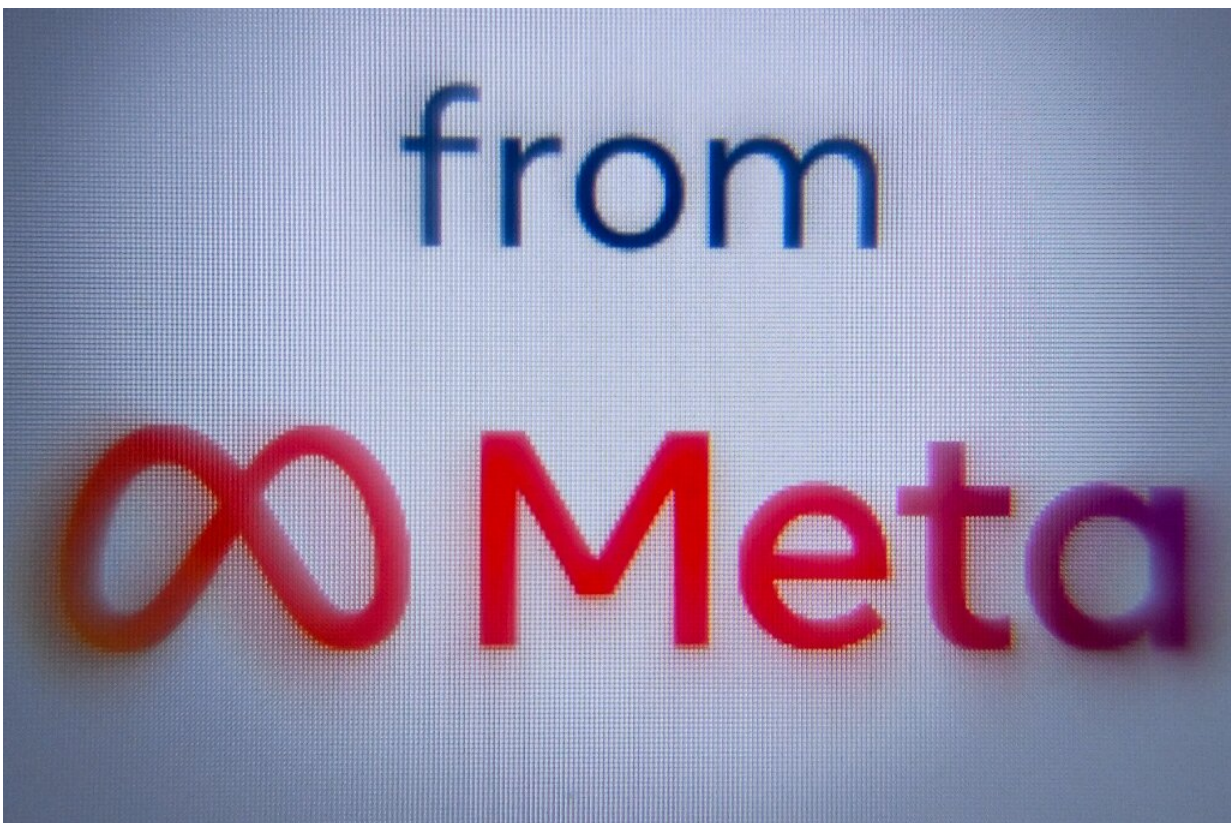


Facebook's Meta funded attack campaign against TikTok: report

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Facebook owner Meta faced questions about a reported campaign to denigrate rival TikTok.

Facebook's owner Meta has hired a consulting firm to carry out a US campaign denigrating its fierce rival TikTok, according to a Washington

Post report Wednesday partially confirmed by AFP.

The campaign reportedly includes placing letters in major US news outlets and promoting negative stories about TikTok, allegedly using the type of tough tactics familiar to Washington politics.

Meta, which shed hundreds of billions in value earlier this year due to doubts about its future, is in a pitched fight against the video sharing platform popular with young social media fans.

"We believe all platforms, including TikTok, should face a level of scrutiny consistent with their growing success," Meta told AFP in a one-line statement in response to the article.

The [consulting firm](#), Targeted Victory, confirmed having worked for Meta and did not deny having put forward negative information about TikTok.

"We're proud of the work we've done to highlight the dangers of TikTok," the firm's CEO Zac Moffatt tweeted.

Employees at Targeted Victory worked to undermine TikTok, which is owned by Chinese company ByteDance, by promoting an effort to have it portrayed as a danger to American children, the Post reported, citing the firm's internal emails.

The Post quoted one message saying Targeted Victory needed to "get the message out that while Meta is the current punching bag, TikTok is the real threat especially as a foreign owned app that is #1 in sharing data that young teens are using."

One effort reportedly included getting parents to sign on to letters raising concerns that were submitted to US newspapers, some of which

published them.

Targeted Victory also alerted elected officials and journalists to alleged trends on TikTok that encouraged students to vandalize their school premises, known as "devious licks" or the "slap a teacher" challenge.

The "challenge" urging young users to attack teachers did not start on TikTok, but on Facebook, according to an investigation by the "Reply All" podcast, with the investigator unable to find any videos on this topic on TikTok.

"We are deeply concerned that the stoking of local media reports on alleged trends that have not been found on the platform could cause real world harm," TikTok told AFP in a statement.

Moffatt, the Targeted Victory CEO, also argued the Post article "mischaracterizes the work we do," citing examples including the characterization of people who signed the letters sent to newspapers.

"The story infers that the words of the letters to the editor were not the authors' own, nor did they know of Meta's involvement. That is false," he tweeted.

When contacted by AFP, the people cited as signing the letters did not respond to requests for comment.

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