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Social Media Fact Checking Strategies

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#DEFYHATENOW | CHAPTER 3

SOCIAL MEDIA FACT CHECKING STRATEGIES

How to Verify Rumours and Identify Fake News & Images

"Fake news" are news stories that are false, where the story itself is fabricated, with no verifiable facts, sources or quotes. In recent years fake news stories have proliferated via social media, in part because they are so easily and quickly shared online. To an untrained eye fake news may pass as legitimate news sources.

Fake news should not be confused or conflated with propaganda.

Propaganda means information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote or publicise a particular political cause or point of view. It is used primarily to further an agenda - often by presenting facts selectively to encourage a particular synthesis or perception to produce an emotional rather than a rational response.

The proliferation of social media such as Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp has increased political polarisation and the spread of fake news and propaganda. One might hope the free flow of information would translate into a more informed populace that would make more informed choices. However, recent global and national trends show evidence to the contrary.

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> Fake news and other problematic digital content aren't just issues confronting stable democratic nations like the U.S., the U.K., or France. And in countries embroiled in violent conflict like South Sudan, the stakes are much higher: Misinformation fuels bloodshed.
>
> **Justin Lynch, slate.com**
> **"In South Sudan Fake News has deadly consequences" Justin Lynch, slate.com June 2017**
> "

> "
> In South Sudan,"inflammatory rhetoric, stereotyping and name calling have been accompanied by targeted killings and rape of members of particular ethnic groups, and by violent attacks against individuals or communities on the basis of their perceived political affiliation," says a November report by Adama Dieng, the United Nations special adviser on the prevention of genocide.
>
> "The media, including social media, are being used to spread hatred and encourage ethnic polarization. Social media has been used by partisans on all sides, including some senior government officials, to exaggerate incidents, spread falsehoods and veiled threats, or post outright messages of incitement."
> **Online Fake News and Hate Speech are Fueling Genocide in South Sudan, PRI March 2017**
> "

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HOW TO VERIFY RUMOURS AND IDENTIFY FAKE NEWS

HOW TO IDENTIFY A FAKE
https://www.stopfake.org/en/how-to-identity-a-fake/

PHOTO-FAKE

It is usually possible to establish the credibility of any photo within a matter of seconds, using a reverse image search on the internet. Many people still instantly believe any "screaming" photo.

There are a number of ways to ID a photo-fake. If you use Google Chrome you simply need to right-click on an image and select the option of searching for the image in Google.

If you use a different browser you can install a special plug-in, for example: Who stole my pictures. This plug-in can search not only on Google, but also on Yandex, Tineye, or all three at once.

If you do not have Chrome and do not have the option of installing a plug-in, do this instead:
Keep two tabs open in your browser: one tab contains the page with the subject image; the second tab contains the Google Images page. Go to the first tab, and use your mouse to grab the subject image, then drag it to the second tab, and drop it into the search bar of the Google Images page.

This way you can also search for images from your own hard drive: simply drag-and-drop the image file into the Google Images search bar. Now you can examine two very important aspects:

The first is whether the image is original, or if has been subject to photo-editing software.
The second aspect is the image's date of publishing, its original source and subject matter.

VIDEO-FAKE

Working with a video fake is more difficult than with images, as there is no simplified search tool. If you suspect that a video's authenticity is questionable you can try one of these methods:

If you are watching a YouTube window on another site, go to YouTube itself, to gather more source information on the video (to do this click on the YouTube logo in the bottom right-hand corner).

Pay attention to the details in a video: names of objects; car license plates; street signs. Such factors can often be used to determine what is truly taking place.

If there are no obvious signs of a video-fake, we recommend that attention be drawn to the following. If there is a recent date in the very title of the video, and that particular video has been uploaded to YouTube multiple times over a short span of time, then there is a high probability that the video is a fake.

Select a version of the video with the highest amount of views, and read the comments by other viewers; there is a high probability that some of the viewers have seen the original, and may have even posted a link to it.

Alternatively: verbally describe what you see in the video, and search for the description on YouTube or Google. Another method: make a screenshot of a more prominent part of the video, and place it in Google Image search, using the method described earlier. There is a possibility that someone used the video in some news, or used such a prominent screenshot as an image somewhere. This way it is possible to uncover the original source.

WITNESS STATEMENTS

Often it is difficult or impossible to evaluate validity of witness statements, but there are exceptions. Pay close attention to witness statements: are there actual confirmations to the journalistic claims made, or are they speaking on some general subject matter (which the mass media would later use in their own interests)? Furthermore, pay attention to the actual witness: have you seen him/her before in another context?

The main condition for identification of a fake is critically thinking about the information you're presented with. Informational warfare is a very important element of confrontation between countries, so try not to take information on faith, without having been fully convinced of its validity.

By Oleg Shankovskiy
www.StopFake.org
https://www.stopfake.org/en/how-to-identity-a-fake/

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KEY QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

- What rumours or stories have you heard that may have been fake?
- Where did you hear them – via social media, in person, over the phone, reported in the traditional media (news sites, radio, tv)?
- How do you decide if the story if true or false?
- Was the story propaganda, and if so can you identify by whom?
- Who does it benefit? Who does it harm?
- What kind of tools do you already have to verify information you receive?
- How did these fake news stories or rumours affect you and the community?
- Are you aware of stories that might be propaganda for a particular interest?
- How do you identify who is the source, and what their intentions are?

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PLAY VIDEO ON USB STICK

#defyhatenow Street Theatre Performance in Juba

South Sudan Street Theatre #defyhatenow video
Published 19 Nov 2016: **https://youtu.be/iMQvDxpTc9k**

This video introduces #defyhatenow workshops, street theatre and dance performances in Juba, with voices from citizens of South Sudan concerning the impact of online hate speech and incitement to violence in their communities. The street drama was developed around issues of hate speech online and incitement to violence offline.

Performances at #peacejam, September 21st; Juba Girls Secondary School and PoC sites. Thanks to the South Sudan Theatre Organisation (SSTO) and Aggrey Jaden Cultural Centre.

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YOUNG AFRICAN LEADER'S INITIATIVE

https://yali.state.gov/checks/

Stopping the spread of misinformation is everyone's responsibility!
Misinformation has become a core part of the news cycle and remains a leading area of concern across independent, private, and public organizations. Content from non-credible news sites, paid bloggers, and sophisticated videos masquerading as legitimate newscasts has found fertile ground in the social media scene. Identifying and stopping the spread of misinformation is vital to ensure that credible news sources maintain levels of trust.

Stop. Before you share.
Reflect. On what you see or read.
Verify. That the information is accurate.
Remember to **share responsibly.**
#YALICHECKS

Find out how you can be involved with YALIChecks.
Stop. Reflect. Verify.

Once you pledge you will receive a personalized pledge graphic to share on social media.
Share it using the hashtag #YALIChecks and encourage your friends, family, and networks to join and share as well!

The Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) is a signature effort to invest in the next generation of African leaders.

SOCIAL MEDIA FACT CHECKING STRATEGIES

Africa Check
Sorting fact from fiction
www.AfricaCheck.org

A non-partisan organisation that promotes accuracy and honesty in public debate and the media in Africa. To do this effectively, it is important that we stick to the best practices in fact-checking, recognised by leading non-partisan fact-checking organisations around the world, and that we adhere to the fundamental operating principles of commitment to impartiality, transparency and accuracy. This code of principles is the result of consultations between Africa Check and other non-partisan fact-checkers from around the world.

FACT CHECK TIPS AND ADVICE
https://africacheck.org/how-to-fact-check/tips-and-advice/

Whether you are a reporter, an activist, a business leader, a health worker or a regular citizen how can you know when public figures tell the truth and when they distort it? How can you decide what claims are fair and who to trust?

Verification: A practical guide

Craig Silverman, a journalist and editor of Regret the Error, a blog about media errors, accuracy and verification, has drawn on the work of media experts to compile a best practice guide for social media verification. These guidelines include:

Verifying the source

- **Location:** Is the user   situated in the locality of the event or passing on information from a different locality?
- **Account history:** Check how long the account has existed (recent accounts may be opportunistic) and what kind of content the user normally shares.
- **Social network:** With whom does the user interact on the social network? Who is sharing the content – and are they credible?
- **Communicate:** Make direct   contact with the source to verify the authenticity of the source and credibility of the information being passed on.
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Verifying the content

- **Crosscheck:** Check the shared information against news sources to check for veracity.
- **Crowd-source:** Verify accuracy by putting the information out on your networks asking   followers to help verify information.
- **Find the original:** Check message timestamps and go back to the original source of the information. This can also provide additional context or information.

Verifying pictures and video content

- **Location:** Check the location of the source of the information.
- **Crosscheck:** Check the graphics against Google Street View or satellite imagery of the   location to verify details. Also, check the photograph or video against news reports of the event.
- **Details:** Ensure that the details of the picture or video clip are correct. Do the weather and scenery match those of the purported location? Do car registrations and vehicle makes match those used in the purported location?
- **Translate:** Ensure languages and accents are in line with the purported location.

[*Published 23/04/2014; updated 5/01/2017*]
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https://africacheck.org/factsheets/guide-how-to-spot-fakes-and-hoaxes-online/

VERIFICATION TRAINING VIDEOS

Produced by PeaceTech Lab, East Africa 2017 :
http://www.peacetechlab.org/hate-speech-in-south-sudan/

Countering Hate Speech – Image Verification 1
Image Search
https://youtu.be/WHF9Q_Ghve8

Countering Hate Speech – Image Verification 11
Verifying Altered or Misused News Images
https://youtu.be/Jhju1M2zz3s

Countering Hate Speech – News Verification
https://youtu.be/T9kuJPuhZmA

REVERSE IMAGE SEARCH

Reverse Search is useful for verifying the original source of photographs, WhatsApp images, screenshots and memes.
Upload image, click on camera icon or search by URL.
Use reverse.photos on mobile phone, tablet or android apps.
https://images.google.com/
https://reverse.photos/
https://tineye.com/

How to use reverse image search
https://www.tineye.com/how

Here's how you can search by image or perform a reverse image search:

1. Upload an image from your computer or mobile device by clicking the upload button to locate the image you wish to search for.
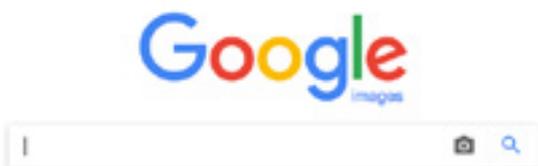
2. To search by URL, copy and paste a page or image url address into the search box.
3. Drag an image from a tab in your browser and drop it in a browser tab where TinEye is open.

4. Check the results page to see where else the image has been used. Do the dates match? Does the image have the same caption? Have details of the image been changed? Is there other evidence to show the image was originally used to illustrate a different story, time or place?

GO TO IMAGES.GOOGLE.COM

+
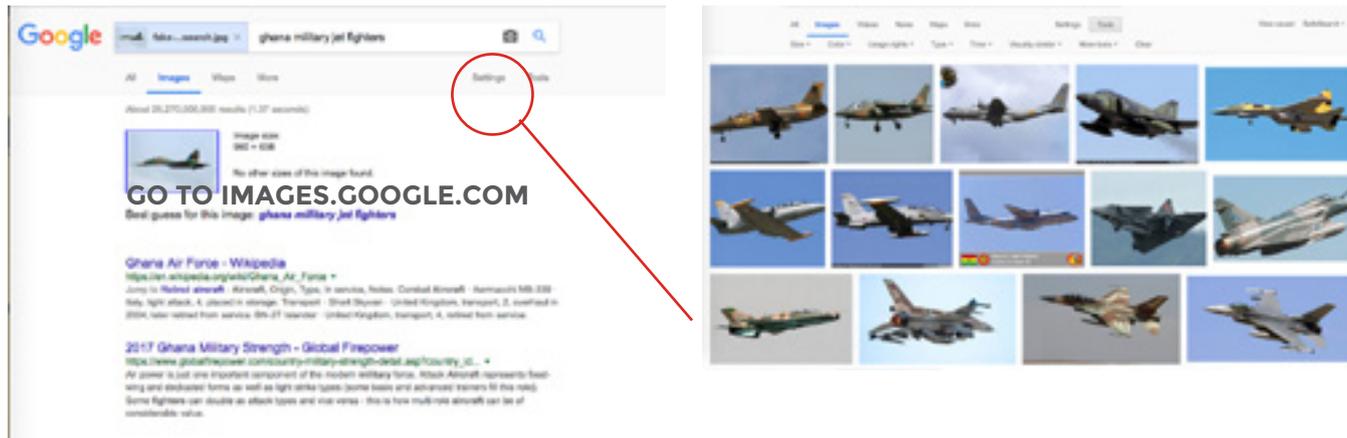
WHAT DO I DO NEXT?

1. ALWAYS TAKE A SCREENSHOT OF THE ORIGINAL POST, IMAGE OR COMMENT

2. INCLUDE THE URL SO YOU CAN FIND AND IDENTIFY THE SOURCE LATER

3. THIS WILL HELP PROVIDE EVIDENCE TO THE PLATFORM OR LEGAL ACTION

Use these tools to report the story on various platforms:

MARK A STORY AS FALSE ON FACEBOOK
https://www.facebook.com/help/572838089565953?helpref=related

This is the one everyone is talking about. Why? Because you would like to be able to trust your friends and family to get things right, even that relative who has not made sense for at least a decade.
If you are unsure about a post, find the little chevron/down arrow in the top corner - and then pick the "report post" option.
Do you think it should be on Facebook? No.
Then tell them why.

Google
The search giant is where you go when you want to check what your friends are saying, is true don't you? Its chief executive Sundar Pichai says fake news should not be distributed. And we agree.
If you want to tell Google, you will need to scroll to the bottom of the page and click on send feedback. Do not forget to send them a screenshot.
They even let you highlight the most fake of the fake bits.

Twitter
While the micro-messaging platform has been big on cracking down on abuse and threats, its tools for reporting fakery are limited. You will need to click the chevron in the corner or the three dots under a tweet, then chose "report tweet".
It is not really spam, and no-one is "interested" in fake news in their feed. It is harmful, but not in the ways Twitter then lists.
Click spam or not interested, depending on how generous you are feeling.

Instagram
The options at the top of the list for reporting a post tell you something about what the biggest issues apparently are for Instagram users. There is no obvious function on Instagram to simply say "this is fake" other than to report it as spam.

Produced by the UGC and Social News team
How to report fake news to social media
By Alex Murray BBC News, November 2016
http://www.bbc.com/news/38053324

⚡ QUICK CHECKLIST TO IDENTIFY FAKE NEWS

Read the headline.
Read the entire article.
Don't believe a word of anything you read until you check facts and check sources.
Are the sources and facts credible? Why or why not?
Do a search engine scan to see who else has covered the story.
Check images to see if they are really what they claim to be.
Take a screenshot as evidence and to help check the source.
Do you see two sides (or more) to the article?
Are you being spun? Do you feel manipulated?
Are other credible news outlets covering the story?
Is this story a potential hoax or fake news story?

MEDIASHIFT: How To Detect Fake News With These Tools and Techniques by Beth Jannery Sept 7th 2017
http://mediashift.org/2017/09/how-to-detect-fake-news-with-thesetools-
and-techniques/

➕ ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

FAKE NEWS, ALTERNATIVE FACTS, AND THE WORLD OF MISINFORMATION
Craig Silverman, BuzzFeed
Published February 13, 2017
VIDEO Explains how fake news is generated and how you can track it.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZmzmBlovXY

IRL MOZILLA PODCAST
Ctrl+Alt+Facts
https://irlpodcast.org/episode14/

The truth is out there. But online, it feels like it's harder than ever to find. Consider this sobering statistic from a recent MIT study: on Twitter, lies are 70% more likely to be retweeted than facts. Somehow, the information age became the misinformation age. Where do we go from here?

From campaign bots to conspiracy videos, it's harder than ever to discover the truth online. In the season finale of IRL, recorded live in San Francisco, we navigate the strange new world of social media misinformation. The New York Times' Sheera Frenkel discusses the shifting landscape of journalism and argues for platform accountability. DisInfoMedia, Inc. founder Jestin Coler talks about how confirmation bias makes us vulnerable to fake news. And Data For Democracy Policy Lead and Mozilla Fellow Renee DiResta break down the hidden virality engines responsible for spreading hoaxes online.

TOOLS TO STOP THE SPREAD OF FAKE NEWS

Facebook tips to spot fake news
https://www.facebook.com/help/188118808357379

Africa Check
www.AfricaCheck.org
Sorting fact from fiction.

www.StopFake.org (Ukraine)
https://www.stopfake.org/en/news/
Struggle against fake information about events in Ukraine

On March 2, 2014 Kyiv Mohyla Journalism School lecturers, graduates and students along with the KMA Digital Future of Journalism project launched the Stopfake.org fact checking site.

We are a journalists' organisation whose primary goal is to verify information, raise media literacy in Ukraine and establish a clear red line between journalism and propaganda.

Andy Carvin published an online case study of how he and his followers debunked a claim that Israeli munitions were being used in Libya: **https://storify.com/acarvin/how-to-debunk-a-geopolitical-rumor-with-your-twitt2**

Storyful: 'Truth in context' **http://storyful.com/**

Ushahidi: 'Read the crowd. Don't just get the data. Get the whole story.' **http://www.ushahidi.com/**

"In South Sudan Fake News has deadly consequences"
Justin Lynch, slate.com June 2017
http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/future_tense/2017/06/in_south_sudan_fake_news_has_deadly_consequences.html

Online Fake News and Hate Speech are Fueling Genocide in South Sudan
Benjamin Reeves, PRI March 2017
https://www.pri.org/stories/2017-04-25/online-fake-news-and-hate-speech-are-fueling-tribal-genocide-south-sudan