FAKE NEWS FOOLING MILLIONS!

Fabricated stories on social media are influencing major events like the presidential election. How can we separate fact from fiction?

BY CARL STOFFERS

Last March, a fake news site called The Boston Tribune went viral with a story that the government was secretly tracking Americans using computer chips in credit cards. In October, another site peddling bogus news, The Free Thought Project, got more than 28,000 people on Facebook to share its claim that U.S. Marines were heading to Europe to battle Russia. And a third site, The Political Insider, had thousands sharing a fabricated report in August that Hillary Clinton was selling weapons to ISIS.

These invented stories are part of a disturbing trend: Fake news sites—many with official-sounding names and professional designs—are flourishing. Once found only in the dark corners of the internet, these sites have begun to play a role in major events, including the recent presidential campaign. In fact, some political analysts say fake news stories spread on social media might have helped tip the election to Donald Trump.

Experts are warning that these sites are eroding the public's ability to distinguish between fact and fiction. At the same time, tech companies like Facebook and Google are struggling with...
HOW TO SPOT FAKE NEWS

Despite the increasing amount of false information online, there are ways to get to the truth and stop the spread of fake news. Here are a few tips.

1. **Be skeptical:** Just because you see an article online, don’t assume it’s factual, even if a friend shared it with you.

2. **Verify:** Make sure that what you’re reading—and thinking of sharing—was published by a reputable source.

3. **Look for other clues:** Scrutinizing the sources cited in articles and even the ads on the page can reveal a hidden agenda behind a website.

4. **Get help:** Independent verification can often confirm whether something widely shared is true. Nonpartisan fact-checking sites like Factcheck.org and PolitiFact.com point out untruths in the news. Teachers and family can also help.

**‘They’re trying to get you to believe something that’s independent of the truth.’**

Experts say it will take a concerted effort by the public and the media to fix the problem of misinformation and slow the spread of fake news.

"Users on social media need to call out people who are sharing this stuff, and journalists need to continue to adhere to professional standards," Adornato says. "It’s a team effort."

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