

Web quest: Fake news

1. Collect 3-5 examples of Fake News in Germany, Britain and the USA and say why it is fake.

- a. in Germany:

- **WhatsApp voice message: covid-19 is getting worse when taking ibuprofene.:**
it was difficult to realize that this message was fake. Signals that it was fake were that the person just quoted "a friend" without mentioning the name, that this news hadn't been published by famous newspapers or news shows before, the date: that this wasn't found out until three months after the coronavirus first broke out in China and once it went viral, newspapers, and newscasts on TV and on the radio warned about it that it was fake.

- b. in the UK:

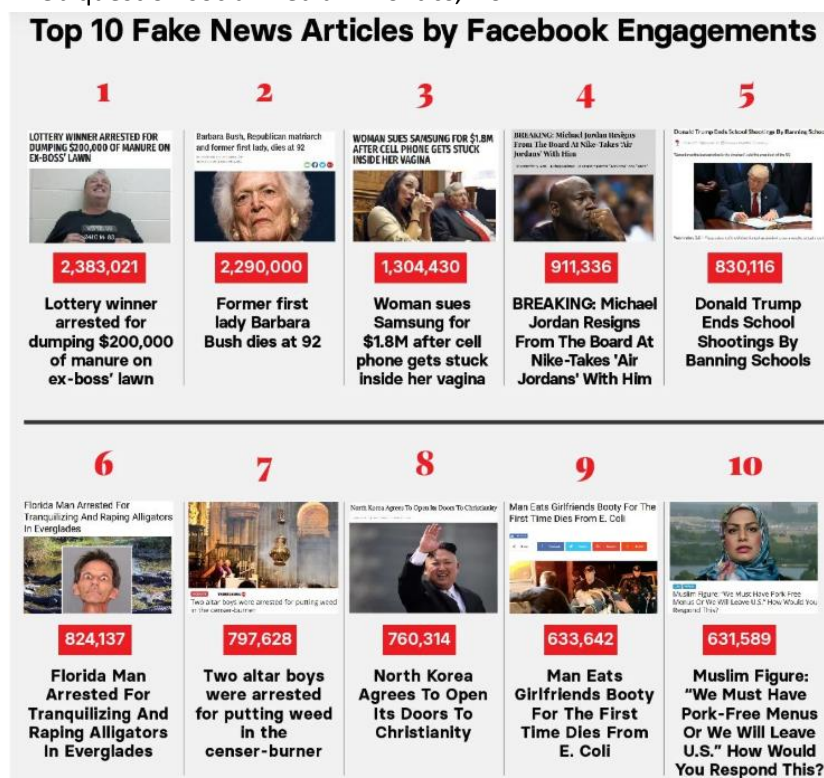


- This is fake because no such thing happened. After mass panic and widespread confusion, the British Transport Police clarified that an evacuation of Oxford Circus took place because of "an altercation" between two men, and not – as far-right ogres had prematurely gloated – an attack by Islamic terrorists.

https://www.vice.com/en_uk/article/ne4ve7/the-top-ten-uk-fake-news-stories-of-2017

- c. in the U.S.:

- for examples from the U.S. presidential election in 2016 see below in the section Web quest on social media in Politics, No. 1.



<https://www.socialmediatoday.com/news/the-top-10-fake-news-articles-on-facebook-in-2018-infographic/545165/>

- American/Swedish example:

Shortly after American rapper ASAP Rocky was put in prison in Sweden because of a street fight, people) started accusing the Swedish prison of holding the rapper in prison under inhumane conditions “ASAP Rocky is being held in a Swedish jail with shockingly inhumane conditions -- feces hurled about and not cleaned up, wretched food and facilities that are not fit for human beings ... this according to sources with direct knowledge of Rocky's situation..”

Many Americans believed this fake news and celebrities demanded that ASAP Rocky should be set free. Even President Trump got involved telling Swedish Prime Minister that they should treat Americans fairly. However, the news about the inhumane treatment was fake. ASAP Rocky was in a normal cell. The prison defended itself saying the prison had been renovated a couple of years before and published a photo of a prison cell similar to the one ASAP Rocky was held in which shows a very nice prison cell.



<https://www.bbc.com/news/newsbeat-48934378>

<https://www.tmz.com/2019/07/09/asap-rocky-inhumane-conditions-jail-swedish-sweden/>



-> fake article about food supplements helping to lose weight. The ad claims to be from reliable newspapers; however, it's all fake and the ad just wants you to buy food supplements.

https://www.truthinadvertising.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Screen-shot-2011-08-18-at-4_51_19-PM.png

2. Who spreads Fake news?

Difficult to say:

- people who care more about making profits than about moral issues
- people who want to increase their power
- platforms who want to attract lots of views (-> find a list on wiki https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_fake_news_websites)
- users who mistake the news for being correct
- people who want to create uproar against a (leading) political party or the government to split the nation

<https://www.poynter.org/fact-checking/2020/whos-mainly-responsible-for-curbing-disinformation/>

3. Why do some people spread fake news?

see answer above

4. In which areas have you come across fake news? (for example political/...)

- health: fake news on coronavirus
- politics: e.g. during the U.S. presidential election
- advertisement: e.g. fake news on dietary products
- celebrities: fake news on celebrities e.g. having done plastic surgery, stars being obese....

5. What are the dangers of Fake news?

- recipients might be more likely to buy a certain product or to avoid a different product
- readers might believe the news especially if the domain or url sounds like it is from a respectable source or if it's accompanied by a photo or just sounds plausible.
- the reputation of a person or a company might be ruined even though it was not true what was said about them
- readers might start taking (violent) action against a person or a company
- even if readers read a piece of fakenews and know that it is fake, after a couple of days, they might forget that it was fake and just remember having read about a certain issue
- <https://30secondes.org/en/module/impacts-of-fake-news/>

6. How do you know if something is fake? What can you do to be sure that the information is true? Make a list of tips.

Fake news often contain

- dubious domain names (e.g. com.co) or dubious website names
- spelling errors
- capital letters
- grammar mistakes
- biased information
- information that is not available on other sites

Tips:

- use a fact-checking website: e.g. FactCheck.org, Snopes.com
- find out who the author of the information is
- analyze sources and quotes
- do a reverse search for images

<https://www.summer.harvard.edu/inside-summer/4-tips-spotting-fake-news-story>

<http://library.pfeiffer.edu/Fake-News-Worksheet.pdf>

Here's a **video** on how to spot fake news:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/av/embed/p0874kmv/52086284>

7. In that regard also explain the concept of "media literacy".

"Media literacy, by its widely accepted definition, is of various types (visual, auditory, printed, etc.) to be able to access media messages, to analyze and evaluate the accessed media from a **critical** point of view (and to produce their own media messages)."

<https://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/media-literacy-and-framing-of-media-content/18156>

→ That means to learn about the media so that know about the dangers and risks and know how to surf the internet safely. In German you would translate this concept with “Medienkompetenz”

8. Often the concept of “populism” is mentioned in the context of Fake News. What does “populism” or “populist” mean?

Populism refers to political activities or ideas that claim to promote the interests and opinions of ordinary people. <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/de/worterbuch/englisch/populism>

→ Populism often means having a **very easy solution** to a very complex problem. Obviously the solution is often insufficient , but politicians use such easy solutions to appeal to (perhaps less informed) voters.

cf. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Populism>

Web quest: Social media in politics

1. Find examples of social media usage during or after the U.S. presidential elections.

There were many fake news about Hillary Clinton and Trump in the 2016 election

- e.g. the headline “WikiLeaks confirms Hillary sold weapons to ISIS... Then drops another bombshell.”
- the headline “FBI agent suspected in Clinton’s email leaks found dead in apparent murder-suicide” published by the “Denver Guardian”, but there is no newspaper called “Denver Guardian”, there is only the “Denver Post”.
- the headline “Pope Francis shocks world, endorses Donald Trump for president”
- The “Pizzagate” case in 2016: There were tweets about a pizza shop in Washington claiming that the pizza restaurant was the base for a pedophile sex ring led by Hillary Clinton. After the tweets the restaurant received many threats and bad comments on social networks and one man even went to the restaurant and started shooting to save the (as he believed) trapped kids.

<https://www.marubeni.com/en/insight/potomac/backnumber/19.html>

<https://www.cnn.com/2016/12/30/read-all-about-it-the-biggest-fake-news-stories-of-2016.html>

<https://www.denverpost.com/2016/11/05/there-is-no-such-thing-as-the-denver-guardian/>

- Heavily biased pro-Trump site '70news' redirected to a WordPress blog page that said that Trump had won both the popular vote and the Electoral College. Moreover, when Internet users searched for ‘final election numbers’ or similar phrases in Google in the days after the presidential election, Google's top search result directed users to the link of this fake news blog. Google's top search result was actually fake news: it claimed that Trump had won both the popular vote and the Electoral College, when, in fact, Trump had won the Electoral College, but not the popular vote - Hillary Clinton did.

https://libraryguides.vu.edu.au/evaluating_information_guide/fakenews2016

2. Explain the concept of “filter bubbles”.

People are in a **filter bubble** when they only get information on social media that agrees with their viewpoint. This is a result of personalized searches and algorithms that guess what a user would like to see. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Filter_bubble

This often goes hand in hand with the concept of “**echo chambers**”.

An echo chamber is defined as “an environment in which a person encounters only beliefs or opinions that coincide with their own, so that their existing views are reinforced and alternative ideas are not considered.” https://www.lexico.com/definition/echo_chamber

Filter bubbles and echo chambers can be dangerous. Here’s an example:

E.g. if a person is a racist and often searches for racist information on the internet, he will be more likely to get much more racist information, racist news and racist ads, that support his viewpoint and less info contradicting it. Then, he might believe that he is justified in his way of thinking because of all the information he gets confirming his viewpoint and might not even find out about things that don’t fit to his viewpoint.

3. Find 3 examples of populist tweets by politicians from at least two different countries and explain why they are populist.

- *"It is time to free the French people from an arrogant elite."* (Marine le Pen during the presidential election in 2017) <https://www.cnn.com/2017/04/23/le-pen-time-to-free-french-arrogant-elite.html>
→ This statement portrays the French as being run by an arrogant elite, simple solution: vote for Marine le Pen and everything will be good.
- *"Brazilian prisons are wonderful places ... They are places for people to pay for their sins, not live the life of Reilly in a spa. Those who rape, kidnap and kill are going there to suffer — not attend a holiday camp."* (Bolsonaro in 2014)
<https://www.cnn.com/2018/10/29/brazil-election-jair-bolsonaros-most-controversial-quotes.html>
→ Bolsonaro doesn't want to renovate existing prisons or build more prisons to improve the conditions in the crowded prisons and justifies political inaction.
- *"Every decision on trade, on taxes, on immigration, on foreign affairs will be made to benefit American workers and American families. We must protect our borders from the ravages of other countries making our products, stealing our companies and destroying our jobs."*(Donald Trump)
<https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/opinion/the-conversation/sd-most-populist-lines-from-trumps-speech-20170120-htmlstory.html>
→ Trump portrays immigrants as the root of all economic problems having to do with trade or taxes, his solution for the economic problems: close the borders.
- *"We will build a wall [...] and Mexico will pay for it!"* (Donald Trump)
<https://www.rttnews.com/2688554/trump-we-will-build-a-wall-and-mexico-will-pay-for-it.aspx>
→ The wall is the solution to economic problems, the Mexicans paying for the wall is the easy solution because American taxpayers don't want to pay for the wall.

4. What are advantages and disadvantages of tweets by politicians?

advantages	disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - direct communication with readers - fast spreading of news - ability to reach a wide audience - possibility to react to other tweets or to news - puts politicians and "normal people" on the same level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fake news can be spread quickly - contrary to newspaper articles, tweets are usually not examined by a higher authority before being published. - accounts can be hacked and misused - possibility to spread propaganda

5. How can political parties use social media platforms to their advantage?

- they can inform social media users about the party's interests and stance on certain issues
- they can post pictures/videos and other material about the party's activities and events
- they can make live chats with users -> closer to the people -> less hierarchy

- they can comment on questions or other posts by social media users
- by looking at the number of followers or users “liking” an article/comment/video... they have a feedback on what voters want
- They can appeal to younger voters who are more like to use social media platforms unlike older generations who are more likely to read printed newspapers.
- They can attract new party members.
- They can reach a large audience.
- They don’t need to go from door to door. Once a comment is out there on the net it can be spread by followers.

Write an essay to the following topic:

What role do social media play in politics today? Discuss positive and negative effects.”

Positive effects	Negative effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spreading of awareness for some topics - People can find out / learn about political parties or about politicians - Direct contact to politicians and political parties - Politicians can directly react to events or answer messages. - Politicians can reach a bigger audience. - Make it easier to organize political events: to invite people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spreading of news from everybody. The news might be fake, inaccurate or incomplete or taken out of context. - Political parties or politicians can have to face “shitstorms” or may be presented in a bad light. - Possible radicalization of some people because of echo chambers: They only get information shown on social media that fits to their way of thinking. - No censoring of what is written. - Politicians can directly write/post something which might not be agreed on by their party. - Influence from foreign countries e.g. Russia’s assumed manipulation of U.S. elections