



OPINION MAKING ON THE INTERNET

MODULE SUMMARY

#DABEI-Geschichten – an initiative by Deutsche Telekom AG



LIFE IS FOR SHARING.

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Opinion Making on the Internet

How do fake news, social bots and filter bubbles influence our opinion making?

Is it real or Fake?

More and more false reports and fake images are spread via the Internet. This can be dangerous if it influences your opinion. That is why it is important to be able to differentiate true stories from fake ones. The interactive learning module "Opinion Making on the Internet" will help you to do this. Learn how opinion making works. Delve into the world of fake news and learn how to identify it. You will be surprised how hard that can be sometimes.

"Everyday Life" in Social Media

In social media, many things are not what they seem. It is very tempting to help reality out a bit and put oneself in a better light by putting a rosy filter over photos.

The Many Facets of Opinion Making

Opinion making has many different faces. Phenomena such as fake news, social bots and fake images are omnipresent. In this module you will learn how complex online opinion making can be.

You Are, What You Like

Imagine Facebook could judge you better than your closest friends and relatives. What may sound like science fiction has already become reality. With just a few "innocent" mouse clicks you can make accurate statements about yourself and your personality. These are then used to display content on the Internet and in social media that fits you and your opinion. This is also known as a filter bubble or opinion bubble. As a result, what you see is a distorted view of reality. So be careful before you form an opinion. The "Apply Magic Sauce" tool from Cambridge University analyzes your digital footprints and derives statements about your personality from them.

FACT OR FAKE

What Is Fake News?

Fake news plur. <Engl.> (false, often sensational, information disseminated under the guise of news reporting)".(Collins Dictionary, 2017)

Fake news is no more than false information. However, in many cases, it is difficult to distinguish real news from fake news. That is why fake news is often classified as true and then spread further. This is particularly easy to do in social media by sharing contributions. Often you can not even find the source of the fake news in social media. The mere fact that a message is often shared on social networks does not mean it is true.

Flamingo Harry – a Knight in Shining Armor

Northern Germany. A miracle happened at a zoo in Lower Saxony: Tilmann, a ten-month-old baby, climbed out of his stroller unnoticed by his parents near the flamingo enclosure and plunged into the enclosure pond. Tilmann could only be saved by the rapid intervention of the brave flamingo Harry. Harry grabbed the baby with his beak and carried him back to land. "Without Harry, Tilmann would have drowned", sobbed Mrs. M., Tilmann's mother. "Harry's reaction was simply amazing", said the local zoo director, who is planning on rewarding his new feathered hero with an extra portion of fish. You decide: Fact or fake? (Fake)

Genetically Modified Glow-in-the-dark Plant Helps You Save Energy

Cambridge, USA. Researchers of the famous Massachusetts Institute of Technology have recently succeeded in breeding the first genetically modified plant that glows in the dark. At the first glance, the crop that goes by the name "Starlight Avatar" seems like something that would grow on radioactive ground. However, the plant glows solely with the help of natural substances. This innovation could soon even replace common street lights and thus help advance an energy revolution. You decide: Fact or fake? (Fact)

Twilight Novels to be Re-filmed

Los Angeles. Fans across the world are going to go crazy! The popular novels from the "Twilight" series, which revolve around the beautiful Bella and her vampire Edward, are going to be filmed – again. The production company Summit Entertainment announced yesterday in Los Angeles that they expect the success of the old films to continue with the new ones. "The series still has a lot to offer", stated a member of the production staff. "We are not planning on pursuing any new paths artistically, but financially, there is still a lot to get out of it." It should be interesting to see what the new films have in store for us. It is however, already certain that none of the old actors will be involved in the new films. On the one hand, the above-mentioned financial reasons (Robert Pattinson and Kristen Stewart are sought-after stars) are likely to play a role, and on the other hand, new faces are intended to lure fans back into the cinemas. It is not yet clear when the new films will be released. You decide: Fact or fake? (Fake)

Recognizing Fake News Easily

- #Trustworthiness
True news reports come from sites you can trust. They have for example, an imprint which states a specific address and a contact person or person responsible for the site. The author of the news is also stated. The author reports factually and incorporates different views in his news. A further indication for the trustworthiness of a news report is that other trustworthy pages or sites have also published the report.
- #Content
The presentation of the content in true news is neutral and without exaggeration. To make sure that the readers get the content, it will not be decontextualized or presented in a biased manner. Instead, the author shows different views. He takes a sufficient number of understandable explanations into account and cites evidences and sources.
- #Image

Fake news often use images that actually come from a completely different context. In many cases, these images have been manipulated, e. g. cut up or pieced together from several different parts. However, a simple image search on the Internet allows you to quickly find the original photos and compare them with the images used in the news.

- #Language
True news can also be distinguished linguistically from fake news. For example, fake news often has headlines that want to attract attention. They are worded in a lurid manner or deliberately lead the reader in the wrong direction. In fake news, provocative buzzwords such as “scandal” and “danger” are often used to attract attention. Mistakes in grammar and spelling are also characteristic for fake news: fake news reports often contain a particularly large number of these.

Creating Fake News

On the website www.react365.com you can see for yourself how easy it is to create fake news. Write a headline for your news report and choose the appropriate cover photo. Your fake news will be created in no time at all.

Earning Money with Fake News

The game “Fake it to make it” proves that you can earn a lot of money with fake news. The goal is to build up your own business and generate the highest possible profits by generating fake news. Play the game and become a fake news author. Learn how the fake news business works.
<https://www.fakeittomakeitgame.com>

CAN PHOTOS LIE?

Can Photos Lie?

In the age of digital imaging, it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish real from fake images.

Criteria for the Detection of Fake Images

- Image Details and background elements
Often, certain objects in a photo indicate that it could be a forgery, these could be for example, a calendar date, time, road signs or license plates.
- Proportions
In many fake photos, individual image elements do not fit together. For example, in the case of photographs that have been manipulated, a certain part of the body may not fit the rest of the body or a person may be too large or small in relation to a building.
- Differences in color and contrast
In photomontages, people and objects that were originally photographed in separate photos with completely different light conditions are put together in one image. If this is not adjusted, differences in color and contrast are noticeable.
- Shadows and reflections

When editing an image, people often forget to adjust the shadows as well. Especially when a person or an object – that was not originally there – is inserted into an image, the shadow is often missing. This is a clear indication that an image has been manipulated.

PSYCHOLOGY 4.0

The "Majority Illusion"

Social media can influence our opinions. Kristina Lerman from the University of Southern California proved this in a study. The red and white balls on the wooden board represent different opinions. The white balls represent the opinion of the majority. However, they do not communicate much with the other balls. The red balls do, though. They represent a rather rare opinion, but they communicate a lot. As a result, the white balls often come into contact with the red balls and thus, with their opinion. It appears to them as if the red balls' opinion is the majority opinion. Experts refer to this as the so-called "majority illusion". Lerman's study also showed that the white balls often end up sharing the opinion of the red balls.

Electoral Victory by Way of Majority Illusion

It is no secret that political election campaigns are influenced to a large extent by opinion polls in social media. This is sometimes done by so-called social robots, in short: social bots. They simulate human behavioral patterns in social networks. Social bots are programs that pursue a specific goal, such as political propaganda. With the appropriate programming, social bots can quickly communicate a rare opinion so often that the illusion of a majority emerges causing people to share the rare opinion.

Recognizing Social Bots

With the help of just a few characteristics you can easily recognize social bots.

A Social Bot's Account

- Frequency and timing of posts
Are more than 50 posts published per day? Are more than 50 posts shared per day?
- Reactions to the account
Are comments made within one second of a post being published? Does the account offer more than 50 likes for other posts? How does the account react to questions about spatial thinking, e.g. What is above you? What is under you? (Social bots can not deal with questions like this).
- Trustworthiness of the account
Do you know the person doing the posting? Do you know followers of the account? Is the content of the posts always very similar? Have the same messages you received been sent to many other users? Are posts from the same account always shared?
- Profile description of the account
Does the information make sense? Is a lot of information missing? Are the links provided in the profile trustworthy?

Good Bot – Bad Bot

A bot is neither good nor bad. Many bots provide very useful services, for example chat bots that provide automated customer service solutions (such as those offered by renowned mail-order companies). Most bots work according to the same principle. They collect data and then store it. As soon as a user speaks to the bot, it searches for suitable answers in its data memory. Since many people use bots, the bot collects more and more data. This is similar to intensive training for a bot.

Protection Against Bots

Surely you know the situation: You create an account on a website. All of a sudden, a picture appears with the request: Please mark all of the fields with cars in them. But why? Questions such as solving a simple math problem, typing a specific letter and number code into an image, or clicking on certain picture elements are used to identify you as a real person. Tests such as this are referred to as Captcha (= “Completely Automated Public Turing test to tell Computers and Humans Apart”). This means that you have to prove that you are human – compared to an artificial intelligence. For humans, these tasks are usually relatively easy to perform, whereas for bots they are almost impossible. Since sometimes even humans may have difficulty reading the captcha or they are often too difficult to read, audio functions are provided as captcha as well.

Form Your Own Opinion!

Now you know, that news on the internet should be treated with caution. In this module among other things you became acquainted with criteria and tools to verify people and news.