

The Knowledge 4 All Foundation

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Report on actions taken by companies in response to fake news issue

Prioritise me! Side-effects of online content delivery workshop

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Agenda

- Large Data companies
- Large Advertising companies
- Small companies affected
- Citizens affected
- Gouvernement and policy changes

Fake news criticisms

Google and Facebook in general:

- **Have been in something of a no-win situation**
- **Both companies grappling with a widespread backlash**
- **How they spread rumors on a vast scale**
- **How little responsibility they take for any of the content that appears on their platforms**
- **Have been introducing changes at the same time**

Other actors:

- **Twitter and message boards like 4chan and Reddit have all been criticized for being part of the chain**

Breaking point:

- **After the American presidential election**
- **Facebook in particular accused of swaying voters to President Trump through misleading and untrue news articles**

Initial developments - November 2016

Google:

- Would ban sites that spread misinformation from AdSense as a way to impair how such sites make money
- Reviewed 550 sites “suspected of misrepresenting content to users, including impersonating news organizations”
- Careful not to say that these were fake news sites, only sites that *deceive users by misrepresenting themselves or their content*
- Declined to identify the sites or publishers it banned
- Google said that its search algorithms fell short but that the company would continue to work to improve its results

Initial developments - November 2016

Facebook:

- Updated some of its policy language
- Said it would not display ads on sites that show misleading or illegal content, to include fake news sites
- Has since introduced other changes, including consulting third-party news organizations like The Associated Press and ABC News about the accuracy of articles that users report as being false
- Begun experiments to limit misinformation on its site
- Tests include
 - making it easier for its 1.8 billion members to report fake news
 - creating partnerships with outside fact-checking organizations to help it indicate when articles are false
- Also changing some advertising practices to stop dealers of fake news from profiting from it

Recent developments - Feb 2017

Google and Facebook:

- Have been taking steps to curb the number of false news articles propagated across their sites
- Still in the early stages of their battle to limit misinformation online
- Google said it had permanently banned nearly 200 publishers from its AdSense advertising network
- Facebook introduced changes to its Trending Topics feature
- Google's bans were a drop in the bucket compared with the almost two million publishers that use AdSense

Advertisers response

The AdSense system:

- **Major revenue driver for independent web publishers who rely on the network to deliver display advertising on their sites**
- **Publishers are paid when a reader views or clicks on those ads, with a portion of the proceeds going to Google**
- **AdSense is one of the largest advertising networks on the web with nearly two million publishers using the system.**

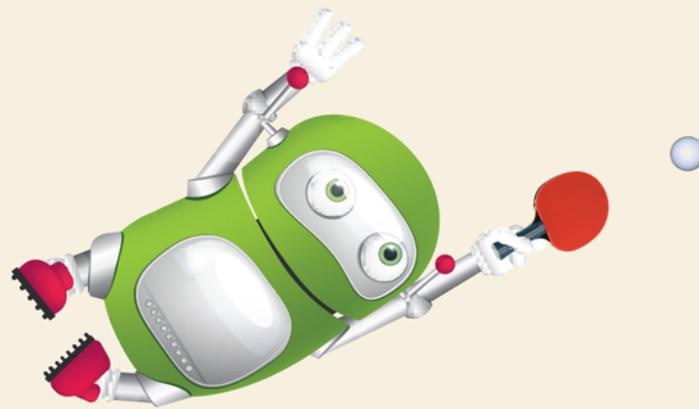
“Nothing drives clicks better than when the headline is exactly what people want to hear or believe,” Ian Schafer, the chief executive and founder of Deep Focus, a digital advertising agency, referring specifically to Google. Mr. Schafer said that without significant changes to the economics and technology of online ads, banning individual sites would not produce change in the long run.

Quick conclusions

- There is a business model in fake news
- What impact Facebook's moves will have on fake news is unclear
- The issue is not confined to the social network
- A vast ecosystem of false news creators who thrive on online advertising and who can use other social media and search engines to propagate their work
- Still, Facebook has taken the most heat over fake news
- Facebook has been under that spotlight since Nov. 8
- That is when Donald J. Trump was elected president

Value proposition:

- What about ordinary companies affected by fake news?
- What about ordinary citizens affected by fake news?
- Remember the 'right to be forgotten, at Google?
- Governmental policies, remember Tory manifesto?



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