

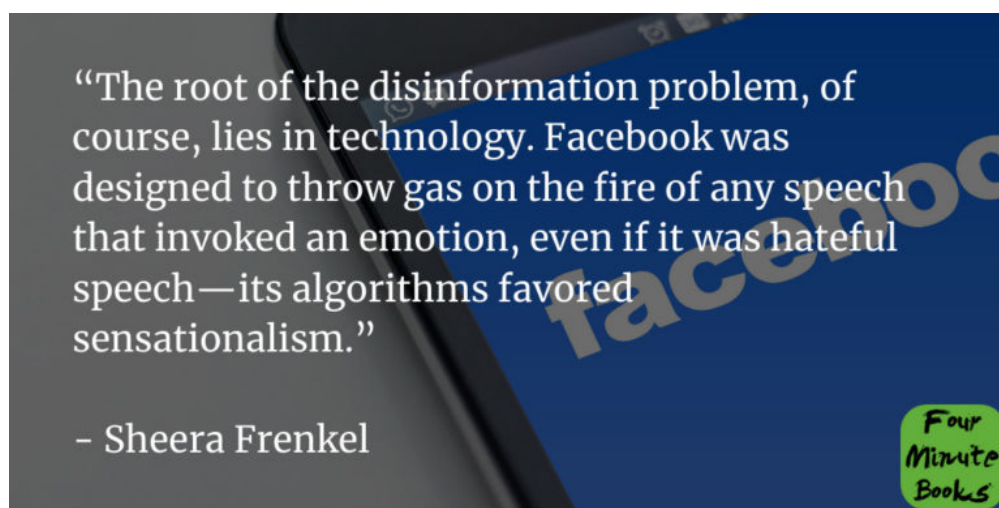
An Ugly Truth Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *An Ugly Truth* offers a critical look at Facebook and its administrators, who foster a gaslighting environment and a controversial social media platform that can easily become a danger for its users both virtually and in real life due to its immense power and influence on our society.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



If you haven't heard of Facebook, you're probably living under a rock. It all started from a dorm-room project. Now, this social media platform is one of the most powerful companies in the world. Although successful, the giant corporation holds a reputation for violating its users' privacy, having political biases, and continuous legality issues.

An Ugly Truth exposes Facebook and its multiple facets. Friendly and connective on the outside, but misleading and biased on the inside. The company is on its way to almost three billion monthly active users. And their data became one of the most valuable digital assets in the world. What is it that makes this company stand out even today?

Mark Zuckerberg designed Facebook to connect people and make them socialize. Its popularity increased drastically as users became obsessed with the platform. Fast-forward to 2015, the app grew to be so influential that it could even affect the presidential elections in the USA! However, the power accumulated over the years came at huge moral costs.

Here are my three favorite lessons from the book:

1. Although Facebook tried to remain politically neutral, it ended up being quite biased.
2. The social media platform is not concerned with data privacy, but with profits.

3. The market monopoly of the company enraged many people and organizations.

Lesson 1: As the social platform rose to fame, political news media took advantage and it worked.

As the social media platform turned into a giant corporation, it became the target of many competitors. It also became the supreme tool of news companies. Articles that appeared in the media were reaching wider audiences using Facebook. And the companies behind them were happy to increase their traffic, authority, and margins.

Now, the corporate social responsibility principle states that enterprises must also consider the social and environmental aspects of their actions. **Instead, Facebook got involved with censorship and political favoritism.** As of 2016, the company was searching for employees who were reporting embarrassing inside stories on the popular Gizmodo blog to fire them.

They even had employees for it! Sonya Ahuja was one of the *ratcatchers*. But she couldn't cover election-related scandals. Its algorithm favored news with high engagement rates. Unfortunately, these were also the ones with inflammatory content. This is why the company introduced a feature called *trending topics*. Gizmodo claimed that they were using this tool to block right-wing perspectives.

The administration has publicly waived these accusations. But then the Cambridge Analytica scandal took off. This company acquired information on up to 87 million users and sold it to members of Donald Trump's political campaign. With all this data at their disposal, the future president's campaign team created one of the most effective online ad campaigns in election history and managed to win.

Lesson 2: Facebook is a gold data mine and exploiting it puts profits over morals.

Similar to the Cambridge Analytica scandal, Facebook was involved in numerous political and legal public misconduct. Still, the company seems to be better than ever. The financial statements and stock prices are stable and growing. Meanwhile, the platform keeps attracting new users and monetizing the old ones.

So how does Facebook do it? What is it that makes this company so profitable? The answer is data. Clive Humby, a UK mathematician, once called data the new oil. And this popular analogy is clearer than ever. Ever since its beginning, Facebook was uniquely suited for the online environment.

The amount of information it has on its users is incredible. With it, the company can target ads specifically to each type of customer, generating billions in revenue. Moreover, the platform is made in such a way that people share advertisements and data with each other,

generating significant insights to be monetized.

For example, in 2009, Facebook introduced the *like button*. **With this new feature, it could see what it is that users prefer and sell just that.** The site also adjusted the privacy settings, tricking its users into obtaining more information on them and receiving permissions to collect intelligence. Unethical? Yes. Profitable? Absolutely.

The Center for Digital Democracy noticed Facebook's growing exploitation of its users' data and filed a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission. However, little action has been taken. Facebook agreed to change the practices used and undertake audits. But the government didn't really allocate many resources for examinations.

Lesson 3: Facebook has many enemies due to its anti-competitive practices.

As we've seen, the reputation of Facebook from a business point of view revolves around lawsuits, scandals, and data privacy issues. To top it off, the company managed to enter a new territory: being accused of anti-competitive practices. **Despite being accustomed to negative press, Zuckerberg was shocked to find out that Chris Hughes, a co-founder, turned against him.**

Hughes left the company early to move on to other projects. Later, he published an article saying that the company grew too big too fast by crushing competition using people's data. He wasn't the only one making these claims. And they were right! Over the years, Facebook had acquired approximately 70 operations, including Instagram and Whatsapp.

Later on, Zuckerberg merged the services. This made it harder for lawyers who were looking at ways to tackle Facebook's monopoly. Still, as of 2020, antitrust regulations for this company became a common topic in the United States. So who knows what's going to happen with Facebook?

Currently, the corporation doesn't have many friends in Washington DC due to a refusal to dismiss an embarrassing video of the House Speaker. Moreover, it failed to rebrand the company as a platform that stands for democracy and free speech. Or as an asset for America against Chinese social media platforms.

An Ugly Truth Review

An Ugly Truth reveals the legal and political affairs that Facebook works so hard to cover. The book dives deep into the controversy of data privacy and the Cambridge Analytica scandal. It also tackles the many wrongful practices associated with this corporation. The readers will gain an objective perspective on where Facebook stands in our society and where the company's great power leads it to.

Who would I recommend the An Ugly Truth summary to?

The internet user who is preoccupied about their data, the social media user who is curious about the nature of the platform they are using, or the political junkie addicted to scandals, social media, and internet news.