

Table of Contents

I.	Chapter 1: Introduction	2
II.	Chapter 2: Misinformation vs Disinformation	2
III.	Chapter 3: Fact-Checking in Action; Methods for Critical Thinking	4
IV.	Chapter 4: Fact-Checking Tools	12
V.	Chapter 5: Concluding with A Critical Lens	
VI.	Appendix and Bibliography	16

Chapter 1: Introduction

Welcome to the Fact-Checking Handbook, created by students for students! As part of our commitment to creating an informed and engaged community, we designed this handbook to help guide our peers in understanding the importance of fact-checking and developing skills for evaluating the reliability of the information they see online.

As the world increasingly relies on social media for news and information, the importance of fact-checking information has never been so critical. This project originates from the realisation that disinformation and fake news is an active issue that perpetuates confusion, creates stigma and causes harm in public and academic discourse. As creators of this project, we recognize our positionality as students and have a mission to create a better academic environment that is based on accurate information and informed debates. Our mission is to promote a fact-checking culture that restores accountability, accuracy and transparency in educational settings.

As students, we recognize the power of our voices and the impact of our work. We believe in creating an environment that is both knowledgeable and critical. This project is a reflection of our commitment to media literacy, in which we take an active role in learning how to identify and challenge misinformation. We acknowledge that our own bias and perspective can influence our research and that it is essential to be aware of this when fact-checking.

Therefore, we strive to provide as much unbiased information as possible to create a reliable guide to fact-checking. We believe students benefit from fact-checking knowledge because it helps them develop critical thinking and studying skills. It also helps them become more educated and capable of distinguishing between credible and unreliable sources of information. With the proliferation of fake news and misinformation on social media, it is more important than ever for students to be able to tell the difference between the two.

Furthermore, an understanding of fact-checking can assist students in developing the skills required to assess the credibility of sources and make informed choices.

We envision a future where fact-checking becomes integral to the academic discourse and reliable sources are appropriately cited and referenced. By clarifying misconceptions and separating fact from fiction, we hope to contribute towards a more informed citizenry capable of making informed decisions. We understand that building a fact-checking culture may be difficult and require significant effort. However, we firmly believe in its potential for positive impact on academic research, public policy, and societal progress. Therefore, in this handbook, we provide practical guidelines and tips on how to fact-check information effectively.

This handbook will be an invaluable resource to students, educators, and researchers looking to ensure accuracy in their work. We hope to foster a culture of responsible research and accurate reporting by providing a comprehensive guide to fact-checking.

Chapter 2: Misinformation vs Disinformation and Social Media

“If you are spreading around information that is wrong, but you don’t know it is wrong, then you are, well technically spreading misinformation” – Dictionary.com

Understanding these two words which are often interchanged, their differences, and the motives and appeal behind them, is important in avoiding and combating them.

Misinformation is any kind of untrue information that is unintentionally shared, whereas **disinformation** is false information, deliberately manufactured and shared with the intent to deceive or harm (Carsten Stahl, 2006; Hilary & Dumebi, 2021, UNDP). On social media platforms, it is well-established that misinformation/disinformation spreads faster than true information. (UNICEF 2013). According to dictionary.com, the difference between misinformation and disinformation is intent which should always be kept in mind.

Fake news

According to the Center for Information Technology and Society (2016), fake news is news that is unverifiable and produced with the intent of manipulating of real facts, events, and statements. It is information based on untrue and incredible facts that are presented as if it were true.

Some fake news may have a “nugget” of truth but lack any contextualising details. As reported by Desai, n.d., Fake news is presented in several ways, some may be one viewpoint or important points are left out and some may be in the intended instigative language. Moreover, Fake news is part of a bigger ecology of misinformation. (Desai, 2022).

There are 5 categories of fake news (Martinson, 2023, Machete & Turpin, 2020)

1. **False/deceptive** – these are made-up news or information that is intentionally fabricated to mislead.
2. **Misleading** – news, information or stories in the category has no baseline for truth and are intended to promote an agenda. News /stories in this category manipulate credible stories.

3. **Slanted/biased** – stories contain credible information but are selective of the facts to be omitted. Sharing true stories in a biased way as seen in most media organizations
4. **Manipulated** – this category contains altered content or images (doctored or photoshopped)
5. **Humour** (satire/parody/jokes) – Satirical news is mistaken as true though it is intended to entertain than to mislead.

Active Fact-Checking, Critical Thinking

With the sheer amount of news that is presently released online, being able to assess the validity of internet news is very crucial. (Machete & Turpin, 2020). With the rapid rise of social media, there is the rapid spread of fake news, misinformation and disinformation, and it is impossible to not to see fake news on social media daily (Hilary & Dumebi, 2021; Ku et al., 2019). However, critical thinking skills might help to minimize the spread of false information (Ku et al., 2019; Hilary & Dumebi, 2021)

According to Tiruneh et al. (2014), critical thinking is the ability to analyze and assess any given information for credibility, respond to arguments and make conclusions logically.” (Tiruneh et al., 2014). Critical thinking is a required skill for identifying fake news.

Furthermore, Halpern (1998) suggests critical thinking is a form of information literacy, which provides a means to critically engage with information. It requires the ability to reason verbally, analyze arguments, test hypotheses, cope with uncertainty, make decisions and solve problems (Halpern, 1998).

To employ critical thinking skills, one must realize when it is necessary to fact-check information, rather than accepting its veracity, therefore, It is crucial for academic institutions to offer information literacy courses that equip students and faculty with the skills necessary to recognize, choose, comprehend, and utilize credible information. (Machete & Turpin, 2020).

Conclusively, teaching students the significance of information literacy is crucial and will be used to navigate real-world circumstances that demand assessing and evaluating information (Machete & Turpin, 2020). According to Desai (2022) always think critically about every piece of information and when in doubt, use available fact-checking tools.

“Always think, if you are in doubt, don’t share” (Desai, 2022)

Social media (how to use critical thinking skills on social media)

Studies report people no longer rely on television or print media for news. Since social media has become the dominant source of news, it has also created rampant misinformation as there are numerous fake news and misinformation articles online, correspondently, we need to know how to sieve credible and unverifiable news, and this requires critical thinking skills (Machete & Turpin, 2020, Thomas Goodnight & Goodnight, 2009). Misinformation on social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc spread swiftly due to internet algorithm always trying to attract users’ attention, therefore, creating a fertile environment for the transmission of clickbait fake news (Machete & Turpin, 2020). Other authors also argue social media sites are used to spread user-generated content such as hoaxes, false claims, fake news and conspiracy theories therefore every social media user is a consumer or distributor of fake news (Machete & Turpin, 2020). According to online disinformation 2023, the best way to identify false information is to fact-check information you find online, use fact-checking tools to see if a professional fact-checker has already debunked the story, find the source, verify the source, and check other sources for verification.

According to (Robins-Early, 2016), to recognize a fake news story, use these 9 guides

- Read past the headline,

- Check what news outlet published it,
- Check the publish date and time,
- Who is the author?
- Look at what links and sources are used,
- Look out for questionable quotes and photos,
- Beware confirmation bias,
- Search if other news outlets are reporting it.
- Think before you share.

Why is it important to understand the implication of social media as an information tool?

Social media presents you information in an echo chamber

Echo chamber is an environment where the user only sees information that reflect and reinforce the opinions they already have. To be more specific the Internet is a certain type of echo chamber called a filter bubble. Filter bubbles are created by algorithms that keep track of which posts the users click and interact with the most. The social media company will then use those algorithms to fill the users feed with content that is similar to the posts the users liked or spent a lot of time watching. This leads to selective exposure of contents and can prevent users from finding different views and perspectives online. Echo chamber reinforces an existing opinion that a group of people share. This can result in the entire group of people moving towards even more extreme positions which can lead to real life consequences. It can eventually lead to the growing influence of social media companies and their role in what kind of information is consumed by the users and how public opinion is formed. Once this becomes extreme, it will become harder to agree on what is an objective truth accepted by society. It can lead an individual's sense of reality being distorted and deter them from accessing to information from credible sources (Casad et al., 2023)

Your personal echo chamber is affected by your natural confirmation bias

Confirmation bias is the natural human tendency to seek new information in accordance with pre-existing beliefs. Social media users tend to interact with posts that confirm their bias and dismiss information that contradict with their beliefs.. Although it is natural to seek things they agree with, since users are focusing only on what they want to and cherry picking information they see, it can lead to radicalization and further isolate them from the rest of the world (Cabanca et al, n.d.)

Chapter 3: Fact-Checking in Action; Methods for Critical Thinking

Introduction to fact checking methods and critical thinking while researching online

Critical thinking skills can be utilised online by asking yourself questions about the origins and personal biases that may appear in online sources of information. It is important to remember that every article and post you read online will have some inherent bias from

those who write the information and pay to publish it online. Because of this, applying critical thinking skills to information we see online is very important. There is no such thing as neutral information when something is published and written for an audience online; it comes from a particular perspective of a problem and is usually written for an audience who agrees with the perspective being discussed. This creates personal bias and echo chambers of information only being looked at by one view. In order to avoid this issue of bias, it is important to critically evaluate where information is coming from and who it is being written for, to understand the perspective a source of information is trying to portray and why.

Inherent bias poses a problem because it leads people to believe incorrect information because it fits into their particular worldview. When a bias is present in our sources of information, it leads to misinterpretation and misunderstandings over what is true and what is not when researching topics. One such way this has been avoided is through peer review systems in academic articles; in peer review, multiple people of many different backgrounds go over scientific data/articles to tease out personal/professional bias from scientific data and theories (Elsevier, 2023).

PRO TIP: Inaccurate or biased sources of information can still include correct facts, but how those facts are presented can lead you believing a particular point/belief even when that is not the reality of the facts. This is where bias and misrepresentation of facts play a role in how we judge information we find online

IF I APPLY METHOD to identify credible sources

In order to best equip you with the tools you need to fact-check information online, this section will provide you with a guiding framework that will help you address biases in online information. A very successful method that allows you to identify both your own personal biases and author bias present in online information is the IF I APPLY METHOD.

The IF I APPLY method was developed by Benjes et al. in their book *Teaching About Fake News: Lesson Plans for Different Disciplines and Audiences*. It is a critical evaluation tool that helps students and researchers identify sound information sources from fake news information sources. In the IF I APPLY, personal reader bias and author bias are evaluated using a series of critical thinking questions that aim at making researchers of information think about the particular perspectives and biases being projected in a source of information. A word from the authors of the IF I APPLY METHOD (Benjes-Small et al, 2021)

- “. The IF I APPLY source evaluation tool encourages learners to think about how they seek out information and how they cognitively process facts, arguments, and positions that contradict not just their thesis but also their worldview; it establishes a process by which sound research can be conducted to create well-informed health policy. Employing it should lead learners to ask questions such as, “Have you rejected unsound arguments and had the courage to accept that not all viewpoints are valid?” and “What are the perspectives, opinions, assumptions and biases of whoever is responsible for this information?” It builds on the concept that information is neither strictly good nor bad and that all information or resources have the potential to be credible depending on the specific need and attached value. Each step is accompanied by critical-thinking questions to guide the evaluation process but was not developed with the intention to be used as a checklist” (Benjes-Small et al, 2021)

IF I APPLY Methodology

Each letter represents a critical evaluation question you should ask about your information source. The first three steps (IF I) aim to understand your own biases better, while the APPLY steps encourage you to evaluate the credibility of the source of information.

- Yellow highlighted steps are personal questions
- Blue highlighted steps are

IF I APPLY STEP	Critical thinking questions and steps
I dentify emotions attached to the topic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are your honest opinions regarding the topic? - Have you addressed your internal biases? - Make an all-inclusive list of counter-opinions or counterarguments
F ind unbiased reference sources that will provide a proper and informative overview of the topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct a general knowledge overview - Search for information in encyclopaedias, wikis, dictionaries, etc
I ntellectual courage is needed to seek authoritative voices on the topic that may fall outside your comfort zone or thesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify credible materials for all of the viewpoints—yours and the additional materials you identified. - Reject unsound arguments. Have the courage to accept that not all viewpoints are valid
A uthority established	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who is the author(may be an individual or organisation), publisher, and/or other experts? - Who has the author interviewed, referenced, included, etc.? - What are the credentials and affiliation or sponsorship of any named individuals or organisations? - How objective, reliable, and authoritative are they? - Have they written other articles or books? - Is/Are the author(s) listed with contact information (street address, e-mail)? - Do they specialise in publishing certain topics or fields?
P urpose/point of view	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What can be said about the content,

	<p>context, style, structure, completeness, and accuracy of the information provided by the source?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are any conclusions offered? If so, based on what evidence and supported by what primary and secondary documentation? - What is implied by the content? - Are diverse perspectives represented? - Is the information provided by the source in its original form or has it been revised? If so, why (e.g. changes in knowledge, summarising for consumer consumption, cherry picking of information, etc.)?
Publisher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who published the material and does the publisher have an agenda? - Has the publisher published other works? - Is the publisher scholarly (university press, scholarly associations)? Commercial? Government agency? Self (“vanity”) press?
List of sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Where else can the information provided by the source be found? - Is this information authentic? - Is this information unique or has it been copied? - Not all sources will have an official bibliography. - Can you create a list of external sources?
Year of publication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When was this published? - How does the year of publication impact your needs? - Is this information current? Can you find more current or relevant information? If older, why is it useful? If brand new, is there a chance that this information will change or update frequently or infrequently? - Is the cited information current? Make sure work is not based on outdated research, statistics, data,

	etc. - Is the information routinely updated?
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(Benjes-Small et al, 2021)

PRO TIP: Not every single question may apply to your source of information you are evaluating, these questions are guidelines, so use which questions make the most sense for your situation.

IF I APPLY Practice Exercise

In order to better understand how to use the IF I APPLY method a practice assessment will be provided in order to show students how to apply this method in their own research.

Instructions

Out of the 2 sources provided here please choose which source you would consider credible and which you would consider to be unreliable/fake news. Please describe why you thought which source was credible using the steps and questions provided in the IF I APPLY method. Go through each step of the IF I APPLY method for both sources and then compare results in order to determine which is the more credible source of information (Benjes-Small et al, 2021).

Source one

Dizikes, P. (2018, March 8). *Study: On Twitter, false news travels faster than true stories*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Retrieved from <https://news.mit.edu/2018/study-twitter-false-news-travels-faster-true-stories-0308>

Source two

The Onion. (2022, October 18). *Twitter to promote healthier discussion by letting one user tweet at a time*. The Onion. Retrieved from <https://www.theonion.com/twitter-to-promote-healthier-discussion-by-letting-one-184965946>

9

Reflection questions for after completing IF I APPLY exercise

- How easy/difficult was it to determine the difference between fake news and more traditional sources?
 - Which elements do fake news borrow to establish credibility? Why?
 - In the sources analysed, is there a continuum of “fakeness”?
 - What are some tentative conclusions you can draw about how each format may present its information? Are there similarities? Are there any major differences?
- (Benjes et al)

What is a Credible Source of Information?

Introduction to sources

In this handbook, we have discussed the importance of using credible sources of information many times, but what can be considered credible? And what makes it different from bad sources of information like fake news? In this section, we will show you the difference between credible articles and fake news articles and how to identify misinformation from truthful information in news and journal articles you can find while surfing the web.

Unfortunately, fake news and misinformation is prevalent in our online environments, and we are very susceptible to being tricked into believing untrue information from them without proper critical thinking tools like the IF I APPLY method. The most common sources of information you will find when researching any topic online are news articles, journal articles, or articles from organizations or social media posts. Although news and online articles from websites can give accurate information, you must be careful as many pieces of fake news come from uncredited news and organization websites that come up in base-level search engines like Google. Likewise, social media posts are only a credible source of information if what has been posted cites a credible source. This is because of the anecdotal nature of social media posts; most posts can only be called facts if they cite trustworthy information (which is not common). Finally, the most trustworthy sources of information come from journal articles that can be found in online databases such as JSTOR; many databases can be accessed for free through local libraries and school accounts that allow access to university databases. (McBrayer, 2020)

Types of Fake News Online

In terms of online articles from search engines, there are three major forms of fake news you may run into while researching online, the first is a hoax, which is where a website is trying to convince its reader that a paranoia-fueled story is valid, for example, aliens have contacted earth (Pathak et al., 2021). The next is satirical news sites; these are fake news sites that mimic real news but still cue the reader that it is not meant to be taken seriously and is instead for comedy (Pathak et al., 2021). The last and most prevalent is propaganda; this form of fake news aims to influence people's mindsets to advance a specific agenda (Pathak et al., 2021). Fake news or any other article with misinformation almost always looks like real news. The difference is that fake news rejects the ethics of journalism and writes with the intent to deceive rather than enlighten (Benjes-Small et al, 2021). That is why it is essential to use critical thinking evaluation tools to ensure an article you find online comes from credible sources.

The Difference Between Journal Articles And News Articles

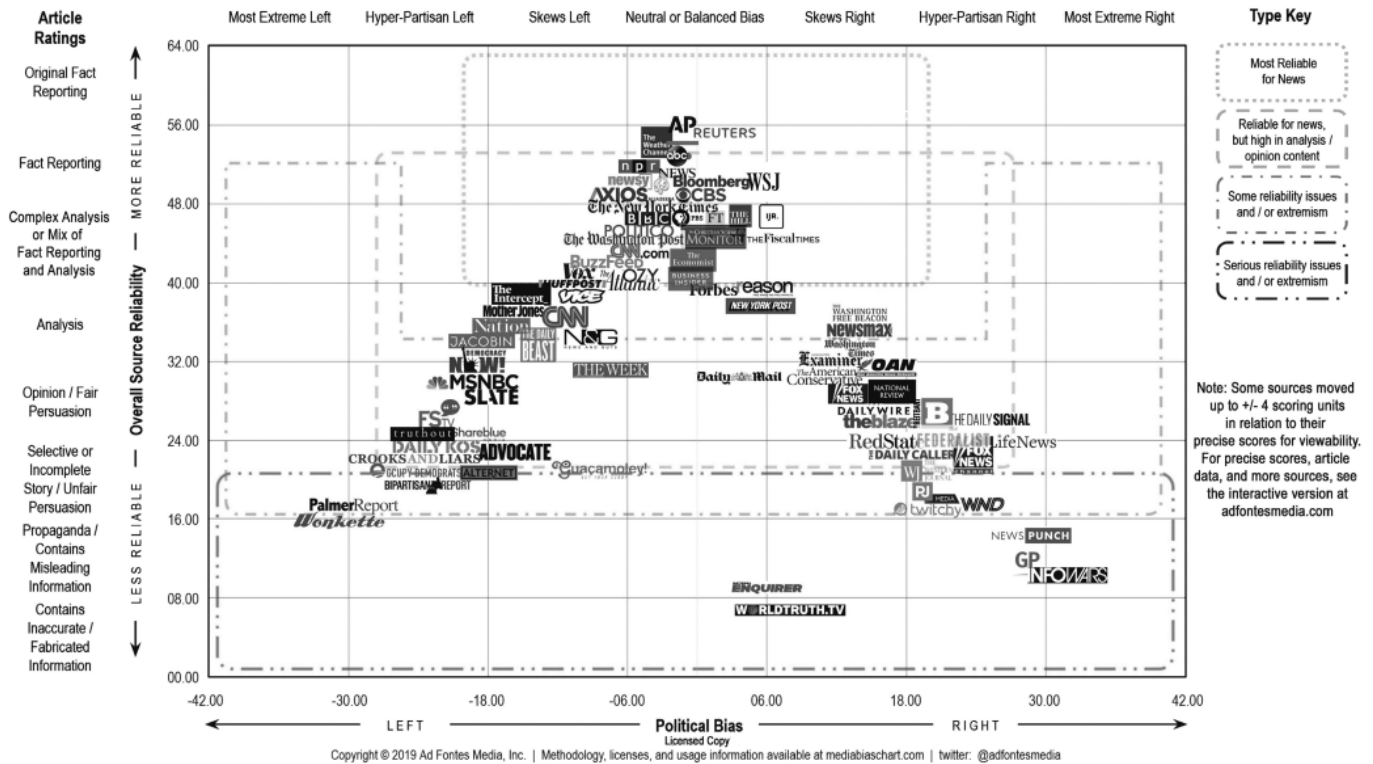
The reason articles from websites in the normal search algorithms are less trustable than journal articles from online databases is due to the issue of inherent bias from those who are paying to publish articles online for public consumption. When we read information from a news or organizational website, we must remember that whoever published and paid for that article had the final say over what was presented in that source and that each organization/person has their motives for pushing certain information. Although, so well, an article may present impartial information, there is a particular way that information has been presented in order to get readers to believe in the agenda being pushed by the publisher(s). This does not mean that all online articles not from a database are tainted sources of information, but it does mean that it is important to bear in mind that the way information is presented to you in online articles is value-laden. (McBrayer, 2020)

Fake News Red Flags Checking for Bias

An easy way to determine if an online article has a bias (particularly in news articles) is to look at the political alignment of the news company or organization that has published the article. An overwhelming majority of fake or misleading news articles are political in nature (McBrayer, 2020). A surefire way to see if the article you are reading has a political bias is to check where an organization (like fox news) falls on the political spectrum (McBrayer, 2020). An online article can have a conservative or liberal bias, which will shape how a piece of information is presented to a reader (McBrayer, 2020). By understanding what type of worldview is being pushed by an organization in a news article about current events, we can understand what parts of the article present facts versus what parts present opinions as facts. This is not to say that every news article that comes from a right or left-leaning news company is wrong. However, if we understand the biases in their reporting, we are less likely to take opinions as facts and more likely to identify propaganda in the reporting. It is recommended that when using online news articles as sources of information, you try to look at the same topic from many different news sources in order to get multiple perspectives about the topic you're researching. Doing so will help ensure you're not only seeing one side's opinion of the topic and will aid you in understanding what is true information and what is not.

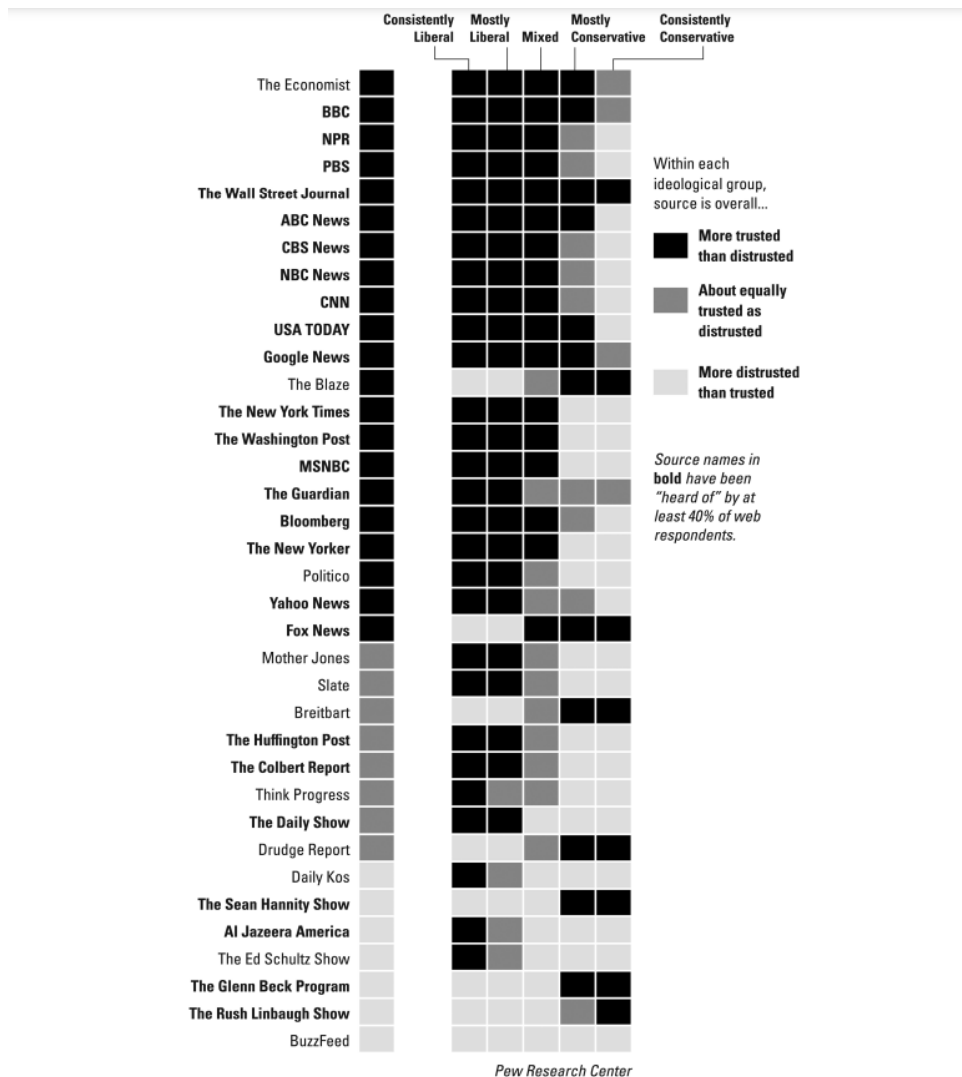
One way to find out the political alignments of a news or organization that has posted an article is to look through the political news media charts that appear below; also helpful websites like [PolitiFact](#) and [AllSides](#) will help you identify an organization's political biases for companies that are not shown in the figures below.

Version 5.1



The Media Bias Chart from Ad Fontes Media

(McBrayer, 2020)



(McBrayer, 2020)

Wording and "Clickbaityness"

Another red flag to look for that will signal that the information you are reading is misleading is the wording. Fake news and other misinformation sources try to pass themselves as legitimate news sources. However, they frequently try to play on your emotions by using clickbait wording and hyperbolic headlines. For example, "you won't believe what Kim Kardashian said to the president". Clickbait headlines can be the first sign that an article contains misinformation. The wording within a fake news article will also tend to be more emotional and heart-string pulling than in factual news articles. This is a form of manipulation to push an agenda; this is done in order to get you emotionally invested in untrue information so you are less likely to realize it is fake and less likely to believe the truth even if it is told to you. Factual and trustworthy articles aim to give you correct and accurate information, not to make you feel a certain way about a topic. So if you are reading an article that sounds "clickbaity" or is trying to elicit an emotional reaction, you should step back and

analyze its reason for doing so; more often than not, it is because the author is presenting misinformation as true in order to push their agenda. (Pathak et al., 2021).

Journal Articles and Peer Review

Journal articles that come from databases tend to be the most trustworthy sources of information about any topic. This is because a journal article published in a scientific journal or scientific database has had to have gone through an extensive process of peer review (Elsevier, 2023). Peer reviewing is a part of the scientific process that turns hypotheses into accepted theories (Elsevier, 2023). Peer reviewing is when a scientific article and its data is reviewed or recreated by other researchers within or outside of the field of study (Elsevier, 2023). Doing extensive peer review processes ensures that the information being presented in a journal article is as accurate and unbiased as possible to ensure that what is being presented is the truth of the matter (Elsevier, 2023). All articles from journals are peer-reviewed, which is why they are the most trustworthy type of article you can use as a source of information (Elsevier, 2023). Journal articles are most commonly found in databases (that can be accessed using student accounts) or journal search engines like google scholar. Other types of online articles, such as news, can also go through peer review processes; this is usually declared at the end of the article. If an article has gone through a peer review process, you can trust that it contains credible information. (Elsevier, 2023)

Final thoughts on fact-checking methods

In conclusion, a credible source of information is one that is impartial with its bias, open about its sources and agenda and has been peer-reviewed. You will come across many articles that do not fit every standard of credibility, but using the IF I APPLY method and knowing what sources of information are credible will help you weed out the bad information from the true information. Although journal articles tend to be the most credible, It is important to remember that all writing has a bias. Although news articles tend to be more biased in their reporting style, they can still relay accurate information about the world around us. The important part is being an active consumer of information who utilizes critical thinking skills in order to separate misleading information/opinions from true facts.

Chapter 4: Fact-Checking Tools

IFCN

The international fact checking network is part of the Poynter institute for media studies a non-profit journalism school and research organisation, based in St Petersburg Florida. IFCN was launched in 2015, establishing a code of ethics for fact checking organisations. IFCN reviews fact checkers and issues certifications to publishers who have passed the audit. IFCN is the only NGO of its kind with their certificates being relied on by major tech companies such as Meta and Facebook to vet fact checkers on their respective platforms. The International Fact Checking Networks certifications operate on 4 principles. First a Commitment to Non-partisanship and Fairness. Second a commitment to standards and transparency of sources. Third a commitment Transparency of funding & organisation. Four, A Commitment to standards and Transparency of Methodology. Five a commitment to an Open & Honest Corrections Policy. The Commitment to non-partisanship fairness requires

signatory organisations to fact check claims using the same standards for every fact check, not concentrating their fact-checking on any one side. Furthermore, signatories must not advocate or take policy positions on the issues they fact check. A commitment to standards and transparency of sources requires signatories to make their methods available to the public, with enough detail for readers to replicate their work, except in cases where personal security could be compromised. A Commitment to Transparency of Funding & Organization, signatory organisations must be transparent about their funding sources.

Altmetrics

Altimetric's is a tool like other bibliometrics used to track engagement with publications, however it adds the the tracking of communication channels outside of traditional scholarly channels. Meaning statistical analysis includes voices of both academics and the public allowing for a greater understanding of the impact of research. Some of the sources included are; scholarly citations, patent citations, blog mentions, news media mentions, Wikipedia references, YouTube mentions, public policy citations, social media mentions/shares

A major factor in the dissemination of misinformation is understanding the effect that academic publications have outside academic spheres. Many people define there opinions and beliefs based on major issues such as genetic testing, politics, and LGBTQ rights, based on the media they consume on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Reddit etc. Online journalism is largely funded through engagement, traditional news sources have been responsible for convoluting facts, misinterpreting, or reporting on incomplete aspects of scientific studies, highlighting unusual claims to boost engagement. Individuals are even more likely convoluted academic reports, spreading misinformation under the vale of academic soundness. At its core altimetric allows for students and academics to break free from their information eco chambers having a window into the conversations being had after research is published; contributing to understanding how misinformation is spread and how the misinterpretation purposefully or negligently contributes to misinformation online.

Fact-checking can generally be broken down into three steps: (Sourced from the Truth in Journalism Project)

- 1. Verification:** Given a statement and the reporter's sources for that statement, the fact checker confirms that the statement is factual, identifies errors and suggests corrections, or determines that neither of these options is possible.
- 2. Investigation:** The fact checker assesses the credibility of the sources used by the reporter and finds out what other credible sources say about the statement in question. Is there any nuance or context missing from the statement? Have any sourcing considerations been overlooked or misjudged?

3. **Documentation:** After the statement is confirmed or corrected, the fact checker preserves all sources, documents, and methodology for their (and their publication's) fact-checking records

Chapter 5: Concluding with A Critical Lens

“The mass media serve as a system for communicating messages and symbols to the general populace. It is their function to amuse, entertain, and inform, and to inculcate individuals with the values, beliefs, and codes of behaviour that will integrate them into the institutional structures of the larger society.”

-Noam Chomsky “Manufacturing Consent”

It is important to understand that this handbook is by no means an exhaustive reference to all the resources available for fact-checking. It exists now, in this present moment. To say that our handbook is the end all be all for all time is inaccurate. The future will see a change in what social media will look like. Social media has and will always be dynamic, and the resources needed to properly fact-check on future social media similarly need to be dynamic. Thus, though our resources are helpful for now, they will not always be. Because of this, what we want to leave you with is rather a timeless way of "fact-checking" what you see on social media.

We hope to promote the implementation of a "critical lens" within our readers. Whether you are reading an article you found on Facebook or watching a TikTok your mother sent you, it's vital not to just take what you see and accept it as truth. Even if it presents itself as trustworthy, that might not always be the case. Take a second to think about the creator's intention. Whom is it targeting? What is it trying to convince you of? And why? Are there parts that might be left out? What is it not saying? Having a "critical lens" allows you to question what you see, critically analyzing factual accuracy. A "critical lens" is like fact-checking software written into your very brain. This lens should not merely be placed on social media but can and should be applied to all aspects of life. We prevent learning about topics with a skewed perspective by questioning what we consume. Perspectives with the specific intent of facilitating specific understandings of the world for an ulterior motive.

Appendix

- Chapter one was written by Shadi Rezaeisoureshjani
- Chapter two was written by Grace Uddy-Akatu and Jihyo Lee
- Chapter three was written by Tia Aprile
- Chapter four was written by Matthew Strzelczyk
- Chapter five was written by Seth Pollak and Thereza Eric

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