What ethical responsibilities do we feel Social Media companies have as they present information to us? Do we think there is any relationship between the information being shared and a person’s mood?

As internet started to become widely available to everyone, Social media has gained its popularity and people use it for variety of reasons such as keeping in touch with their loved ones, keeping themselves updated with the latest happenings and the news from all over the world. On the other side, few people spread false information, fake news, promote hatred and violence and these are amplified with the reach of social media all over the world with a single-click. Imagine a person with millions of followers, sharing false information on a community or a group without verifying the source. This may create communal tensions or even riots and there are instances of this happening all over the world. There are instances where the paid promotion has affected the behavior of the users.

Researchers from University of Warwick have found that there is a strong correlation between the hate crimes on refugees and the anti-refugee social media posts. This is where social media companies have ethical responsibilities to verify the information and stop the spreading of the false information or information that may put any group or community in danger. There have been efforts from companies such as twitter and facebook to remove the bogus users and offensive contents from their platforms. But this must be applied to wide range of users and the algorithms of the companies should be able to identify them before any damage can happen. Also, they should be ready to forego their ad income if any paid promotions are involved in a false propaganda. Companies should also be able to let users distinguish between the paid content and the regular content. There has been widespread criticism on facebook for promoting one political party during 2016 election campaign through their ads. Facebook has recently blocked an influential president of a Nation for inciting violence against people and abusing the democracy. Users also should be diligent in consuming the right information and notify if they think otherwise.  Social media companies should implement a way to verify all the user accounts so that any user action that jeopardize should be identified and reported to the authorities after verification. Also, they should not involve in selling any of the user’s information as more and more users started to share their personal information and day-to-day activities on the social media.

There have been a lot of discussion lately on how social media can affect our mood and how it can make one vulnerable to stress and anxiety. some researchers found out that people compare themselves with others who post their trips or accomplishments and that it’ll inflict self-doubt and affect their self-esteem adversely. These posts on social media can cause FOMO (fear of missing out) that other people are having more fun and lively life than them and can cause more social media use. This can cause them to check their accounts regularly for any activity and respond to each post or comment.  A research done by University of Copenhagen found out that many people who use facebook suffer from ‘Facebook envy’ when compared with others who abstained from using it. People post photos and their status on social media and the studies show that the more no. of likes and positive comments received affected their mood positively and adversely when they haven’t received the no. of likes or comments they anticipated. Many people have quit from the social media as it affects their mood and performance in their day-to-day activities. People must use social media responsibly and be empathetic while posting anything and consume information diligently and keep away from any accounts that affect their mental health.