

News Trustworthiness Proposal



What are the facts about these two pictures?
What are the "alternative facts" about them?

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Barack Obama on fake news: 'We have problems' if we can't tell the difference

The US president denounced the spate of misinformation across social media platforms, including Facebook, suggesting American politics can be affected

Barack Obama: fake news is a threat to democracy

Olivia Solon in San Francisco (Thursday 17 November 2016 19.03 EST)

President Barack Obama has spoken out about fake news on Facebook and other media platforms, suggesting that it helped undermine the US political process.

“If we are not serious about facts and what’s true and what’s not, if we can’t discriminate between serious arguments and propaganda, then we have problems,” he said during a press conference in Germany.

Since the surprise election of Donald Trump as president-elect, Facebook has battled accusations that it has failed to stem the flow of misinformation on its network and that its business model leads to users becoming divided into polarized political echo chambers.

Obama said that we live in an age with “so much active misinformation” that is “packaged very well” and looks the same whether it’s on Facebook or on TV.

“If everything seems to be the same and no distinctions are made, then we won’t know what to protect. We won’t know what to fight for. And we can lose so much of what we’ve gained in terms of the kind of democratic freedoms and market-based economies and prosperity that we’ve come to take for granted,” he said.

These comments come after Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg rejected the “crazy idea” that fake news on the social network swayed voters in the US presidential election. That’s in spite of analysis by BuzzFeed that showed that fake news on the site outperformed real news in the run-up to polling day.

Conspiracy theories and misinformation have flourished on Facebook thanks to a network of highly partisan media outlets with questionable editorial policies, including a website called the Denver Guardian peddling stories about Clinton murdering people and a cluster of pro-Trump sites founded by teenagers in Veles, Macedonia, motivated only by the advertising dollars they can accrue if enough people click on their links.

It’s not the first time that Obama has commented on the problem. At a Democratic party rally on 7 November, he denounced the “crazy conspiracy theorizing” that spreads on Facebook, creating a “dust cloud of nonsense”. The issue is not unique to Facebook. If you were to believe the top Google result for “final election results” on Monday, you’d think that Trump won the popular vote in the 2016 election. He did not.

The slip-up was widely reported on Monday, demonstrating that though Google’s algorithms are also susceptible to fake news, the company wants to be seen as better at tackling it than Facebook. “The goal of search is to provide the most relevant and useful results for our users,” a Google spokeswoman said. “In this case we clearly didn’t get it right, but we are continually working to improve our algorithms.”

Earlier this week both Google and Facebook announced plans to go after the revenue of fake news sites, kicking the hoaxers off their ad networks in an attempt to prevent misleading the public from being profitable. Although this reduces the financial incentive to generate fake news websites, it doesn’t tackle the distribution of such content on Facebook.

Problem with News: **TRUST**

The public has lost trust in the validity of the press. This has allowed fake news sites and stories to propagate creating an atmosphere of mistrust. Why?

- Previously trusted sources have focused more on opinion; drawing conclusions for the consumer.
- Dramatic headlines are used as click bait with no checks and balances.
- Fake news feeds into existing beliefs of the consumer exacerbating the rift between communities.

There are two current solutions to this epidemic being tried.

- The reader can research the news story themselves and check other sources to validate the story.
 - This falls short as the reader does not desire to spend time or have the resources to adequately vet a story, nor has access to the original sources.
 - Fake news appears on multiple fake sites which provide the illusion that the story is valid.
 - Who can the reader actually trust becomes a core problem.
- Trusted news agencies are hiring journalists to validate fake news stories and report.
 - Fake news stories can be generated at a rate that is impossible to vet.
 - There is a huge lag time between when a fake story is published and the time it takes to vet the story.
 - Multiple new fake news stories already take over the headlines which negates the original fake story.
 - Exponential new stories covering fake news detract from critical news being disseminated. Reader's suffer from information overload.

(Solution)

The problem we are seeing is not unlike what banking or online sales faced. A mechanism was needed to prove the identity of the online store or bank, so the user was not handing over their credentials or identity to illegitimate sources instead of the intended recipients. This was solved with Digital Certificates and SSL, rather than expecting the user to track down IP Addresses, call their bank or online store, researching URL addresses, or expecting them not to be fooled by a Website that was ripped from a legitimate source.

Our solution is to form an Independent Commission of the News Industry similar to other organizations like the BBB, ICANN, IANA, ARIN, IETF, or a non profit VERISIGN to approach the problem in a different way.

- The commission offers a mechanism similar to digital signing documents to allow a news Author/Agency to sign their news story.
- The reader's browser, similar to a secure website, authenticates this signature and displays a certification symbol to certify to the reader the news is trusted.
- With a "News Trustworthiness Rating System" the consumer can easily understand the history of the Author/Agency and the trustworthiness of past contributions.
- Inaccurate critiques or confirmations with documentation from others can be forwarded to the Author/Agency to bolster their news story or allow the Author/Agency to make corrections or retractions.
- If the Author/Agency denies documented critiques an appeals process board can determine if the Author/Agency's "News Trustworthiness Rating" should be adjusted.
- Over time as Author/Agency is found to be factual, non opinionated and include all relative information "News Trustworthiness Rating" will reflect this to the reader.

(See attached flowchart)

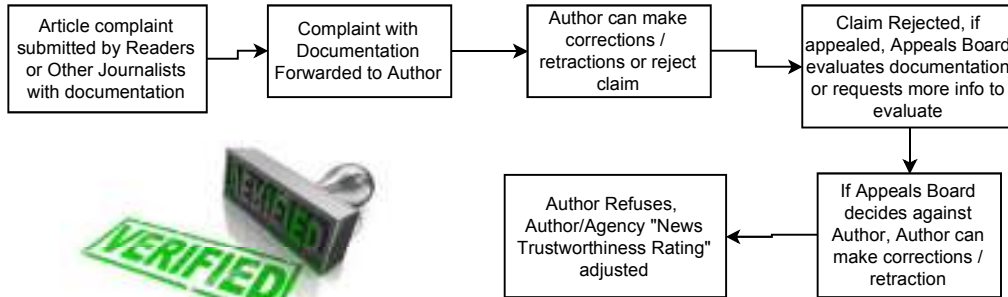
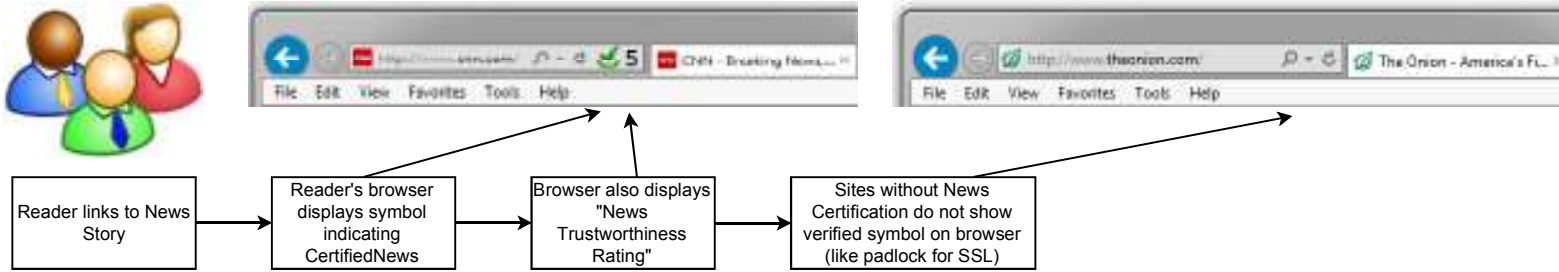
Readers can instantly verify news sources as credible so they can be factually informed and journalists have a mechanism to reduce the need for sensationalism to attract viewers/readers and focus on deeper and more critical news stories. Trustworthy News Agencies will no longer be on the same level as unverified sources and are rewarded for factual information and will naturally work toward accurate reporting versus who publishes first.

Just like how Digital Signatures and SSL have provided a mechanism of trust for the internet, this can reassure the public facts are facts and there are no alternatives, and replace left or right leaning news with evidence for the viewer to form their own independent opinion.

Proposed News Author / Reader Flow / Verification Flowchart of News Trustworthiness:



VS



Readers again have Trust in Factual News and are accurately informed!
News Agencies benefit from more clicks because they are factual not first!

