



# “Fake News”, an existent reality.

## Our route towards fake news

It may be absurd that some believe in something that other believe its false. However, 70% of Latin America doesn't know how to detect or is not sure to recognize a fake news on the internet, according to Kaspersky a cybersecurity company and Corpa<sup>1</sup> consultancy firm. Technology and social media has allowed that groups of people, that think the same and that before couldn't have met, begin to connect, strengthening their belief that what they think is true and generating animosity against those who do not think alike. It is in this scenario where fake news has been thriving.

Psychologists and neural scientists have also begun to ask about the topic: we're rational but, in some scenarios, we act emotionally and irrationally.

In his book *The Enigma of Reason*, Hugo Mercier, cognitive scientist at the French National Center for Scientific Research, and Dan Sperber, researcher in the departments of Cognitive Sciences and Philosophy at the Central European University of Budapest, argue that reason arose not to help us solve logical and abstract problems or even help us to build conclusions from data, but, rather as the answer to humanity's hyper sociability and the challenges of living in collaborative groups (Mercier y Sperber, 2017).

In other words, reason exists to justify our beliefs and actions before others, convince them through argumentation and evaluate their justifications and arguments. This explanation may show the reason it is so difficult for us to accept arguments and why our reasons is biased towards what we already believe in.

Our reason is permeated by something called Confirmation Bias: the tendency to gather evidence that confirms preexisting expectations, typically by emphasizing or pursuing supporting evidence while dismissing or failing to seek contradictory evidence.<sup>2</sup> We are prone to accept what helps us to better argue our ideas, so if we are presented with arguments and facts that contradict it, we tend to be reluctant to change our position.



<sup>1</sup><https://latam.kaspersky.com/blog/70-de-los-latinoamericanos-desconoce-como-detectar-una-fake-news/17015/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://dictionary.apa.org/confirmation-bias>

In a recent study by the University of South California, led by Jonas Kaplan<sup>3</sup>, cognitive neuroscientist, it was found that attacks against our beliefs in various topics such as our political beliefs, climate change, abortion, death penalty, among others, are perceived as an attack on the “I”. As Kaplan mentions, our brains are built to protect our bodies “The psychological self is the brain’s extension of that. When our self feels attacked, our [brain is] going to bring to bear the same defenses that it has for protecting the body.”<sup>4</sup>

Although the study is limited, it brings forth new evidence that we are built to perceive attacks to our belief system as an attack to ourselves, challenging the possibility of change and showing that, from a neural point of view, facts and arguments do not have the value we have given them.

Accepting the weaknesses of our brain and reason, it is understood why it’s not easy to believe certain arguments and facts. However, technology and social media have helped to erase the border between what is true and false, becoming a meeting place for those who think like us and “support” us against those who think differently.

## Anatomy of Fake News<sup>5</sup>

- ✓ They are false, misrepresented or misinterpreted information about something that is happening. They may have truthful elements, but they lead the reader to wrong conclusions, for example, with exaggerated headlines or content without truthful support.
- ✓ They tend to generate strong reactions or confirm an idea or prejudice that you already had. Usually they appeal to alarm or are scandalous, putting the recipient in a position of fear, outrage, or frustration.
- ✓ The most notorious are about characters or events of great interest, but there are also many about daily life or small circles, communities, and interests.
- ✓ In general, they do not fulfill the properties of a journalistic text. It may happen that they do not have clear or verifiable sources of information, that their structure is strange or inconclusive, that they appeal to many exclamation points, to questions that exacerbate emotions and vertical statements, or, although not always, that they have bad spelling or grammar.
- ✓ Traditional journalistic texts, on the other hand, normally approach the news from an informative point of view and citing verifiable and verifiable sources of information.
- ✓ They are frequently disseminated through chains in networks, family groups, work groups or small communities. But they can also resort to posts on social networks, blogs, pamphlets, emails, or messages and, after some time, it will be difficult for those who receive them to trace their origin.



<sup>3</sup> <https://rdcu.be/ceAa2>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2016/12/28/14088992/brain-study-change-minds>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.ifj.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Fake\\_News\\_-\\_FIP\\_AmLat.pdf](https://www.ifj.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Fake_News_-_FIP_AmLat.pdf)

## Recommendations to fight against fake news<sup>6</sup>

### ✓ Determine if a bias exists:

bias can modify perception. Be sure to check if the media outlet or the author of the publication has any ideological or political position.

### ✓ Read the entire news:

don't limit yourself to only read the headline, that way you can read the complete information and confirm if it is suspicious or not.

### ✓ Google the headline:

when a news is correct you will find it in different media outlets. If it is false, it would not appear in Google search or you can find articles that confirmed its falsehood.

### ✓ Analyze the origin of the news:

it is important to review who shares the information, see their profile and the kind of content they disseminate. If it was through WhatsApp, ask the person who shared it who sent it to you and always be wary of chains.

### ✓ Check the sources, links and documents cited:

a real news story is told by a media outlet, it quotes those who are part of the news or, even when deeper analyzes are made, it contains official documents and statements. Therefore, please review these points.

### ✓ Check the multimedia material:

if the news includes a photo, you can search for it in tools such as Google Images to see if it has been used on other sites. This will allow you to check if it corresponds to the topic of the news and its publication date. When the story is audio, copy somewhere and use a search engine to check if it belongs to topic.

### ✓ Use other specialized tools:

**For text verification:** these options will help you determine the origin of the article. Currently, there are not only web pages, but also platforms, extensions, games, courses, workshops, among other tools that will help you determine the veracity of the news:

#### **.Faker Fact:**

Google Chrome extension That identifies fake news.

#### **.Sherpa News:**

Application that allows access to news according to your interests from verified and reliable sources.

#### **.Fact Check Explorer:**

Google search engine where keywords of the news are entered.

As a result, it shows other pages where they did verifications of that information.



<sup>6</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-45561204>

**To verify images and videos:**

audiovisual content can be false when they are old images that are shared again as new, are edited, or manipulated or have staged content, specially created to mislead. In order not to fall into these traps, platforms such as:

**.Google Images:**

Determines where the selected image has been published.

**.FotoForensics:**

Check if an image was edited.

**.TruePic o InVID:**

Verifies the veracity of images and videos.

**Other tools of interest:****.Botometer:**

Helps to detect fake profiles or bots on Twitter.

**.Media Bias/Fact Check (MBFC):**

Platform that produces bias classifications in each news outlet.

**.Fakey:**

is an interactive educational tool, a website designed to improve media literacy.

**.Bad news:**

educational game where the player must create the fake news, and, thus, whoever publishes the most attractive headline wins.

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