

5 Reasons Why Fake News is Here to Stay

In case you haven't been paying attention, mainstream news outlets have been screaming about the [problem of fake news](#) on social media. Some have argued that the platform engineers should [filter out this false content](#). Others blame [cyber-entrepreneurs for the fake news](#). Still others think it's [caused by web-bots](#). And now there's even speculation that the outcome of the recent presidential election was—yes, you guessed it—a [Russian plot to spread disinformation](#) via fake news.

C'mon, folks. Fake news is here to stay. And the reason isn't just that we're all a bunch of gullible idiots. Let me explain:

1. Fake news is no worse than fake or misleading advertisements: We all get inundated with deceptive ads around the holiday shopping season. Who hasn't been tricked into buying something because of one of these ads? You can only blame yourself for not verifying the advertiser's claims. The same goes for fake news. You're a consumer of news. It's best to be a discriminating consumer.

2. To filter out fake news is equivalent to censorship or imposing prior restraint on publication: In 1644, the English polemicist [John Milton](#) (1608-1674) argued in the [Areopagitica](#) that no authority should decide in advance what is true or false expression. Instead, readers should be free to choose for themselves:

3. Fake news should be unregulated on the internet, so the truth eventually wins out: We can and should put controls on the internet so that children do not see certain content. As adults, though, our ability to freely express ourselves, even

to spread falsehoods, is essential to a thriving democracy. The American jurist [Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.](#) (1841-1935), claimed that the free exchange of ideas happens best in a metaphorical marketplace, not a garden. Though he never anticipated the internet, it too should be a messy and competitive marketplace, not a pruned and regulated garden, if we want the truth to prevail.

4. What better way to sharpen our critical thinking skills than to confront fake news: Fake news challenges us to think critically about the news we read. Being fooled by fake news teaches us to scrutinize sources more carefully, check facts and critically respond to new information, hopefully never to be fooled again. On the other hand, maybe we just want everything distilled and explained for us without the need to think critically. Fake news, no less than mainstream news, provides this service. But if you're too lazy to scrutinize your news, then believe what you read at your own peril.

5. If someone is obtuse enough to believe anything they read on a social media feed, then we have a more serious problem than fake news...a failed education system: We should thank fake news producers for exposing how broken our institutions of public education are. Now let's fix them or create better alternatives.

Evidence that we are just a bunch of gullible idiots has arrived, folks, courtesy of [Statistica](#) and [Business Insider](#) (see the graph below). People on Facebook were more engaged by the top-20 fake election news stories than they were by the top-20 authentic ones.



What did I say? Fake news is here to stay.

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