



Question what you get. Media education to fight Disinformation



Combating disinformation: Social media tools for digital media literacy

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Did you see the bear doing a moonwalk?

- In the psychology study (originally done with a gorilla): **Out of 192 observers, 46% failed to notice the unexpected event.**
Simons, D. J., & Chabris, C. F. (1999). "Gorillas in our midst: Sustained inattention blindness for dynamic events." *Perception*, 28(9), 1059–1074. DOI: 10.1068/p281059
- Relevant to disinformation because this cognitive bias (that we all have, as it helps select the important information when in situations of information overload) can be preyed upon by malicious actors.

Inattentional blindness bias and social media



- **Focus on headlines:** Social media trains users to focus on headlines without reading further.
- **Clickbait headlines:** We don't think of looking for the sources or crossing information with other sources > no lateral reading on social media, reinforced by the platforms' algorithms, which push content from same sources you 'trust'.
- **Emotionally charged images and videos:** To direct attention to one aspect of a story, preventing people from noticing misleading or missing information.



Teaching media literacy and enhancing critical thinking skills are crucial to counteract inattentional blindness in the digital age.



Social media & disinformation

- **Virality:** sensational nature of 'information' on social media, with clickbait images and heightened emotions > will be shared more and more quickly.
- **Algorithms:** content that maximises user engagement is prioritised - reinforcing confirmation bias by showing to the user 'information' they are ready to agree with - and the more emotionally charged the better because it inhibits the need to verify sources and search for counter-evidence. > Encourages misinformation
- **Echo chambers:** with the combined efforts of algorithms and viral content: formation of insulated communities where disinformation is more readily accepted and disseminated, as opposing viewpoints are less likely to be encountered.



Social media & disinformation

- **False information spreads six times faster than the truth on Twitter** (2018 MIT study). The study analysed Twitter data and found that false news spreads significantly faster, deeper, and more broadly than true news. (Vosoughi, S., Roy, D., & Aral, S. (2018). The spread of true and false news online. *Science*, 359(6380), 1146-1151. DOI: 10.1126/science.aap9559)
- **Sharing of misinformation on social media is habitual, not just lazy or biased** (2023 USC study). Conducted among 2,476 active Facebook users aged 18 to 89, this study found that habitual social media users were significantly more likely to share fake news compared to occasional users. Specifically, the 15% most habitual news sharers were responsible for spreading about 30% to 40% of the false news in the study. The research suggests that **the reward structures of social media platforms encourage users to share sensational content without adequate verification.** (G. Ceylan, I.A. Anderson, & W. Wood, Sharing of misinformation is habitual, not just lazy or biased, *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U.S.A.* 120 (4) e2216614120, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2216614120> (2023).)



Overview of social media platforms



and
more!





A few important points

- Rise of new platforms (Mastodon, BlueSky, Threads) due to Elon Musk overtaking Twitter in 2022 and working to monetise it since, taking inspiration on the Chinese platform Weibo.
- Some platforms are more likely to promote disinformation, for example due to the number of bots and fake accounts (people paid to spread certain information).
- Potential for misleading visuals and deepfakes to spread faster.
- **External moderators:** On 7 January 2025, Zuckerberg announced his decision to eliminate its 3rd-party fact-checking programme because it was “too politically biased”. But Meta still has to comply to national & regional laws - in Europe, to the DSA, to avoid legal consequences.

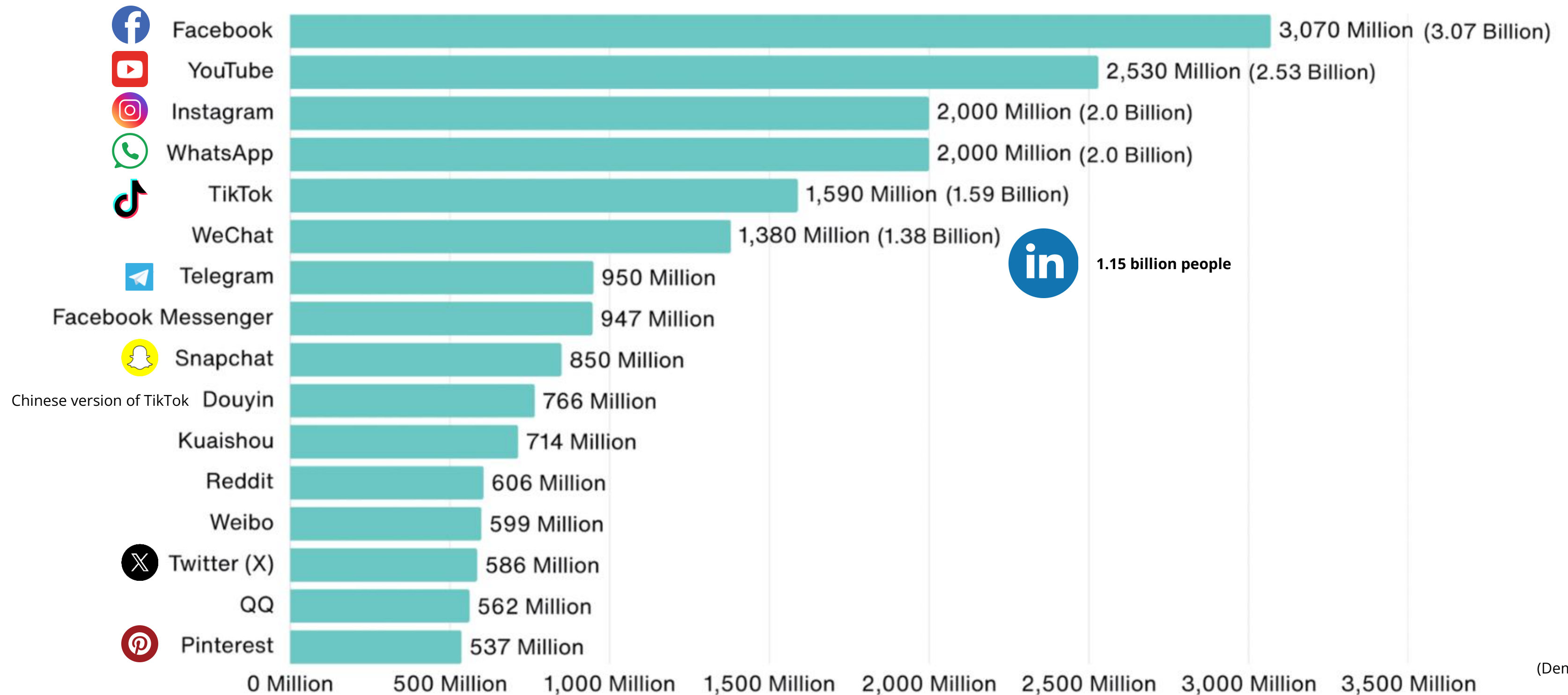


Digital Services Act - EU level

- Adopted in 2022.
- Acts for a safer digital space where the fundamental rights of users are protected.
- Focus on very large online platforms (VLOPs) & very large online search engines (VLOSEs) and how they dramatically impact societies, mentalities, and democracy
- It requires the platforms to identify + analyse + assess systemic risks that are linked to their services + act to mitigate such risks.
- It now also provides an anonymous whistleblower tool to report harmful practices done by these platforms.



Overview of social media platforms



(DemandSage, 2024)

How do people use social media



Preferred social platforms by generation

GEN Z

- TikTok
- Instagram
- YouTube

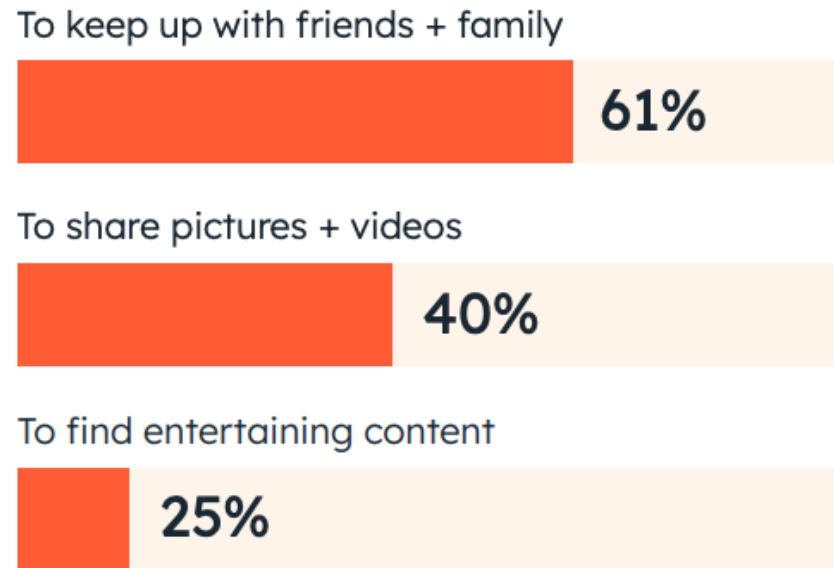
MILLENNIALS

- YouTube
- Facebook
- Instagram

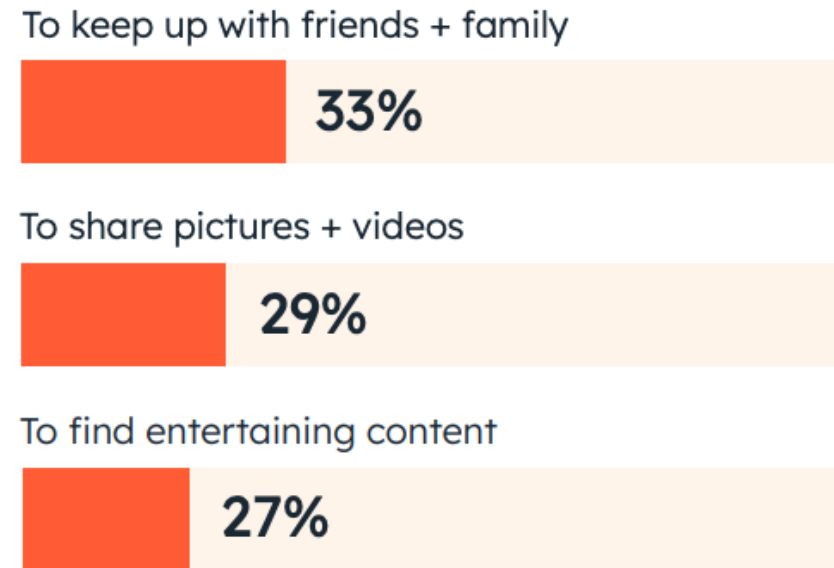
GEN X + BOOMERS

- Facebook
- YouTube

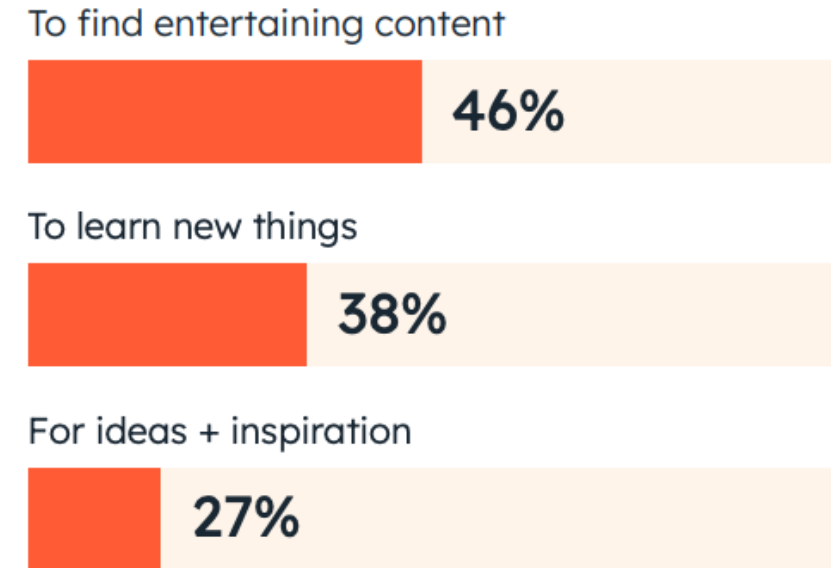
Facebook



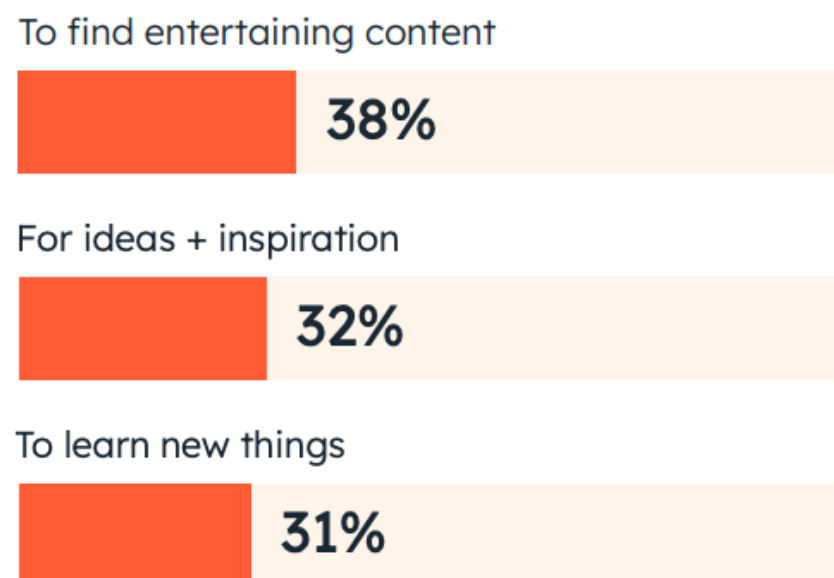
Instagram



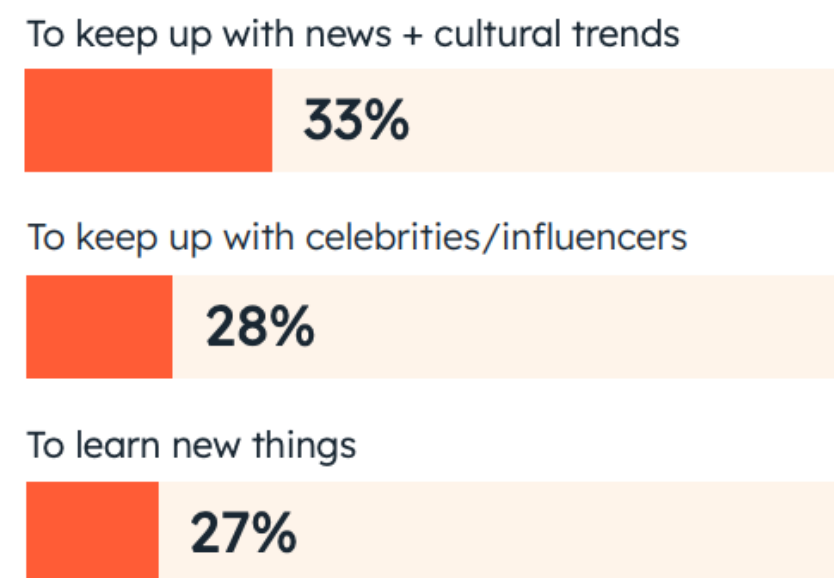
YouTube



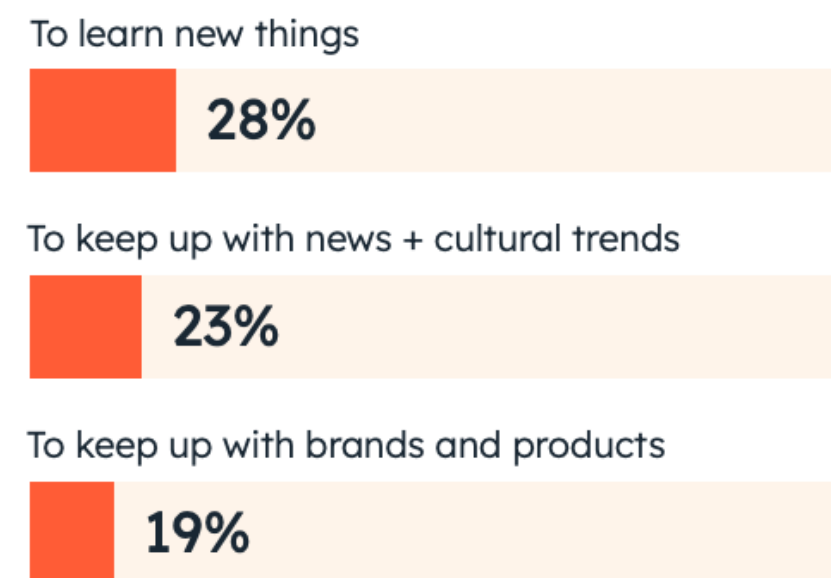
TikTok



X/Twitter



LinkedIn





Who fights disinformation

- Maldita
- International Fact-Checking Network
- Les Décodeurs (Le Monde)
- Verificado
- Snopes
- etc.



- 1.They recall what has been said.
- 2.They confront that with their research, citing all their sources and evidence.
- 3.They give a final evaluation to the original information:
 - a. True / Debatable / More complex / False
 - b. True / False /Misleading / Inaccurate / Unverifiable / Hoax

MALDITA:

**How to check the
veracity of images
and videos**



Educational/debunking digital content creation

Like with any other content, we need to identify:

- Why am I creating content?
- Who am I targeting with this content?
- Why should they care about it? What's the 'competition'? (cats + celebrities + emotionally charged disinformation)
- Where is my audience - which platform, at what time do they use it, what type of content do they prefer? > can be useful to create multiple 'marketing persona' to better understand their pain points and their interests, and better reach them.
- What do I want my audience to do? > Call To Action (CTA)

Marketing persona example



ALICE

- 33 years old
- Shirley Lane
- Director
- Senior Level
- Married
- 2 small children

"Q is an absolute must-have for any team looking to maximise productivity!"

DESCRIPTION

Alice is a proactive busy professional who wants to be there for her coworkers. Her goal is to unlock the potential of her staff through mentoring, coaching, and giving advice. She uses Q to track her team's progress and to collaborate with other departments.

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- Down-to-earth
- Easy-going
- Reliable
- Inspiring
- Problem solver

HOBBIES AND INTERESTS

- Recharging
- Taking care of plants
- Reading business books
- Listening to industry podcasts
- Volunteering at nonprofits

GOALS

- To lead her team
- To collaborate across teams
- To network with industry peers

CHALLENGES

- To track her team's progress
- To voice out her ideas
- To stay connected

BUYING ROLES

(Decision maker or influencer)

BUYER'S JOURNEY

(Awareness, consideration, purchase, advocacy)

NEEDS

- Productivity tools
- Powerful messaging app
- Access across devices

SOURCES OF INFO

- News
- Social media
- Word of mouth

KEY MESSAGING APPROACH



Variety of formats to debunk misinformation, the posts can be:

- Just text (eg on Twitter)
- An image with a long caption
- An image with text overlaid
- A cartoon or doodle
- A video - short / long / live / animated
- Photos
- A carousel post mixing photos and text
- Infographics
- and more...



Social media for educational outreach (1)

- Learning VS education:
 - Learning: ongoing, informal process of acquiring knowledge or skills through experiences, practice, and exploration; happens anytime, anywhere.
 - Education: a structured, formal process typically guided by institutions, curricula, and educators; involves assessment and certification.
- Social media: conducive to micro-learning (short form) and peer-to-peer learning > useful to science communicators who become influencers by making topics accessible to most.



Social media for educational outreach (2)

- But passive learning on social media > challenge of retention.
- Instead, education takes into account the full learning process and has a longer structure.
- Using social media in educational settings can help with engagement & motivation (eg interactive quizzes) but cannot replace true learning, which has a slower timeline.



Produce a social media post to fight one piece of disinformation

1. Identify the dis/misinformation
2. Verify it, identify the correct information
3. Choose your debunking approach (direct correction, explanation, etc.)
4. Craft the post – what hook, how to sustain the audience's interest
5. Add visuals?
6. Cite your sources
7. Engage the audience



Teaching social media literacy

- Consciously bring social media in the classroom
 - Key role of social media in students' lives today
 - Need to frame it as opportunity, not just risk - how can it help society + education
 - Need to guide them through questioning what they see on the platforms
 - Students themselves can provide posts to analyse together in the classroom to build critical thinking
- Engaging, interactive activity: fake or real? - with images and videos but also textual information.
- Useful format: flipped classroom



Flipping the classroom

- Before class: students are asked to engage with materials - typically, learning the theory.
- During class: students can sharpen their critical thinking skills, applying what they learned with the support of the teacher:
 - Doing fact-checking exercises, engaging in debates with classmates, analysing social media case studies.
 - Richer discussions due to prior knowledge, which they can also test and consolidate through engaged conversations.
- This method mirrors real-world situations where people encounter disinformation online and need to critically assess it.





Design your social media literacy module

- Learning objectives
- Overarching themes and topics
- Activities
- Integration of social media
- Evaluation strategies
- Feedback
- Challenges?





? yourself

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Erasmus+: Key Action 2, Cooperation partnerships in adult education

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