OPINION MAKING ON THE INTERNET

Believing or knowing for a fact? In what way do fake news, social bots and filter bubbles influence our opinions?

1001 TRUTH – an initiative by Deutsche Telekom AG
Moderation documents for a workshop (approx. 90 minutes)

LIFE IS FOR SHARING.

PUBLICATION DETAILS

NOTES FOR MULTIPLIERS

In the course of this workshop, participants will explore the topics of "Opinion Making on the Internet" and "Fake News". The goal is to draw attention to the complexity of the topics. The focus is on interactive phases in which participants think about fake news reports, examine the credibility of news and photos, and learn about criteria for assessing information on the Internet.

Fake news and false news reports are of great importance in political and social discourse. On the Internet, news, whether real or fake, can be disseminated very quickly and must be judged by users as to whether it is credible or nor.

The core statements of the workshop are therefore:
1. On the Internet, users are confronted with a multitude of different information. But not all of this information is true. If the news deliberately conveys false information, it is called "fake news".
2. But there are ways to distinguish real from fake news. Various criteria can be used for evaluation (e.g. the language of the message).
3. Images can also be manipulated. At first glance, these are often indistinguishable from real images.
4. The swift circulation of false information via many channels (e.g. social networks, websites etc.) can lead to the propragation of fake news. It can make fake news appear to be the opinion of the majority (keyword "majority illusion").

PHASE 1: "EVERYDAY LIFE" IN SOCIAL MEDIA   5 MIN.

Procedure
"Welcome to our workshop on "Opinion Making on the Internet.
Today you will learn how easy it is to fake news and how you can still recognize fake news.
I will start by showing you a short video.
In it you see normal situations from everyday social network life."
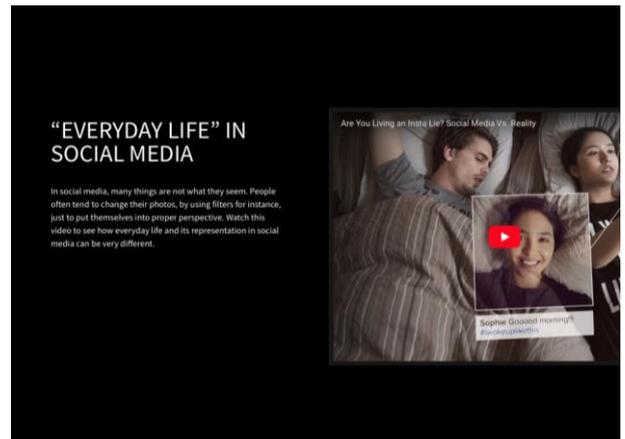
Task
"Take a look at the video and write down the associations that it triggers in you."

Possible solution
"In social media, people present themselves differently than they would in their everyday lives."

Your Notes

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PHASE 2: WHAT IS FAKE NEWS?   10 MIN.

Procedure
"Some people present their life in social networks better than it actually is. You saw that in the video.
But fake news is not just spread in social networks. You can find many examples on the Internet."
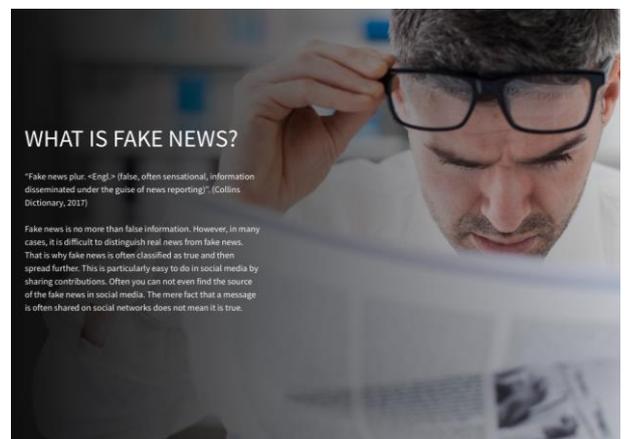
Task
"What do you know about fake news? Exchange ideas with your neighbor and collect your ideas."

Possible solution
"Fake news are stories that are made up.", "Since the US election campaign, fake news can be found in all types of media."

Your Notes

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PHASE 3: RECOGNIZING FAKE NEWS EASILY   10 MIN.

Procedure
"As you have seen, it has not always been easy
to distinguish real from fake news.
All too often the boundaries are blurred.
Which news story made it difficult to decide?
Here are some tips on how to expose fake news."

Task
"How did you recognize the fake news? Compare
your answers with the tips on the following
page."

Possible solution
"Fake news is often exaggerated, real news stories
are neutral", "Fake news is often very one-sided",
etc.

Your Notes

PHASE 4: FACT OR FAKE? (3 NEWS REPORTS)   15 MIN.

Procedure
"You now have the tools to find out for yourself
whether news reports are true or false.
But these criteria are not always so clear.
On the following pages you will see different
news reports.
Whether heroic flamingo (story 1), glowing plants
(story 2) or new film versions of the Twilight
novels (story 3) – in the news everything is
possible."

Task
"Watch the news and decide for yourself:
Are the news reports fact or are they fake?"

Possible solution
"The story about the flamingo seems a bit strange
to me. Flamingos are not strong enough to carry a
child. I think it is a fake story."

Your Notes

PHASE 5: CAN PHOTOS LIE?   15 MIN.

Procedure
"Fake news often use very expressive images.
But these images are not always real.
If you look closely, you can see whether an image is real or fake. I will now show you a video. It contains a number of Internet images that went viral. This means that many people have seen and shared these images."

Task
"Take a look at the video and decide for yourself: real or fake? Write down the clues that prove that an image is fake."

Possible solution
"The proportions don't match the background.", "Something about the picture seems artificial.", "I find the situation unrealistic."

Your Notes

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PHASE 6: CRITERIA FOR DETECTING FAKE IMAGES   15 MIN.

Procedure
"The notes you just made are a good start for detecting fake images. Proportions, details and background, color differences, as well as shadows and reflections are of particular importance. I will now show you another photo from social networks."

Task
"Evaluate the image based on the criteria we just discussed."

Possible solution
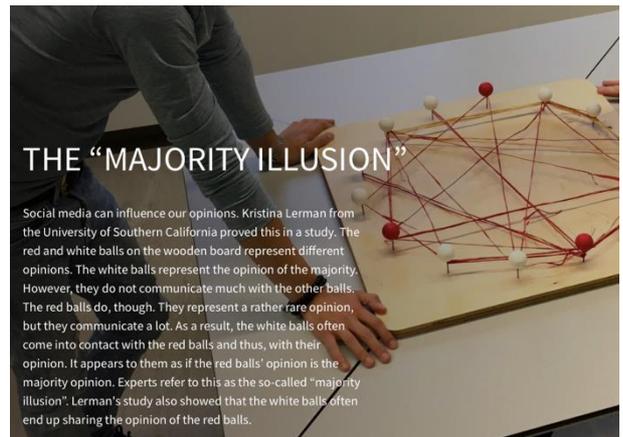"The proportions in the background are unrealistic.", "The light on the car does not seem real."

Your Notes

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PHASE 7: THE MAJORITY ILLUSION   10 MIN.

Procedure
"Social media can influence our opinions. The study from Kristina Lerman of the University of Southern California shows that the opinion of individuals in social networks often appears to be the opinion of the majority. This is called the 'majority illusion'."

THE "MAJORITY ILLUSION"

Social media can influence our opinions. Kristina Lerman from the University of Southern California proved this in a study. The red and white balls on the wooden board represent different opinions. The white balls represent the opinion of the majority. However, they do not communicate much with the other balls. The red balls do, though. They represent a rather rare opinion, but they communicate a lot. As a result, the white balls often come into contact with the red balls and thus, with their opinion. It appears to them as if the red balls' opinion is the majority opinion. Experts refer to this as the so-called "majority illusion". Lerman's study also showed that the white balls often end up sharing the opinion of the red balls.

Task
"Read the text about the majority illusion and take a stance: Do you think a phenomenon like this is dangerous?"

Your Notes

Possible solution
"Yes, I think it is dangerous. It can irritate other users and may lead them to adopt other people's opinions."
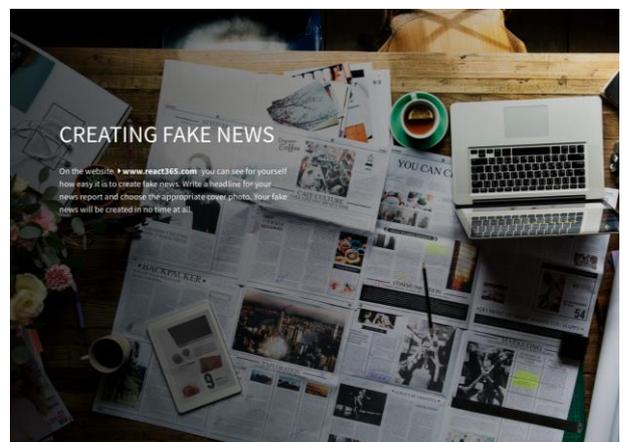
PHASE 8: CREATING FAKE NEWS YOURSELF   15 MIN.

Procedure
"You learned a lot about fake news in this workshop. You read fake news and were given tips on how to recognize it. Now, it is your turn to create fake news."

CREATING FAKE NEWS

On the website ▸ www.react365.com you can see for yourself how easy it is to create fake news. Write a headline for your news report and choose the appropriate cover photo. Your fake news will be created in no time at all.

Task
"Go to www.react365.com and write your own fake news."

Your Notes

Possible solution
Current events from politics and contemporary history or news about celebrities as possible topics.