

What is the link between **BEHAVIOURAL ADVERTISING** and **FAKE NEWS**?

Social media is ubiquitous. This media – known as platforms – is often ‘free’ at face value. In reality, social media, collecting vast amounts of people’s personal data, makes its money out of online advertising, which is tailored to the profile of each user. This business model has proved to be a **highway for the spread of fake news**. Why is that?

ONLINE PROFILING

SENSATIONALIST NEWS/
DISINFORMATION
OTHER NEWS
OTHER CONTENT/
PRODUCTS



EVERYTHING YOU DO ONLINE BUILDS YOUR PROFILE

By harvesting personal data, platforms build profiles of users. With users under constant commercial surveillance when they are online, platforms are gathering masses of data about us.

FILTER BUBBLES



PLATFORMS DECIDE WHAT YOU SHOULD SEE

Algorithms recommend content that is appealing to the user according to their online behaviour, allowing platforms to maximise the value of advertising space in the process. Users may also become isolated from information sources that algorithms view as not relevant or uninteresting for them. The role of the filter bubbles is to show consumers content that is interesting enough to keep them on the platform for as long as possible. This generates more advertising revenue for them.

ONLINE BEHAVIOURAL ADVERTISING



AS SENSATIONALIST NEWS TRAVELS FASTER, IT IS A MONEY MAKER.

The more content is clicked & shared online, the higher the advertising revenue. Content that resonates more with people emotionally is more likely to be clicked upon. Within the personalised filter bubbles – based on one’s profiling and online activity – users are more easily exposed to sensationalist (both real and fake) news and content triggering emotions, such as anger or fear.

Fake news is more likely to be clicked on and shared, because it is written in a way that attracts people. It thereby keeps them engaged, as the platform cashes in on the revenue from the advertising space that is associated with this type of content.

To stop the dissemination of fake news, and therefore the online manipulation of users, we must head to the source: business models based on online behavioural advertising. This means assessing the compliance of companies with EU consumer and data protection laws. And it calls for an investigation of whether platforms with a dominant position deploy anti-competitive behaviour. For example, they may exclude certain journalistic sources. Or impose contractual arrangements on advertisers or content providers that aim to maximise profits through spreading sensationalist news.