

Tomi Pesonen

# The effects of fake news on consumer trust in social media marketing

A quantitative study on consumer mindset

---

Metropolia University of Applied Sciences

Bachelor of Business Administration

Marketing

Bachelor's Thesis

April 2018

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Author(s)<br>Title<br>Number of Pages<br>Date   | Tomi Pesonen<br>The effects of fake news on consumer trust in social media marketing<br>27 pages + 1 appendix<br>May 2018 |
| Degree  | Bachelor of Business Administration   |
| Degree Programme  | Economics and Business Administration   |
| Specialisation option   | Marketing   |
| Instructor(s)   | Pia Väkiparta-Lehtonen, Senior Lecturer   |
| <p>The purpose of this thesis was to discover the effects of the fake news phenomenon on consumer trust in social media marketing. The concept of fake news is discussed at length and breadth in this survey in order to establish a solid theoretical basis for study. This is a thesis focusing on research.</p> <p>Quantitative research methodology was utilized in this study. The research data was gathered with the help of a questionnaire. The questionnaire was posted on a dedicated survey group on the social media site Facebook with the aim of gathering a hundred responses. After the hundred responses were received the data was analyzed.</p> <p>The results of the questionnaire revealed a moderate rise of consumer distrust in social media platforms and other online entities. Consumers felt that tech companies such as Facebook have a responsibility in fighting fake news and that working with sites that are associated with fake news is unethical for online companies.</p> <p>The author recommends image-conscious marketers and brands to steer clear of using clickbait, and not associate with websites known for peddling fake news. Consumers do well to fact-check news items they find online.</p> |   |
| Keywords  | marketing, social media, fake news  |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Tekijä(t)<br>Otsikko<br><br>Sivumäärä<br>Aika   | Tomi Pesonen<br>Valeuutisilmiön vaikutukset kuluttajien luottamuksessa sosiaalisessa mediassa tapahtuvaa markkinointia kohtaan<br>27 sivua + 1 liite<br>Toukokuu 2018 |
| Tutkinto  | Tradenomi   |
| Koulutusohjelma   | Liiketalous   |
| Suuntautumisvaihtoehto  | Markkinointi  |
| Ohjaaja(t)  | Lehtori Pia Väkiparta-Lehtonen  |
| <p>Opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena oli selvittää, millaisia vaikutuksia valeuutisilmiöllä on kuluttajien luottamukseen sosiaalisessa mediassa tapahtuvaa markkinointia kohtaan. Valeuutisilmiötä oli tarkoitus käsitellä laajasti opinnäytetyössä kattavan teoriapohjan luomiseksi. Opinnäytetyö oli tutkimustyyppinen opinnäytetyö.</p> <p>Opinnäytetyössä käytettiin määrällisen tutkimuksen menetelmiä. Tutkimuksen aineisto kerättiin kyselyn avulla. Kysely julkaistiin kyselyjen jakamiseen erikoistuneessa Facebook-ryhmässä. Päämääränä oli kerätä sata vastausta. Kun päämäärä oli saavutettu, aineisto analysoitiin.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen tulokset viittasivat siihen, että kuluttajien epäluottamus sosiaalisen median palveluntarjoajia ja muita online-toimijoita kohtaan on kasvanut maltillisesti. Kuluttajien mielestä teknologiajäteillä, kuten Facebookilla, on vastuu kannettavanaan taistelussa valeuutisia vastaan. Kuluttajien mielestä on epäeettistä, että online-yritykset tekevät yhteistyötä sellaisten sivujen ja toimijoiden kanssa, jotka on liitetty valeuutisilmiöön.</p> <p>Opinnäytetyön johtopäätöksissä suositeltiin, että imago tietoiset markkinoijat ja brändit kieltäytyisivät hyödyntämästä klikkiotsikoita, ja että ne eivät tekisi yhteistyötä sellaisten yritysten kanssa, joiden tiedetään laskevan liikkeelle valeuutisia. Kuluttajien on suositeltavaa tarkistaa online- uutisten todenperäisyys itse.</p> |   |
| Avainsanat  | markkinointi, sosiaalinen media, valeuutiset  |

## Contents

|       |  |    |
|-------|--|----|
| 1     | Introduction   | 1  |
| 1.1   | Background for the thesis                                      | 1  |
| 1.2   | Timing   | 1  |
| 1.3   | The structure of the thesis                                    | 2  |
| 1.4   | Methods used   | 2  |
| 1.5   | Pinpointing the subject of the thesis                          | 3  |
| 1.6   | Sources and data   | 3  |
| 2     | Fake news  | 4  |
| 2.1   | Fake news search history                                       | 5  |
| 2.2   | Fake news defined  | 6  |
| 2.3   | Types of fake news   | 6  |
| 2.4   | Post-truth era and fake news                                   | 7  |
| 3     | Social media marketing   | 8  |
| 3.1   | Social media global numbers                                    | 8  |
| 3.2   | Overview   | 9  |
| 3.3   | Types of social marketing services and sites                   | 10 |
| 3.3.1 | Social networks and media-sharing networks                     | 10 |
| 3.3.2 | Discussion forums  | 11 |
| 3.3.3 | Bookmarking and content curation networks                      | 11 |
| 3.3.4 | Consumer review networks                                       | 12 |
| 3.3.5 | Blogging and publishing networks                               | 12 |
| 3.3.6 | Social shopping networks                                       | 12 |
| 3.3.7 | Interest-based networks  | 13 |
| 3.3.8 | Sharing economy networks                                       | 13 |
| 3.3.9 | Anonymous social networks                                      | 13 |
| 3.4   | Goals of social marketing                                      | 14 |
| 3.4.1 | Increasing brand awareness and enhancing public relations      | 14 |
| 3.4.2 | Building a community of advocates and driving sales and leads  | 14 |
| 3.4.3 | Research and development                                       | 15 |
| 3.5   | Benefits of social media marketing                             | 15 |
| 3.5.1 | Improved brand recognition, loyalty and authority              | 15 |
| 3.5.2 | More opportunities for conversion with higher conversion rates | 15 |
| 3.5.3 | Increased inbound traffic and decreased marketing costs        | 16 |

|       |   |    |
|-------|---|----|
| 3.5.4 | Better search engine rankings and richer customer experiences | 16 |
| 3.6   | Social media marketing and influence                          | 16 |
| 3.6.1 | Social selling and reciprocity                                | 17 |
| 3.6.2 | Content marketing and social proof                            | 17 |
| 3.6.3 | Personal branding, authority and scarcity                     | 18 |
| 4     | Research problems   | 18 |
| 4.1   | Social media marketing and consumer trust                     | 19 |
| 4.2   | Hypotheses  | 19 |
| 5     | The survey  | 20 |
| 5.1   | Method  | 20 |
| 5.2   | Research material   | 20 |
| 5.3   | Self-evaluation of execution of study                         | 21 |
| 5.4   | Details of the study  | 21 |
| 5.5   | Distrust brewing  | 22 |
| 5.6   | Fake news and marketing                                       | 22 |
| 5.7   | Solutions   | 23 |
| 6     | Conclusions   | 23 |
| 6.1   | Research results  | 23 |
| 6.2   | Reliability and validity of the study                         | 24 |
|       | References  | 25 |

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background for the thesis

The subject of this thesis is the growing influence of the fake news phenomenon on social media marketing. A broad international scope was chosen to gather a wide sample group of social media users. Consumer trust in the sincerity of online brands, digital marketers and social media operator is in the center of this thesis,

The reason for focusing on social media marketing in this thesis is two-fold. Firstly, statistics are clear that social media was and probably will be the most important platform for the spread and controversy of fake news, accounting for 42% of the traffic generated for fake news up until February 2017 (Gallup; Edelman; Alexa 2017).

Secondly, social media continues to grow, with a 34,5% share of digital advertising spending worldwide in 2017, with a whopping 48,7% growth in percentage from 2013 (eMarketer 2015, 6). Social media users now number over 2,8 billion worldwide, equating to a 37% penetration (Kemp 2017).

## 1.2 Timing

The subject of changing trust towards digital marketing is a timely one. Not later than in the aftermath of both the 2016 US presidential election and the Brexit referendum in Great Britain was the full force of biased and often deceptive news distribution plain to observe.

The effects of fake news on politics, economy and culture in the 2010s were undeniable. In Finland we have had our share of related controversy with the media hubbub around Magneettimedia, the MV Magazine and its founder Ilja Janitskin.

Fake news and fake media as phenomena are not exactly new, but their power has become more easily observed with the development of media transparency. The abundance of both online and offline resources has made it both easier and harder for an enlightened consumer to discern the truth, because every source of information needs to be fact-checked individually. The most important change in the history of fake news

is that while in the past only governments and powerful individuals could effectively spread false information, nowadays anyone with internet access can publish

### 1.3 The structure of the thesis

The thesis begins with an introduction that highlights the origins and fundamentals of the thesis and study. The introduction is followed by theory and background sections that give the reader the necessary theoretical frameworks to work with the study results offered later in the thesis. The study results and author's suggestions are followed by a list of references and an appendix containing the survey report upon which the study was built.

### 1.4 Methods used

Quantitative research was the chosen method for the research problem of the thesis. Quantitative research is research on the basis of numbers and calculations (Dudoskiy 2017). Data provided by high quality quantitative research is easy to summarize, compare and generalize, all key words to tracking the effects of a world-wide phenomenon such as fake news. The exact type of quantitative research used was closed-ended questionnaire hosted online.

Quantitative research seemed like an ample choice considering the nature of the research problem, which concerned large numbers of consumers. The author concluded that for the scope of this thesis, qualitative research surveys would have been cumbersome to analyze and apply in a practical manner.

The author made the survey with Typeform. Typeform is "a web-based platform for collecting and sharing information" (Typeform 2018). Typeform offers a range of tools, but the one that was used was the survey builder. The survey shared the survey in a dedicated survey-sharing group on facebook. The author set a goal of gathering 100 responses. The questions were written with the facebook platform in mind. The platform was also taken into consideration when analyzing data from the survey. This boiled down to recognizing the fact that each survey-taker was a facebook user, and most often a college or university student. The latter also meant that most people who participated in

the survey had the fundamentals of social media and communications technology well in their grasp.

### 1.5 Pinpointing the subject of the thesis

The author originally had a broader subject in mind for the thesis. Gradually it became obvious that tackling the effects of fake news on all aspects of digital marketing would have been a cumbersome endeavor. The focus was settled on social media because fake news had the biggest immediate impact on the social media sites a lot of the traffic for the news articles originated on.

The author has been personally involved with a lot of online political debate surrounding for example the Brexit referendum and the US presidential election of 2016. Finding the polarized discussion fascinating if not also surreal in its extremes, the author decided to study deeper into the world of propaganda and ill-use of the latest communication technology.

### 1.6 Sources and data

The theoretical basis and statistics used in this thesis were compiled from online sources including digital marketing articles, online dictionaries and encyclopedia, and research articles about social media and fake news. Statista.com proved to be an invaluable portal for statistics and business intelligence.

The author instinctively favored online sources due to their ease of use and availability. In future studies however, the author will probably seek out printed sources to accompany the online ones, and spend more time learning to use depositories of digital books. This is because the author found vast quantities of online data both tiresome to examine, and splintered in nature: a lot of the information seemed to be scattered all over the internet in articles and encyclopedias.



## 2 Fake news

The US presidential election catapulted fake news to genuine headlines and has been widely discussed since 2016. In a poll by Pew Research Center in December 2016, 64% of Americans felt that fake news are causing a great deal of confusion about the basic factual situation of current events (Pew Research Center 2016). Furthermore, trust in mass media took a dip in 2016, with only 32% of US adults having at least moderate confidence in the credibility of mass media reporting about current events (Gallup 2016).

The figure below illustrates the reach and impact of popular fake news stories of 2016. Of special note is the fact that fake news generated more Facebook engagement than all factual news in late 2016.

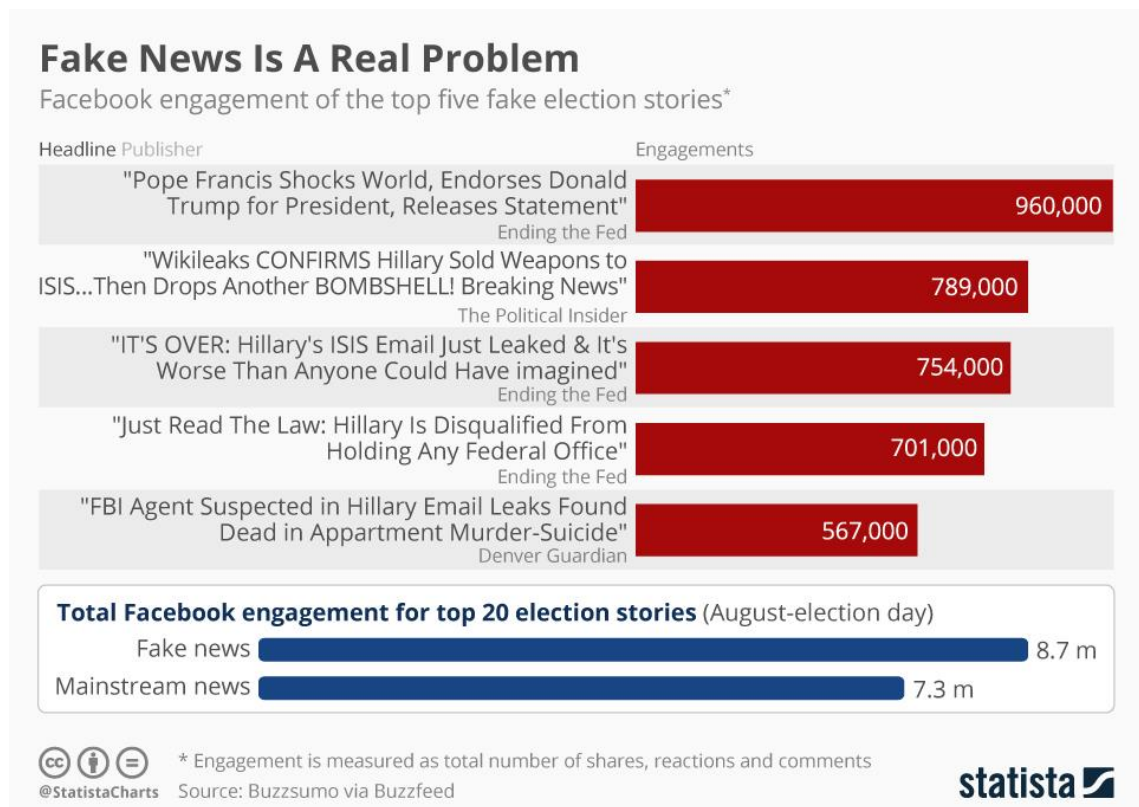


Figure 1. Facebook engagement of the top five fake election stories (Statista 2016)

The effects of fake news are acutely felt closer to home as well. In a 2017 survey by Finnish Media Federation, 43% of respondents said that they come across news articles

with false information on a weekly basis and 29% reported seeing articles that they recognized as fake right off the bat. 59% expressed fear that fake news will play a role in the 2018 Finnish presidential election. (Herranen 2017, 4 ja 28.)

## 2.1 Fake news search history

Google Trends is a useful tool for visualizing the development of interest for a search term. The figure below depicts the gaining of momentum for the search term 'fake news'. The graph demonstrates the popularity of the search item in relation to largest reported value in an abstract way: the value 100 is for the time when the popularity of the item reached its peak, 50 is where the popularity was half of the value of the peak and 0 denotes a time frame from which there is not enough data.

Google Trends suggests that the term "fake news" started gaining traction around November 2017, and the interest peaked in January 2018.

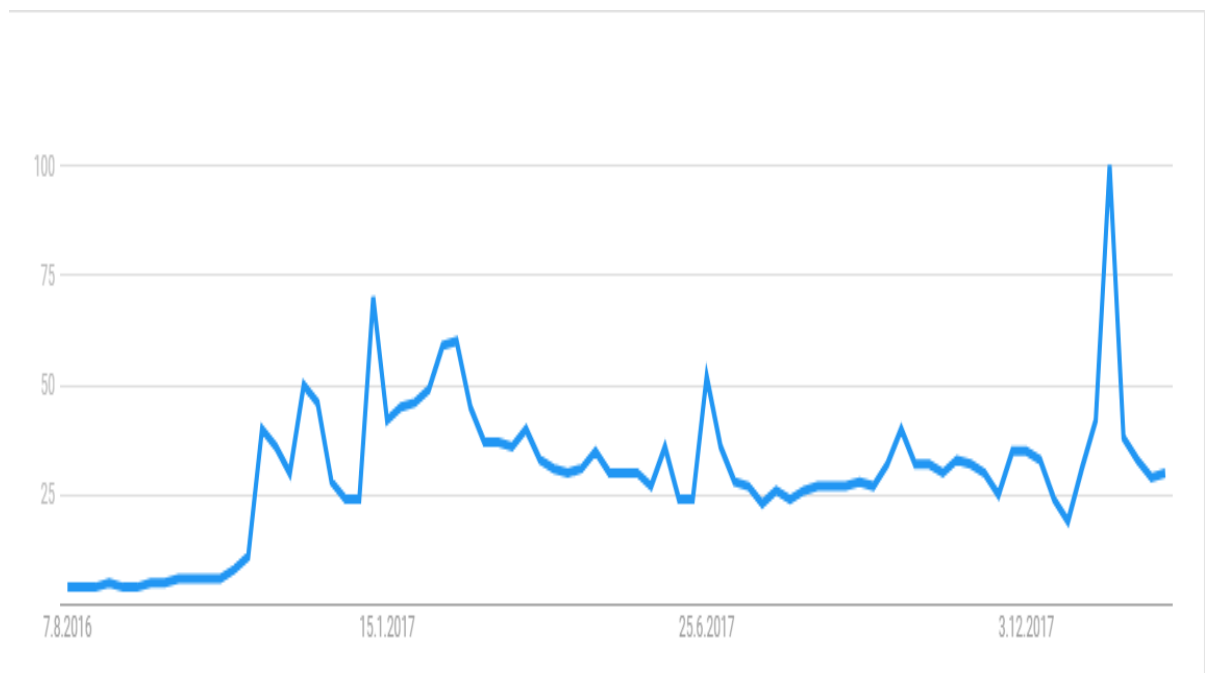


Figure 2. Search interest for search term "fake news" from 1.8.2016-16.2.2018 (Google Trends)

## 2.2 Fake news defined

Stanford University defines fake news as “news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false and could mislead readers.” (Allcott, H. and Gentzkow, M. 2017, 213.)

It is thus different from simple misinformation because it is created with an intention to manipulate. The disinformation carried by fake news can spread quickly when it is aligned with the point of view held by the audience because such content is likely not to be questioned. (TechTarget 2017.)

The Internet has enabled the spread of fake news by providing a host of low-cost distribution channels. The posting of fake news on discussion forums, blogs and social media sites requires very little technical know-how, reaching enormous audiences over the course of a few hours. (TechTarget 2017.)

## 2.3 Types of fake news

For the purpose of this study the author found it relevant to differentiate between different types of fake news.

The European Association for Viewers Interests (EAVI) lists 10 different types of fake news (2017). The types and their respective suggested Impact and Motivation marks are as follows:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>propaganda</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>adopted by governments, corporations and non-profits to manage attitudes, values and knowledge</li> <li>appeals to emotions</li> <li>can be beneficial or harmful</li> </ul>   | <p>partisan</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ideological and includes interpretation of facts but may claim to be impartial</li> <li>privileges facts that conform to the narrative whilst forgoing others</li> <li>emotional and passionate language</li> </ul>                                      |
| <p>clickbait</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>eye catching, sensational headlines designed to distract</li> <li>often misleading and content may not reflect headline</li> <li>drives ad revenue</li> </ul>   | <p>conspiracy theory</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>tries to explain simply complex realities as response to fear or uncertainty</li> <li>not falsifiable and evidence that refutes the conspiracy is regarded as further proof of the conspiracy</li> <li>rejects experts and authority</li> </ul> |
| <p>sponsored content</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>advertising made to look like editorial</li> <li>potential conflict of interest for genuine news organisations</li> <li>consumers might not identify content as advertising if it is not clearly labeled</li> </ul> | <p>pseudoscience</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>purveyors of greenwashing, miracle cures, anti-vaccination and climate change denial</li> <li>misrepresents real scientific studies with exaggerated or false claims</li> <li>often contradicts experts</li> </ul>                                  |
| <p>satire and hoax</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>social commentary or humour</li> <li>varies widely in quality and intended meaning may not be apparent</li> <li>can embarrass people who confuse the content as true</li> </ul>                                       | <p>misinformation</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>includes a mix of factual, false or partly-false content</li> <li>intention can be to inform but author may not be aware the content is false</li> <li>false attributions, doctored content and misleading headlines</li> </ul>                    |
| <p>error</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>established news organisations sometimes make mistakes</li> <li>mistakes can hurt the brand, offend or result in litigation</li> <li>reputable orgs publish apologies</li> </ul>  | <p>bogus</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>entirely fabricated content spread intentionally to disinform</li> <li>guerrilla marketing tactics; bots, comments and counterfeit branding</li> <li>motivated by ad revenue, political influence or both</li> </ul>  |

Figure 3. Infographic: Beyond Fake News (adapted from EAVI, 2017)

The need to differentiate the types of fake news was crucial for the study because one of the core problems the author set out to discover was what exactly do consumers consider fake news. The infogram provided by EAVI highlights the scale of threat of both the intent and level of influence of different kinds of false and/or politically-inclined communication. Drawing lines between the definitions or establishing terminology on fake news was not the intent of this thesis however. The aim was to discover how the variety of fake news has affected consumer behavior.

#### 2.4 Post-truth era and fake news

Oxford Dictionaries' Word of the Year for 2016 was *post-truth*. It is defined as 'relating or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief' (Oxford Dictionaries 2018). Oxford Dictionaries argue that the word has evolved from a peripheral term to a widely used item in political commentary, often seen in the phrase 'post-truth politics'.

The fake news phenomenon is a prominent part of the post-truth era of politics as it represents a shift to media culture where public opinion is often influenced by factually ambiguous news stories and reporting.

### **3 Social media marketing**

“Social media is the collective of online communications channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration.” (TechTarget 2016.) The Merriam-Webster gives a more practical angle, saying that social media includes the forms of electronic communication such as websites through which users create online communities with the aim of sharing information, personal messages and content such as videos (Merriam-Webster 2018).

#### **3.1 Social media global numbers**

eMarketer (2017) predicts that the amount of people on social media worldwide will hit 2,62 billion. With the global population estimated to be around 7,63 billion by mid-2018 (Worldometers 2018) that would equal a 34,3% worldwide penetration. In essence it means that every third person in the world is connected to billions of others via one or more social media channels.

In the near future it is possible that the amount of social media users grows very rapidly as the hugely populous developing countries such as India, Indonesia, Pakistan and Brazil adopt smartphones, personal computers and widespread internet usage as part of economic growth.

China is an interesting outlier among the more developed or developing countries in that the required communication technology has been widely adopted, but is heavily censored and monitored by the state. Popular apps and services such as WhatsApp, Twitter, Google and YouTube are off-limits to the Chinese populace, having been replaced by state-approved domestic counterparts (BBC 2017).

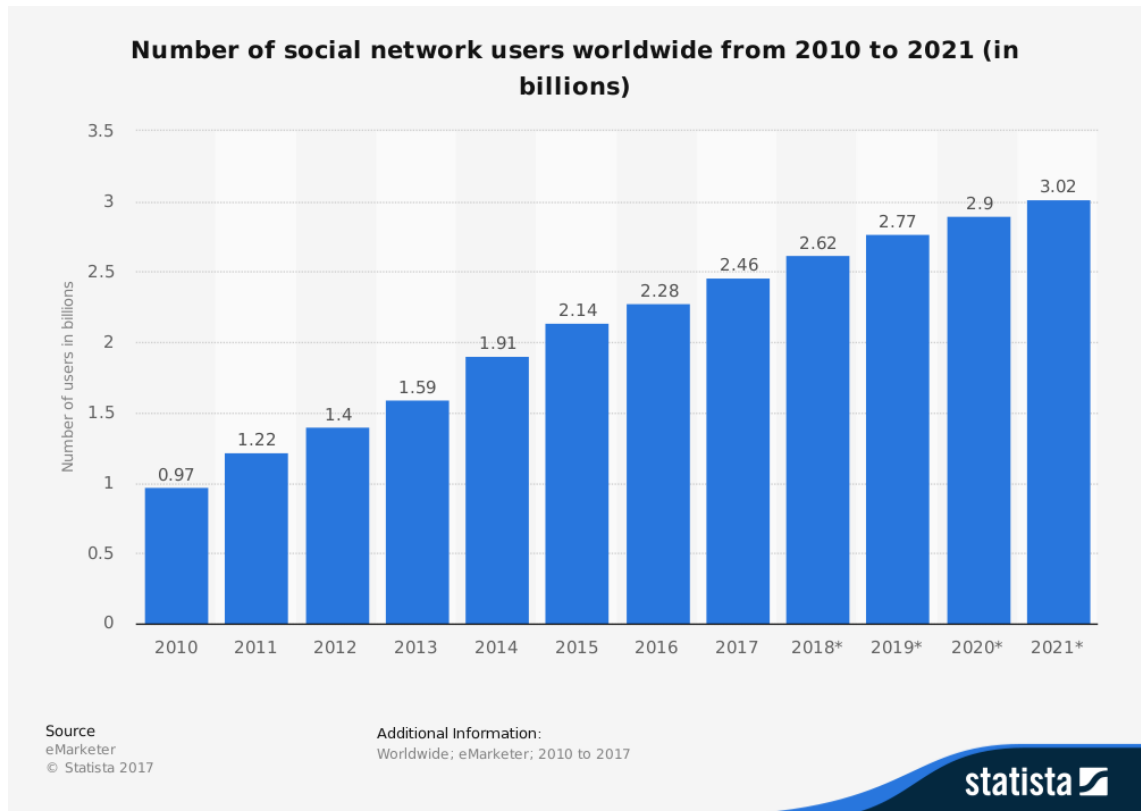


Figure 4. Number of social network users worldwide from 2010 to 2021 (billions). (Statista 2017).

### 3.2 Overview

For the context of this thesis, the author chose the definition for social media marketing as given by Margaret Rouse of what.is.com. She writes that social media marketing (SSM for short) “is a form of Internet marketing that utilizes social networking websites as a marketing tool”, with the goal “to produce content that users will share with their social network to help a company increase brand exposure and broaden customer reach.” (Rouse 2011.)

Social media marketing is a growing area of marketing and a crucial part of a modern company’s marketing strategy. CMO Survey’s report (2017) on US marketers indicates that social media spending as percent of marketing budget totals sits at 9,8%, while it is predicted to reach as high as 18,5% by 2022. Social media spending is highest in the business-to-consumer sector.

Table 1. Changes in social media spending across sectors (CMO Survey 2017)

|   | Overall | B2B Product | B2B Services | B2C Product | B2C Services |
|---|---------|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| Current social media spending               | 9.8%    | 6.8%        | 9.3%         | 16.3%       | 11.1%        |
| Social media spending in the next 12 months | 13.0%   | 9.2%        | 11.5%        | 22.8%       | 15.4%        |
| Social media spending in the next 5 years   | 18.5%   | 13.7%       | 16.1%        | 31.9%       | 21.4%        |

### 3.3 Types of social marketing services and sites

Hootsuite (2017) divides social media into 10 distinct types which are explored below.

#### 3.3.1 Social networks and media-sharing networks

Examples of social networks include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, while media-sharing networks include sites like Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube. People use social networks to connect with each other and brands media-sharing networks to find and share pictures, videos and other media online.

Social networks define social media. Since the rise of the mobile internet, social networks have become online hubs for their users. Sites like Facebook and Twitter have transformed a lot of aspects of 21<sup>st</sup> century life, such as reading news, sharing personal pictures and finding a job, into a social experience. Benefits and possibilities for marketers include market research, brand awareness, lead generation, relationship management and customer service.

Media sharing networks allow consumers and brands a platform for finding and sharing media online. The line between media sharing networks and social networks are blurring as the latter are add multimedia services. The distinguishing feature of media-sharing platforms is however that the sharing of media is the primary and defining purpose. In practice this means that while most posts on social networks contain text, posts on media-sharing networks often start with an image or video.

The benefits and options offered by media-sharing networks are largely the same as with social networking networks. When estimating whether or not a company needs to build presence on a media sharing network, it is worthwhile to consider available resources, and about having a clearly detailed mission with carefully designed media assets supporting the whole.

### 3.3.2 Discussion forums

Examples include reddit, Quore and Digg. People use discussion to find, discuss and share news and information.

Discussion forums are one of the oldest types of social media from the time before the term “social media” was even coined as a term. Much of the discussion now going on on sites like Facebook used to be exclusive on discussion forums.

Despite the obvious similarities between social networking sites and discussion forums, the deliberate anonymity of discussion forums makes them different from the more open social sites. This means that discussion forums are very good for deep customer research, because the anonymity allows people to freely express strong opinions. Besides market research, discussion forums can also be used to host ads.

### 3.3.3 Bookmarking and content curation networks

Examples include Pinterest and Flipboard. People use bookmarking and content curation networks to discover, save, share and discuss new and trending content and media.

Adding bookmarking and content curation networks to a marketing strategy, companies can establish new channels for building brand awareness and customer engagement. Making websites bookmark-friendly entails optimizing headlines and images of a website for the feeds that the bookmarking networks use for access and sharing.

Content curation works similarly to bookmarking, but with a focus on finding and sharing text content.



### 3.3.4 Consumer review networks

Examples include Yelp, Zomato and TripAdvisor. People use consumer review networks to find, review and share information about brands, products and services.

The spread of geolocation in social networks is driving location-based review services.

A BrightLocal (2014) survey indicates that 88% of consumers put as much weight to online reviews as to personal recommendations.

Attracting positive user reviews and dealing with negative ones is crucial for a company on a review site.

### 3.3.5 Blogging and publishing networks

Examples include WordPress, Tumblr and Medium. People use blogging and publishing networks to publish, discover and comment on content online.

Companies that have content marketing in their marketing strategy pie can gain visibility by having a blog. Besides increasing awareness of a business and generating engaging content for social hubs a blog can also help a business obtain thought leader status in their industry.

### 3.3.6 Social shopping networks

Examples include Polyvore, Etsy and Fancy. People use social shopping networks to discover trends, follow brands, share their finds and make purchases.

Social shopping networks add a social element to online commerce. While social elements are inherently part of online commerce to some degree, social shopping networks go further by building their model around a focused meld of the social experience and the shopping experience.

Some services like Etsy also allow small businesses to sell products without existing brick-and-mortar locations, and others like Polyvore focus on aggregating products from

different retailers into singular online marketplaces. By having users generate most of the content by creating collages and publishing them as sets for other users to view, Polyvore integrates the social with the buying experience.

### 3.3.7 Interest-based networks

Examples include Goodreads, Houzz and Last.fm. People use interest-based networks to connect with people who share their interests and hobbies.

Interest-based networks are related to the larger social networks but take on a more targeted approach by focusing on single subjects instead of a wide variety of topics. This allows users to enjoy a tailor-made experience that always caters specifically to the wants and needs of their niche group.

### 3.3.8 Sharing economy networks

Examples include Airbnb, Uber, Taskrabbit. People use sharing economy networks to advertise, find, share, buy, sell and trade products and services between their peers.

Also called collaborative economy networks, sharing economy networks connect users for the purpose of advertising, finding, sharing, buying and selling of products and services in a peer commerce model. According to a report by Vision Critical (2014), the collaborative economy is a valid model because trust can now be verified electronically through social media.

Sharing economy networks are fairly specific, but a company dealing in the business being done on a particular network can use them for another channel for driving in business.

### 3.3.9 Anonymous social networks

Examples include Whisper, Ask.fm and After School. People use anonymous social networks to gossip, vent, snoop and even bully other people.

The obvious harmful implications of Anonymous social networks offer very little for marketers.

### 3.4 Goals of social marketing

eClincher (2016) lists 5 goals of social media marketing. The following chapters include a look at each goal individually.

#### 3.4.1 Increasing brand awareness and enhancing public relations

Brand awareness is about a brand becoming relevant to potential customers. On social media, this boils down to posting content regularly that offers answers to the questions the customers are asking. The content can include for example links to blog posts, infographics, statistics and articles relevant to the company's business. Humorous content such as memes can also be posted to build a connection with the customer base. eClincher (2016)

By following social media discussion about their brand, companies can respond to complaints effectively and in a timely manner. Responding quickly allows a company to stay ahead of large-scale complaints and cultivate brand loyalty in the process. Social Media Today (2015) reports that companies that engage and respond to customer service requests over social media enjoy a 20-40% increase in customer spending.

#### 3.4.2 Building a community of advocates and driving sales and leads

In the past, companies had to rely on word of mouth for building brand loyalty. Today social media provides an effective platform where brand loyalty can be shared with a global community in real time. One example of social media advocacy is restaurants offering promotions and discounts for customers that post pictures of their food on social media. (eClincher 2016)

Driving sales and leads is the bottom-line goal of social media marketing but a lot of companies miss out on that by not having the first 4 goals tended to. (eClincher 2016)

### 3.4.3 Research and development

By constant engagement with the customer base, a company can stay up to date on the problems that arise and develop solutions along the way. It is also advisable for companies to follow their competitors to see how they engage with their customers, handle complaints and offer promotions. (eClincher 2016)

### 3.5 Benefits of social media marketing

According to Jayson DeMers of Audience Bloom, the top 10 benefits of social media marketing are as follows:

#### 3.5.1 Improved brand recognition, loyalty and authority

DeMers (2014) argues that every opportunity a company has to increase their visibility by finding new distribution is valuable. Social media gives companies an opportunity to gain valuable information about customers and their interests and behavior. (DeMers 2014). DeMers (2014) also references a report published by Texas Tech University that concluded that brands who are active on social media channels enjoy higher loyalty from their customers. (Bell 2013) DeMers (2014) also argues that having more people talking about a company or brand on social media will add to the value and authority of the company or brand in question.

#### 3.5.2 More opportunities for conversion with higher conversion rates

Every post a company publishes on social media is an opportunity for a company's customers to convert. When a company builds and maintains a presence they're simultaneously having access to new, recent and old customer with the ability to interact with all of them. Every positive interaction on social media increases the likelihood of a conversion. (DeMers 2014)

Social media marketing humanizes companies because companies get to act like human beings on social media, and consumers prefer interacting with people to interacting with companies. This leads to higher conversion rates. (DeMers 2014)

### 3.5.3 Increased inbound traffic and decreased marketing costs

Without social media, a company's inbound traffic is limited to people already familiar with the company, and people searching for keywords related to the company's line of business. Every new social media profile is another path leading back to the company site. (DeMers 2014)

Advertising on for example Facebook and Twitter is relatively affordable. DeMers (2014) also references a Social Media Examiner survey published by HubSpot that concluded that over 66% of marketers thought that spending as little as 6 hours per week on social media marketing efforts saw lead generation benefits for their business. (HubSpot 2017)

### 3.5.4 Better search engine rankings and richer customer experiences

Google and other search engines may factor social media presence in their rankings calculations because strong brands almost always use social media actively. Being active may act as a brand signal to search engines, signaling legitimacy, credibility and trustworthiness. (DeMers 2014)

Every customer interaction on social media is an opportunity to demonstrate customer service proficiency and enrich relationship with customers. (DeMers 2014) Social media gives opportunities to gain information about customers' interests and behaviour. For example, it is possible to monitor comments written by users directly. (DeMers 2014)

## 3.6 Social media marketing and influence

In her article *The Psychology Behind Social Media Engagement* (SocialMediaToday 2017), Melonie Dodaro argues that generating engagement on social media is all about persuading an audience to respond. She references Robert Cialdini's book *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion* (Cialdini 1984). In the article Dodaro explores the 7 key influencers of persuasion listed by Cialdini in the context of social media marketing.

### 3.6.1 Social selling and reciprocity

Giving one's target audience a clear reason to engage on social media is crucial. A brand should talk about their offerings and how they help the target market. The only thing that differentiates a company from its competitors is the persona and story of the people behind it, so sharing that story is a clever move.

Cialdini (1984) argues that people hate owing someone a debt, whether tangible or not. The flipside of this is that people are likely to take on any opportunity that gets them out of that debt, even if it's a little outside of their comfort zone. A straightforward example of this is transparent "you follow me, I follow you" strategy used by many beauty brands on Instagram. The brands track their hashtags and subsequently follow the accounts of people who use those hashtags. In addition to reciprocity, this policy is an example of profiling as brands are able to stay in contact with people who are likely to be interested in their offerings.

### 3.6.2 Content marketing and social proof

Just as people dislike being in debt, people also have an aversion to breaking promises. Neglecting to do something people commit to leaves them with a feeling of unease, and that usually makes people stay true to their commitments. If a company stops posting for a while, their followers are likely to forget them or even unfollow them. Consistent posting is thus a way to keep that commitment active.

Social proof on social media has what is called a snowball effect to it. The more people that like and share a brand's Facebook update the higher the chances are that fellow users will do the same. Cialdini (1984) points out quite simply that people are influenced by what other people are doing in their immediate surroundings, and social media is no different in that regard. This also why there's such a phenomenon as thought leadership. Entities that amass credibility and reputation are more likely to build up a large follower base.

### 3.6.3 Personal branding, authority and scarcity

Customers are more likely to engage with a brand that has a relatable identity to them. People tend to favor people and things that reflect the variety of views, values, interests and beliefs that they perceive to be important and positive to them. Knowing the audience, tailoring brand identity and engaging in storytelling are keys to rise in engagement.

*Thought leaders* are perceived as people of authority and a credible source of information. This sort of reputation enables higher levels of engagement whether it is from followers who share their insights, ask them questions to find out their opinion or a recommended course of action or merely click the 'like' the button for silent agreement. Simply put, authorities have no shortage of leverage for establishing conversation with themselves and their audience.

Limited-time offers and/or contests on a brand's social media page are the simplest example of scarcity affecting engagement. Limited timeframes make people more likely to ask, join or directly buy. Creating a sense of scarcity thus creates a sense of urgency.

## 4 Research problems

The author set out to find out how the rise of fake news and fake media have impacted consumer behavior on social media, and trust towards social media service providers and brands doing marketing on social media.

The main points of the study were:

1. Consumer trust in the sincerity of social media marketing
2. Consumer views on the larger definition of fake news (including obvious satire and clickbait)
3. Changes in consumer social media habits and views
4. Changes in consumer trust when it comes to other consumers online
5. The desire for change voiced by consumers

In order to tackle the rather vague problem of influence of fake news on social media marketing we need to take a look at the relation between social media marketing and consumer trust.

#### 4.1 Social media marketing and consumer trust

Social media marketing is at least partly based on brand messages gaining objectivity when shared by people on social media. But in order for that de-commercialization to happen, the brand messages need to be trusted by consumers. (Hausman 2013.)

With fake news running rampant, public trust in the media including social is at an all time low. Consumer trust is still the basis for selling products or services however. (Allen 2013.)

Rachael Bryson (2017) argues that “trust in social media is synonymous with credibility and reliability.” Consumers are more skeptical towards social media than traditional media, and user-generated content platforms such as Twitter and Facebook do not enjoy the same level of legitimacy as sources as television and print. This obviously means that organizations have to employ higher standards if they are to become trusted sources. Every small misstep can make a brand lose a brand followers and provide a beachhead for negative commentary and reactions. (Bryson 2017.)

Organizations lack control over the negative feedback they receive on social media. Many consumers will search for opinions and sources, legitimate or not, that verify their own stance, and this creates echo chambers. Users who do not agree with a company’s social media content or who simply dislike the company in general may join in on negative feedback campaigns that can be very damaging to trust. (Bryson 2017.)

#### 4.2 Hypotheses

A hypothesis is a proposed solution for a yet-unexplained occurrence that does not fall under into any current scientific theory or study. A central idea of a hypothesis is that there is no pre-determined result. To be termed a scientific hypothesis, it needs to something that can be supported or refuted through experimentation or observation. This is called falsifiability and testability. (Bradford 2017.)

The author hypothesizes that the fake news phenomenon has brought a sizeable impact on consumer trust. Online news outlets in particular have probably lost credibility in the



eyes of consumers. The author also suspects there is a demand for action for tech companies to take a larger role in fighting fake news and dubious marketing. Author believes that social media usage has not gone down dramatically.

## 5 The survey

### 5.1 Method

The author chose to gather data with a quantitative survey. Quantitative research method was chosen to suit the large scope of the study by the thesis.

A 23-question survey was compiled using the website Typeform. The questionnaire consisted of four demographic questions, three multiple questions about social media usage and technology and finally 16 opinion scale questions regarding fake news, social media usage, social media marketing and more. The questions and answers can be found in the Appendix section of the thesis.

### 5.2 Research material

The research material of the survey consisted of 100 respondents that took the test the author posted on a dedicated page on Facebook, called Survey Sharing 2018. The purpose of the group was to provide Facebook users with a channel where they could post links to their own surveys and studies and help other researchers complete their studies.

As mentioned in the methods chapter, the author readily assumed that a large number of the people who took the survey were students and young professionals. Indeed, it turned out that that 69% of respondents were aged 18 to 34. As predicted they were also fairly tech savvy, with 88% using Facebook and other social networks regularly and 74% also using media-sharing networks such as Instagram and YouTube regularly. A whopping 91% said they logged on to social media on a daily basis.

The four platforms used for browsing the internet featured in the survey were also fairly evenly represented, with smartphones at the top at 89% and tablets at 30%, with laptop and desktop computers in the middle.

### 5.3 Self-evaluation of execution of study

The questionnaire was fairly well-thought out, but some minor problems were realized only as the author began analysing the data. Firstly, the complete lack of open questions meant that the author was left with the bare quantitative data gathered in the questionnaire with no personal insight into the subjects of the study. This proved slightly stressful, given the tight schedule for executing the study. Scheduling problems also meant that the author didn't have enough time to analyse the data as thoroughly as would have been required for a deeper study.

The sample size was also rather small. The modest number of respondents made it difficult to find reliable patterns in the data, especially when it came to demographic factors such as age or origin. The author concluded, however, that the sample size was adequate for the purpose and timeframe of the thesis. Gathering a larger sample would simply have required too much time.

The method which was used to gather the respondents was also problematic in the sense that it warped the validity of the research by limiting the sample to the users in the Facebook group. The wide coverage of demographic factors that was originally intended for this study was not achieved.

### 5.4 Details of the study

The opinion scale questions were given a scale of 0 to 4. The author decided to set the limit of a sizeable agreement to scale number 2, meaning that mean agreement levels of 2 or higher were considered noteworthy. In the following chapters the average means are discussed in the form of  $x/4.0$  where  $x$  denotes the mean value of answers compared to the maximum value available which is 4.

The figure below is an example of the opinion scale questions from the summary of the questionnaire results on Typeform. The AVG. number in the top right corner in the grey box denotes the arithmetic mean value for answers for the given question.

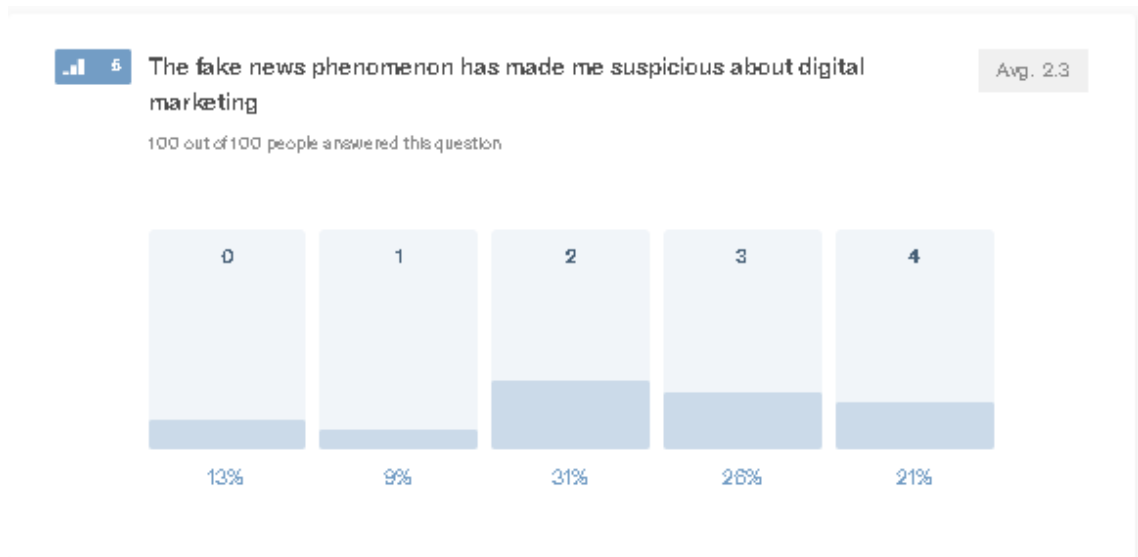


Figure 5. Question 5 of Fake News Survey (Typeform 2018)

### 5.5 Distrust brewing

At a mean value of 2.3/4 agreement the survey statement “the fake news phenomenon has made me suspicious about digital marketing” suggest a slight rise of distrust. A mean of 2.6/4 for the statement “I frequently fact-check online news”, 2.9/4 for “companies issuing fake news about their competition is a real problem”, 2.6/4 for fake news have made me question the credibility of online news outlets” and 2.3/4 for “fake news have me sceptical about the sincerity of fellow users on social media” suggest that the distrust is there but it’s not terribly profound.

### 5.6 Fake news and marketing

One of the themes of the survey were the links between the broad definition of fake news and digital marketing itself. A 3.0 agreement point was reached for the claim that it is unethical of online companies to serve ads from websites known to be affiliated with fake news, and a fair deal of respondents also felt that clickbait is unethical. The broader definition of fake news was explored in the statement “utilizing any kind of fake news (satire, parodies etc.) in marketing is dubious”. Respondents replied with a modest 1.8 agreement point. On a related note, respondents felt that fake news was not to be taken too lightly, with a mean agreement point of 1.6 for the statement that fake news on social media can be entertaining

## 5.7 Solutions

The respondents suggest that tech giants have a burden to bear with the fake news, with an average agreement point value of 3.0/4.0 for the statement about tech companies having a responsibility to eradicate fake news. A meagre 2.0 agreement with a statement claiming that social media sites are responsible for the damage caused by fake news shared on them translates to lukewarm blame towards tech giants such as Facebook and Twitter.

On the other hand, the respondents had a mean agreement of 2.5/4.0 with the statement that consumers should be required to do fact-checking themselves. Respondents weren't too interested in fact-checking apps however, with a low agreement point of 1.7.

Furthermore, the respondents felt that companies should include defence against fake news and social media scandals in their social media strategy, with a mean agreement level of 2.6.

## 6 Conclusions

### 6.1 Research results

In the light of the results of the survey it looks like online brands, digital marketers and social media experts don't have immense consumer distrust to tackle. However, it does seem that working with social media sites would be fruitful in the future. Establishing co-operation between brands and their social media associates would probably be the first step. This can be difficult to achieve without social media service providers reaching out to brands first though. Global legislation will probably adapt to the current climate of social media and fake news by regulating the service providers heavier than before, as was implied during Mark Zuckerberg's congressional hearings on April 10 and 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

When aiming for any and all of the 5 goals of social media marketing discussed earlier in the thesis, sincerity is the key to fruitful communication. The distrust towards all digital marketing has gone up so brands do well to double down on their efforts of transparency.

## 6.2 Reliability and validity of the study

Reliability and validity are the focal points of any measurement, including a quantitative research, since they are important in establishing the credibility and truthfulness of the findings, respectively (De Bruin 2010).

Validity is the meter of accuracy for the study of a concept in a study. For example, a survey about depression that ends up measuring anxiety is not valid. Reliability on the other hand is the meter of accuracy of an instrument of study. A research instrument is what researchers use for a measurement device, for example a survey or a test. (Biddix 2009.)

An example of an instrument's reliability is to what extent the instrument consistently produces the same results in the same situations on repeated occasions (Heale, Twycross 2015).

The author deems this study's validity moderately strong and reliability inherently weak. The survey gathered answers to questions that were valid for the study, but the sample as rather modest in its size, especially when considering that the study was aimed at a global audience.

If another researcher was to conduct this same exact study later, they would probably have different findings. The field of social media is in a state of crisis right now, and the public opinion is bound to fluctuate in the near future.

## References

Allcott, H. and Gentzkow (2017). *Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election*. <http://web.stanford.edu/~gentzkow/research/fakenews.pdf> [Accessed 4.2.2018]

BBC (2017). *Social media and censorship in China: how is it different to the West?* <http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/article/41398423/social-media-and-censorship-in-china-how-is-it-different-to-the-west> [Accessed 21.4.2018]

Business 2 Community (2013). *Social Media Marketing: Building Consumer Trust*. <https://www.business2community.com/social-media/social-media-marketing-building-consumer-trust-0452574> [Accessed 12.2.2018]

BrightLocal (2014). *Local Consumer Review Survey 2014*. <https://www.bright-local.com/learn/local-consumer-review-survey-2014/> [Accessed 24.2.2018]

Conference Board of Canada (2017). *The Importance of Trust on Social Media*. <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/topics/security-safety/commentaries/hot-topics-in-security-and-safety/2017/11/27/the-importance-of-trust-on-social-media?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1> [Accessed 13.2.2018]

CMO Survey (2017). *Highlights and Insights Report*. [https://cmosurvey.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2017/08/The\\_CMO\\_Survey-Highlights\\_and\\_Insights-Aug-2017.pdf](https://cmosurvey.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2017/08/The_CMO_Survey-Highlights_and_Insights-Aug-2017.pdf) [Accessed 17.2.2018]

DMR (2018). *160 Amazing YouTube Statistics And Facts (January 2018)*. <https://expandedramblings.com/index.php/youtube-statistics/> [Accessed 8.2.2018]

Dreamgrow (2018). *Top 15 Most Popular Social Networking Sites and Apps*. <https://www.dreamgrow.com/top-15-most-popular-social-networking-sites/> [Accessed 10.2.2018]

eClincher (2016). *5 Goals of Social Media Marketing*. <https://eclincher.com/blog/5-goals-of-social-media-marketing/> [Accessed 10.2.2018]

eMarketer (2016). *More Than Half of UK Population Will Log on to Facebook This Year*. <https://www.emarketer.com/Article/More-Than-Half-of-UK-Population-Will-Log-on-Facebook-This-Year/1013627> [Accessed 4.2.2018]

eMarketer (2016). *UK Facebook Users and Penetration, 2014-2020*. <https://www.emarketer.com/Chart/UK-Facebook-Users-Penetration-2014-2020/185981> [Accessed 4.2.2018]

the European Association for Viewers Interests (2017). *Infographic: Beyond Fake News – 10 Types of Misleading News*. <https://eavi.eu/beyond-fake-news-10-types-misleading-info/> [Accessed 7.2.2018]

Evidence-Based Nursing (2015). *Validity and reliability in quantitative studies*. <http://ebn.bmj.com/content/18/3/66> [Accessed 10.4.2018]

Facebook (2017). *Facebook Reports Third Quarter 2017 Results*. <https://investor.fb.com/investor-news/press-release-details/2017/Facebook-Reports-third-Quarter-2017-Results/default.aspx> [Accessed 4.2.2018]

Forbes (2014). *The Top 10 Benefits Of Social Media Marketing*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jaysondemers/2014/08/11/the-top-10-benefits-of-social-media-marketing/#5e7a21eb1f80> [Accessed 8.2.2018]

GetResponse (2013). *Building Consumer Trust in a World of Fake News*. <https://blog.getresponse.com/building-consumer-trust.html> [Accessed 13.2.2018]

Google Trends (2018). *Fake news*. <https://trends.google.fi/trends/explore?date=2016-08-01%202018-02-16&q=fake%20news> [Accessed 16.2.2018]

Hootsuite (2017). *10 Types of Social Media and How Each Can Benefit Your Business*. <https://blog.hootsuite.com/types-of-social-media/> [Accessed 21.2.2018]

HubSpot (2017). *16 Stats That Prove Social Media Isn't a Passing Fad*. <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/social-media-roi-stats> [Accessed 8.2.2018]

LiveScience (2017). *What Is a Scientific Hypothesis? | Definition of Hypothesis*. <https://www.livescience.com/21490-what-is-a-scientific-hypothesis-definition-of-hypothesis.html> [Accessed 24.4.2108]

Medium (2016). *What is Google Trends data – and what does it mean?* <https://medium.com/google-news-lab/what-is-google-trends-data-and-what-does-it-mean-b48f07342ee8> [Accessed 17.2.2018]

Merriam-Webster (2018). *Partisan*. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/partisan> [Accessed 15.2.2018]

Merriam-Webster (2018). *Pseudoscience*. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pseudoscience> [Accessed 15.2.2018]

Merriam-Webster (2018). *Propaganda*. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/propaganda> [Accessed 15.2.2018]

Merriam-Webster (2018). *Social media*. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/social%20media> [Accessed 7.2.2018]

Oxford Dictionaries (2018). *Word of the Year 2016 is...* <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/word-of-the-year/word-of-the-year-2016> [Accessed 22.4.2018]

OmniCore Agency (2018). *Facebook by the Numbers: Stats, Demographics & Fun Facts*. <https://www.omnicoreagency.com/facebook-statistics/> [Accessed 8.2.2018]

OmniCore Agency (2018). *Instagram by the Numbers: Stats, Demographics & Fun Facts*. <https://www.omnicoreagency.com/instagram-statistics/> [Accessed 4.2.2018]

OmniCore Agency (2018). *Twitter by the Numbers: Stats, Demographics & Fun Facts*. <https://www.omnicoreagency.com/twitter-statistics/> [Accessed 4.2.2018]

Oxford Dictionaries (2018). *Echo chamber*. [https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/echo\\_chamber](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/echo_chamber) [Accessed 4.2.2018]

Psychology Today (2015). *What Is Confirmation Bias?* <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/science-choice/201504/what-is-confirmation-bias> [Accessed 4.2.2018]

Research Methodology (2017). *Quantitative Data Collection Methods*. <https://research-methodology.net/research-methods/quantitative-research/>. [Accessed 4.2.2018]

Social Media Today (2015). *24 Statistics That Show Social Media Is The Future Of Customer Service*. <https://www.socialmediatoday.com/social-business/24-statistics-show-social-media-future-customer-service> [Accessed 11.2.2018]

Social Media Today (2017). *The psychology Behind Social Media Engagement*. <https://www.socialmediatoday.com/social-business/psychology-behind-social-media-engagement> [Accessed 10.2.2018]

Statista (2015) *Social media advertising expenditure as share of digital advertising spending worldwide from 2013 to 2017*. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/271408/share-of-social-media-in-online-advertising-spending-worldwide/>. [Accessed 4.2.2018]

Statista (2016). *Fake News Is A Real Problem*. <https://www.statista.com/chart/6795/fake-news-is-a-real-problem/> [Accessed 22.4.2018]

Statista (2016). *Fake News Stories Are a Problem – But Who's To Blame?* <https://www.statista.com/chart/7305/public-opinion-on-fake-news/> [Accessed 4.2.2018]

Statista (2017). *Distribution of traffic sources for fake news in the United States in 2017*. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/672275/fake-news-traffic-source/>. [Accessed 4.2.2018]

Statista (2017). *Number of social media users worldwide from 2010 to 2021 (in billions)*. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/278414/number-of-worldwide-social-network-users/> [Accessed 17.2.2018]

Statista (2017). *Trust in Mass Media Erodes*. <https://www.statista.com/chart/5883/trust-in-mass-media/> [Accessed 4.2.2018]

TechTarget (2017). *Content management (CM)*. <http://searchcontentmanagement.techtarget.com/definition/content-management> [Accessed 8.2.2018]

Texas Tech University (2013). *Establishing Brand Loyalty through Social Media*. <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/comc/research/outpost/blog/brand-loyalty.php#sthash.GymG5BDh.dpbs> [Accessed 8.2.2018]

Typeform (2018). *Welcome*. <https://www.typeform.com/help/welcome/> [Accessed 9.4.2018]

Universiteit van Pretoria (2010). *Validity and reliability*. <https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/25218/02chapter3-4.pdf?sequence=3> [Accessed 12.4.2018]



Vision Critical (2014). *How Brands Can Win in the Collaborative Economy*. <https://www.visioncritical.com/resources/collaborative-economy-report/> [Accessed 24.2.2018]

We Are Social (2017). *Digital in 2017: global overview*. <https://wearesocial.com/special-reports/digital-in-2017-global-overview>. [Accessed 4.2.2018]

WhatIs.com (2011). *Social media marketing*. <http://whatIs.techtarget.com/definition/social-media-marketing-SMM> [Accessed 4.2.2018]

WhatIs.com (2012). *YouTube*. <http://searchcio.techtarget.com/definition/YouTube> [Accessed 8.2.2018]

WhatIs.com (2014). *Facebook*. <http://whatIs.techtarget.com/definition/Facebook> [Accessed 7.8.2018]

WhatIs.com (2016): *Social media*. <http://whatIs.techtarget.com/definition/social-media> [Accessed 7.2.2018]

WhatIs.com (2017). *Fake news*. <http://whatIs.techtarget.com/definition/fake-news> [Accessed 4.2.2018]

Wired (2016). *Blame the echo chamber on Facebook. But blame yourself too*. <https://www.wired.com/2016/11/facebook-echo-chamber/> [Accessed 4.2.2018]

Worldometers (2018). *World population*. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/278414/number-of-worldwide-social-network-users/> [Accessed 17.2.2018]

Yle (2017). *Survey: Majority of Finns feel effects of fake news*. [https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/survey\\_majority\\_of\\_finns\\_feel\\_effects\\_of\\_fake\\_news/9931091](https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/survey_majority_of_finns_feel_effects_of_fake_news/9931091) [Accessed 4.2.2018]

Zephoria (2018). *The Top 20 Valuable Facebook Statistics – Updated February 2018*. <https://zephoria.com/top-15-valuable-facebook-statistics/> [Accessed 4.2.2018]

## Survey report

Please state your origin

100 out of 100 people answered this question

|   |                |          |
|---|----------------|----------|
| 1 | European       | 46 / 46% |
| 2 | North American | 32 / 32% |
| 3 | Asian          | 13 / 13% |
| 4 | Oceanian       | 4 / 4%   |
| 5 | African        | 3 / 3%   |
| 6 | South American | 2 / 2%   |

What is your gender?

98 out of 100 people answered this question

|   |        |          |
|---|--------|----------|
| 1 | Male   | 55 / 56% |
| 2 | Female | 42 / 43% |
| 3 | Other  | 1 / 1%   |

What is your age range?

100 out of 100 people answered this question

|   |               |          |
|---|---------------|----------|
| 1 | 19 - 24       | 35 / 35% |
| 2 | 25 - 34       | 34 / 34% |
| 3 | 35 - 44       | 16 / 16% |
| 4 | 45 - 54       | 7 / 7%   |
| 5 | 18 or younger | 5 / 5%   |
| 6 | 55 - 64       | 3 / 3%   |
| 7 | 65 or older   | 0 / 0%   |

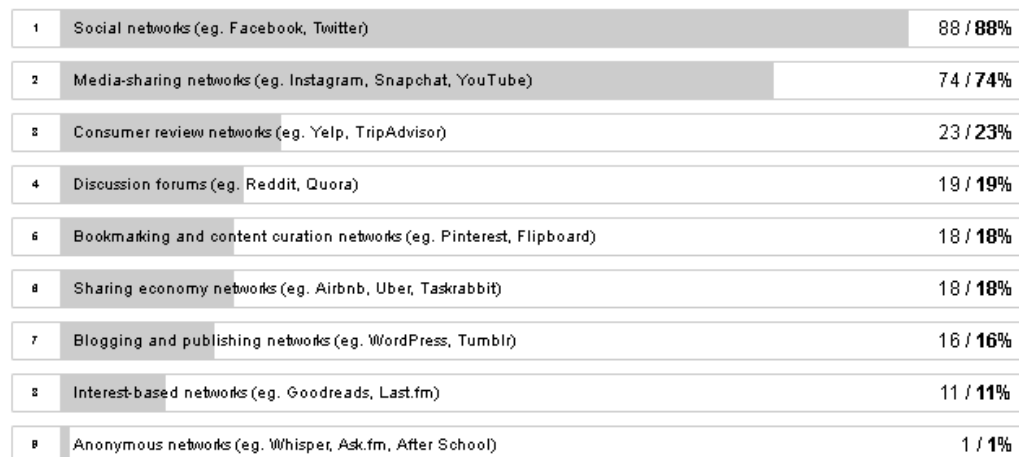
Please state your political standing (select the option that fits the best)

100 out of 100 people answered this question

|   |                        |          |
|---|------------------------|----------|
| 1 | Liberal                | 40 / 40% |
| 2 | Other                  | 20 / 20% |
| 3 | Centrist               | 19 / 19% |
| 4 | I prefer not to answer | 11 / 11% |
| 5 | Conservative           | 10 / 10% |

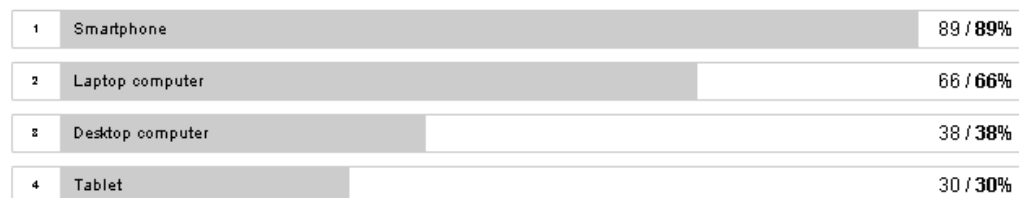
Which of the following social media types do you use regularly?

100 out of 100 people answered this question



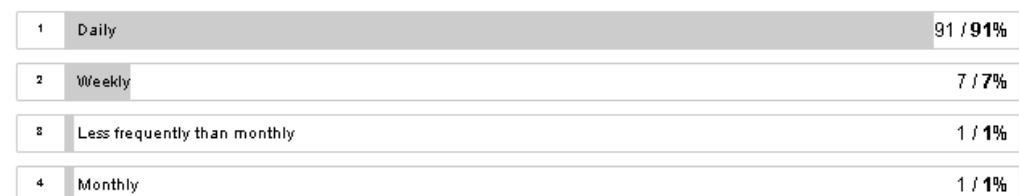
Which of the following platforms do you use for browsing the internet?

100 out of 100 people answered this question



How often do you log on or visit social media sites?

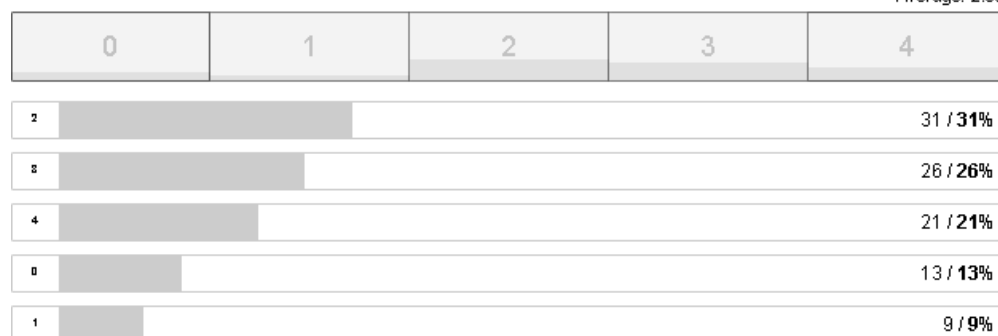
100 out of 100 people answered this question



The fake news phenomenon has made me suspicious about digital marketing

100 out of 100 people answered this question

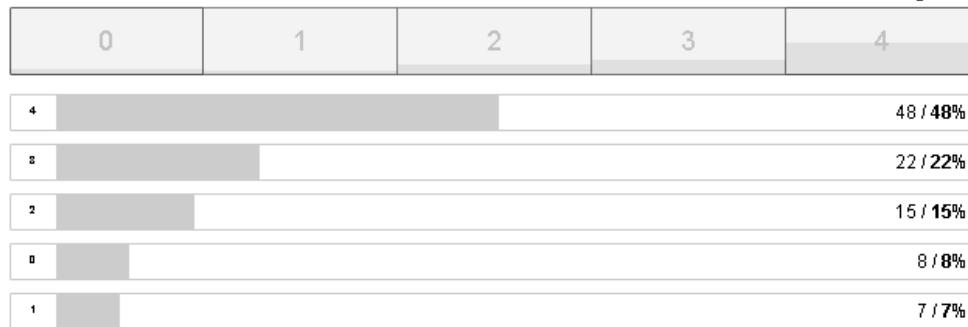
Average: 2.33



Tech companies should strive to eradicate fake news

100 out of 100 people answered this question

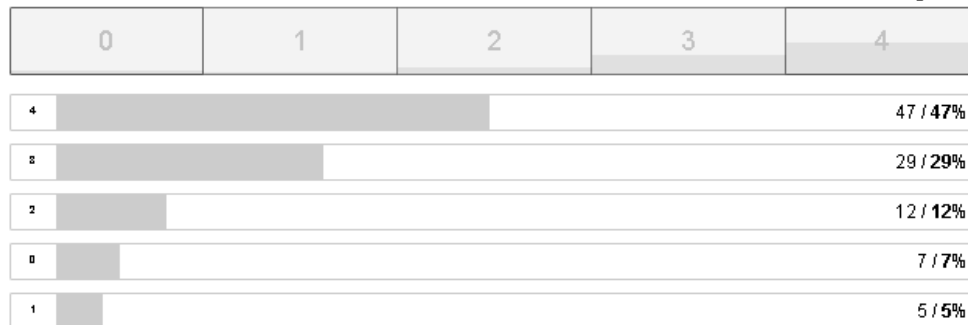
Average: 2.95



It is unethical of online companies to serve ads from fake news websites

100 out of 100 people answered this question

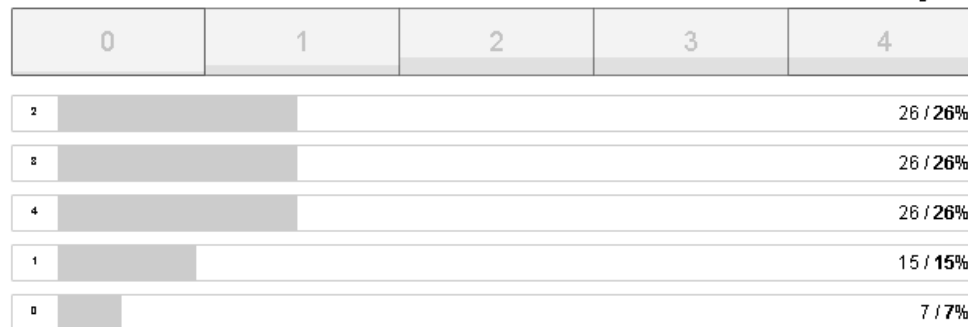
Average: 3.04



Consumers should be required to do fact-checking themselves

100 out of 100 people answered this question

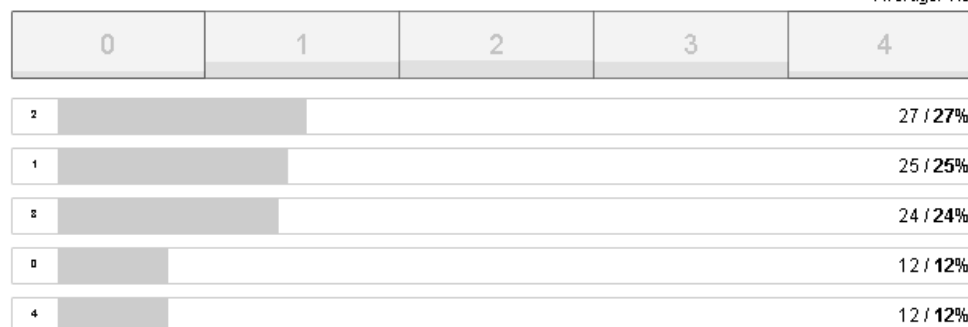
Average: 2.49



Social media sites are responsible for the damage caused by fake news shared on them

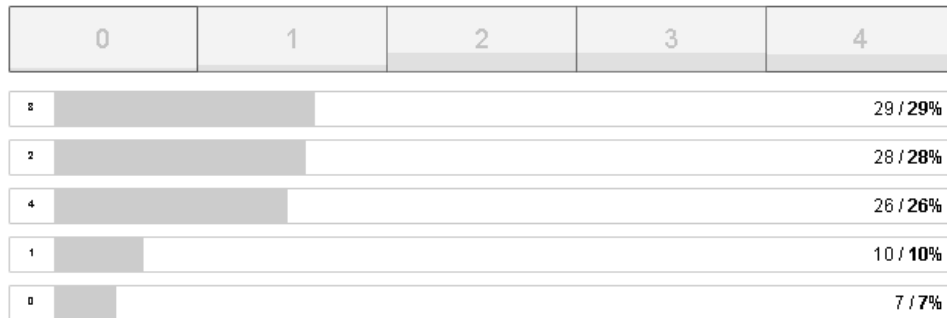
100 out of 100 people answered this question

Average: 1.99



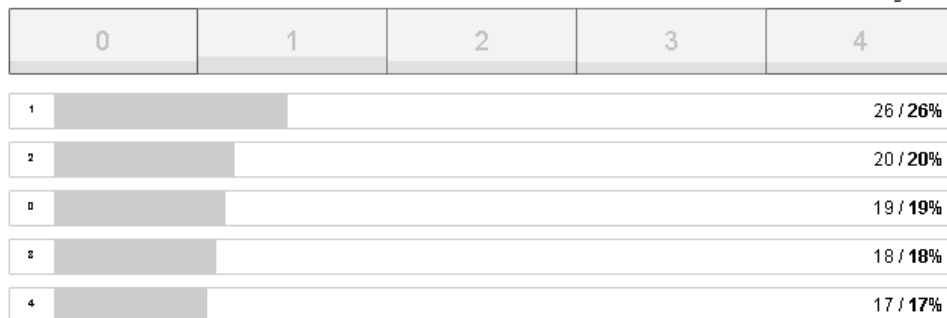
I frequently fact-check online news  
100 out of 100 people answered this question

Average: 2.57



The fake news phenomenon has weakened my trust towards online brands  
100 out of 100 people answered this question

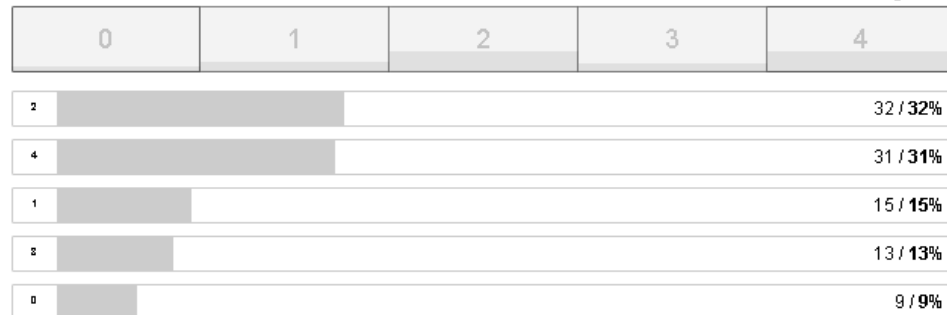
Average: 1.88



Clickbait is unethical

100 out of 100 people answered this question

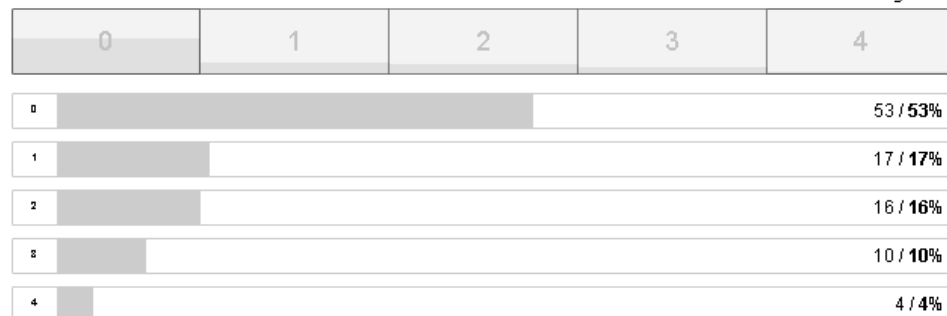
Average: 2.42



My social media usage has gone down because of fake news

100 out of 100 people answered this question

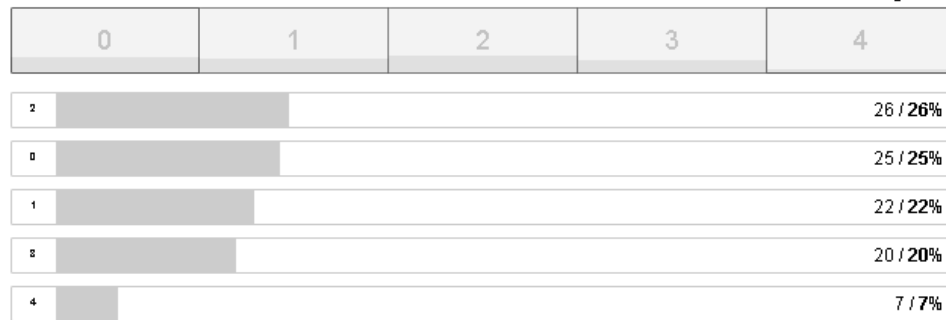
Average: 0.95



Fake news on social media can be entertaining

100 out of 100 people answered this question

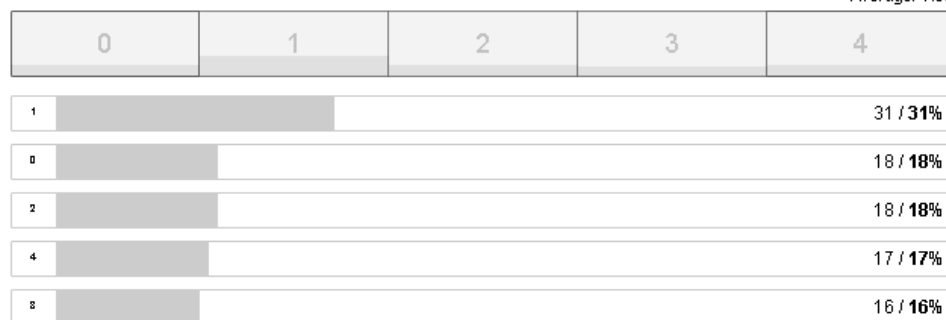
Average: 1.62



Utilizing any kind of fake news (satire, parodies etc.) in marketing is dubious

100 out of 100 people answered this question

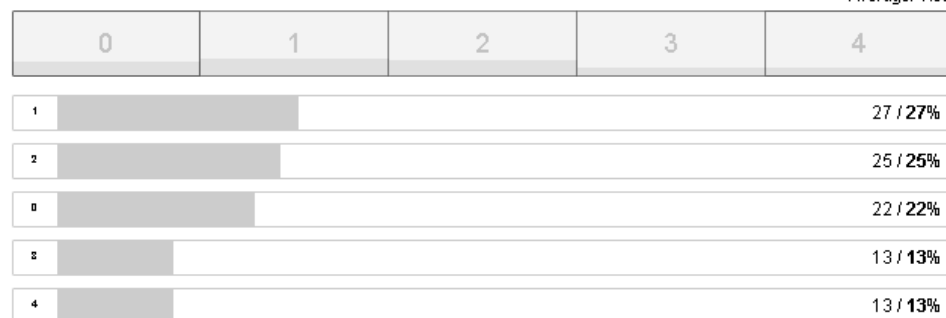
Average: 1.83



I am interested in fact-checking apps for smartphones and tablets

100 out of 100 people answered this question

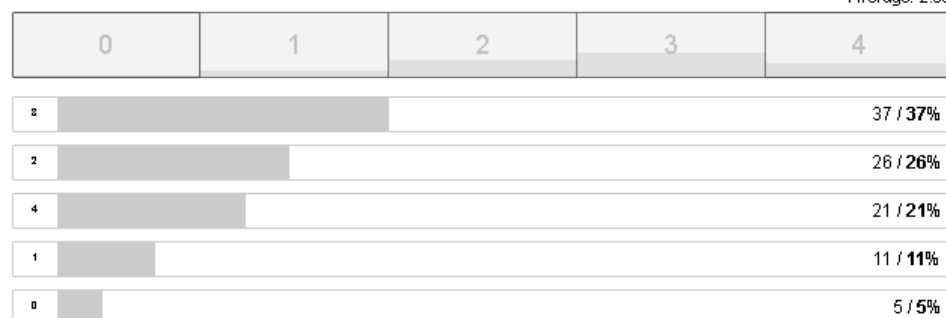
Average: 1.68



Companies should include defense against fake news and social media scandals in their social media strategy

100 out of 100 people answered this question

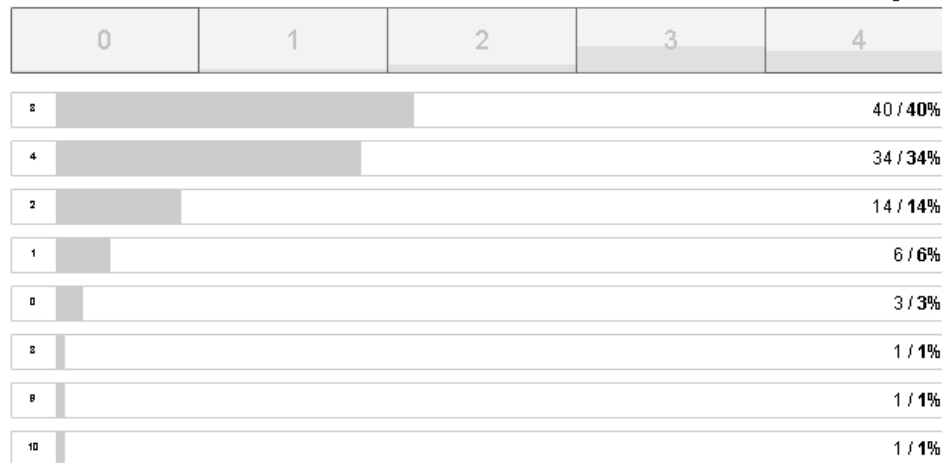
Average: 2.58



Companies issuing fake news about their competition is a real problem

100 out of 100 people answered this question

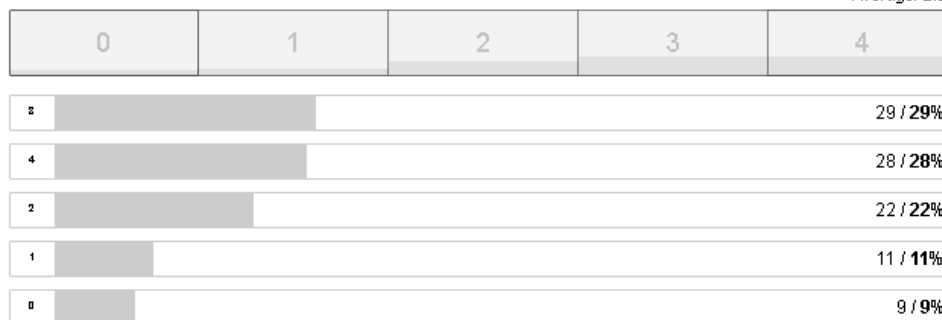
Average: 2.99



Fake news have made me question the credibility of online news outlets

99 out of 100 people answered this question

Average: 2.57



Fake news have me skeptical about the sincerity of fellow users on social media

99 out of 100 people answered this question

Average: 2.28

