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Facebook ads reinforce political polarization among users

American researchers spent more than \$13,000 on a set of advertising campaigns to test how Facebook promotes political messaging.

The findings may have grave consequences for democracy in the U.S. And the campaigns may not even know it.

[Download the study.](#)

Four things you need to know:

1. Facebook delivers political ads to its users based on the content of those ads and information of its users – and not necessarily based on the audience intended by the advertiser.
2. In its desire to show relevant ads to users, the ad delivery is dramatically skewed amongst gender and racial lines – even when the advertiser aims to reach a balanced audience.
3. Users are being excluded from seeing ads that challenge their beliefs because those ads are calculated as less relevant to them.
4. The algorithms are effectively undermining public debate, and make it more difficult for people to be well-informed citizens.



250 journalists jailed for their work globally

The number of journalists imprisoned globally for their work in 2019 remained near a record high.

In its annual global survey, the Committee to Protect Journalists found at least 250 journalists in jail in relation to their work.

[Read the report.](#)

A list of all imprisoned journalists [here](#).

Five things you need to know:

1. This is the fourth consecutive year the number of arrested journalists passes 250.
2. China (48 journalists) is the worst jailer of journalists, narrowly followed by Turkey (47), Saudi Arabia (26) and Egypt (26).
3. Nato-member Turkey, under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's leadership, has stamped out independent reporting and criticism by closing down more than 100 news outlets and lodging terror-related charges against many of their staff.
4. 98 percent of those arrested are local journalists, and 27 percent of them are jailed without charges.
5. 230 of the 250 imprisoned journalists are men.



40 new news podcasts globally every day

If you are in any doubt: News media have broken the sound barrier, and the number of new podcasts is skyrocketing.

The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism has looked at the numbers, and what kind of podcasts news organization is launching.

[Download the report.](#)

(or [watch the webinar](#) with Nic Newman on YouTube).

Here are five main findings:

1. The number of new news podcasts globally rose by almost 12.000 between January and October 2019 – an increase of 32 percent.
2. News podcasts make up a small proportion (6%) of the 770.000 existing podcasts, but make up around a fifth (21%) of the most popular episodes in the United States Apple charts.
3. Talk and interview shows are the most popular sub-genre within news, along with one-off narrative series, but daily news has become an increasingly important focus.
4. There are three sub-categories of daily news podcasts: 1) Micro-bulletins (1-5 minutes), 2) News round-ups (6-15 minutes) and 3) Deep-dives (20+ minutes).
5. Most publishers and experts feel there is still significant room for growth, with new voice-driven interfaces making it easier to access on-demand audio in the home and on the move.



Social media are failing to combat fake content

NATO researchers found 19.000 fake social media accounts and reported them. Three weeks later, 95 percent of the accounts were still active.

The findings from the StratCom (Nato Strategic Communication Center of Excellence) are meant to be a wake-up call for politicians who still believe the platforms can regulate themselves. In a series of reports, StratCom highlights digital manipulation and vulnerability.

[Download the report.](#)

Eight main findings:

1. StratCom estimates that 90 percent of fake engagement is purchased to lift commercial records.
2. In total, the researchers found evidence of purchases of fake engagement on 721 political accounts and 52 government accounts – including official pages for two presidents.
3. YouTube: Did only remove a few fake accounts after they were reported.
4. Instagram: The cheapest and easiest platform to manipulate – did not remove any of the reported accounts.
5. Facebook: Did block several accounts, but did not remove the fake content from the accounts.
6. Twitter: Removed about half of all likes and retweets from the fake accounts.
7. The industry of social media manipulation is increasing year by year, and it has become neither more expensive nor more difficult to manipulate social media in recent years.
8. Conclusion: Self-regulation does not work.



Freedom of Expression is at its lowest point for a decade

In the 70th year since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the declaration is under intense pressure.

The annual Global Expression Report from the nonprofit organization Article 19 shows a negative trend over the last ten years.

The report has analyzed the conditions for freedom of expression in 161 countries with a total population of 5.5 billion people.

[Read the report.](#)

Here are five main findings:

1. The decline of freedom of expression is steady over time.
2. Denmark, Norway and Sweden are the three countries with the highest score on freedom of expression globally (all Nordic countries are among the top 8 globally).
3. At the bottom are Turkmenistan, Eritrea, Bahrain and finally, North Korea.
4. Four of the decade's top 10 decliners are countries in Europe and Central Asia. This reflects the region's creeping erosion of institutions and the slow consolidation of power in the hands of strongman politicians in recent years.
5. Seventy-eight percent of the population of the Europe and Central Asia region live in countries that saw a decline in Freedom of Expression scores in one of the reports' key time periods over the past decade.



One in three Norwegians and Swedes consider subscribing to Disney+

The streaming war closes in on the Nordic countries. In a recent survey, 33 percent of Norwegians and Swedes say they will consider subscribing to Disney's new streaming service when it launches.

[Download the report.](#)

Three main findings:

1. Only 23 percent of Finns and 21 percent of Danes will consider subscribing to Disney+.
2. Disney+ faces intense competition in all countries and appears to capture the largest market share from Netflix (-8%).
3. As many as 40 percent say they will terminate a competing service to subscribe to Disney+.