Name: Terna-kaainjo Favour

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Special Topics in Advertising and Public Relations.

Mrs Oluwasola Omolola

2. social media and proliferation of fake news dodgy health advice and fake cures of covid-19

Most research on fake news has emerged from developed countries. This work concentrated on the Nigerian setting. Despite the Anti-fake news campaign launched in Nigeria, the spread of fake news remains alarming. Sharing news among Nigerians is seen as contributing to social cohesion. Users doing so are motivated by the emotional impact the news is seen to have, the relevance it might have for the receiver, and the sender’s intention to ‘provide advice or warning.’ Most Nigerians tend to trust information shared by family members and friends more than strangers. The world suffers from a pandemic of fake news surrounding the coronavirus. Emissions from crematoriums in China could be seen from space. Russia unleashed 500 lions to keep people indoors. Doctors in London are being mugged. Vitamins or certain snake oils cure the disease. Even gargling with warm water and salt and vinegar? Or inhaling hot air from a hair dryer? It’s all fake.

The Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO) Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus says “We’re not just fighting an epidemic; we’re fighting an infodemic,” “Fake news spreads faster and more easily than this virus, and is just as dangerous.” If we believe misinformation rather than facts, “we are headed down a dark path that leads nowhere but division and disharmony.” Through the internet, social media and instant messaging fake news is spreading faster and more easily. These messages may contain useless, incorrect or even harmful information and advice, which can hamper the public health response and add to social disorder and division.

Some of the fake news are: Exposing yourself to the sun or to temperatures higher than 25C degrees DOES NOT prevent the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), You can recover from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Catching the new coronavirus DOES NOT mean you will have it for life, Being able to hold your breath for 10 seconds or more without coughing or feeling discomfort DOES NOT mean you are free from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) or any other lung disease, Drinking alcohol does not protect you against COVID-19 and can be dangerous, COVID-19 virus can be transmitted in areas with hot and humid climates, Cold weather and snow CANNOT kill the new coronavirus, Taking a hot bath does not prevent the new coronavirus disease.

So hindsight, although information gotten from social media outlets might little to no truths about the information been passed around, you as well as individuals owe yourself to the duty to find out whether this information has any basis of truth so as not to become victims of the consequences of these fake news just like the albino victims of the Ebola outbreak who dies because of the information passed around that salt prevents Ebola.