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SPECIALIZED REPORTING

QUESTION

Submit a feature article on any one of these topics.

1. User generated images and menes on covid-19
2. Social media and proliferation of fake news, dodgy health advice and fake cures of covid-19
3. Mainstream media coverage and social media narratives about covid-19.

ANSWER ON QUESTION 2.

**PROLIFERATION OF FAKE NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

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Social media is the most effective tool in disseminating information and disinformation travels the fastest. Most recently, fake news of the deadly corona virus has been spreading like wildfire on social media.

Most Nigerians tend to trust information shared by family members and friends more than strangers. They are more likely to share misinformation about news because it usually cannot be traced to a particular source or website and therefore cannot be backed up with facts.

‘Twitter’, a social media platform is in support of the motion to ban any fake news concerning the COVID-19 as they announce that they will delete any tweets which give bogus information about the coronavirus including unverified claims that incite people to action.

Fake news spreads faster and more easily today throught the internet, social media and instant messaging. These messages may contain useless, incorrect or even harmful information and advice, which can hamper the public health response and add to social disporder and division.

These fake news often comes with fake health advice which should be ignored. According to BBC news “coronavirus is emerging in more countries around the world and there is currently no known cure. Unfortunately that hasn’t stopped a skew of health advice ranging from useless but relatively harmless, to downright dangerous”.

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“Trustworthy health advice has never been more vital- it could be the difference betweeb life and death” Tom Phillips, editor of ‘The Guardian’ states.

Misinformation is spreasding like wildfire, and misbranded or unapproved products claiming to have curative effects or to prevent COVID-19 have been swept under the rugs overnight. Despite theor earnest hopes, consumers who pay for these bogus products wont get their money’s worth.

The easiest way to avoid falling victim to fraud during the coronavirus outbreak iss by using common sensee and making sure that you adopt healtky browsing practices. Most importantly, keep an eye out for suspicious links, emails claiming to come from the World Health Oorganization also ignore and report any false advertisements you see on social media platforms.

Some of the fake news heard abpout the coronavirus disease include; chloroquine is a proven cure, children are immune to the virus and that 5G caused the pandemic. From the seemingly plausible tonthe predictably untrue, fake news about COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus, is flooding the internet as we scramble to make sense of a crisisthat has brought havoc around the world.

There is so much misinformayion and this is definitelyno help to the current situation. Millions of us remain cooped up in our homes under strict lockdownlaws, on whatsapp, facebook, youtube and elsewhere, a range of bogus stories and half-baked conspiracy theories concerning COVID-19 have gained considerable global momentum.

In the UK alone, nearly half of all adults have been exposed to false claims or misleading information online about the vines, according to research published last week by the countrys media watchdog, Ofcom.

Some 35 percent have seen claims that drinking more water can help flush out the disease for example, while around a quarter have seen advice suggesting the injection can be treated by gargling salt water, both of which have been rubbished by the world health organization and contradict UK public health guidelines.

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“it was frightening and infuriating because you know this information is false, but the people who are sharing it have the confidence thus will help or save humanity and other people pick up on that” Aweis told Aljazeera.

Because of the scale of the problem, the world health organization (WHO) which is the leading UN’s response to the pandemic, ha added a “mythbusters” section to its online coronavirus advice pages. It refutes a staggering array of myths, including claims that drinking potent alcoholic drinks, exposure to high temperatures, or conversely, cold weather, can kill the virus.

The best sources to go to for health information about COVID-19 are your government health websites and the world health organization website. Primary sources are generally better than news articles. Even government messaging and the minstream media can get things wrong, but they are more trustworthy than any unverifiedsources on social media and viral messaging.

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