

Beyond lack of Understanding, Beyond disInformation









Content reliability

UNIT 5: INFORMATION DISORDERS



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1.Introduction

In today's digital environment, we are surrounded by an endless stream of information—some accurate, some misleading, and some deliberately false. The ability to navigate this information landscape has become a vital skill, not only for professional growth as well as for informed participation in society. This module explores content reliability and the different forms of information disorders that can distort our perception of reality.

Through development of critical thinking and heightened awareness, you will learn to recognize signs of unreliable, biased, or manipulative content. We will examine practical strategies for categorizing online content and apply functional literacies—including media literacy, data literacy, and digital literacy—to evaluate and manage diverse sources of information.





Learning Goals

After training in Unit 5, the trainees will be able to:

- Recognize and distinguish online threats by identifying common characteristics of misinformation, disinformation, malinformation, and scams.
- Differentiate content types such as news articles, opinion pieces, sponsored content, and advertisements, based on their purpose, structure, and credibility indicators.
- Analyze source reliability using fact-checking tools and cross-referencing techniques to verify information accuracy.
- Apply responsible sharing practices by critically assessing content before engaging with or distributing it, thereby reducing the spread of false or harmful information.





2. LEARNING





Learning Outcome 1 – **Misinformation And Scam Recognition**

Identify and evaluate misleading or fraudulent online content by recognizing common patterns, tactics, and red flags used in misinformation and scams.

Explain the difference between misinformation and scam, providing at least one real-life example of each.

List common red flags that indicate an online post, message, or e-mail may be a scam.

Apply a fact-checking tool to verify the accuracy of a suspicious online news article.











Learning Outcome 2 – Content Type Differentiation (News vs. Opinions vs. Ads)

Identify and distinguish between news articles, opinion pieces, sponsored content, and advertisements based on structure, tone, and purpose.

Explain the differences in intent and credibility among different content types, and how each one influences the audience.

Apply critical reading strategies to classify and evaluate online content according to its type and potential bias.

3. LEARNING OUTOCMES









Learning Outcome 3 – **Disinformation**, **Misionformation & Malinformation**

- Identify the difference between misinformation, disinformation and malinformation.
- Identify common signs of unreliable or misleading online content.
- 3. Identify whether a content piece is advertising, news, or opinion based on its features and source.
- 4. Apply basic fact-checking tools (such as Google reverse image search, Snopes, or InVID) to verify the accuracy of information found online.
- 5. Apply a simple checklist or verification steps before forwarding or sharing information with others.







A. MISINFORMATION AND SCAM RECOGNITION







Why It Is Important To Recognize Misonformation And Scam

In today's digital world, we are constantly surrounded by information — but not all of it is true or safe.

Recognizing misinformation and scams has become a critical skill for people of all ages, for several important reasons:







Why It Is Important To Recognize Misonformation And Scam

✓ Protect your money and personal data Avoid fraud, identity theft, and financial loss.

√ Make smart decisions

Don't let fake news or false offers mislead you.

√ Keep vulnerable groups safe

Help protect seniors, youth, and those less familiar with technology.

√ Maintain trust

Truth matters — don't let fake information damage trust in real sources.

√ Stop the spread

When we detect false information, we stop sharing it further.



What is misinformation?

Misinformation is false or inaccurate information that is shared without the intention to deceive, but still causes harm because people believe it to be true.

Several respected authors and institutions define it similarly:

According to Wardle and Derakhshan (2017), misinformation is "information that is false, but not created with the intention of causing harm."

The World Health Organization (WHO) explains it as "false information shared by people who do not realize it is false and do not mean any harm."

Key characteristics of misinformation:

- It is not true
- It is shared accidentally or unknowingly
- It can still mislead people and spread confusion
- It is often shared through social media, messages, or conversations

LIABLE CONTENT

What is a scam?

A scam is a form of fraud — a dishonest plan designed to trick people into giving away money, personal information, or access to their accounts.

Scams are intentional and are created on purpose to mislead, manipulate, or steal from others.

Characteristics of a scam:
Intentional deception – someone is trying
to fool you on purpose.

Usually involves money or personal data

Can happen **online** (emails, SMS, social media, fake websites) or **offline**

Scammers often pretend to be someone else (a bank, a delivery company, government, etc.)





Check the Source

- •Is it a trustworthy website, news portal, or institution?
- •Unknown pages, strange URLs, or websites with lots of pop-ups = ... warning sign.

Look for Other Sources

- •Can you find the same information on at least 2–3 reliable sites?
- •If only one unknown source claims something shocking be careful!

Watch for Emotional Language

- •Titles that sound very shocking, angry or unbelievable ("You won't believe!") are often misleading.
- Misinformation tries to trigger strong emotions so people will share it quickly.









Verify the Author

- Is the author a real person or expert?
- •If there is no name, or it is "admin123" that is suspicious.

Check the Date

- •Old or outdated articles sometimes get shared as if they are new.
- Always check when it was written or published.

Too Good (or Too Bad) to Be True

- Miraculous cures, mega prizes, quick money schemes = are usually false.
- Always be skeptical of spectacular claims without real evidence.









Photo or Video Manipulation

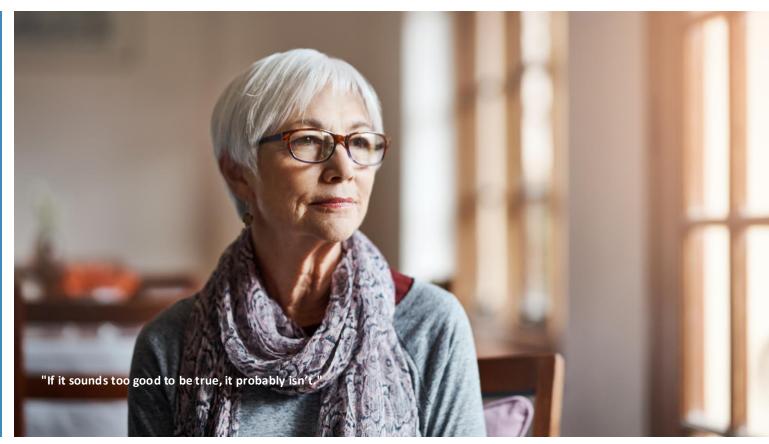
- •Images can be edited or taken from a different context.
- •Do a "reverse image search" (Google Images) to see the real origin.













B. CONTENT TYPE
DIFFERENTIATION
(NEWS VS. OPINIONS
VS. ADS)







Why it matters to know the difference

Understanding the difference between news, opinion, advertisements, and native advertising helps people become **critical and responsible media users**.

When we clearly recognize the *purpose and intent* behind each type of content, we can:







Why it matters to know the difference

Avoid manipulation and be less vulnerable to persuasive or promotional messages disguised as facts. (*Richards & Curran, 2002, IAB, 2013*)

Detect bias and separate factual reporting from personal viewpoints or hidden agendas. (*Potter, 2015*)

Make informed decisions based on reliable information — especially on social media where these formats often overlap or get mixed. (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014)



News

News is information about current events presented to the public by journalists through various media.

Advertisement

An advertisement is a paid, mediated form of communication from an identifiable source designed to persuade the receiver to take some action now or in the future.

Opinions

Opinion writing is commentary that reflects the writer's personal beliefs or judgments, rather than objective reporting of facts.

Native Advertisement (also called "Sponsored Content")

Native advertising is paid content designed to match the form and function of the media platform on which it appears, often blending in so that it resembles editorial content.





"Advertising is the art of convincing people to spend money they don't have for something they don't need."

— Will Rogers





C. DISINFORMATION,
MISINFORMATION AND
MALINFORMATION
AWARENESS TRAINING







False and harmful content is all around us.

In today's digital age, we are surrounded by a constant flow of information. Not all of it is trustworthy or harmless.

Being able to recognize different types of false or harmful content—such as misinformation, disinformation and malinformation—is essential for protecting ourselves, making informed decisions, and preventing the spread of manipulation or fear in our communities.

These concepts are especially important when working with vulnerable groups, such as older adults.

Understanding the difference between them is the first step in building strong media literacy.



Misinformation

"False information that is shared without the intent to cause harm."

UNESCO, Journalism, Fake News &
 Disinformation: A Handbook for
 Journalism Education and Training (2018)

Malinformation

"Information that is based on reality, used to inflict harm on a person, organization or country."

— Wardle & Derakhshan, Information
Disorder (Council of Europe Report, 2017)

Disinformation

"Information that is false and deliberately created to harm a person, social group, organization or country."

UNESCO, Journalism, Fake News &
 Disinformation: A Handbook for Journalism
 Education and Training (2018)

Fact-Checking Tools & Platforms

Snopes.com – debunks viral rumors, fake news and scams.

PolitiFact – checks political statements and claims.
FactCheck.org – investigates political and public policy claims.

AFP Fact Check – international fact-checking platform by Agence France-Presse.

Poynter / IFCN (International Fact-Checking Network) – provides a database of global fact-checkers.

MISINFORMATION, DISINFORMATION AND MALINFORMATION



HOW TO SPOT FAKE NEWS



CONSIDER THE SOURCE

Click away from the story to investigate the site, its mission and its contact info.



CHECK THE AUTHOR

Do a quick search on the author. Are they credible? Are they real?



CHECK THE DATE

Reposting old news stories doesn't mean they're relevant to current events.



CHECK YOUR BIASES

Consider if your own beliefs could affect your judgement.



Headlines can be outrageous in an effort to get clicks. What's the whole story?



SUPPORTING SOURCES?

Click on those links. Determine if the info given actually supports the story.



IS IT A JOKE?

If it is too outlandish, it might be satire. Research the site and author to be sure.



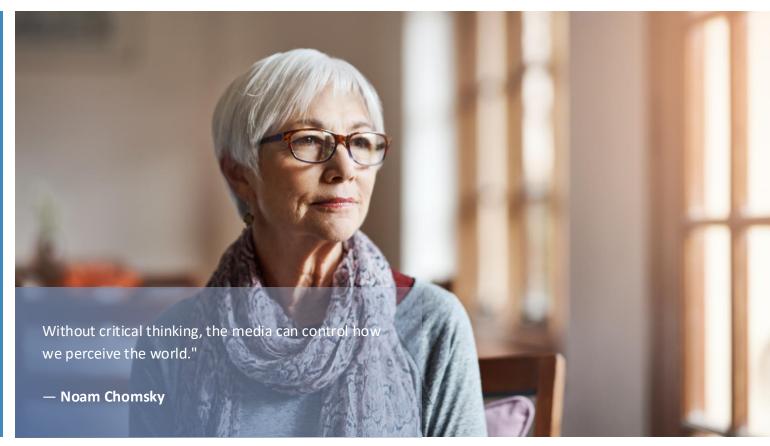
Ask a librarian, or consult a

fact-checking site.

If something sounds suspicious, emotional, or unbelievable – pause and check before forwarding it to others.









- Posetti, J., Ireton, C., Wardle, C., Derakhshan, H., Matthews, A., Abu-Fadil, M., Trewinnard, T., Bell, F., Mantzarlis, A., 2018, "Journalism, 'fake news' & disinformation", UNESCO Series on Journalism Education, pp 43-109
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- ComissionEuropa.eu (2024) Tackling online disinformation. Available at: https://digitalstrategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/online-disinformation (Accessed: 20th August, 2025)
- Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, Little book of scams(2024) available at: https://www.scamwatch.gov.au/system/files/little-book-scams-2024-english.pdf
- Social Media Scams and How to Spot Them (2019) available at: https://www.pandasecurity.com/en/mediacenter/social-media-scams/





THANK YOU

Does anyone have any questions? Follow the project updates

Rok Vukcevic (Aforisma) Tel.: (+39) 050 2201288 Fax: (+39) 050 2209491 info@aforismatoscana.net

