

Five

Things to do to Spot Fake News on Coronavirus



Centre for Democracy & Development
Centre pour la démocratie et le développement

April, 2020

Nigeria is awash with different kinds of articles on the coronavirus, all purporting to state fact. We are going through what is called an ‘infodemic’. According to the World Health Organization, an infodemic involves an “excessive amount of information about a problem, which makes it difficult to identify a solution.” With this information overload, it can be exhausting constantly trying to decide what is true. These are questions one should ask oneself, particularly with news articles that advocate for changing your behaviour concerning the virus (e.g. wearing/not wearing masks, taking a particular herb to "cure" the virus).

Look Beyond the Headlines

Headlines can be sensational or outrageous in a bid to get clicks or views. Think-are there other sources to confirm this article? What is the actual story? Who wrote or shared it? Is the person credible?

Check Multiple Credible Sources

It is important to CHECK more than one credible news source and also the websites of the NCDC, WHO and the verified accounts or channels of the local health and administrative authorities. It is also good to check the other links, statistics or sources that may be in the article or news item.

Checking the author of an article may not be something we are used to, but this is the perfect time to pick up the habit. Who wrote the article? If a journalist, what media does he work or which platform published the article? Otherwise, is the person a health expert working for a verifiable clinic, institute, or government entity? If not, our advice is to chuck it in the bin. If the news is important enough, a verifiable expert will speak on it.



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Be Wary and Be Careful with What You Share

When you get new information, especially during this time, it is fine to be skeptical.

An example: CDD recently debunked a story whose headline was “No Nigerian is hungry, we have disbursed 100billion naira to poor Nigerians’-Lai Mohammed”. With so many videos of residents in different locations complaining about palliatives not being sufficient, it is highly unlikely that this headline is true. The price of oil has hit historic lows and oil revenues form the majority of government receipts. So, where did the government get 100 billion to disburse to Nigerians?

The next step after seeing an article or headline should be to investigate the source and contents of the article. If you find that the information is false, let others know! If you are not sure, do not share.

Sometimes a news article will cite a valid health source but misquote them or fabricate statements. The good thing is that the reference is verifiable, so go ahead and verify from the source. For example, this article falsely claims that UNICEF said the coronavirus does not live in hot regions and exposure to a temperature of 25 – 27C will kill the virus. It also claims “drinking hot water and exposure to the sun will do the trick”. Confronted with an article quoting UNICEF, what do you do? That’s right-you go to the UNICEF website to

What is the date of the story?

With coronavirus, things change rapidly. A two-week-old article's facts are unlikely to reflect reality. Be wary of sharing outdated events and articles. Sometimes old news stories can be used to skew the thoughts or feelings around current affairs. When was the story originally posted?



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Tips for spotting fake news on Coronavirus

1



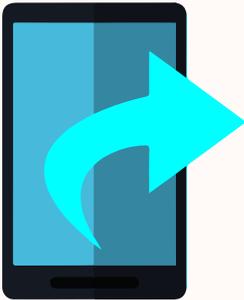
Look beyond the headlines

2



Check multiple credible sources

3



Be wary/ careful with what you share

4



What is the date of the story?

5



Ask the experts

Ask The Experts

Ask questions. When in doubt, ask someone you feel may be more knowledgeable of the news or the situation, a doctor or health worker perhaps. You can even go on fact-checking sites like the WHO Mythbuster:

(<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/myth-busters>), www.snopes.com and the NCDC.gov.ng. You can also forward suspicious messages for verification at +2349062910568 or contact us on twitter: @CDDWestAfrica.

Final Word

These do not represent all possible practices that can help with approaching coronavirus-related information, but we believe they are a great start. While it may initially be burdensome to be so cautious with information, we are happy to report that if you practise these 5 enough, they will become second nature. They can save you from unnecessary malaise.

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The Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) was established in the United Kingdom in 1997 as an independent, not-for-profit, research training, advocacy and capacity building organisation.

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