

BELIEVE IT OR NOT

I One of the more serious problems in the media today is fake¹ news – false information that's spread in order to gain attention and influence people's views. A recent example is an article published in 2018 about a couple who decided to name their baby three emojis – ☺☺☺. The article claimed the name was legal, explaining that the United States has the most flexible naming laws in the world. The story quickly went viral² on social media and was accepted by many people as fact. Eventually, it was discovered that the entire story was made up. The couple didn't exist, and emoji names are not legal in the United States.

II Fake news is increasingly common on social media sites. One reason is that it's profitable. Fake news stories tend to be outrageous³, so they generate a lot of clicks and help make sites popular. Popular sites can charge more for advertising because companies that sell products want their ads to reach a large audience. If a site can show that it has millions of users, companies will pay them a lot of money to post ads. This makes a huge difference to the site's profits.

III What's worrisome⁴ is that social media sites have become a major source of news. A recent survey showed that 70% of Israelis get political content⁵ from social media sites. This is surprising because a majority of those surveyed also believe a lot of fake news is spread on these sites. It's not entirely clear, then, why people rely on them for their news. One reason may be that people overestimate⁶ their ability to spot false information. The evidence, however, suggests otherwise.

IV Media expert, Dr. Michele Rosenthal, recommends following a few simple rules to separate the fake news stories from the accurate ones. "When you come across an article on a website you're not familiar with," she says, "try to find another source of information so that you can confirm the facts." She also suggests looking out for the typical warning signs, like headlines⁷ with exclamation points⁸. "And let's not forget to use our common sense," she says. "An emoji name ... really?!" Her main message is to become a smart media consumer. It's good advice since apparently, fake news is here to stay.

¹fake / كانب

להפוך לוויראלי / ينتشر مثل الفيروس. ينتشر بسرعة

³outrageous / فاضح

⁴worrisome / مثير للقلق

תוכן / مضمون. محتوى (n)

להפוך בהערכתه / يبالغ في التقدير

⁷headline / عنوان (n)

⁸exclamation point / علامة تعجب

B Answer the questions about the article.

1. What do we learn from paragraph I?
 - (i) Why news is fake.
 - (ii) Which names are legal.
 - (iii) What fake news is.
 - (iv) Which emojis are names.
2. According to paragraph II, why do social media sites post outrageous news stories?

PUT A ✓ BY THE TWO CORRECT ANSWERS.

- (i) The stories convince people to buy more products.
- (ii) The stories attract more people to social media sites.
- (iii) Social media sites are major sources of news.
- (iv) Social media sites know what kinds of stories people like.
- (v) The stories help social media sites make money from ads.
- (vi) Social media sites want to spread interesting news stories.

3. According to the survey mentioned in paragraph III, many people believe social media sites spread fake news. Why is this surprising?

COMPLETE THE SENTENCE.

Many people still get

4. According to lines 17-19, people can't always spot false information. What example from the text shows that this is true? Take your answer from another paragraph.

COMPLETE THE SENTENCE.

People believed that

5. Why does Dr. Rosenthal recommend looking for additional sources of information? (paragraph IV)

COMPLETE THE ANSWER.

It can help you check whether

6. According to Dr. Rosenthal, what is ONE sign that a news story might be fake? (paragraph IV)

ANSWER:

7. What prediction does the writer make in line 26?

- (i) Fake news will probably continue to be a problem.
- (ii) Fake news will not spread as fast in the future.
- (iii) People with common sense won't believe fake news.
- (iv) Fake news will not spread among smart