Fake News in Presidential Election between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump

The definition of fake news is “false stories that appear to be news, spread on the internet or using other media, usually created to influence political views or as a joke” (Cambridge). It’s a tactic used by politicians, or voters, to further their success in political elections by making other candidates look bad. With the increasingly popular use of technology and smartphones, spreading fake news is much more successful than ever before and more easily accomplished.

In the 2016 presidential election between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, fake news was used a lot. For example, there’s a popular quote supposedly said by Trump about Republicans that says “If I were to run, I’d run as a Republican. They are the dumbest group of voters in the country. They believe anything on Fox News. I could lie and they’d still eat it up. I bet my numbers would be terrific.” Lots of people believed he said this. “Many Guardian readers will have seen this quote, attributed to a 1998 interview with Donald Trump in People magazine, in their Facebook news feed. It’s a great quote, but he never said it” (theguardian.com). This is a great example of the kinds of false quotes that were spread during this election. This tactic was not only used against Trump, though. Both candidates had an extreme amount of fiction made up about them that angered many people who unfortunately bought into it.

Fake news was used quite possibly more than it ever has been during the 2016 election. It would be almost impossible to calculate which of the candidates was more affected by fake news, but from what I witnessed personally, Trump was the most affected by the spreading of false news. Rumors and stories were everywhere about things he had supposedly said or done that upset many people. However, many people reasonably argue that Hillary Clinton was affected by it more. Many people also argue that that’s what caused her to lose the election, and certain studies have been made about this very topic and if that’s possible. A study at Stanford University revealed that “For fake news to have changed the outcome of the election, a single fake news story would need to have convinced about 0.7 percent of Clinton voters and non-voters who saw it to shift their votes to Trump, a persuasion rate equivalent to seeing 36 television campaign ads,” the authors conclude. The study comes with important caveats. Gentzkow said, for example, that a voter doesn’t necessarily need to recall a specific news story in order to have developed a negative view of either Trump or Clinton” (Stanford). Overall, it is a fact that both candidates received their fair share of fake news that year.

While fake news is something that may almost seem humorous, it’s actually very dangerous. “Americans care about being informed... People know that they have political decisions to make, that their votes matter, and that they shouldn’t make them in a vacuum. False news makes the basic responsibilities of citizenship much harder” (The Center on Congress). It’s important for voting citizens to know true facts about the politicians they’re voting for or against. Fake news could cause many people to change their minds about who they’re going to vote for during the presidential election. Certain spreading of fake news can stir up arguments and angry citizens. When making an important decision like voting, people need to know the facts.

The dangerous aspect of fake news can be avoided if people try to avoid it. In fact, certain studies have been made on how to avoid seeing false information in the news. In one particular

study, “the researchers found that Democrats trusted mainstream media outlets more than Republicans do — with the exception of Fox News, which Republicans trusted far more than Democrats did. But when it comes to lesser-known sites peddling false information, as well as “hyperpartisan” political websites (the researchers include Breitbart and Daily Kos in this category), both Democrats and Republicans show a similar disregard for such sources” (We Forum). This study suggests that crowdsourcing could very well lower the amount of fake news people see. There are also ways to determine if a news article is fake news or not. A study by Harvard Summer School suggests that people “Vet the publisher’s credibility,” “pay attention to quality and timeliness,” “check the sources and citations,” and lastly, “ask the pros” when it comes to reading news about politicians.

In conclusion, fake news is not a good thing. It makes people angry and can lessen their trust for certain politicians. Sometimes, seeing so much fake news can sway voters to vote for a different candidate instead of the candidate they originally intended to vote for. To avoid seeing false information when voting, it’s important to only read the news you know you can trust. Before making a decision as important as voting, make sure you know the facts. The spreading of fake news can be deterred if many people work to discourage the spreading of it.