

influences what we may be exposed to via searches and online shopping. We are exposed to a seemingly never-ending blitz of competing data that pummels our smartphones, search engines, and laptop computers.

Algorithms, Helpful or Harmful?

An algorithm is a computer program that is designed to filter, concentrate, or manipulate digital information for any number of purposes. An algorithm can be helpful to track your heart rate via your smartwatch or it can analyze what you like to purchase and serve you up similar items for faster searching. But algorithms can also potentially harm us by controlling the news we are exposed to or the social media posts we most frequently see (Broussard, et. al., 2019).

Such algorithms could lead to fake news or ads that masquerade as news (Bean, 2018). The ads themselves may be fake and may not offer what they appear to promise. They may also be used to gather your personal information. By employing all the assessment methods we discussed, hopefully you can stave off these annoying pieces of information and not become a victim to their less than authentic message.

That said, no one wants to be recklessly manipulated by information delivered to them by an algorithm, but we must all strive to do a better job at reading between the bias algorithm lines. What's at stake? Our future value system as we know it. Not properly analyzing information can:

1. Lead you to follow a false cause
2. Leave you feeling foolish
3. Tarnish your credibility
4. Attract the wrong people
5. Create undue stress
6. Compromise your values
7. Harm your mental health

Joseph Pulitzer, Legacy of a New York Congressman and Non-Bias Purveyor of News



This unabashed disregard for truth propagated in many social networks (one of the biggest misinformation data aggregates) has resulted in political and global economic strife the likes of which have not been experienced since the printing press was invented over 500 years ago. In 1904 Pulitzer wrote, "Our Republic and its press will rise or fall together..." (Topping, 2018, para 22).

If we choose to recklessly share information without vetting, much is at stake personally as well as politically. If we fall victim to any of the 10 fallacies we will soon discuss, our mental health may be comprised! We may experience what psychologists call cognitive dissonance, an uncomfortable psychological state that exists when there are inconsistencies between one's behaviors and cognitions (Festinger, 1957).

Such cognitive dissonance can cause much emotional pain and physical hardship leading to negative, stressful consequences (Migliore & Bean, 2020). The simplest example of cognitive dissonance can represent the feeling someone

