

The Internet Can Get Lost.

In the Privileged world we live in today we are lucky enough to be surrounded with information about any single, possible thing anyone may be curious about. News articles, facts, statistics, rumours and conspiracies can be found in just a fraction of a millisecond in just one Google search. However, as fortunate as we are to have access to all this valuable knowledge offered, is it really doing us a favour? Just one wrong question can plummet us into a complete unknown world we never intended to visit. We explore it with fear and disbelief to then retaliate, shutting the browser down.

We walk away mind blown, our hearts set on an opinion that is completely irrelevant and ill-informed in relation to the issue we ventured out to research in the first place...

Let's take the NHS website for example, the trusty NHS24, and the first point of contact for all those hypochondriacs out there with a common cold or a sore throat. The welcoming venue where you are automatically handed a doctor's degree and a medicine school graduation photo as you find yourself self-diagnosing with "vampire syndrome" or "Alice in wonderland syndrome".

The beauty of the NHS website is its A-Z list with all the illnesses or health concerns for you to ponder over at your leisure.

But wait, it gets better.

The list doesn't just share with us all the bizarre illnesses out there, but also a "helpful" catalogue of symptoms that are associated with the illness. So, let's imagine our typical hypochondriac has a headache, and our worried individual then curiously ambles down to NHS24. By trekking through the dangerous terrain of the website, our hypochondriac has managed to match his symptoms with "Toxic Shock Syndrome" or "Fibromyalgia; two potentially fatal and extremely rare diseases that are hilariously miles away from the hypochondriac's real condition: stress, created by spending too much time on the NHS website.

Now don't get me wrong, the website does have its positives as it can give sound advice for pre/post treatments as well as information on booking or ordering prescriptions online. However, how many of us can truthfully say that they went on the NHS website without looking at least one condition out of idle curiosity? Exactly. In searching for internet answers, it's all too easy to get lost.

Another case in point is politics. Don't worry I won't bore you too much on the excitement of Brexit or the current state of the British economy. Instead, I'll be taking a close look into the opinions shared across the UK over the December election period.

On the 12th of December 2019, Westminster held an important referendum to elect the party that will have total control over our country for the next four years.

Now, classic election behaviour is as follows: social media posts, hundreds and hundreds of social media posts. Your opinion cannot simply just be your own; it must be everyone's opinion too. For the weeks running up to the elections, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram were flooded with various hash tags and bold statements about Boris Johnson and his "modern day Nazis" (a comment made by a Labour supporter online).

For many people, especially those who have no idea of what's going on in the complex world of politics today, this can be one of the first pieces of information they learn about the Conservatives. During the run up to the 12th, more and more young people were intrigued into how awful these "selfish" and "heartless" people could be... the rape clause, austerity, gambling our future with Brexit. The people needed a hero. But not your typical superhero. A 70-year-old English man, who doesn't wear a tie, glorifies himself at Glastonbury, and who won't destroy his enemies with a nuke...

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It was hard to believe he was a terrorist (*sigh*) as the Conservatives perked up and fought their ground.

And the battle between the various opinions goes on and on as more people are dragged into the chaos that is British Politics, without having the slightest idea of what information is true or more importantly, what key information they're missing out. And so, the war continues with numerous losses along the way as people repeatedly defect from side to side after hearing one small fact they didn't know about before. The extensive list of casualties ranges from the truth to your very own brain cells.

Finally, let's talk about fake news.

All of us at one point in our lives have read some ridiculous excuse of an article we've found on Facebook or the unknown realms of Google. We so innocently read these articles believing every single made up word from the Aldi equivalent of our well-known news sites. But how does fake news start I hear you ask? Well, someone has overheard a couple of words, maybe even just one and in their head has created this Oscar-worthy story to publish on "CCB news". It goes viral. Friends are sending it to other friends, liking it, commenting on it, posting about it. Soon the naivety of the British public takes over as we start saying goodbye to our loved ones as we wholeheartedly believe we're going into World war three.

Soon enough it all dies down, only for it to be awoken again by some other eavesdropper listening to a random conversation about the monarch. They then log onto their social media account to make the entire world aware that the Queen of England has in fact just died. And has she really? Of course, not because the last time I checked some 20-year olds Twitter wasn't put in charge of the distribution of Global news.

Now, obviously I can't tell you all to just stay away from the internet or your phones because that would be ridiculous, how would we all survive? Instead I ask you to just think. I mean genuinely think. The last time you suffered from a sore head, were you really on the cusp of death? Or the time you were told Boris Johnson was in the process of selling off the NHS to suck up to Donald Trump, was everyone then suddenly kicked out of hospital? And the last time you were told that climate change is a myth, did the ice caps unexpectedly refreeze?

So, the next time you tie your shoelaces, check the weather, and count off the supplies in your rucksack, before you set off on another of your internet expeditions, make sure you've also packed your common sense.

Or... you'll probably soon get lost.