

Elon Musk and Hillary Clinton Fans on the Web Are Entirely Fake!

Shadowy world of social media fraud revealed in report

AN INVESTIGATION has revealed a shadowy global marketplace for social media fraud and how celebrities are paying for thousands of fake followers.

MILLIONS of fake Twitter and Facebook accounts are feeding a shadowy global marketplace for social media fraud, a new investigation has revealed.

Facebook, Twitter and Google ENCOURAGE such fraud

because it helps them sell ads!

The *New York Times* report, released today, states that up to 48 million of Twitter's claimed 330 million monthly active users are actually fake. That is nearly 15 per cent of all Twitter accounts.

Twitter has refuted the figure, but the platform is far from alone.

Facebook revealed to investors that it hosted up to 60 million fake accounts, more than twice as much as previously estimated.

The new report claims these fake accounts, also known as bots, are influential in shaping public opinion, amplifying messages, and spreading fake news.

They can also defraud businesses and ruin reputations.

 [Facebook and Twitter have vowed to get tough on fake accounts. Source: iStock.](#)

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However, US Senator Mark Warner, a ranking member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, which has been investigating the spread of fake accounts on Facebook, Twitter and other platforms, told the *Times* that the creating and selling of them falls into “legal grey zone”.

“The continued viability of fraudulent accounts and interactions on social media platforms — and the professionalisation of these fraudulent services — is an indication that there's still much work to do,” he told the newspaper.

The report also looks into Devumi, one of the most popular companies for buying social media followers — which reportedly has 3.5 million fake accounts on offer for its clients.

Devumi reportedly sells Twitter followers and retweets to celebrities, businesses and anyone who wants to appear more popular or exert influence online.

The *Times* analysis shows that the company has provided customers with more than 200 million Twitter followers.

And, there are some big names in among those.

***Romeo + Juliet* star John Leguizamo has Devumi followers, according to the report. So do Michael Dell, the computer billionaire, and Ray Lewis, the American football commentator and former Ravens linebacker.**

Kathy Ireland, the one-time swimsuit model who now presides over a half-billion-dollar licensing empire, has hundreds of thousands of fake Devumi followers, as does Akbar Gbajabiamila, the host of the show *American Ninja Warrior*.

Dean Leal, who works in the adult film industry and tweets from @PornoDan, told the *Times*, “Countless public figures, companies, music acts, etc. purchase followers. If Twitter was to purge everyone who did so there would be hardly any of them on it.”

 [The Times claims John Leguizamo has Devumi followers. Source: News Limited.](#)

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The Times also claims that foreign powers are also using the fake profiles to spread propaganda.

It states Devumi’s products are used by an editor at China’s state-run news agency, Xinhua, paid the company for hundreds of thousands of followers and retweets on Twitter.

An adviser to Ecuador’s president, Lenín Moreno, also bought tens of thousands of followers and retweets for Mr. Moreno’s campaign

accounts during last year's elections.

However, Devumi's founder, German Calas, denied that his company sold fake followers and said he knew nothing about social identities stolen from real users.

"The allegations are false, and we do not have knowledge of any such activity," Mr Calas told the *Times* in an email exchange in November.

Last year, Indiana University research showed that users of Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr were being overwhelmed with **propaganda, fake news, hoaxes, and outright lies**.

The researchers, led by Dr Diego Fregolente Mendes de Oliveira, found social media users were struggling "to cope with the information overload caused by the messages that flood our screens" and did not question information sources or whether it had been verified by reputable organisations.

Automated "bot" accounts were also sharing fraudulent stories in greater numbers, it found, adding to users' confusion and exhaustion.

"Our results suggest that one way to increase the discriminative power of online social media would be to reduce information load by limiting the number of posts in the system," the report found.

"Currently, bot accounts controlled by software make up a significant portion of online profiles, and many of them flood social media with high volumes of low quality information to manipulate public discourse."

— *with Jennifer Dudley-Nicholson.*