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● FAKING IT

Facebook and Twitter are too big to allow fake users

They should be regulated in the same way as TV stations and newspapers, which vet the information they publish

THERE'S SOMETHING in common between amazing story of "Nicole Mincey," the pseudonymous Twitter user with 146,000 followers who was retweeted by President Donald Trump and then disappeared overnight along with a few other online personae, and a recent prank by a Berliner frustrated with his inability to get Twitter to remove hate speech. The common element is the obvious solution to both problems, which rarely

surfaces in discussions of trolling, fake news and cyberbullying.

Social networks should be able to ban anonymous accounts. If they refuse to do so voluntarily, government regulators should force the issue.

Nicole Mincey was apparently a fake African American identity that helped sell Trump-related merchandise online. It was part of an enterprise supported by pro-Trump social media posts from several fake accounts representing people whose back-

grounds, looks (illegally used stock photos, and views might appeal to potential buyers. The whole scam blew up after the Trump retweet prompted the owner of the photo stock to look into the matter. But how many other pro-Trump and anti-Trump accounts on Twitter and Facebook are actually fake? How do we figure out which of the famous internet echo chambers are even real? Is there a way to make sure real people are not regularly misled and confused by the purveyors of fake opinions who are just trying to sell a bootlegged MAGA cap?

The German story also involves a retweet by a top government official—Justice Minister Heiko Maas. In a video Maas tweeted this week, Shahak Shapira, an Israeli-born satirist and musician living in Berlin, explains that he tried to flag about 300 tweets violating Germany's hate speech laws to Twitter, but the few replies he received alleged that the posts didn't go against the platform's policy. Shapira then travelled to Hamburg, where Twitter's German office is located, and spray-painted the fronts of the office building. "Jewish pigs," one said. "If you hate Muslims, retweet," said another. The accounts that tweeted this used pseudonyms, of course.

Germany has a recently-passed law obliging social networks to delete hate speech within 24 hours of it being reported. With the link to Shapira's video, Maas also tweeted a report from a government-funded study showing that Twitter only deletes 1% of hate-speech posts after they're reported by users, while Facebook erases 39% of such posts and YouTube 90%. All three platforms delete almost 100% of the posts after being contacted again via e-mail. "#HeyTwitter, that's not enough!" Maas wrote.

Both with Mincey and with the racist tweets in Germany, it took particularly persistent users to draw attention to spurious and offensive content. The networks, though they profess a willingness to fight fakes, cyberbullying and other abuses, aren't particularly proactive about it, and they have a plausible explanation: They cannot police their vast user bases, and they need a lot of help.

But there's an easy answer to that defence. Neither "Mincey" nor most of the tweets Shapira sprayed on the pavement in Hamburg would have been possible had

Twitter required identifying information from users before creating accounts. The platform's anonymity—its privacy policy specifically allows pseudonyms and multiple accounts—gives bigots, swindlers and bullies a sense of impunity. It's not clear what else it does for users; after all, the accounts with the most followers—those of public personalities and journalists—are, as a rule, verified by Twitter. People don't attach much value to anonymous opinions. They may appreciate an account that specialises in a certain kind of content or even an interesting bot—but what would be the harm in identifying their creators?

Facebook, unlike Twitter, has a strict policy against multiple personal accounts and pseudonyms—which it doesn't enforce. If an account has been reported as using a fake name or impersonating someone, it may require an image of a government-issued ID. But the company vehemently protests when people try to force it to identify users. A UK court case in 2013 is a great example. When the parents of an underage girl who had repeatedly used Facebook to hook up with men proposed the pre-identification of users, Facebook made a number of surprising statements.

"Facebook cannot proactively prevent an individual from registering and creating a Facebook account and profile," the company testified. "It is simply not feasible to review over 1 billion profiles to locate a single user who may be lying about his or her name. No technical program or mechanism exists to prevent an individual from lying about his or her identity and/or age." All it could do, Facebook said, was shut down the girl's accounts—the new ones she set up every time—after the fact.

The judge sided with Facebook.

In reality, both Facebook and Twitter would be able to identify users if they wanted to. It would be difficult for them to require a valid credit or debit card, the way one does in application stores or on Amazon, and require regular updates to the card information. That way, all accounts linked to one card would be tied to their actual owner, and underage users' accounts would be tied to their parents' identities.

This would immediately resolve the problems of fake names, anonymous bullies, troll armies and hate-speech law violations. There would still be cases of identity theft, but the platforms could easily alert a user if a new account attempted to use his or her card data.

Such identification, of course, would hurt whistleblowers and opposition activists in oppressive regimes. But, for their own safety, those of them who want to hide their identities should stay off Facebook and Twitter, anyway: There's a greater chance that a hostile government or corporation will track them down there than on more secure, encrypted messaging platforms or on the Dark Web. As for the world's unbanked, one could argue they are of little value to the advertisers who fund

the social networks and thus non-essential to their business models.

There's plenty of anonymity to be had on the internet for those who need it. There is, however, no reason the huge corporate platforms which essentially trade in our personal information should be allowed to get on a high horse as defenders of privacy. These platforms are huge media companies that have as little to do with the internet's early ideals as today's Apple has with the company Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak launched in a garage in the 1970s. They should be regulated in the same way as a TV station or a newspaper, which always knows the authors of the information it publishes.

The social platforms hold on desperately to anonymity because it's the basis for their inflated user numbers, which they sell to advertisers and the stock market. If they give it up—in reality, not just on paper like Facebook—competitors will spring up to offer it. These are not good reasons for the advertising market's dominant players. They should face up to their responsibility and start caring whether their users are real—and why they might not want to give their real names if they are.

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● COMMON BUSINESS SPACE

Shared offices for start-ups

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A co-working space is like a hotel where, instead of rooms, there are offices. The concept has become the latest trend in the global start-up environment

With a great idea, comes a great responsibility, hassles, bills, salaries, PPTs and ... office space? If a list of top-10 problems faced by prospective Indian entrepreneurs is ever made, finding an ideal office space, and the costs associated with it, will undoubtedly feature near the top. Real estate prices have always been on a higher side in our country, and even with the recent dip, renting or buying commercial space still costs a bomb. As a result, start-ups working on the threadbare model looking to cut corners cannot really afford to have a dedicated space which has a recurring cost of its own.

The silver lining, however, has appeared in the form of the emergence of a 'common business space' culture, which can also be termed as co-working spaces or a shared business services set-up. Essentially, it can be understood just as a hotel where, instead of rooms, there are offices. The concept has become the latest trend in the global start-up environment, and almost 80% are spaces in the UK—which is the hub of co-working culture—are planning to expand.

It is still an exception rather than a convention in India, and experts are of the opinion that it is the most ideal work culture concept that is suited specifically to the Indian social, cultural and economic traits.

First, the increasing population in India has already created an enormous pressure on the limited amount of real estate resources available. The infrastructural development that needs to be followed for every dedicated office space is also huge, which does not optimise the scarce resources at hand.

Second, many international travellers frequently marvelled at the unparalleled quality of India's hospitality. Adhering to the adage of 'Atithi Devo Bhava' (the guest is akin to God), Indians have been engrained since their childhood to go out of

their way in order to make the guest feel happy and content. This is why India's hospitality sector has grown exponentially, and implementing the same principle on the shared business centre concept guarantees its phenomenal growth as well. Businessmen all around the world are now travelling to India, buoyed by the impeccable, extremely well-equipped infrastructure and professional service quality of its shared and serviced business spaces.

Third, the costs associated with such common business spaces in India is also less as compared to many other countries. Value-for-money services are available in India for a much lesser price and without any apprehensions regarding the quality of product or service. This further distinguishes Indian commercial hospitality from the West, which is more aloof, standardised and uses a cookie-cutter approach. Therefore, the individual attention to needs and an option for customisation that is available in top Indian serviced business set-ups endears it further to global clients.

It is, however, incorrect to say that every space in India provides a similar kind of working environment.

The most important determinant of the service quality depends on the management running the space. While some may focus on just implementing the best infrastructural equipment and automation, others might give more leverage to the warmth of human interaction and being flexible enough to adapt to any of the client's requirements or concerns.

In fact, businesses across the world are slowly moving towards the co-working spaces as they have identified the amount of savings they end up making, which has a highly favourable effect on the Return on Investment (RoI). The only aspect that bothers entrepreneurs is whether a common business centre can be transformative enough to reflect the unique identity of the organisation and be efficient enough to serve all its clients in a satisfactory manner simultaneously? Well, if Indian business centres are to be considered, the job has been done exceedingly well till now.

Businesses across the world are moving towards co-working culture. They've identified the amount of savings they end up making

HUMAN MIND HAS always been stimulated by automation and artificial intelligence (AI). In today's age, what is needed is not the denial of their existence and relevance, but the need to acknowledge the harmony.

The manufacturing sector in India is expected to contribute 25% of GDP by 2020 and reach \$1 trillion by 2025. It will demand higher productivity, better efficiency, reliability, perfection, uniformity, flexibility, customised solutions and, above all, matching global standards—directly associated with choosing the right technology, i.e. high level of industrial automation. Clearly, automation is key to the growth of the manufacturing sector and the way to scale up the value chain in a progressive manner.

Automation offers opportunities that can help the industry catalyse market requirements, reduce manufacturing downtime, improve efficiency of machines and increase productivity. In order to attain error-free results and considering the current ecosystem, it is inevitable for manufacturers to lean towards one-stop automation solutions.

With the transition towards Industry 4.0, also known as IIoT (Industrial Internet of Things), there is an opportunity for man and machine to constantly communicate and complement each other's performance. A connected shop-floor based on a sturdy Industry 4.0 framework is enabled with transparent and real-time data analysis and so is a lot more competitive, efficient and flexible.

Make world-class in India

The coexistence of man and machine is not a new concept. We have known it for ages, and automation is India's window to the future

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An example of the utility of a high-end and connected automation solution is India's automotive industry, which is one of the fastest growing sectors in the world. It relies heavily on well-automated ecosystem to assemble multiple complex components seamlessly with constant checking and precision at every step.

A challenge the automotive industry faces is 'recall', which can happen due to a defect in a single component—causing huge setbacks to the credibility of a brand and even safety of the users. To tackle recalls, automation solutions like 'traceability' can help manufacturers to a great extent.

Another challenge is optimising costs, which can be done effectively through 'flexible manufacturing'—this solution can tell how manufacturing sites need to step up with facilities that allow not only to produce in large quantities, but also to produce based on varying customer requirements with the right standards and precision.

Companies also need to establish the right chord between machines and men. This can give rise to new skill development, particularly for shop-floor workers, and lead to their effective utilisation.

The ongoing conversation around automation in general and robots in particular



has depicted robots as the reason for job losses. Robots are not living beings, but are the creation of man, and are programmed to do a particular task. Operating robots requires a skilled workforce, which is an opportunity of job creation, but with more advanced skill-sets.

The future of automation demands that workers do not lose their creativity by executing time-consuming, repetitive or potentially unsafe jobs that are best performed by a machine. We are of the view that by getting machines to do repetitive tasks, man is freed to do 'fulfilling' work.

As per a recent McKinsey report, au-

tomation's boost to global productivity is expected to be 0.8-1.4% annually over decades. The technologies are being adopted in almost all industries and countries, but the speed and strength will vary as it depends on various technical and economic factors. For example, machines need to simulate the full range of human performance capabilities and have to be economically viable when compared to wage levels. This is very much applicable to India (and to an extent to China) because of its large workforce and heavy reliance on predictable physical activities needing considerable upfront capital investment for automation.

So, for an emerging economy like India, automation may take time to become viable, but whatever is the time frame, it will have a significant impact on the workforce. This is unlikely to result in unemployment, rather it will open new avenues of growth in multiple industries and in ways that may be difficult to imagine today. When computerisation/IT was introduced in Indian banks in the 1980s, there was a widespread fear that employees would lose their jobs. Not only did this fear prove unfounded (no job losses), on the contrary the productivity improvements brought about by computerisation had a positive spin-off in attracting private players to the banking sector and generating more employment. Gradually, new avenues were created and we all evolved to a brighter future.

The coexistence of the man and machine is the solution for tomorrow. Automation is needed for increased output and decreased costs, and also to remain competitive and produce goods that are consistent and of high-quality.

Automation and productivity-raising measures are necessary to sustain economic development. The countries that have already touched high levels of manufacturing will need even higher levels of investment, whereas the Indian industry has the opportunity to leapfrog this 'automation curve' to take full advantage of automation technologies available today. Our aspiration should not only be to make in India, but also to make world-class in India, and automation is key to achieving that.