

43% of Meta Ads about Starmer Contain Harmful Financial Disinformation

The image displays four screenshots of Meta advertisements, each featuring a video of Keir Starmer. The ads are sponsored by various entities and contain disinformation claims. Each ad includes a 'Learn more' button and a 'Library ID'.

- Actual News:** Sponsored, Library ID: 471661862296037. Text: "Information of this magnitude has shaken the entire UK! Platform, now available for everyone!". Video text: "LIVE DOWNING STREET", "PM: Self-interest is yesterday's politics", "STATE OF THE PARTIES", "LAB CON LD SNP REF OTH", "211 251 3 36 5 10", "13:08".
- Jaipur English Winglish Zone:** Sponsored, Library ID: 399992919758361. Text: "EXCLUSIVE TO THOSE WHO WATCH THIS VIDEO", "KEIR STARMER ALLOWS YOU TO START AT £250", "PEOPLE ARE SHOCKED BY KEIR STARMER'S STATEMENTS".
- Change UK:** Sponsored, Library ID: 1184766112571751. Text: "An official announcement of this magnitude has shocked the whole of the UK! A platform now available to everyone!". Video text: "START YOUR PATH TO FINANCIAL PROSPERITY TODAY!".
- Britishbro5:** Sponsored, Library ID: 1706628896819924. Text: "EXCLUSIVELY FOR THOSE WHO SEE THIS VIDEO", "KEIR STARMER HAS ALLOWED TO START FROM £250", "SO I CHALLENGE".

43% of Meta Ads about Starmer Contain Harmful Financial Disinformation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Fenimore Harper has uncovered a **financial disinformation campaign** which has been using **deep-fakes of Prime Minister Keir Starmer** to scam people out of their money.
- **Over 250 of these adverts have appeared on Meta's platform** since the election.
- **Up to £21,053 has been spent, reaching up to 891,834 people.**
- **They represent 43% of all Meta adverts about Prime Minister Keir Starmer, meaning harmful disinformation ads risk outnumbering authentic ones.**
- **Some of the adverts are still running now.** Fenimore Harper has been able to identify these instantly using Meta's own A.I. model, Llama 3.1 70B.
- **These findings indicate that AI-powered disinformation campaigns are a growing threat on social media platforms. More must be done to moderate them.**

Introduction

Disinformation spreads online due to three main motivations: for **financial gain**, for **political gain** or for **social gain** (attention).

More often, we are witnessing **low-quality disinformation built for financial gain** bleed over into having **real-world political ramifications**.

Recently, the [false claim that the perpetrator of the Southport stabbings was an asylum seeker](#) played a role in catalysing the social unrest and riots in the UK. This claim was spread primarily by the website Channel3Now.com, with the stated goal of publishing '[as much news as possible](#)' in order to make advertising revenue.

Social media platforms play a large role in promoting sites like these to wider audiences. While the claim appeared on their website, it reached the masses via their X (formerly Twitter) account.

In this report, we document a disinformation campaign which is more advanced than those we've seen before on Meta's platform. It features [more ads and deep fakes than campaigns we've seen earlier this year](#).

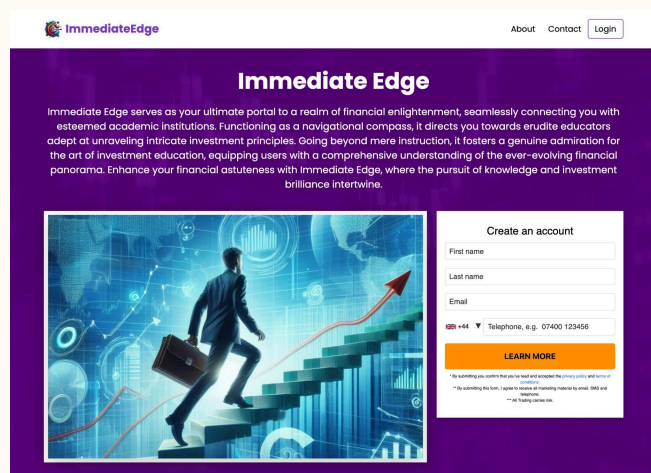
To conclude, we propose that these campaigns can be prevented sooner by implementing an AI-powered disinformation-classifier- 'fighting fire with fire'.

1. What is the nature of the campaign?

These adverts represent a financially motivated disinformation campaign¹ direction people to a fraudulent cryptocurrency trading platform called 'Immediate Edge'.

The campaign suggests that 'Immediate Edge' is part of a new 'project' or 'platform' endorsed by Prime Minister Keir Starmer which can earn its users life-changing sums of money.

Many of the links used in the disinformation campaign now lead nowhere. When it was running, it would lead users to a landing page which would ask for the victim's name, phone number and email.



IMMEDIATEEDGE.BIZ - ONE OF THE MANY DESTINATIONS OF THE ADS


¹ Disinformation: deliberately sharing of false or misleading information. Misinformation is the unknowing or accidental sharing of misleading information.


After they enter these details, they are contacted and encouraged to make deposits into a fake online trading platform. Scammers typically show a fake portfolio making great gains, encouraging victims to deposit more.


When the victims request to withdraw their funds, the scammers disappear and the victims never see their money again.

'Immediate Edge' has over 55 negative reviews of Trustpilot, mostly from victims complaining they lost their money or were hounded by scammers over the phone.

Some reviewers still appear to believe that Prime Minister Keir Starmer has endorsed the platform.






David Lord
1 review  GB

 8 Jun 2024

Kier Starmer said this is a good idea!

I almost signed up to this because of ITV and Kier Starmer claiming it to be legit... turns out you cant trust either the media or a politician to tell the truth. Why the opposition leader of the UK government is advising people to join this is beyond insane to me

Date of experience: 08 June 2024

 Useful **3**  Share 

One review referencing the disinformation campaign

2. What do the adverts say?

Example 1: [click to view](#)

A deepfake of Keir Starmer, claiming to be the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and leader of the Labour Party, presents the offer:

"Your life is about to change. I am Keir Starmer, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and leader of the Labour Party. I have been waiting for you. Today is your lucky day. I don't know how you found this page, but you won't regret it."

The ad claims that 45 individuals have been specially selected to earn "life-changing money" through a mysterious project. It promises substantial daily earnings of £1,000, amounting to £7,000 weekly or £27,000 monthly, without needing any prior knowledge or special skills.

It emphasises that **"this is not a scam"** and that Keir Starmer himself does not need anything from the viewers.

Example 2: [click to view](#)

In another ad, Keir Starmer introduces the 'National Invest Platform':

"Now it's a reality, I, Keir Starmer, am officially announcing the launch of the new National Invest Platform. To make money on this official platform, all you need is a phone or computer."

He explains that users can fund their accounts to start trading and make money anytime, even while sleeping. The ad emphasizes the platform's transparency and reliability, encouraging citizens to invest in cryptocurrencies and new financial technologies.

Example 3: [click to view](#)

Some of the adverts use third parties while citing that it is an initiative from the Prime Minister. In one advert, a deepfake of

Prince William endorses the platform, expressing the Royal Family's support:

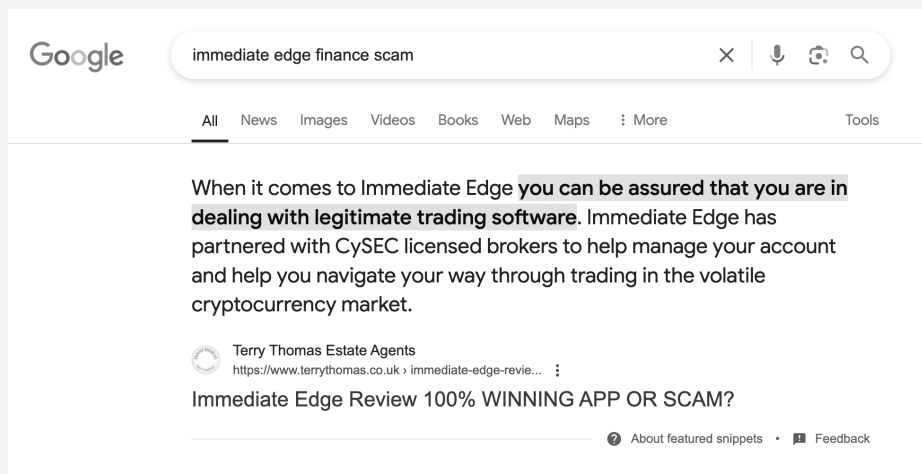
“Good afternoon, honoured citizens of the United Kingdom. I am pleased to announce that I, Prince William, and the entire Royal Family fully support Prime Minister Keir Starmer's initiative and his new platform.”

The ad claims that this initiative is necessary and will help improve the lives of citizens, urging viewers to join and create a better future for the country.

GOOGLE'S A.I. MISTAKELY PROMOTES DISINFORMATION

When faced with a deal that seems 'too good to be true', it's usually responsible to do your own research and find out the facts. Many people, after seeing the adverts, may have turned to Google to check if 'Immediate Edge' is a scam.

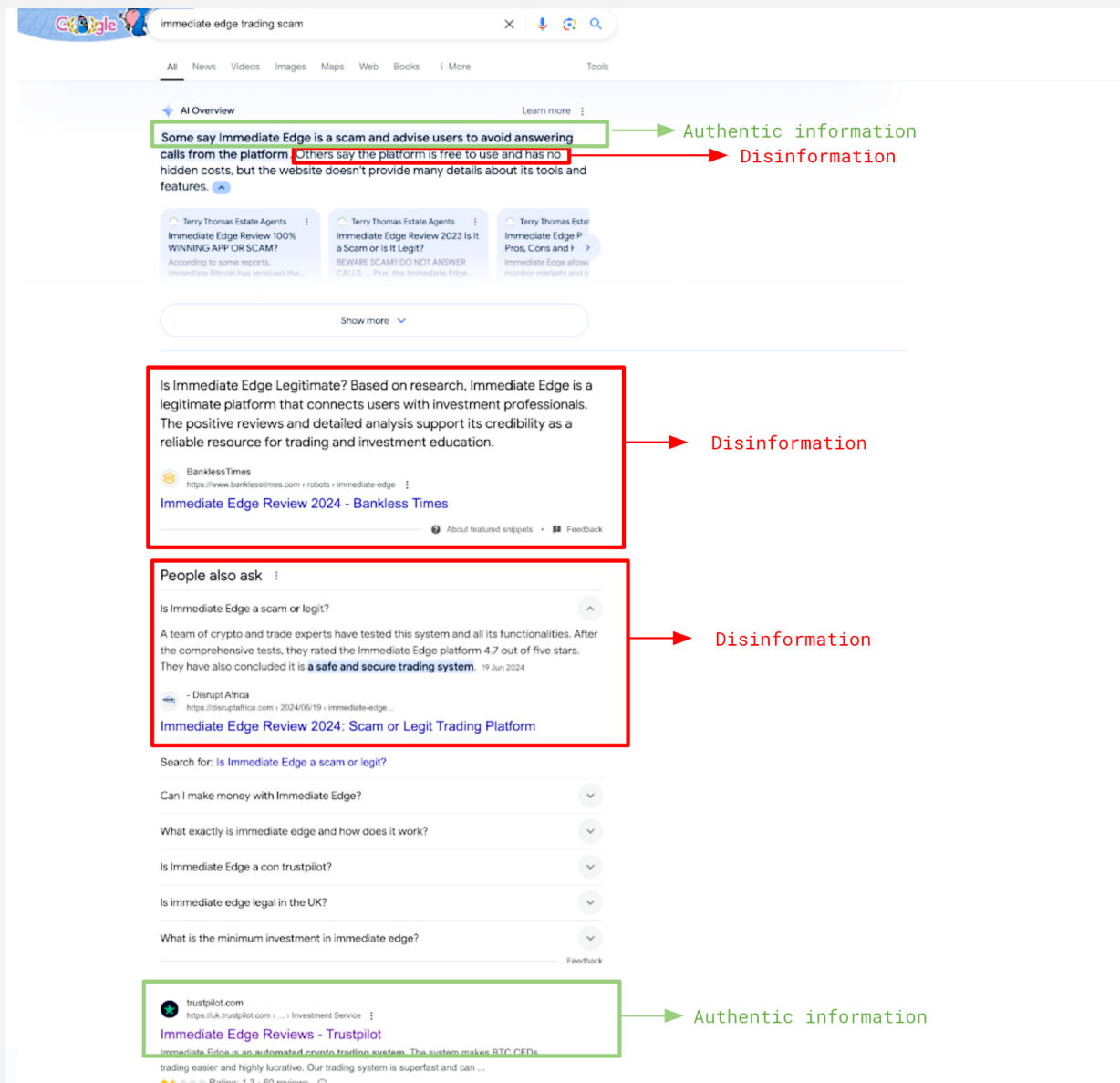
However, Google's own recommended results places disinformation above authentic search results. By using SEO-hacking techniques, **scammers are able to place their own copy in Google's 'featured snippets'**, leading the top result being a **glowing endorsement for the scam**.



Other variations of the search such as 'immediate edge trading scam' also promote disinformation. [Google's controversial AI overview feature](#) does pick

up on the negative Trustpilot reviews, it also summarizes that the platform is 'free to use' and 'had no hidden costs'.

Beneath this, another featured snippet endorsing the scam is displayed, followed by Google's 'people also ask' Q&A module, which also promotes the disinformation.



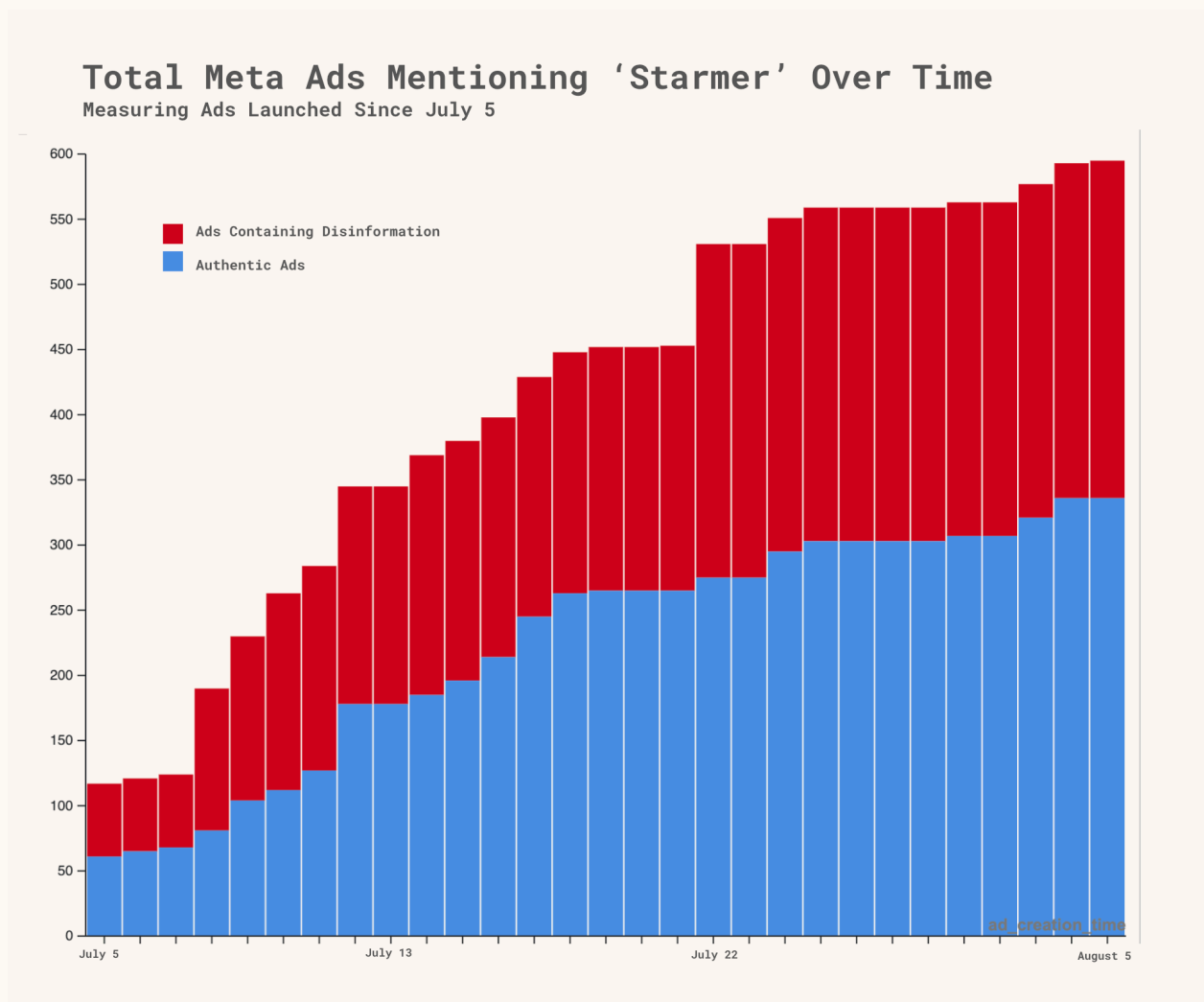
Disinformation promoted by Google

Users have to scroll down - past several paragraphs of disinformation promotion - to read the Trustpilot reviews which reveal the nature of the scam.

3. How many adverts were there?

In the month following the election, **259 disinformation adverts mentioning Prime Minister Keir Starmer** were launched on Meta's advertising platform.

In total, there were 595 adverts which mention the Prime Minister. This means that **43% of all ads about the Prime Minister contained harmful financial disinformation.**



4. How many people did it reach?

In total they reached up to **891,834 people**. This is based on Meta's own data found on their Ads Transparency API.

Facebook provides a range of impressions for each advert launched, the number above represents the maximum number of people the campaign could have reached.

5. How much was spent on these adverts?

This campaign was funded by **14 different currencies**, including Columbian Pesos, Thai Bahm, Uruguayan Peso, Bangladeshi Taka and United Arab Emirates Dirham.

Converted to GBP, the total spent from July 5 - August 5 was a maximum of **£21,025**.

Currency	Original Currency Spend	Spend in GBP
THB (Thai Baht)	352,497	£7,832
USD (United States Dollar)	10,110	£7,926
EUR (Euro)	3,477	£2,976
MXN (Mexican Peso)	28,083	£1,171
AED (United Arab Emirates Dirham)	2,197	£469
AUD (Australian Dollar)	297	£153
GTQ (Guatemalan Quetzal)	1,492	£151
RON (Romanian Leu)	798	£137
CAD (Canadian Dollar)	99	£57
BDT (Bangladeshi Taka)	699	£5
PKR (Pakistani Rupee)	8,089	£23
UYU (Uruguayan Peso)	1,198	£23
COP (Colombian Peso)	14,999	£3
GBP (British Pound Sterling)	99	£99

Currency	Original Currency Spend	Spend in GBP
Total Spend in GBP: £21,025		

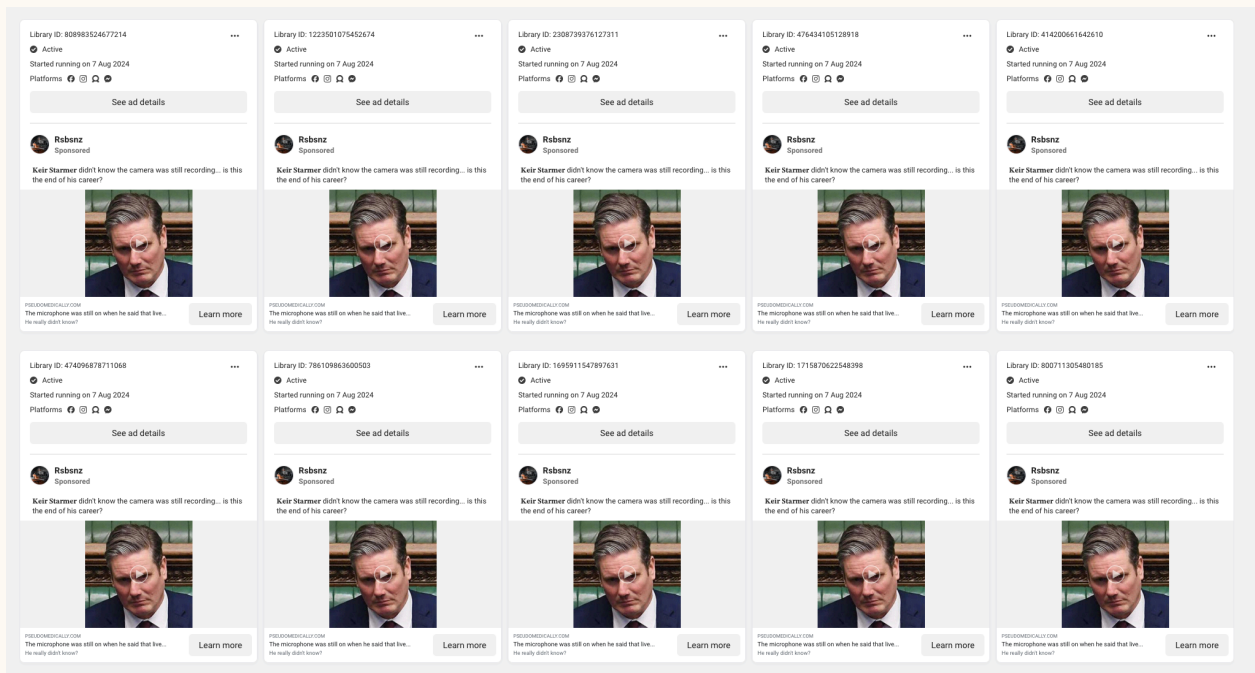
6. Is the campaign still ongoing?

At the time of writing (Friday 9 August 10:20), **at least 15 adverts** which used identical copy, images and links to the other adverts **are still running**.

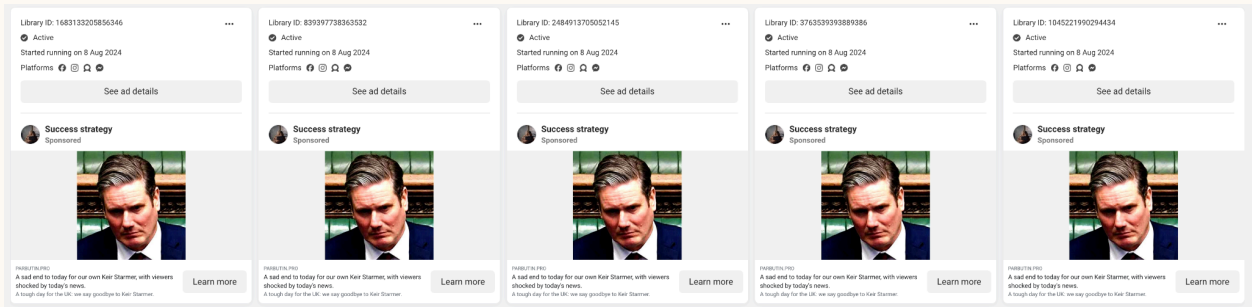
These are not included in our totals as we analyzed ads from July 5 2024 - August 5 2024.

We were able to detect these using our A.I.-powered process to detect high-risk misinformation for our clients. We used the latest open source language model release from Meta ([Llama 3.1 70B](#)) to assign a 'fraud score' to each ad found in the library which mentioned 'Starmer'.

These ads were flagged by our system.



Active ads launched on Wednesday 7 Aug



Active Ads launched on Thursday 9 Aug

CONCLUSION

This campaign shows that **the disinformation on Meta's platform is getting worse, not better**. Compared to the [campaign we uncovered early this year](#), there are twice as many ads and twice as much money has been spent on them.

There's no silver bullet. A portfolio of measures need to be identified and implemented with haste. As a first step, **we believe that even more transparency, from all online platforms, will allow the public to better scrutinise and understand the information they are being presented with.**

Reviewing each advert manually isn't feasible at scale. However, with Meta's extensive experience of A.I. - including providing the **model used in our own analysis** - there should be a way to automate this process so ads are removed before they reach 100,000s of people.

Our findings show that more must be done to curb online disinformation. These campaigns can now impersonate well-known figures with ease, and sow disinformation online at an unprecedented rate. They pose a huge risk to individuals, public figures, businesses and to our democracy.

Recent events have shown how **even small pieces of false information can cause serious harm if not addressed immediately**. Platforms, the government, the public and the media all need to be doing more to support the healthy and safe online discussion.

This discovery was made possible by [Meta's Ad Library](#). Any ads covering issues, elections or politics are publicly available to view

on this portal, in addition to their estimated ad spend and reach. This was an initiative started in the wake of the Cambridge Analytica Scandal of 2016.

However, most other platforms do not have this level of transparency. [Twitter's Ad Repository](#) only covers adverts served in the EU, after their political Ad Transparency initiative was shut down in 2019. TikTok does not have a similar publicly accessible ad transparency initiative.

Transparency in online advertising following the 2016 presidential election helped to somewhat slow widespread sharing of false news. 8 years later, another step-change is needed.

Recommendations for organisations

- 1) **Build A.I. into to your organisation's risk detection systems.** Manual monitoring solutions will be too time-intensive to keep up with the pace of the millions of social posts every day. A step-change must be implemented if organisations wish to stay ahead.
- 2) **Teach your organisation about the motivations and tactics of disinformation campaigns.** Understanding the psychological and strategic drivers behind disinformation is key to developing effective countermeasures. Regular training sessions can help teams identify and mitigate such risks more effectively.
- 3) **Implement robust ethical guidelines for AI usage within your organisation.** As AI becomes increasingly integrated into digital communications, it's crucial to establish clear ethical guidelines. This ensures that AI tools are used responsibly, preventing them from being exploited to spread disinformation or manipulate public opinion.

ABOUT FENIMORE HARPER

Fenimore Harper is a media insight and research firm. It was founded in 2021 by Marcus Beard, after working as a communications adviser at HM Treasury, Cabinet Office and 10 Downing Street.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Marcus led the UK Government's digital counter-misinformation strategy. Working internationally, he advised partners such as NATO, the G7 and the governments of Ukraine, Bulgaria and North Macedonia.

Marcus' writing and research has appeared in The Times, The Telegraph, The Independent, The Guardian, and Bloomberg. He has also provided political commentary for BBC News and Sky News.

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APPENDIX

LINK TO ALL ADS: [Click to View](#)

EXAMPLE VIDEOS:

Example 1: [click to view](#)

Example 2: [click to view](#)

Example 3: [click to view](#)