Facebook or Fakebook?

Social media sites, such as Facebook, have become hotbeds for the spread of fake news and other misinformation, due the user-generated nature of its content. This means that the entirety of the content of the site is created by the users and shared among users by those same users, rather than having content provided from one central source such as happens on a blog or personal website. This is a very serious problem, particularly for the less discerning social media users, however it is not the responsibility of the social media companies to police or put a stop to such practices. This is due to the fact that social media sites, as their name plainly suggests, are not news sites. Additionally, there is no agreeable and effective way, in my opinion, that a site such as Facebook could stop the spread of fake news. It is down to the publishers of news stories and the users themselves who share, discuss, and otherwise propagate the spread of these fake news sources, to do their own research and form their own thought out opinions on what is and isn't real and true news.

Primarily, Facebook does not advertise to its users that it is a reliable network for sharing the most accurate breaking news stories. Facebook markets itself as a place to connect with friends who you know in the real world and keep in touch with them. In times past, Facebook actively discouraged users from adding people they don't know in the real world as friends, and this still largely holds true among those who continue to use Facebook. As a result, one should not log in to Facebook and expect that it is a reliable source for accurate and relevant news, especially if they would not trust such things from their friends in person without the need for research or verification. If a site is meant to be a place where people connect with their friends and colleagues, as all social media sites are, then that is all the site is responsible for ensuring. Facebook is only required, by nature of their service, to facilitate interaction among users rather than to determine that what their users are sharing is accurate and truthful absolutely all the time. In the same way that if a person is mentally dense enough to take satire as truth,

we don't blame the satirical medium, we should not blame Facebook for its users' inability to discern the truth.

Additionally, not only do I feel that Facebook should not be responsible for policing the content that is posted for accuracy, I do not feel that they or any outside group can be allowed to be responsible for such an important job, particularly if people insist on misusing Facebook as their primary source of information gathering. In theory, this idea of policing seems to work well, but it only takes one corrupt person who is on the team in charge of checking content for accuracy to compromise the whole system. This person could simply use their powers to flag certain news outlets or stories as disreputable simply because they disagree with it. This problem remains in place regardless of who is in charge of fact checking stories or assigning reputation to news outlets. Whether it is Facebook themselves or an independent agency, this risks is still in place. Giving anyone the power to determine what news the general public receives is an almost certain way to ensure that news becomes even more biased than it already is, and could even go so far as to result in censorship based on difference of opinion, which is not acceptable in a free world. This problem becomes even more exaggerated if it is a government agency put in charge of this job. As the news that is shared tends to relate in some way to the government or a political issue, if they are put in charge of policing news about themselves, the government will almost inevitably favor outlets and stories that portray them in a more favorable light.

It is not the job of a company who provides an entertainment and networking platform to have the level of accuracy and fact checking that is present within a new company. Unless a company tells users that it is a news sharing service, then they would be responsible for this function, but not as an entertainment company. In addition to not being responsible for this, Facebook and any other group is incapable of doing such in an entirely objective and still accurate way. As a result, the burden falls to individual users to understand and take responsibility for the content that they generate and spread, rather than passively wanting or allowing a "Big Brother" style organization to do it for them.