

What Is True And What Is Not?

By **Alexander Baron** - Apr 3, 2015



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If you are old enough to remember a world without social media or even a world without the Internet, you will realise how much times have changed. For most people there was no real access to the media; even with the rise of small independent local newspapers and limited local radio, the news was still dominated by corporations.

Go back further in time and there were only newspapers and a few magazines. Add to that, state censorship, and people had no way to verify information. After all, we all know the government lies to us, right?

Though in one sense times have changed for the better, the flip side is that every organisation, every bigot, every crank, indeed every idiot can create a *news* story that may spread to the far corners of the Earth. A recent bad example of this is the horrific Germanwings crash. It is now believed Andreas Lubitz was a mentally disturbed individual who for reasons known only to himself planned not only his suicide but a calculated act of mass murder, but there have **been reports** that he was a Moslem convert. Others that he was not only a Jew but **a Mossad agent!**

Although most people will not take either of these claims seriously, there are many stories out there that are even more outrageous. If in addition to that we bear in mind that sometimes the most implausible stories can be true, how do we decide what to believe? Fortunately, there are a few websites out there that do proper research, and which we can take seriously.

FlackCheck.Org is an American website that monitors specifically the American political scene. Another American website that debunks rumours and lies is **FactCheck.Org**. These people did some impressive work on the Obama “birther” nonsense.

The **Hoaxbusters** website is also worth a visit; this has been running since the last Millennium, so has accrued an impressive index of hoax stories and nonsense.