Can machine learning help us measure the trustworthiness of news?

Quality media, like impartial news, helps us discern fact from fiction and make informed decisions. Traditional methods to evaluate media quality are complex and time-consuming, so we tested whether machine learning can help us catch opinionated news content.

THE EXPERIMENT

Load 1,200 online news articles into machine learning software.

Show it examples of articles that contain opinionated content.

Verify and correct the software's suggestions.

KEY FINDINGS

95%

The software found opinionated articles with a **95% accuracy** rate.

The software began finding opinions after seeing only **20 examples**.

Accuracy increased over time, despite **human error and bias**.

LESSONS & LIMITATIONS

This experiment tested only one of IREX's 18 indicators of media quality (which is whether the author inserts their own opinion into articles). Others, like citing a variety of reliable sources, are not as easy to automate.

Like many machine learning applications, human bias is codified into the software. Measuring media quality can be a subjective exercise. This software doesn't eliminate bias, but it does apply it more consistently.

More research and experimentation is necessary. Machine learning can help us spend resources more efficiently, but more exposure to the technology is needed to realize its potential appropriately and responsibly.

IREX