Mashable SE Asia

Tech

Think you can spot a deepfake? Survey proves that even the best get fooled.

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0 MINUTES

A Nanyang Technological University, Singapore (NTU Singapore) survey of 1,231 Singaporeans has found that deepfakes are easily fooling people into thinking fake news is actually real.

What's more worrying is that these AI-powered tools are also deceiving those who claim to be aware of deepfakes in the first place.

But first, what on Earth is a deepfake?

VIDEO: Presenting 'Home Stallone'.

The term itself is a combination of 'deep learning' and 'fake'. Utilizing the frightening power of artificial intelligence, deepfakes come in the form of videos that depict people doing or saying things they've never even done before.

The artificial intelligence software used in making deepfakes can also change the pitch of people's voices, making them sound super-realistic and convincing.

With that in mind, you can probably understand the worrying consequences of using deepfakes, especially in the hands of people with the intention to do harm.

According to the NTU survey, 54 percent of respondents said they were aware of deepfakes. But not everyone could tell them apart.

In fact, one in three Singaporeans surveyed reported to have inadvertently shared a deepfake on social media, convinced it was real, only to learn later on that it wasn't. These same people also claimed to have been aware of deepfakes. Unfortunately that still didn't prevent them from sharing deceptively 'real' videos online.

The survey also found that one in five respondents regularly encountered deepfakes online, which is a worrying trend, considering that not everyone is aware of the existence of such a tool.

"Fake news refers to false information published under the guise of being authentic news to mislead people, and deepfakes are a new, far more insidious form of fake news," survey lead, Assisant Professor Saifuddin Ahmed, said in a media satement.

"In some countries, we are already witnessing how such deepfakes can be used to create non-consensual porn, incite fear and violence, and infuence civic misrus. As the AI technology behind the creation of deepfakes evolves, it will be even more challenging to discern fact from fction."

VIDEO: Comedian and Director Jordan Peele's deepfake of Barack Obama.

The amount of identified deepfakes online has doubled in just six months, from January to June 2020.

According to Sensity, a deepfake detection technology firm, 49,081 identified deepfakes have been found.

Some notable deepfakes include a video that portrays Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg claiming to be able to 'control the future' thanks to stolen data. Even when you know it's fake, watching the video is still creepy as hell.

"While tech companies like Facebook, Twitter, and Google have started to label what they have identified as manipulated online content like deepfakes, more efforts will be required to educate the citizenry in effectively negating such content," said Ahmed.

The study also showed that Americans are more prone than Singaporeans to sharing deepfakes.

NTU benchmarked their findings against a similar demographic and number of respondents in the U.S.

Though more Americans were aware of deepfakes (61 percent as opposed to Singapore's 54 percent), more of them also inadvertently shared deepfakes on social media (39 percent as opposed to Singapore's 33 percent).

VIDEO: This deepfake of Jim Carrey and Alison Brie is fucking bizarre.

"These differences are not surprising, given the more widespread relevance and public discussion surrounding deepfakes in the U.S. More recently, a rise in the number of deepfakes, including those of President Donald Trump, has raised anxieties regarding the destructive potential of this form of disinformation," said Ahmed.

But the professor also posits that Singaporeans may not have witnessed the impacts of

deepfakes due to the island nation's Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act (POFMA).

However, Ahmed believes that legislation isn't enough to stop the spread and circulation of deepfakes.

Citing a 2018 survey by global independent market research agency Ipsos, which found that while four in five Singaporeans can confidently say they can spot fake news, a staggering 90 percent of them mistakenly identified one in five fake headlines as real.

"We need to continue improving digital media literacy going forward, especially for those who are less capable of discerning facts from disinformation," said Ahmed.

You can check out the full NTU report here.

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