

People are using Facebook and Instagram as search engines. During a pandemic, that's dangerous. | Nieman Journalism Lab

By Tommy Shane

August 12, 2020

Invisible moments of vulnerability are known as data voids: when there are high levels of demand for information on a topic, but low levels of credible supply. Data voids were first defined by Michael Golebiewski and danah boyd in 2019, and describe vulnerabilities that emerge from search engines like Google.

When it comes to data voids, a distinction is usually drawn between search engines and social media platforms. Whereas the primary interface of search engines is the search bar, the primary interface of social media platforms is the feed: algorithmic encounters with posts based on general interest, not a specific question you're searching to answer.

It's therefore easy to miss the fact that data voids exist here, too: Even though search isn't the primary interface, it's still a major feature. And with billions of users, they may be creating major social vulnerabilities.

[...]

Source: [People are using Facebook and Instagram as search engines. During a pandemic, that's dangerous. » Nieman Journalism Lab](#)