Social media favouring a biased vision of news

“We are not a media company“. Though Facebook’s CEO refuses to acknowledge it, social media have changed our way to be informed, which is precisely what this dossier epitomizes. Composed of three press articles from Skynews, The Economist and Quartz from 2018, it analyzes the way social media spread news – fake or real– and the impact they have on their users. Construing these documents, we will see that social media give us only the news we want, limiting our worldview.

With social media, news is just a click away. Indeed, these new platforms offer their users unlimited access to information, by publishing it on their feeds – so that we learn from *Sky News* that 62% of Americans now get their news from Facebook. The network’s algorithm looks for articles that might interest you, based on what you have already clicked on. This process, called “clickbait“, allows you to be better informed by giving you facts – or so it should, says *The Economist*.

For reality is quite different : the will to make you click on an article – which allows social media to make money – leads the algorithm to present you only with elements you might like. *Quartz* explains that this results in you clicking only on what confirms your previous beliefs, giving users a one-sided vision of reality. Not only is this a hurdle to compromise in society (for you believe that people who think differently are wrong), but it could also lead to a manipulation of opinion. *The Economist* uses the example of Russian meddling on social media to illustrate it : by spreading biased – and sometimes fake – information, you can make people lean in your direction. Besides, how can you make informed decisions in your life if you know only one side of an issue ?

The documents therefore propose solutions : *Sky News* and *The Economist* advocate more transparency regarding fake news, demanding that social media companies make sources more visible - all the more so as fake news is often presented in the same format as real news on social media. A selection of information seems necessary to ensure that relevant facts are seen by users, but regulation will have to be imposed by law – unless users themselves decide to vary their sources of information to make sure they have a complete vision of facts, as *Quartz* commends.

Eventually, until social media companies decide to act more reponsibly, it comes to users to be aware of potential manipulation and to ensure they see all the aspects of an issue : only then can social media be a tool to help democracy.

(443 words)