FAKE NEWS AND MISINFORMATION

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ABSTRACT

Fake news is a type of propaganda that consists of deliberate misinformation. This false information is mainly spread through journals, magazines, mainstream media or social media. With the increasing popularity of social media and mobile phone, more and more people consume news from social media instead of traditional news media. Thus social media has proved to be a powerful source for fake news propagation. This paper provides a brief introduction to fake news.

Key words: Fake news, False information, Misinformation, Fact checking.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the 1990s when the Internet was first made accessible for public use, its main purpose was for accessing of information. Over the years, the Internet has grown with plenty of untruthful and misleading information. As fake news was found its way into the Internet, it becomes difficult for people to find truthful information. Fake news is spread online through the social media and the use of fake news websites. Current social media is a fertile ground for the spread of fake news. Users of Facebook play a major role in feeding into misinformation. Content can be relayed among users with no third party fact checking or editorial judgment. Misinformation amplified by new technological means in the Internet age poses a threat to open societies worldwide.

   Fake news is fabricated content deceptively presented as real new. It is consists of stories designed to increase readership, online sharing, and Internet click revenue. It is published with the intent to mislead in order to damage an agency, person or rival. It is well known that fake news spreads faster and deeper than truth.

   There are websites that deliberately publish fake news purporting to be real news. These are called "fake news websites." Such sites have spread political misinformation in the United States, Russia, Germany, Indonesia, and the Philippines [1]. The current social media is largely responsible for the spread of fake news

2. TYPES OF FAKE NEWS

Different types of fake news include [2,3]:

- *Clikbit*: Exaggerated or false story created with the intent of generating clicks to increase ad revenue. These often have "clickbait" headlines, proclaiming that drinking two gallons of water a day is good for you, chocolate will help you lose weight, sugar causes cancer, or red wine will improve your skin tone.

- *Propaganda*: Deceptive story designed to promote author's agenda. It may be politically motivated. Propaganda is used by politicians and governments to promote their agenda.

- *Opinion*: The story is the author's commentary intended to influence the reader.

- *Humor*: This story is for the purpose of entertainment. It is using satire to discuss public affair. The authors promote themselves as delivering entertainment and call themselves comedians instead of journalists. If readers are aware of the humorous intent, they may not take the information at face value.

Other types are news parody, forgery, and photo manipulation. These types of fake news are based on two factors: levels of facticity and deception.

3. IMPACT OF FAKE NEWS

Fake news stories are fabricated out of thin air. They get a lot of attention on social media and are consumed by millions of people. They are used by politicians particularly during election in the United States, Canada, Britain, China, and the rest of the world.

The politicians use unrelated photographs and fraudulent captions to significantly influence the outcome of election. For example, a fake news claimed President Barack

Obama was born outside the United States; one claimed that President Donald Trump was born in Pakistan [4]; and another claimed that Pope Francis endorsed Donald Trump. Fake news is a critical issue which cannot be ignored in politics. Due to fake news there is an attendant decline in the credibility of many governments and public institutions

The most salient danger associated with fake news is the fact that it devalues and delegitimizes voices of expertise. Fake news undermines trust and serious media coverage and makes it more difficult for genuine journalism. It has been regarded as a threat to democracy. Such deliberately misleading reporting does a disservice to everyone. Fake news is designed to generate money for the creator through ad revenue.

The impact of fake news on the human life may cause conflict or even war. It may cause confusion and moral panic and eventually undermine an informed citizenry.

4. SPOTTING FAKE NEWS

As good citizens, we are duty bound to be eternally vigilant and to correct questionable news when we encounter it. There are at least two things we can do.

- *Evaluate sources*: Evaluate the source of the news and other stories coming from the same source. If the source is not credible, the message may be fake news. Check the author, supporting sources, the date, and your biases. Avoid citing sources that are not credible. Avoid sharing fake news to your friends or loved ones.

- *Consult experts*: You may ask the expert such as a librarians or consult of a fact-checking website. Information professionals, including librarians and journalists, can play crucial roles in helping the public to become informed consumers of information products and services. Widely trusted fact-checking websites include FactCheck.org, Snopes.com, PolitiFact.com, and ProTruthPledge.org.

5. FIGHTING FAKE NEWS

As a culture that values and promotes truth, what can we do to combat fake news? Some fake news problems require action on the part of individuals, policymakers, and media. There is a strong sentiment that librarians should lead the fight against fake news, misinformation, disinformation, and other tactics that undermine access to accurate information [5]. Fake news can be fought using the following means.

- *Media literacy*: This is the ability to think critically about the information you consume. It is part of being an informed and critical thinker. It includes the ability to distinguish between fact and opinion. While facts are accurate reports of what exists, opinions are an interpretation of the events or facts from an individual's point of view [6]. The way news is

presented makes it notoriously difficult to separate fact and opinion in practice. We may not have the time to check out every story we see in the media.

- *Fact-Checking Network*: In 2015, the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) was launched in 2015. It supports international collaborative efforts in fact-checking. Intermediaries such as Google and Facebook may be required to take action for misleading content.

- *Algorithms*: Artificial intelligence (AI) and other algorithms are known for detecting fake news. Since algorithms are used in spreading fake news, they can also be part of the solution. They can help detect questionable news and curb the propagation of fake news. Advanced algorithms can generate "believable" false information automatically. A simple artificial intelligence algorithm (such as naive Bayes classifier) may be used for the detection of fake news [7].

- *Arbiters*: There are three kinds of arbiters: social, legal, and economic. Social arbiters include the press, academics, and activists. Legal arbiters may be law enforcement agencies and government agencies that enforce rules and regulations on fake news. Economic arbiters may be commercial organizations such as Facebook [8].

6. CONCLUSION

In an age where most consumers receive and share their news online, false information can reach large audiences rapidly. Fake news is any information that deliberately intended to mislead. Fake news stories mimic real journalism and can disseminate through social media, email, or chat message.

Although it is not a new phenomenon, misinformation through false news has become lucrative today. The rapid spread of online misinformation poses an increasing risk to societies worldwide. It is a serious problem calling for solutions. A new system of check and balance is needed. More information about fake news can be found in [9] and other books on the topic available on Amazon.com.

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