

The Study of Dangers and Countermeasures of Fake News in Social Media

Yuting Xie¹,
Megat Al Imran Bin Yasin^{2*},
Syed Agil Bin Shekh Alsagoff³,
Lay Hoon Ang⁴

³PhD Candidate, Department of Communication, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia.

²Senior Lecturer, Department of Communication, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia.

³Senior Lecturer, Department of Communication, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia.

⁴Associate Professor, Department of Foreign Languages, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia.

¹ shirley_xieyt@hotmail.com

² megat@upm.edu.my

³ s_agil@upm.edu.my

⁴ hlang@upm.edu.my

(*Corresponding author)

Abstract—Fake news as one of a normal phenomenon all over the world, it exerts a great impact on both individuals and our society. With the popularity of social media, fake news increasingly invades our lives, even brings disadvantages to institutions or countries. According to the analysis of several examples, the study aims to improve the phenomenon of fake news in social media so as to promise the authenticity of news in the field of media and communication. Even though it is difficult to achieve nowadays, especially in the current information era, in fact, it calls for the collective effort by the government, information producers and social media platform, as well as audiences. In addition, this study also expects to offer a reference to future journalism practitioners and related academic researchers.

Keywords—Fake News, Social Media, Danger, Measures, Society.

I. INTRODUCTION

Social media is essentially a category of online media that people can share information, communicate and interact with each other (Ron Jones, 2009: 6). Most platforms of social media support participation, release comments and share information from interested groups. It is a two-way conversation that permits people to connect to other resources and people. With the development of social media, we can benefit a lot in modern society. Meanwhile, it may bring some adverse results, fake news is one of the typical phenomena in recent society.

With the emergence and development of social media, fake news has evolved rapidly. Akhtar and Chakraborty once argued, fake news becomes one of the biggest problems faced in social media (2021). As a new term that became popularized

during the 2016 U.S. election (Quandt, et al., 2019), ‘fake news’ refers to the cases of deliberate presentation of (typically) false or misleading claims as news, where these are misleading by design. Here the phrase ‘by design’ signifies systemic features of the design of the sources and channels by which fake news propagates and, thereby, manipulates the audience’s cognitive processes (Gelfert, 2018). However, fake news is not a well-defined concept, and the current definition approaches are not unidimensional. But we can also find a rough comprehension through the following expression:

The concept (fake news) is currently used both as: (a) a derogatory term denouncing media and journalism; and (b) an umbrella term for various forms of wrong, misguided, or fabricated information. Fake News in the latter sense is part of a larger spectrum ranging from unintentional misinformation (e.g., sloppy reporting) to intentional disinformation (e.g., propaganda). Examples include various discrepancies from factuality along several dimensions and aspects of the transmitted information, ranging from actual content features (including text, images, etc.) to meta-information (e.g., headlines, author information) to more contextual aspects (e.g., framing) whereby combinations are possible (Quandt et al., 2019).

Here is the general route map of this study. For a start, it aims to focus on the production of fake news and ensure the authenticity and vitality of social media. It not only examines the positive and negative influences of social media in regards

to news reporting, but also goes on to research the phenomena of fake news specifically. After that, the researcher will then go on to investigate this problem and further look at the various measures which have been implemented or proposed to deal with fake news in the public domain. In some ways, it can meet more audiences' demands or guarantee their rights, especially prevent them from the danger of fake news when such news productions come to them. These measures will be subsequently scrutinised in detail.

II. THE PROS AND CONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The platform of social media is open to everyone who has a device, an account to use and data or access to the internet (Oparaugo, 2021). Brian Solis created a social media chart (2013) called the conversation prism, in which he categorized social platforms, services and websites into various kinds of social media. The following picture reveals that the existence of social media is not independent. It is a whole organic integration, which will influence people from various fields imperceptibly.



Figure 1: The Conversation Prism 2013(Solis, 2013).

Currently, media is one of the most important sources of information and also exerts a significant positive role in news reporting. To start with, the positive effect of media can expand the space of media, stimulate public participation and raise public consciousness because through that people can exchange information with the assist of mass communication (Nazir, 2017). Oparaugo also argued that current communication within people has never been better and interesting in the history of man (2021). People have the chance to acquire public opinion of certain incidents or current discussions, and engage in more events than ever before as well. Social media becomes a platform for democracy, from where citizens have the chance to monitor government and some politicians. People would not be controlled by social media but engages in it. For example, most of them can put

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their comments on YouTube after watching the news or even establish independent media platforms. Media in any country becomes the reflection of that country. Their positive role makes the nation strong (Nazir, 2017).

Furthermore, social media promotes the prosperity of international economy and cross-cultural communication. In the field of business, social media is used to promote the trade of international products, which can improve the connection with consumers as well as facilitate the exploitation of a broader market (Fuchs, 2015). For example, speculations about the changing prices of goods and statistical studies in various fields can be published in the media. Customers from other countries can find brands and deal with businesses on there, which promote economic progress and cultural integration.

On the other hand, even though social media is advantageous to society, people cannot ignore the disadvantageous effects it has had on society. Present social media can be a very important tool to spread information and awareness to broader audience (Nulty et al., 2016), which brings the culturally diverse as well as intermixed societies of the different countries (Mehmood, 2021). Meanwhile, it conveys massive amounts of information to people flexibly and instantly, unfortunately, false online news also can be spread quickly and is used to manipulate users' behaviour easily. People here can be regarded as the audience that belongs to a cultural category (Ang, 1991), as well as an active participant (Adjoteye, 2021: 3). Some of them may share fake news with other people by social media, which accelerates the interaction of people. Social interaction becomes the heart of fake news (Amarasingam, 2011). If this situation continues, it would even influence users' health, recognition and behaviours.

Fake news has a negative effect on users by making them more anxious and depressed, even causing other serious psychological disorders (Rosen, 2011). It particularly poses a threat to young people, as teenagers who use social media prone to form narcissistic personality. And young adults who have similar habits tend to develop sociopathic or aggressive personality, even suffer other psychological disorders (Nazir, 2017). It is mainly because they have more chance to get access to various information that contains those falsehood of news. It not only has a negative impact on individuals, but also harms the whole society. It becomes hard to maintain communal unity and harmony due to people harbour antagonistic or discontented views (Nazir, 2017). Sometimes it plays with the emotions of people and they may feel more anxious. Media exaggerates the problems relating to their common interests in news reporting, which may lead them to make some serious behaviours, such as terrorist attack. Hence, people are easily immersed in an unsafe environment and society become less harmonious.

This study has found that even though social media gives huge advantages to people, it still poses a threat to them. Hence, people should balance the positive and negative effects of it. They need to utilize their critical thinking and be more initiative instead of just become simple information-receiver. It is also necessary to realize the dangers of fake news, and more details will be demonstrated in the next following paragraph.

III. THE DANGERS OF FAKE NEWS

Many people have heard of fake news, but most of them may do not know its specific definition. Fake news is very complicated. It can be defined as a sort of news that is verifiably and intentionally false, as well as would mislead audiences (Allcott and Gentzkow, 2017). Vary from 'real news', it can be seen as the untrue news which is reported by media, and published unintentionally and deliberately due to lack of reliable sources of information. In fact, 'Fake news' is not in accordance with the actual facts, which can be exemplified by the inconformity of the truth and the necessary contents. That stands for the discrepancy with the fundamental facticity of events or opinions from incidents (Rimer, 2017). There are three types of fake news. First, false information deliberately spread by those who expect to promote political causes. Second, false news is broadcasted by journalists who do not realize it is false. The last kind of fake news is not actually fake indeed. It is simply news that some people do not want to acknowledge, and hope to silence (Rajan, 2017).

Critically, there is more false news exposed to people's life recently (Donald, 2016). People may be attracted to viewpoints that support what they already believe, that social media creates unchallenged environments of affirmation, as well as that some news customers tend to deeply trust falsehoods even after they have come to light (National Union of Journalists, 2017: 69). Fake news is very difficult to correct once misinformation gets a foothold (Nyilasy, 2020). Most people prefer to trust fake news even though they notice it is not the truth, which made huge damage to individuals, even the whole society.

The rise of fake news highlights the erosion of long-standing institutional bulwarks against misinformation in the internet age. Concern over the problem is global (Lazer et al., 2018). Sometimes it has a disadvantageous influence on those innocent people rather than the thing itself. It would cause the vulnerabilities of individuals, institutions even society to manipulations by malicious actors.

For example, in China, there is a woman who was falsely accused of kidnapping suffered huge pressure from the public. The woman's name was cleared after the media revealed the truth. However, people still believe that she actually did such things. Due to huge mental pressure by public opinion, she was scared to go out and got away from people (Chong, 2017).

From this case, people can imagine how huge the damage can be exerted on individuals. Maybe everyone aware of the differences between the real and fabrication, that is whether it is authentic or not. As a form of untrue fabrication, rumour really influences people's opinion. Audiences sometimes cannot recognize fake news, or cannot verify the difference between the rumour and truth, which influences their minds and forms their original impression.

The real news contains the influx of cognition, it is also a kind of entertainment; and the fields of emotion influence the opinions of its audiences. Although fake news contains interesting emotion, it also includes epistemic factors, and has an impact on individuals and societies (Amarasingam, 2014). Another example of fake news which went viral during the election in Malaysia was a rumour that a service interruption

had happened at a vote-counting centre for the Bentong parliamentary seat, as well as 'reports' that a suspicious ballot box had been sent to the centre. Even though leaders clarified the objectivity of the final result, many voters still doubted the authenticity of the elections (Chong, 2017).

Furthermore, fake news may also lead to miscomprehension even xenophobia among citizens in different countries. For instance, misinformation titled "Chinese passengers from Wuhan with fever slipped through the quarantine at Kansai International Airport" was disseminated through multiple social media channels at the beginning of the outbreak of Covid-19. Even though Kansai International Airport promptly denied the fact, discrimination against Chinese people has become widespread in Japan (Shimizu, 2020). At that time, "Chinese visitors have been tagged as dirty, insensitive, and even bioterrorists" on Twitter (Rich, 2020).

From those cases, this study found that fake news really does influence individuals, institutions, as well as the social stability of countries. The impact of fake news is far more serious than the "news" itself. Things would go far worse and pose a threat to the harmony of society if there are not any control or limitation.

IV. MEASURES OF DEALING WITH FAKE NEWS

Many academics have implemented some solutions to fight against fake news, and the National Union of Journalists is no exception.

The first measure they proposed is for government to realize the necessity of law-making and education. Initially, the government need to reform existing regulations and carry out the punishment of false news, or create some new laws, so as to cut the supply of false information (Nyilasy, 2020). To guarantee the facticity of news, western media deem those cheating media as a scandal that would be punished severely. It is wise for them to renew existing law on the basis of modern social circumstances. In Germany, German officials unveiled a landmark social-media law in order to combat the fake news. They devoted themselves to remove illegal information from the platform and work with others to solve this problem (Faiola and Kirchner, 2017). Meanwhile, there is not a written media law in some countries, like China. It is urgent for the Chinese government to create a formal media law that is adapted to Chinese realities. In addition, they can add new education as a part of the national curriculum, popularize the features of social media and strengthen citizens' impression about the seriousness of fake news. It targets the whole society rather than individuals or certain groups. To wipe out fake news, the government should begin with education in view of people lack of discernment about how to boycott fake news (Chong, 2017). In Malaysia, their government also committed to educating their readers in order to let them identify false news. Furthermore, the government also can establish a news fund in local religions, make funding arrangements to guarantee the status of public service broadcasters as well (National Union of Journalists, 2017).

Apart from these efforts by the government, media and journalists should participate in likewise. Media industries and quality journalism are vital pillars in this

information-dependent society (National Union of Journalists, 2017). In this information era, people acquire news mainly from social media. It is necessary for media and journalists to raise their responsibilities on news reporting (Nyilasy, 2020), and try to block audiences' access to view fake news. In addition, timely and effective communication between media and related institutions (especially the department of information source) is also necessary, which contribute to lessening the risk for inappropriate behaviour (Shimizu, 2020).

It seems that news just like a searchlight in the night, which may light up an area finitely and let people notice the limited regions. However, the rest of the regions are in the dark. People cannot fully realize the whole things in view of the fact that the media just broadcast a part of the truth. It is important to illuminate the limited area and report the facts, which mainly depends on the media (National Union of Journalists, 2017). To start with, social media should realize their responsibilities. For those platforms, they should dedicate themselves to enhancing their quality and utilize modern methods that serve users. For the established media, they should actively work towards a more pluralistic media landscape. Additionally, they can involve the protection of media freedom and ethical journalism into the key emphasis in their work, as well as offer a system of redress if these principles are ignored. Last but not least, it is useful to utilize news production methods that highlight veracity (National Union of Journalists, 2017). For example, Facebook restricts advertisements on fake news and not display news which containing misdirecting or deceptive contents in websites or applications. Besides, they also deploy their software and let people distinguish fake news by patterns in user behaviours (Caplan, 2017).

News reporting is a fair and objective process and fake news just like an assault on truth. Hence, journalists also need to lead the common opinion correctly (Rajan, 2017). Enhancing the construction of journalistic ethics become another inevitable approach obviously. Relying on the role expectations, journalists have space to report the news in various forms. In the event of the performances that journalists chose fall outside this range, it would be very dangerous. Therefore, they must carefully adjust their performances to the context that within the scale of permission (Borden and Tew, 2007). Although journalists have the rights to report the news to the public, their performance should be based on their ethic and public expectation because it is their duty. Combined with these views, the researcher discovered that journalists should foster their occupational quality and explore approaches to guarantee the veracity part of what they produce. The common goal of journalists is to ensure the interest of the public. To achieve this aim, they must insist to pursue the truth, promote a sort of loyal sense of moral responsibilities and develop strict self-discipline ability (Borden and Tew, 2007). As qualified journalists, they should regard it as a norm for them and put efforts into their career. In view of the fact that they lead the major tendency of public opinion, it is necessary for them to foster their ability by themselves.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, everyone as consumers of information needs to practice vigilance and devote themselves to fight against fake news. It not only relates to individuals' safety, but also refers to social stability

directly. This needs to lie with the engagement of the user. Ideally, the audience should use reputable fact-checking websites as much as possible (Nyilasy, 2020). To achieve this, everyone should develop some sort of critical thinking right now (Borden and Tew, 2007). In present society that depends on information and communication, it is necessary for people to raise the ability of guesstimate when facing various information, and try not to spread unconfirmed news in daily lives.

V. WILL BE THE SOLUTIONS WORK?

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of these measures this article presented, it would be tested mainly through practices.

Solution one, the legislation of media for government follows the standards of their regulations and have certain effectiveness. For instance, the German government proposed a related law about fake news. Rather than setting a new standard, they simply forcing social media and private companies to comply with existing laws in Germany. To some extent, the appearance of fake news diminished in German society actually (Faiola and Kirchner, 2017). In Singapore, related laws are currently carried out to battle the problem of fake news in the country. Their government also work towards consulting with the media and the Internet companies to find out what the outlines of the legislation ought to be (Tay, 2017). Furthermore, Singapore government use related law to deal with misinformation as well. According to the results of a poll, the government found most Singaporeans supported legislation to deal with fake news. After that, they carried out strong laws to ensure the removal or correction of fake news. Besides, they also named websites such as All Singapore Stuff and States Times Review as websites that perpetuate fake stories, raised the potential impact fake news has on national security, which plays an important role in the depletion of fake news (Tay, 2017). These cases show a better result that fake news has been contained to some extent. Through the legislation by the government, social media have been managed and those illegal behaviours have been supervised strictly.

Solution two, it can seize the root of this problem because it targets on the information maker themselves. Once information producers wake up to the severity of fake news, they may start with self-control behaviours and manage the spread of fake news. From a financial perspective, it is very economical due to media just need to restrict themselves and build professional awareness, especially for the journalists (Caplan, 2017). Even though the media may pour some money into re-shaping their image, the expenditure is within the range of their affordability. For example, both Google and Facebook are removing fake news websites from their platforms of advertisement (Allcott and Gentzkow, 2017). Apart from this, they have taken actions to find out false reports, mark untrue articles and display fewer possibly false information in users' news sources so that assist users to avoid sharing false articles as much as possible (Titcomb, 2016). They commit to removing the news from their services in advance for the sake of their audiences. It can be obviously seen that the significance of self-discipline of social media as well as how they work out in this problem.

Mentioning the third measure, it appears probable the simplest one because everyone can raise their awareness by themselves. Before one thing happens, people could distinguish it critically and initially. According to the full list of tips from Facebook on spotting fake news, the ability of many people has improved. For instance, researchers in Facebook found that some people may consider whether it is reliable or not before they share some information (Caplan, 2017).

Compared among these solutions, the first one seems more ideal and practical. Although most section can be dealt with through society, including responsible and effective media and the conscious users, the determining factor should rely on the government. The legislation by the government contains the management of social media and the education for people. Hence, they did work out and control the production of fake news actually, which can be exemplified by the effective solutions of government in Germany, Malaysia and Singapore (Tay, 2017).

VI.CONCLUSION

With the increasing number of people relying on social media as a source for news (Oparaugo, 2021), it is gradually obvious that, to a certain degree, some people who are unable to distinguish truth from such misinformation or disinformation, may be misguided. In the event of it is being spread by social media, it would exert a huge negative impact on the whole of society (Marchi, 2012). Even though social media can benefit people in many aspects, in the meantime, its negative influences also cannot be neglected that everyone needs to recognize, as well as put some effective countermeasures against them.

With the consideration of these, every social member should involve in, including government, social media, journalists and individuals. Primarily, the government needs to establish some relative legislation, or amend some present rules and punish the behaviours about the spread of false news. Meanwhile, they should start with education to every member in society. In addition, journalists must realize their heavy responsibilities and strengthen the construction of their ethics. They should build their professional quality and pursue approaches to guarantee the authenticity of the news. Furthermore, individuals must raise their awareness and develop their ability to distinguish truth and falsehood. All of these solutions are effective, and the legislation and education of government appear to be the most easily-practiced and flexible ones.

In this era, fake news dies hard (Rimer, 2017). It is very difficult to ascertain its immediate disappearance. Whereas, it forces people to contend with how they establish the connection between knowledge, individuals and society. If people want some solutions to combat complex socio-technical issues, everyone needs to work together and share common social goals to address the issues (Borden and Tew, 2007). Many people may look forward to an ideal situation that fake news will fade away in the near future and society will be better and more harmonious.

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