From Fake News to Online Attention Hyper-Synchronization

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http://controverses.sciences-po.fr/archiveindex/

Controversy Mapping (Bruno Latour)

publicdatalab.org
fakenews.publicdatalab.org

Public Data Lab

Public Data Lab and the “Fake News crisis”
The "Fake News crisis"

https://www.buzzfeed.com/craigsilverman/viral-fake-election-news-outperformed-real-news-on-facebook?utm_term=.qnG0mJyJb#.ximDd5y5B

4 reasons to stay clear of "fake news"

according to the literature, the notion of fake news is

1. Vague

2. Undistinguishable from past forms of misinformation

3. Charged with a simplistic idea of journalistic truth

4. Politically dangerous

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Table 1: A typology of fake news definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Facticity</th>
<th>Author’s Immediate Intention to Deceive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Native advertising, Propaganda, Manipulation, Fabrication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Wardle, Claire
medium.com/1st-draft/fake-news-it-complicated-e0d773336d29

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1. Vague

2. Undistinguishable from past misinformation
3. Charged with a simplistic idea of journalistic truth


4. Politically dangerous


The term “fake news” has also begun to be appropriated by politicians around the world to describe news organisations whose coverage they find disagreeable. In this way, it’s becoming a mechanism by which the powerful can clamp down upon, restrict, undermine and circumvent the free press. It’s also worth noting that the term and its visual derivatives (e.g., the red ‘FAKE’ stamp) have been even more widely appropriated by websites, organisations and political figures identified as untrustworthy by fact-checkers to undermine opposing reporting and news organizations” (p.16)

I can’t help but laugh at the irony of folks screaming up and down about fake news and pointing to the story about how the Pope backs Trump. The reason so many progressives know this story is because it was spread wildly among liberal circles who were citing it as appalling and fake. From what I can gather, it seems as though liberals were far more likely to spread this story than conservatives.

What more could you want if you ran a fake news site whose goal was to make money by getting people to spread misinformation? Getting doubters to click on clickbait is far more profitable than getting believers because they’re far more likely to spread the content in an effort to dispel the content. Win!


“Fake news” is not about fakeness
"Fake news" is not about fakeness. When looking at just the titles of fake and real news articles, I find an even stronger dissimilarity between the two, with high consistency between the data sets and high statistical significance in the differences. Precisely, I find that fake news titles are longer than real news titles and contain simpler words in both length and technicality. Fake titles also used more all capitalized words, significantly more proper nouns, but fewer nouns overall, and fewer stop-words...

When adding in satire articles to the analysis, I find that the majority of our features distributions are common between satire and fake. Specifically, both satire and fake use smaller, fewer technical, and fewer analytic words, as well as, fewer quotes, fewer punctuation, more adverbs, and fewer nouns than real articles. Further, fake and satire use significantly more lexical redundancy.


What is "fake news" about if it is not about fakeness?

What we are considering here, however, are the psychic and social consequences of the designs or patterns as they amplify or accelerate existing processes. For the "message" of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs.

The railway did not introduce movement or transportation or wheel or road into human society, but it accelerated and enlarged the scale of previous human functions, creating totally new kinds of cities and new kinds of work and leisure.


"modern media enhanced and extended the range and scope of those processes of invention and imitation that for him [Gabriel Tarde] constituted the essence of economic life" (p. 11)

... [but also] ...

"caused the processes of individuation that connect psychic and social life to be short-circuited, resulting in the destructive hegemony of the short term over the long term" (12).

1. **an economy of ephemeral attention** that sustains micro-transactions on infinitesimal attention spans;
2. **tracking & recommending technologies** that monitor and foster even the thinnest forms of media engagement;
3. **social media metrics** that encourage users to seek and share contents with high spreadability potential;
4. **virality-oriented subcultures** whose identity is defined by the capacity to spread Internet memes
5. **the use of political trolling strategies** to disrupt the conversations of political opponents.

**Google's success came from an understanding** of what Chris Anderson refers to as "the long tail," the collective power of the small sites that make up the bulk of the web's content... The Web 2.0 lesson: leverage customer self-service and algorithmic data management to reach out to the entire web, to the edges and not just the center, to the long tail and not just the head (p.21)

“The young Macedonians who run these sites say they don’t care about Donald Trump. They are responding to straightforward economic incentives… Several teens and young men who run these sites told BuzzFeed News that they learned the best way to generate traffic is to get their politics stories to spread on Facebook — and the best way to generate shares on Facebook is to publish sensationalist and often false content that caters to Trump supporters.”

Serving different attention markets

The raise of click baiting and native advertising

Data brokers & third party cookies

Behavioral recommendation algorithms


Covington, Paul, Jay Adams, and Emre Sargin. 2016
Deep Neural Networks for YouTube Recommendations
Proceedings of the 10th ACM Conference on Recommender Systems - RecSys ’16
3

Social media metrics
socialisation of a "prosumer" audience

Posters and lurkers

The rise of social buttons

And of social metrics
Vaccari, Cristian, and Augusto Valeriani. 2015. "Follow the Leader! Direct and Indirect Flows of Political Communication during the 2013 Italian General Election Campaign." *New Media and Society* 17 (7): 1025–42.
Meme magic

How 4chan promotes viral ephemerality

The "Pizzagate" conspiracy theory

5

Political trolling

disruption of opponents’ conversations and public debate

"the team doing this research... fail[s] to understand the legitimacy of “public opinion guidance” within the Chinese system... traditional public opinion guidance systems don’t seem to be pulling their weight when it comes to overcoming these problems. The Internet media space has an infinite capacity but its borders and its core are unclear, so some grassroots social issues are always able to suddenly attract the attention of the entire Internet, creating one hot button issue after another”

Political trolling VS fake news

Online attention hyper-synchronisation

We still need to put all this together

Learning from brain hyper-synchronisation

The 65 countries covered in Freedom on the Net represent 67 percent of the world’s internet user population.
1. Epilepsy is not caused by an external infection, but by the amplification and accelerating of normal physiological mechanisms, typical brain functioning.

2. Seizures are catalysed by both metabolic and contextual factors, in ways that are:
   1. multi-dimensional
   2. reciprocal
   3. non-linear (accumulating until reaching a threshold).

Thank you!


