

Chapter 7

Fake News: Origins and Political Impact

Fadi Safieddine

University of East London, UK

Rawad Hammad

University of East London, UK

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the buzzword “Fake News.” In recent years, politicians, media, and members of the public have used and misused the term, fake news, in a variety of contexts. This chapter focuses on the impact of fake news as it is linked to political participation through internet activism. An essential part of understanding what constitutes fake news is to appreciate the different characteristics and labels—Alternative Truth, Post Truth, Propaganda, Satire, and more—which leads readers vulnerable to the impact of fake news on a platform that requires little accountability for the facts or the harm it inflicts. The barriers to presenting a journalistic outlet as nothing less than a reputable news agency are only a few clicks away. In an era dominated by social media platforms, there is evidence that these networks inadvertently facilitated the propagation of fake news and their clickbait-driven profits.

INTRODUCTION

There have been overwhelming concerns about the impact of fake news since the beginning of 2016, especially in the aftermath of several surprise results in the UK Brexit Referendum and the USA Presidential elections of 2016. These concerns have been replicated across the globe, from the French Presidential elections of 2017, the Brazilian Presidential elections of 2018, the Arab Spring Revolution of 2011, and the Bolivian protests of 2019. Examples are mounting of fake news repeatedly meddling in national and local politics; so much so that some argue the term “fake news” has become synonymous with the “weaponisation” of news by foreign powers.

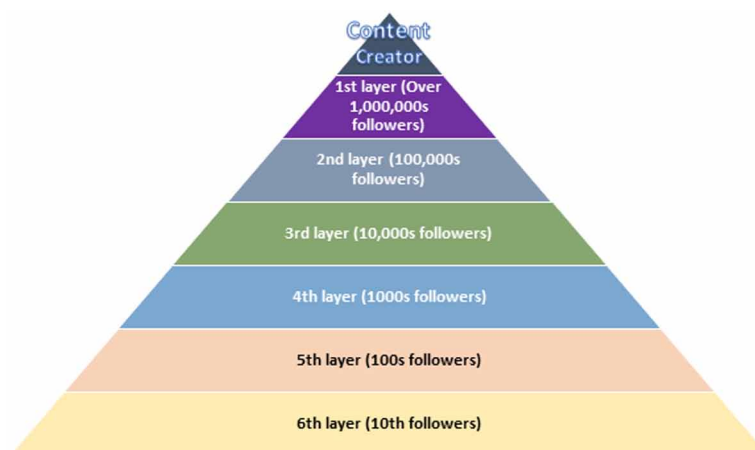
Berghel’s (2017) research shows that political fake news has the tendency to be reposted, shared, and propagated at a much faster rate than truthful news. Indeed, by the time a rebuke arrives, the fake news

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-4796-0.ch007

would have spread and the damage would no longer be containable. Rubin, Chen and Conroy (2015) confirmed that there is a strong correlation between a person's prior beliefs and resistance to changing that belief following a fact-checking rebuke. There is a rewarding aspect to being part of a new phenomenon linked to social media attention that is truly hypnotic. This reward mechanism is that linked to notifications alters things, such as milestone celebrations associated with the number of followers and likes, which is said to be addictive, regardless of whether the material is factual or otherwise (Mejias, 2017). Being the first to share an outrageous piece of news that aligns with one's beliefs, then to see it being shared, validated, and praised, adds to the excitement and rewarding experience. At the top of the chain of the fake news content are the creators. These fake news creators are mostly driven by financial rewards but, on occasion, have political or religious motives.

There is a form of pyramid scheme, which is demonstrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Social media pyramid and ladder for success



In this pyramid scheme, and at the top of the chain, are the content creators who reap much of the financial and political rewards. Despite this, they are likely to be the least noticed. The first and second layers can be considered as major and minor influencers, respectively. Depending on their role, one may find individual influencers referred to as a “YouTube Star, Twitter Personality, or Gamesters.” At the same level, one would find popular newsgroups, media, special interest, and advocate pages, but these are most likely to be well-established celebrities and politicians with social media accounts. The third and fourth layers can be linked to individuals and groups, such as social media activists and promoters. One may argue that users in layers three and four aspire to move up to influencer status. Finally, there are the major and minor social media users occupying the fifth and sixth layers. These are individuals with various stages of social media development and may include occasional users who are only active when interesting events take place. Cyberbot armies, automated fake accounts designed to share, repost, and move up hashtag trends are said to infest layers five and six ahead of a given democratic events. The content creators may use a top-down or bottom-up approach in pushing their content. Ultimately, content creators' success depends on their news being picked up by a top tier group or by individual

17 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the product's webpage:

www.igi-global.com/chapter/fake-news/257819?camid=4v1

This title is available in Advances in Public Policy and Administration, InfoSci-Books, Business, Administration, and Management, Communications, Social Science, and Healthcare, InfoSci-Government and Law, InfoSci-Social Sciences and Humanities, InfoSci-Select, InfoSci-Business Knowledge Solutions – Books, InfoSci-Social Sciences Knowledge Solutions – Books, InfoSci-Select. Recommend this product to your librarian:

www.igi-global.com/e-resources/library-recommendation/?id=124

Related Content

Local and Urban Administrations, Politics, and Elections in Turkey

Hüseyin Gül, Hsian Kamalak and Hakan Mehmet Kiri (2020). *Open Government: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications* (pp. 1348-1372).

www.igi-global.com/chapter/local-and-urban-administrations-politics-and-elections-in-turkey/235235?camid=4v1a

The “Two Ways” of Citizenship Education in China: Benefits and Challenges for China in a Multicultural World

Pablo Alberto Baisotti (2019). *Handbook of Research on Education for Participative Citizenship and Global Prosperity* (pp. 152-171).

www.igi-global.com/chapter/the-two-ways-of-citizenship-education-in-china/217216?camid=4v1a

Drawing in Kindergarten: The Link to Learning in Reading

Gretta Wright (2017). *Handbook of Research on the Facilitation of Civic Engagement through Community Art* (pp. 21-35).

www.igi-global.com/chapter/drawing-in-kindergarten/172975?camid=4v1a

Challenging the De-Politicization of Food Poverty: Austerity Food Blogs

Anita Howarth (2017). *Politics, Protest, and Empowerment in Digital Spaces* (pp. 123-140).

www.igi-global.com/chapter/challenging-the-de-politicization-of-food-poverty/173917?camid=4v1a