

# FAKE NEWS: A MODERN ISSUE

Fraudulent, misstatement, falsification, just to protect one's intellectual property, things get fake. Fake and filthy enough to spread the news over the world.

Nowadays, fake news is circulating around the globe ostentatiously, even causing fear to its intended audiences. Yellow journalism is a great example of "Fake News" that includes intentionally falsified or fabricated information which is published in several media such as in televisions, traditional newspapers and online on social media websites. The social media platforms include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Reddit and many other websites. Additionally, individuals who create fake news are commonly experts who know how to manipulate and gain the attention of people towards their articles or videos they broadcast. However, not all news is fake on social media websites. The obvious method is spreading all sorts of fake information throughout multiple social media platforms since they are presently the most advanced communication platforms that exist in this generation. In comparison to traditional media such as magazines, newspapers, televisions, and radios; social media platforms have attained the top place in terms of the manifestation of fake news. Furthermore, the reason why fake news is created could be done as a form of activism, confronting or supporting political issues, for monetization, or even for fame and reputation.

## HARM TO THE PUBLIC

Can fake news cause harm to the public? The answer is presumably yes if you are one of the targeted audiences, who browse on some bogus articles on social media. Some widespread fraudulent news may cause revolts, followed by causing harm to the public, especially if it has been applied to political issues. The most common, are disturbances amongst political parties or even between democrats and republicans. Protestation and riots may occur, which can then lead to several serious and harmful circumstances. In the past months, during the election days, the term "Fake news" has become popular and is considered to be a threat to the government. On November 27th, President Trump announces the "Fake News Trophy," that was published in the

New York Post article. The President responded to the post through Twitter, his most utilized social media website. He stated, "We should have a contest as to which of the Networks, plus CNN and not including Fox, is the most dishonest, corrupt and/or distorted in its political coverage of your favorite President(me)" according to author Fredericks. This statement was posted with thoroughgoing sarcasm by the president to CNN as a manner of retribution towards what they posted on President Trump during the election. It was the moment that "Fake News" became the headline in most news networks' articles, especially on social media websites.

## MONETIZATION AND BLOCKCHAIN

Since online news has become a new way to learn about the latest events going on in the world, access to news articles has become easier than ever. In addition, lots of news articles have been moved to social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter. But what exactly qualifies as quality news and news that spout nonsense? With the help of a system called monetization, posting news has become easier. As a result, a lot of fake news articles have become viral for many viewers all over the Internet. Fake news articles, just as they sound, are articles that sound like news, but with no given proof. These news articles make money depending on the number of views. Since many viewers can't tell the difference between fake news and real news, the fake news begins to manipulate the audience into believing it. On the other hand, monetizing news on social media has become a common practice to get attention and money, while it manipulates the viewers into believing it, however, blockchain can help reduce these type of news.

Blockchain could be the closest technology to being able to solve the fake news problem by changing the way organizations collect and store data. According to article "How blockchain helps fight fake news and filter bubbles," author Ben Dickson states that "blockchain relies on the decentralized storage and consumption of information" which is in contrast to the centralized mode like Google and Facebook. Data is stored and updated on thousands and millions of independent nodes, making it impossible for any single party to have total control over it. Dickson also mentions that "The key to improving the quality of content distribution and discovery is to involve many parties with possibly orthogonal or conflicting interests in the process." This will make sure that the general interest of everyone is served. Currently,

blockchain would be costly and slow to implement in social media. Any post or activity on a decentralized version of social media platforms would need review and evaluate. Nevertheless, blockchain can help create new business model and opportunities for content publishers, developers, and users.

When searching the web, there's always something that's going to catch the attention of the viewers. One of them is none other than the fake news itself. According to the article, News in an Online World: The Need for an "Automatic Crap Detector", the authors Yimin Chen, Niall J. Conroy, and Victoria L. Rubin states that "the current state of online information is one of overload with many competing sources of varying quality..." Online news is practically everywhere. It is shown on websites and has been pushed on by social media platforms. With the use of online resources like's social media, fake news is one of the easiest things to be found on those platforms. In fact, a lot of this type of news can be shared and sponsored through with the use of monetizing. Monetizing news articles can make access to fake news articles easy. According to the authors, Chen, Conroy and Rubin mentioned that "the online media economy is largely based on monetization of "views" through advertising revenue."

Using monetization makes the sponsors for these news articles are very appealing to look at. Big images, large headlines and even have all caps, just to grab the attention of the viewers. However, fake news can also behave like regular news articles. The differences between the articles are so subtle that someone might not be able to tell the difference. Any news about the government or the president is some of the common topics of fake news. Since political news is the easiest to go viral online, a lot of fake news sites cater to this type of news to make revenue. An article called, The Dark Side of Display: How "Fake News" Sites Monetize their Content, the author Bradley Nickel mentions how these sites monetize their content so easily. He mentions that "the best strategy that paid off though, was to get real people – like Trump fanatics or even the real media –to latch on to the stories and spread them to their own networks." As the news gets to spread the more views the fake news gets. Like advertising, more views results in more money. And unfortunately, most viewers most likely looked at the header without reading the content of the article, falling into the trap.

Most fake news articles are mostly spread on social media; some might even call it the main source for the spread of fake news. In Jonathan Albright's article Welcome to the Era of

Fake News mentions, "...third party applications allow the rapid amplification of emotionally-charged messages across platforms such as Twitter. This strategic distortion of attention can hasten the spread of misinformation and the establishment of 'alternative facts'." The use of social media has created an environment of false information. Since these articles quickly spread on these platforms and usually acts as clickbait, one has to consider whether or not these articles are truly harmful to the viewer. However, even news reports on television aren't even safe from fake news.

## FAKE NEWS IN THE ART WORLD

In the article, "The Art of the Fake News Reel", by Chris Markowski, mentions that "some reporters are reporting on the media itself instead of on the real news." These types of news are attention grabbers. Reporters know that they'll get more views and attention, despite that there is other news that should be more important, than a bunch of Twitter posts from the government. If this news is able to show up on different platforms, then the news is being spread and hyped up for other audiences.

In addition to affecting viewers, fake news has also affected the artist world. Some artists either take the concept of creating fake news sites as a way to get money and other artists will use the subject to create pieces for to spread the word on the current news. Depending on how the piece is portrayed, fake news art can cause confusion or can be received well. An article called "Fake News, Bad Art," author Tausif Noor mentions that "individually, the works in alt-facts are inoffensive, mildly interesting or generally banal; some of them are well-conceived. ... individual works...especially ones that imagine representing various instances of falsehood as equal to actively criticizing misrepresentation." Depending on the viewers these pieces of art that focus on fake news can either be a guide to understanding the news or it could convince that the news is "correct". Much like art, fake news can be interpreted in different ways, depending on the viewer.

Using fake news as a concept of art is a reflection of social phenomena. Some artists strongly criticize fake news, especially political fake news on social media; some others prefer to show different perspectives on viewing this problem. For example, a public process-based

project called Faked/Out proposed a fake-news bureau to create and spread fake news stories. In the essay “Fake It Till You Make It”, author Andrew Hultkrans criticized the idea of this project. He mentions in the essay that, “the project operates from the premise that fakeness and fake news can provide an optimistic space for wish fulfillment and self-actualization...a hopeful futures and unobtainable realities.” However, this “wish-fulfillment” angle of characterizing fake news “seems off and anachronistic” in this time of post-truth. The word post-truth is named as its 2016 international word of the year. It reflects the year dominated by highly-charged political and the circumstances fueled by social media in which “objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion more than the appeals to emotion and personal belief.” Two main factors that influence the authenticity of information online are revealed in this circumstance which is the content posted on social media platforms and the platforms that carry the news.

## DOUBT OR TRUST

People can easily read and share fake news even though they are aware of current atmospheres on the internet. Because anyone with access to the internet can post their opinions online, an individual’s personal belief and emotions can affect or change a fact, and mark itself as a fact. The tendency to look for information that confirms one’s beliefs also allows people to reinforce their own opinions. Meanwhile, fragmented, incomplete expressions can mislead other readers and influence their judgment and worldview. Due to the large variety and amount of users on social media platforms, “technology companies have struggled to define the problem,” as mentions by Elizabeth Dwoskin, editor of the Washington Post, “There is a fine line between false and sensational content.” She also states that Twitter is working on “a feature that would let users flag tweets fake news, but the feature is still in a prototype phase and may never be released.”

Facebook is also fighting fake news with fact-checking labels and test with publisher info button. It is a real challenge because the scope of misinformation on social media network is wide and active; third-party fake-checkers are impossible to check every story. Also, fact-checking can be dangerous when they suspect or judge a news. In the article “Tagging Fake News on Facebook Doesn't Work,” author Jason Schwartz states that “A study has shown that

false news stories as ‘disputed by third party fact-checkers’ has only a small impact on whether readers perceive their headlines as true.” Lately, “trust indicator” is introduced on online platforms, such as Facebook, Google, and Twitter. It could possibly help users better determine the reliability of the content in news feeds. However, according to the article, “Why Zuckerberg’s New ‘Trust Indicators’ Can’t Fix Fake News,” writer Maya Kosoff says that “...their newest idea being a system of ‘trust indicator’ that offer users additional context about the source of the information they’re reading. With the News Verification system, CNN reports, that publishers will be able to upload additional details about their outlets, their writers, and their own fact-checking policies.”

More importantly, much misinformation on social media platforms is driven by commercial profits. Some news organizations rely on social media to find an audience. In the article “How Facebook News Feed Works,” Journalist Josh Constone mentions that “Facebook prioritizes stories you’ll like, comment on, share, click, and spend time reading, which we’ll refer to as ‘engagement’. Facebook also runs both online surveys and offline focus groups to get more feedback about what stories people think should appear.” Facebook’s algorithm spreads news and chooses what appears in other users’ news feeds, injecting advertisement, generating likes, comments, and clicks. With each click comes additional advertising revenue. Because the current online news system is easily manipulated by social media platforms, “it might be time to face a reality – the issue may be with the nature of the platforms that carry the news and the profit systems they work under, not the information itself,” as mentions by Bailey Reutzel in the article “I Want the Truth: Could Blockchain Stop Online News Distortion?” Facebook’s algorithm is designed based on the company’s own profits, influencing how people think and behave, regardless the authenticity of the content. Facebook and Google also updated its policies to ban fake news from using their advertising service. In the article “Google and Facebook Take Aim at Fake News Sites,” Nick Wingfield, Mike Isaac, and Katie Benner common on Google’s new policy and states that, “it remains to be seen how effective Google’s new policy on fake news will be in practice. The policy will rely on a combination of automated and human reviews to help determine what is fake.”

## DESIGN MATTERS

Besides, social media websites such as Twitter often use bots as a mean to post misrepresented images as well as paid advertisements on Facebook pages. On other social media platform such as YouTube, there are fabricated videos declaring that serious terror attacks are hoaxes, but eventually turns out to be real news. These cases are somewhat part of those social media websites themselves and are not considered concrete sources. Facebook, as one of the most used social media platform, is currently losing some of its members since Snapchat is taking over because of its leading user performance. One of the reasons is obviously the fake news they proclaim. For instance, "after the Las Vegas massacre, Travis McKinney's Facebook feed was hit with a scattershot of conspiracy theories," as mentions by Benedict Carey, editor of The New York Times. She follows by saying that "the police were lying, there were multiple shooters in the hotel, not just one and they were covering for casino owners to preserve their business." This is how things get fake, just to protect one's property. Another reason is monetization, "during the 2016 presidential campaign, Facebook sold more than \$100,000 worth of contents" and that includes ads as well as fake messages just to manipulate the public.

As new technologies continue to be involved in the creation of information, social media platforms may need to redesign or reposition their products on the internet, for fighting fake news problem and providing a better user experience. Recently, Snapchat has announced the redesign of its app. "Snapchat sees flaws in "social media" apps and is attempting to fix it by separating the two words within its product...it has two feeds that embody those words," says author Kerry Flynn, the business reporter for Mashable, in the article "Snapchat Just Completely Redesigned Its App. Here's Why." Flynn continually mentions this idea with a quote by Co-Founder, and CEO of Snap Inc., Evan Spiegel, that "The Snapchat solution is to rely on algorithms based on your interests — not on the interests of 'friends' — and to make sure media companies also profit off the content they produce for our Discover platform." Unlike Facebook, Snapchat will focus on relationship because "Spiegel positions Snapchat as an app for an individual and their network of friends regardless of mutual interests," as mentions by Flynn. This solution can help fight fake news because they can communicate with their friends with the content that they create rather than any content on the internet. In this personal way of self-expression, people could strengthen their relationship with friends and free from judgment.

## EVENTUALLY

Fake news can further be described as an epidemic. Once it has been in contact with the public, it will keep on spreading until it gets fully exposed or resolved. Most misleading news are omnipresent and observant in distinguishing and difficult to circumvent them; however, some people become sensitive and emotionally concerned without trying to understand if the news is factual or not. Social media websites are reasonably not ideal methods for looking up news, especially, since people simply browse through them by merely reading the headlines. It is better for people to act intelligently to gather analytical data from various sources, particularly from references that have the best records of trustworthiness journalism.



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