

Spread of fake news around COVID-19 vaccines

Some numbers...



Fake news are 75 percent more likely to be retweeted than true stories



Less than 10% of references indicated respectable sources on Facebook during 2016 elections



90% of people diagnosed with cancer use internet to find more information about their illness



More than 25% of the American adult population tries to figure out online what medical conditions they might have

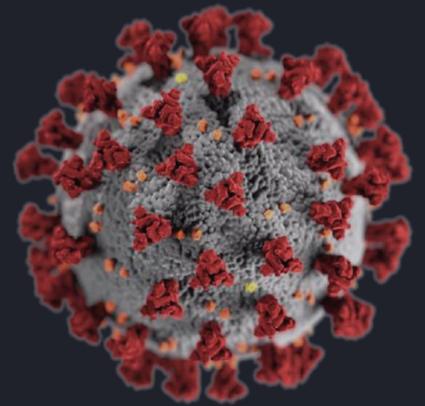
Problem

During the Covid-19 pandemic, an overwhelming amount of health- and life-threatening fake news started circulating on the Internet, leading to accidents, riots, and other harmful consequences.

How has fake news related to Covid-19 impacted today's society? A multidisciplinary analysis regarding the spread of fake news on public and private platforms.

Other raised questions

- How do fake news affect individual business and economy as a whole?
- What is the conflict between right of freedom of expression and the prevention of fake news?
- What measures should be taken to increase digital platforms responsibility, strengthen media freedom and promote online awareness?



Public platforms

In the present study 36% of the articles were assessed as fake news. In four out of five topics they caused higher average engagement per fake link than average engagement per article in total. Moreover, Facebook contributed to more than 95% of total engagement, indicating that it is the main source for fake news spread among all the other public platforms.



Private platforms

Fake news on private messaging platforms are difficult to track. On WhatsApp there is no way to identify viral fake news. This can enable an uninterrupted spread of these messages. Even though the scale of the fake news issue on these platforms is unknown, real life incidents related to Covid-19 vaccine have been traced back to WhatsApp conversations.

Conclusion

- Fake news were defined as intentionally false news published by a news outlet.
- Fake news about Covid-19 vaccine impacted both global economy and individual business.
- Regulation of fake news create a conflict with the right to freedom of expression.
- Restrictions put on the Facebook may significantly reduce the misinformation engagement by the public.



References & Acknowledgements

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