

Section: R

And Then There Were False Propaganda

The popularization of social media gave politicians the power to control information regarding their opponent or themselves, wherein they can simply rewrite history to suit their agenda. In particular, false propaganda can be intentionally created with a goal in mind or simply the result of misinterpretation gone havoc to skew people's knowledge on an issue (Harrison, 2022). Fake News—as facts don't sell anymore but sensationalism does—and deep fakes make it plausible for false propaganda to be embedded with the general public.

According to Ferrari et al. (2016), social media users, with their sharing online, spread the reach of posts containing misinformation, which fuels the algorithm or bots—amplifying and polarizing engagement. As usually proposed, a fact-checking algorithm should be designed to combat the spread of misinformation but that in turn loses engagement and revenue as it is not sensational or engaging for the users. The responsibility now lies upon the user's themselves to be educated in media literacy and when interacting with misinformed posts and AI-generated contents. The lack of deliberation along with repeated exposure as they scroll so quickly through their newsfeed causes people to believe what they see and therefore, fact-checking with other news outlets is unlikely to occur (Pennycook, Cannon, and Rand., 2018). Moreover, the structure of the posts containing propaganda appears “novel,” which incites strong emotion and further encourages engagement. It is therefore advisable to always doubt and dissect the accuracy and agenda of posts while maintaining composure as emotional pitfalls make a person believe what he sees. When combating AI-generated misinformation or simply deep fakes, unusual movements and even uncoordinated facial expression and voice are huge indicators that the video is AI. Various software engines online can also help recognize Ai videos even for the non-specialist folk.

Once the user aspect is resolved where they understand how to identify propaganda and are media literate, preventing the emergence before it becomes mainstream or common sense can now be implemented. With a 96% market penetration rate, Facebook reigns on top as the most commonly used social media platform by Filipinos (Howe, 2024). This app is the main source of information for most Filipinos, and Facebook attempts to curb the spread of misinformation through employing fact checkers to limit the spread of false information and blocking fake/spam accounts. Users themselves can help decrease the rate of spread through reporting or blocking users posting misleading contents and simply ignoring or scrolling away. As simple as it sounds, these actions change how the algorithm works wherein content that

is considered clickbait or spam and has garnered general dislike from the public is not further recommended to others. Likewise, news contents reported to Facebook meta once validated are shown as false to other users which helps decrease the rate of online post sharing. Moreover, combating trolls can be efficiently done through reporting repeatedly. Profiles have “scores” and once lowered due to being reported or confirmed to violate the community standard, the accounts’ visibility along with their content is lessened or even worse, removed entirely from the platform.

The Philippines’ false propaganda epidemic orchestrated by various individuals continues to run amok and with the upcoming election, endlessly shown through news feeds on various platforms. Troll farms trying to manipulate the public opinion along with fake news can be dealt with through media literacy and prevention. The chaotic disinformation online poses a challenge for the general public when it comes to learning the truth. As such, responsible journalism in these times of information turmoil has been appreciated for its important role of verifying and identifying truths.

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