

Hashtags, Tweets and Fake News: Contemporary [Dis]Information

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Sources

Source A

Chart 1. Percentage distribution of responses to the question: Do you trust information and content published online?; n=1,000.

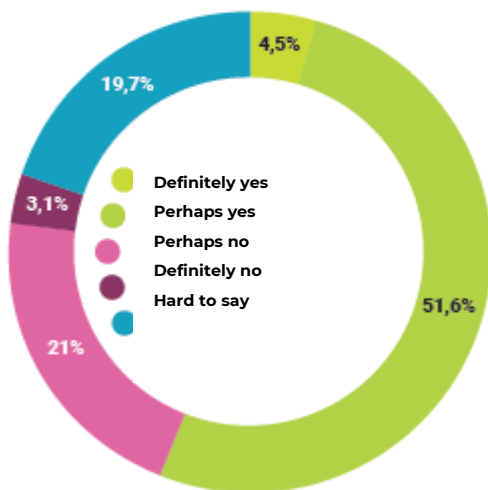


Chart 8. Percentage distribution of responses to the question: based on your experience over the past six months, which of the forms of disinformation or manipulation listed below have you experienced most frequently?; n=1,000.



Dr Rafał Lange and Marcin Bochenek, *Bezpieczne wybory. Badanie opinii o (dez)informacji w sieci* [Safe choices: A poll on (dis)information online, NASK PBS, p. 6 (Chart 1), p. 11 (Chart 8) [accessed 8.12.2020]. Available on NASK: <https://www.nask.pl/pl/aktualnosci/2249.Badania-NASK-ponad-polowa-polskich-internautow-styka-sie-z-manipulacja-i-dezinfo.html>.

Source B

Jakub Oworuszko (Demaskator24): What is fake news?

Dr Jacek Wasilewski: It is false or partially false information, which pretends to be authentic in order to promote the interests of the person who created it. [...]

J.O.: What are the different types of fake news?

J.W.: We can divide fake news into several types. For example, depending on the content, there is 'news' with fabricated content; manipulated content, which is embedded among real facts; and imposter content, which is quite easy to do when you can match your lip movement with what is being said in videos, creating non-existent statements. [...] The last type is false context – when information may be true, but is placed in a context that distorts its proper interpretation. We can encounter the last two types in satire, so it sometimes happens that what was supposed to be just a joke becomes fake news, such as Andy Borowitz's joke about Donald Trump wrapping phones in aluminium foil. Then fake news is made by those who communicate it as real information. This mechanism has also been used to spread information on April Fools' Day and by Orson Welles' broadcast about the Martian attack. One can also classify fake news on the basis of the sender's intention: fake news that functions as clickbait, e.g. about the alleged death of a celebrity (the point is to make the internet user click on the link and generate traffic on the website – ed.) [...].

Jakub Oworuszko, *'Kłamstwa, manipulacje, fałszywy kontekst. Różne typy fake newsów i jak się przed nimi ustrzec, wyjaśnia ekspert Jacek Wasilewski'* [Lies, manipulations and false contexts: various types of fake news and how to defend yourself from it, experts Jacek Wasilewski explains], 20.12.2018 [accessed 8.12.2021]. Available from demaskator24.pl: <https://demaskator24.pl/klamstwa-manipulacje-falszywy-kontekst-rozne-typy-fake/ar/4751756>.

Source C

We are being inundated by a wave of pseudoscientific statements by public figures which pose a threat to public health; foundations and patient organisations that have launched the 'Stop the celebritisation of pseudoscience' campaign ring alarm bells. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this long-standing, worrying trend, they add.

'Celebrities who speak out on health care issues are increasingly spreading views that are not only unsupported by scientific research, but actually contradict scientifically validated facts,' warn the representatives of patient organisations in information sent to the Polish Press Agency PAP. [...] 'Someone told me that one of the celebrities recommended crystal water for such ailments. It is difficult even to comment on this,' admits Łukasz Jankowski, president of the District Medical Chamber in Warsaw [...]

Among the mass of contradictory information, there were statements from all sides made by those we know from the front pages of colourful newspapers and magazines. Some mocked the situation of the epidemic, questioning the sense of the isolation measures taken by almost the whole world, and some quickly became pseudo-experts in virology, convincing others, for example, that drinking warm water will flush coronavirus from the throat.

This phenomenon occurs all over the world and is called celebrity-based medicine; that is, pseudo-medicine that has nothing to do with either facts or, even less with, common sense. [...]

'Kampania "Stop celebrytyzacji pseudonauki". Organizacje pacjentów walczą z medyczną dezinformacją' ['Stop the celebrityisation of pseudoscience' campaign. Patient organisations combating medical disinformation] 25.5.2020, PAP [accessed 8.12.2020]. Available from polskieradio24.pl: <https://polskieradio24.pl/5/1222/Artykul/2517369,Akcja-stop-celebrytyzacji-pseudonauki-Organizacje-pacjentow-walczą-z-medyczna-dezinformacja>.

Source D

Unfortunately, the current situation with the media is that too many people put too much trust in information coming from ordinary people. They say that the TV lies, newspapers lie, news portals lie – with such an attitude it is very easy to believe that if a news item, a photo or a picture comes from a person who is not connected with the media, it is certainly true. Nowadays, anyone can fabricate false information and photos, in the case of the latter a minimum knowledge of photo processing and editing is enough. And the harmfulness of such fake news is enormous [...]. This is why Facebook should check all posts and block this type of content as often as possible. [...]

Paweł Winiarski, *Facebook blokuje fałszywe posty polityczne – także w Polsce. To powinno tak działać od zawsze* [Facebook blocks political fake news, in Poland too. It should always have

been that way], 9.7.2020 [accessed 8.12.2020]. Available on antyweb.pl:
<https://antyweb.pl/polski-facebook-blokuje-polityczne-fake-newsy/>.

Source E

The most recent report by the Stanford Internet Observatory's Cyber Policy Center programme describes how disinformation creators are refining tactics to adapt to online trends. The starting point was an action in which Twitter deleted thousands of accounts identified as inauthentic [...] The most effective action of the deleted group of over 5,000 accounts was the creation and promotion of the hashtag السراج خائن ليبيا (Sarraj the traitor of Libya). The investigation into the origins of this phrase led disinformation specialists to crack down on the group and remove it. [...] A group of fake Twitter accounts were used for the campaign to criticise [...] Sarraj himself. Stanford University researchers found that the hashtag #Sarraj_traitor_Libya was first used on 8 December 2019[...] Subsequent accounts that began using it, used the same or similar photographs in their posts. This indicated a coordinated effort. [...] The hashtag began to be shared *en masse* with graphics, memes and animations attacking Sarraj. The graphic layout of the illustrations was identical to that used previously by the deleted accounts [...] After the mass sharing action, the next phase of the process began, which the authors of the report describe as hashtag laundering. A YouTube channel critical of Prime Minister Sarraj – Libya's Channel – published a video about the growing popularity of a hashtag about the Libyan prime minister. The description stated that by using this hashtag, 'through tweets from their accounts, a great number of Libyan citizens have shown that they are affected by Sarraj's agreement with Turkey. They consider it a betrayal of the country by the prime minister.' [...] the disinformation creators have achieved their goal. By giving the impression that the hashtag appears in the posts of many authentic people, they have introduced their own narrative of a traitor prime minister into credible portals – and thus into the public debate.

Michał Istel, *Pranie hasztagu, jedna z metod współczesnej dezinformacji* [Hashtag laundering: one of the methods of contemporary disinformation, in Polish], 13.4.2020 [accessed 8.12.2020]. Available from konkret24.pl: <https://konkret24.tvn24.pl/swiat,109/pranie-hasztagu-jedna-z-metod-wspolczesnej-dezinformacji,1012321.html>

Source F

[...] Kaveh Waddell, an investigative journalist for Consumer Reports, conducted an experiment to see how Facebook would handle ads containing false or harmful information about coronavirus. To do this, he prepared seven ads with varying degrees of 'directness' within the message. One ad was designed to show that people under 30 were safe, but did not mention the name of the virus. In another, we had to deal with clickbait. It proclaimed that 'Coronavirus is a hoax' and encouraged people to ignore social quarantine as ineffective. The author admits that the most deceitful ad was about using bleach as a means of protecting against coronavirus. Facebook approved all but one of the ads. This one contained a picture of a breathing mask. The advertiser was a fictitious Self-Preservation Society, set up for the purpose of the experiment. Of course, the adverts never really appeared. The journalist planned their publication and they passed moderation, but he did not publish them so as not to become a source of misinformation. [...]

Rafał Gdak, *Facebook: „blokujemy reklamy fake newsów o wirusie”. Dziennikarz stworzył 7 fejków. FB zaakceptował 6*, [Facebook: 'We block adverts of fake news about the virus': A journalist creates 7 fake news items, FB accepts 6; in Polish] 8.4.2020 [accessed 8.12.2020]. Available from spidersweb.pl: <https://spidersweb.pl/2020/04/facebook-koronawirus-reklamy.html>.

Source G

A tweet from the War Studies University about fake news concerning the Polish army

AkademiaSzWoj @AkademiaSzWoj. Website @AkademiaSzWoj... 22.04.2020 [accessed 08.12.2020]. Available on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/AkademiaSzWoj/status/1252991552655409152/photo/1>.



6:04 PM - 22 kwi 2020 - Twitter Web App

↑ Tweet's translation:

Website @AkademiaSzWoj has been a target of a cyberattack today. In a fake article, words that he has never written are attributed to the War Studies University's Rector-Commandant. The case is being dealt with by @CYBER_MIK_PL and relevant services.

Source H

This is not the First World War. Soldiers do not walk through a marked minefield, and the soldier is not carrying a donkey for fear that it will step on a mine and injure everyone in the vicinity. In fact, it is a photo taken during the Algerian War in 1958. The starving donkey was rescued by a member of the French Foreign Legion. He carried it to his base, where the animal recovered and became the camp mascot. It was named Bambi. The entire half brigade was decorated for saving the donkey.

Karol Orzeł, *Tak, ten żołnierz niesie osła, ale nie przez pole minowe* [Yes, this soldiers is carrying a donkey but not through a minefield], 5.4.2020 [accessed 8.12.2020]. Available on fakenews.pl: <https://fakenews.pl/spoleczenstwo/tak-ten-zolnierz-niesie-osla-ale-nie-przez-pole-minowe/>.

A screenshot taken by the author on the basis of information [in:] Karol Orzeł, *Tak, ten żołnierz niesie osła, ale nie przez pole minowe* ['Yes, this soldier is carrying a donkey but not through a minefield']



To jedno z moich ulubionych zdjęć, długo gościło ono na pulpicie mojego telefonu. Żołnierz w czasie I wojny światowej niesie osła przez oznaczone pole minowe. Nie niesie go bynajmniej dlatego, że go kocha i się o niego troszczy, robi to dla dobra ogółu. Jeżeli osioł szedłby jak mu się podoba to na pewno wejdzie na minę i zrani wszystkich w pobliżu. Jaki z tego morał? W obecnych czasach najbardziej trzeba pilnować idiotów, którzy nie rozumieją zagrożenia i robią to co chcą.



8,2 tys.

451 komentarzy 3,5 tys. udostępnień

← FB post's translation:

This is one of my favourite photos and it has long featured as the wallpaper of my mobile. During the First World War, a soldier carries a donkey across a marked minefield. He does it not because he loves the animal and cares for it but for the greater good: if the donkey walked as it pleased, it would surely step on a mine, wounding everyone around. What's the lesson from it? In present times, it is the idiots who must be watched the most as they do not understand the dangers and do whatever they please.

Decision tree structure

