Handbook of Research on Deception, Fake News, and Misinformation Online

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MISSION

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List of Contributors

Table of Contents

Section 3
Misinformation and Deception in Business

Section 4
Propaganda, Defamation, and Political Deception

Section 8
Deceptive Content by Extremist and Terrorist Groups

Detailed Table of Contents

Section 1
Introduction: Concepts and Perspectives

The perspective of social problem has been used to analyze a variety of disconcerting phenomena over the years. These run the gamut from unemployment and drug addiction to sexual assault and child labor. Meanwhile, digital technology has now cemented itself firmly as a dominant social phenomenon. As its by-product, it has engendered online falsehood—often manifested as fake news or rumors—that easily becomes viral on the internet. Yet, research has not examined the phenomenon of online falsehood through the lens of social problem hitherto. Therefore, this chapter seeks to explain how the issue of online falsehood has now turned into a problem for the digital society. With a social constructionism paradigm, the chapter draws on the literature about the construction of social problems. A typology of online falsehood is also proposed. The chapter concludes with an urgent call to combat online falsehood.

Trolls and bots are often used to alter, disrupt, or even silence legitimate online conversations artificially. Disrupting and corrupting the online civic engagement process creates ethical challenges and undermines social and political structures. Trolls and bots often amplify spurious deceptive content as their activity artificially inflates support for an issue or a public figure, thus creating mass misperception. In addressing this concern, the chapter examines how trolls (humans) and bots (robots that exhibit human-like communication behavior) affect online engagement that perpetuates deception, misinformation, and fake news. In doing so, the chapter reviews the literature on online trolling and chatbots to present a list of research-based recommendations for identifying (deception detection) and reacting (deception suppression) to trolls and bots.

Chapter 3

Adilla Anggraeni, Bina Nusantara University, Indonesia

This chapter discusses the need for drama, interpersonal closeness, informational susceptibility, and compassion for others and their influence towards gossiping behavior via social chatting applications. Technological advancements have enabled people to communicate with each other at the convenience of their homes and in real time. This change, however, also means the changes in human behaviors, such as computer-mediated communication, can be shaped by the richness of the media that people can use to convey their thoughts and opinions. The existence of different chatting applications has fulfilled the needs of human beings to be connected and to interact with each other, and the interactions that take place can be in the form of gossiping and spreading information that may not necessarily be accurate.

Chapter 4

Tymoteusz Chajdas, University of California – Santa Barbara, USA

This chapter discusses the phenomenon of media power and dissemination of misleading and spurious representations. The author argues that global mass media can increasingly be seen as devices of control. This is inferred from a frequent use of Orientalist discourses when portraying the Middle East, which bestows the media messages with hidden power structures. These messages, along with the emergence of social media and a high saturation of visual media, contribute to strengthening of media power. This enables the state to justify its control and political actions. By drawing on Orientalism and by exploring media portrayals of the Middle East, this chapter suggests that misrepresentations produced by the media should be seen as a violent rhetoric which aims at acting to discipline Middle Eastern bodies and trapping them in a cycle of alienation. The analysis discusses media coverage of the 2015 Paris terrorist attacks, the war in Iraq, and 9/11. The author suggests that through the practice of alienating subjects from society, mass media create an opportunity for them to turn to extremes.

Chapter 5

Anke J. Kleim, University of Strathclyde, UK
Petya Eckler, University of Strathclyde, UK
Andrea Tonner, University of Strathclyde, UK

This chapter examines how body image deception is created and understood in social media. The authors focus specifically on the beach body, which is a narrower form of bodily representation online, but where deception is especially likely to occur. Focus group discussions with young adults revealed that editing and perfecting the beach body is commonplace and even normalized on social media. However, participants distinguished between celebrities and friends in expected use of manipulation and seemed to place a limit on the acceptable types of manipulation: body tan but not body shape, for example. The authors discuss the implications of these discussions and how applying deception theory in body image research can provide useful insights.

This chapter takes an interdisciplinary approach to the study of deception from the critical perspectives of rhetoric, communication, and media studies. The primary objective is to interrogate the interrelationship of communication, identity, and technology relevant to social media in order to confront issues related to online deception. To that end, this case study is centrally focused on social media sensation Miquela Sosa, also known as Lil Miquela, and the implications of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies and social media influencers to contribute to a more robust critical consciousness regarding misinformation online.

As consumers increasingly rely on user-generated online reviews to make purchase decisions, the prevalence of fake entries camouflaged among authentic ones has become a growing concern. On the scholarly front, this has given rise to two disparate research strands. The first focuses on ways to distinguish between authentic and fake reviews but ignores consumers' perceptions. The second deals with consumers' perceptions of reviews without delving into their ability to discern review authenticity in the first place. As a result of the fragmented literature, what has eluded scholarly attention is the extent to which consumers are able to perceive actual differences between authentic and fake reviews. To this end, the chapter highlights the theoretical value of weaving the two research strands together. With the aim to contribute to the theoretical discussion surrounding the problem, it specifically develops what is referred as the Theoretical model of Authentic and Fake reviews (the TAF). New research directions are identified based on the TAF.

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Section 2
Fake News and Misleading Reports

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Following the 2016 United States Presidential Election, fake news has been the subject of much discussion, research and, ironically, news. This chapter examines how technology enables the creation and spread of fake news stories through the democratization of creation tools, by exploiting the increasing difficulty of discerning between amateur and professional content through digital publication, and, arguably most significantly, through the indiscriminate curation of content through algorithms. These three technological factors together have exponentially compounded the spread of fake news by enabling creators with new opportunities for profit and influence and weakening readers' ability to effectively assess the value of the content they consume or share.

Chapter 9

Anna Grazulis, Marist College, USA
Ryan Rogers, Butler University, USA

Beyond the spread of fake news, the term "fake news" has been used by people on social media and by people in the Trump administration to discredit reporting and show disagreement with the content of a story. This study offers a series of defining traits of fake news and a corresponding experiment testing its impact. Overall, this study shows that fake news, or at least labeling fake news can impact the gratifications people derive from news. Further, this study provides evidence that the impact of fake news might, in some cases, rely on whether or not the fake news complies with preexisting beliefs.

Chapter 10

Janet Aver Adikpo, Eastern Mediterranean University, Cyprus

Today, the media environment has traversed several phases of technological advancements and as a result, there is a shift in the production and consumption of news. This chapter conceived fake news within the milieu of influencing information spread in the society, especially on the cyberspace. Using the hierarchy of influence model trajectory with fake news, it was established that it has become almost impossible to sustain trust and credibility through individual influences on online news content. The primary reason is that journalists are constrained by professional ethics, organizational routines, and ownership influence. Rather than verify facts and offer supporting claims, online users without professional orientation engage in a reproducing information indiscreetly. The chapter recommends that ethics be reconsidered as a means to recreate and imbibe journalistic values that will contend with the fake news pandemic.

Chapter 11

Rosanna E. Guadagno, Stanford University, USA
Karen Guttieri, Air University, USA

Fake news—false information passed off as factual—is an effective weapon in the information age. For instance, the Russian government perfected techniques used in its 2007 Estonian and 2008 Georgian cyber campaigns to support Donald Trump's successful candidacy in the 2016 United States presidential election. In this chapter, the authors examine fake news and Russia's cyberwarfare efforts across time as case studies of information warfare. The chapter identifies key terms and reviews extant political science and psychological research related to obtaining an understanding of psychological cyber warfare ("psywar") through the proliferation of fake news. Specifically, the authors suggest that there are social, contextual, and individual factors that contribute to the spread and influence of fake news and review these factors in this chapter.

Chapter 12

New Mythologies of Fake News: WhatsApp and Misrepresented Scientific Achievements of
    Benson Rajan, Christ University, India

An ideological state project of assigning science achievements to that of Hindu mythologies is indirectly undermining democratic structures. Emergence of the fake news phenomenon within the current post-truth era has threatened India's state harmony. From its dominant role in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections to the 2016 U.S. presidential elections, fake news has become a political tool which was misused in both events. One of the major concerns with fake content creation appeared in its use by the central government to disregard science. Political leaders are achieving this by propagating fictional accounts of material inventions from mythological epics like the Mahabharata as the origin for modern scientific inventions like airplanes. Such fake content is part of Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) larger project directed towards creating a Hindu nation. These content are provided virality with the help of social media and online chat platforms like WhatsApp. The chapter tries to locate the role of the instant messaging application WhatsApp in establishing Hindu mythological achievements as the predecessor of modern science in India.

Chapter 13

The Rise of Professional Facebook Content Generators in Vietnam: A Fake News Campaign
    Le Thu Mach, Monash University, Australia

This case study is empirical research. It highlights the fact that the dynamic and complex Facebook content generators involve actively in the formulation and dissemination of fake news in Vietnam. Professional Facebook content generators include not only the paid online commentators, being hired by the government or business sector but also the professional journalists, who can earn for their living by promoting certain ideas and products on Facebook. As journalism functions as a tool for propaganda in Vietnam, even some governmental officers engage in the formulation of fake news, as long as the fake news serves the propaganda purposes. Through the analysis of the engagement of each group of Facebook content generators in fake news, this chapter contributes to the identification and elimination of fake news, and therefore, it is especially significant for journalists in reflexive truth-seeking practice.

Chapter 14

    Benjamin Enahoro Assay, Delta State Polytechnic Ogwashi-Uku, Nigeria

The rising trend of fake news on social media in Nigeria has raised serious concern about the survival of the country's fledgling democracy especially as the country prepares for the 2019 polls which is expected to usher in a new set of leaders. The federal government had in response to the menace which has reached an alarming proportion launched a campaign against fake news in July 2018 to raise awareness about the dangers fake news portends for the polity. While some applaud the government for the initiative, others lampoon the government for chasing shadows instead of addressing the root cause. This chapter therefore examines the issues, controversies and problems associated with the deadly scourge and proffer solutions to halt the growing menace of fake news in the country.

Section 3
Misinformation and Deception in Business

Chapter 15

> *Darren P. Ingram, University of Oulu, Finland*

Social media networks offer a tremendous opportunity for the dissemination of financial and other information globally to companies. It can be immensely useful for stakeholders and investors too. So far its permitted use as a primary disclosure channel is restricted. Some risks also exist through inadvertent disclosure of information, as well as potential share price manipulation, yet are companies necessarily aware and armed to handle the risks? This research conducts exploratory research into the attitudes of Nordic companies, in a region where social media primary disclosure is not permitted, to analyze the status quo and consider any risks that may prevail. Possible action changes and future research opportunities are also examined.

Chapter 16

> *John Cook, George Mason University, USA*

While there is overwhelming scientific agreement on climate change, the public has become polarized over fundamental questions such as human-caused global warming. Communication strategies to reduce polarization rarely address the underlying cause: ideologically-driven misinformation. In order to effectively counter misinformation campaigns, scientists, communicators, and educators need to understand the arguments and techniques in climate science denial, as well as adopt evidence-based approaches to neutralizing misinforming content. This chapter reviews analyses of climate misinformation, outlining a range of denialist arguments and fallacies. Identifying and deconstructing these different types of arguments is necessary to design appropriate interventions that effectively neutralize the misinformation. This chapter also reviews research into how to counter misinformation using communication interventions such as inoculation, educational approaches such as misconception-based learning, and the interdisciplinary combination of technology and psychology known as technocognition.

Section 4
Propaganda, Defamation, and Political Deception

Chapter 17

> *Ezekiel Olajimbiti, Elizade University, Nigeria*

Facebook, an intrinsic part of 21st century social realities where cognitive-participatory activities are largely captured, is consistently explored for political deception. This chapter investigates how participants utilize language to deceive politically the Nigerian electorate on Facebook. For data, 250 Facebook posts on Nigerian politics were sampled, out of which 50 were purposefully selected for being highly rich in deceptive content in order to unpack online deception through multimodal critical discourse analysis. Four deceptive forms—equivocation of identity, exaggeration of performance, falsification of corruption

cases, and concealment of offences—within two socio-political contexts—election and opposition—constituted the posts. These prompt an evocation of a messianic figure, blunt condemnation, and evocation of sympathy and retrospection to achieve the political intentions of criticism, self-presentation, silent opposition, and galvanizing public support. The chapter concludes that political propaganda taps into Facebook users to appeal to their political biases and sway their opinions.

The issue of Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. Presidential election has been widely debated by scholars and journalists. However, these works have not fully analyzed the ads that have been released by Facebook and the U.S. Congress. This project uses a case study to analyze the ads posted by the Russian-affiliated Internet Research Agency, considering the quantities of ads targeted to particular geographic locations, the frequency of targeting for unique keywords, and the reach and impressions of each of the ads. Further, these results are compared to results from best practices in traditional social media campaigns as a way to better understand the goals and potential impacts of the IRA ads. In conclusion, the project, by analyzing the full set of IRA ads, sheds new light on the way false information narratives were leveraged by the Russian-linked IRA.

Television advertising is a growing important aspect in presidential electoral campaiging. It accounts for a big part of the electioneering expenses. Presidential political advertisements are important sources of information to voters. Their messages may influence poll results. Using a content analytical method, this study examined 12 of the presidential campaign advertisements created for ex-president Goodluck Jonathan and his People's Democratic Party (PDP); and the opposition coalition flag bearer, Retired General Muhammadu Buhari and his All Progressives Congress during the 2015 Nigerian presidential election campaigns. The aim of this study was to identify the deceptions in these advertisements. This study found that both sides engaged in deceptive advertising. Buhari/APC engaged more in misinformation, lies, misrepresentation and spreading of unproven facts. Goodluck/PDP avoided misrepresentations and misinformation, but used lies, unproven assertions and pufferies. It is recommended that campaign advertisements be scrutinized before they are aired.

This chapter contributes to scholarship in the fields of media ecology and political communication by investigating the effects of the Trump bump in media-driven democracy. Specifically, it explains how the media's obsession with Donald Trump allowed them to capitalize on his political brand, which in turn

contributed to changing the tone of political discourse in the United States. The effects of mediatization, including click-bait framing, increased negativity, and person-centered media coverage, had a distinct impact on the behavior of political actors and the political system as a whole. The dominance of marketing logic in contemporary media democracies provides a compelling argument for critical investigation of brand appropriation in political communication and its impact on the state of democracy. This chapter advocates for the further investigation of the current media ecosystem in order to move toward a public deliberation model that would support enhanced media literacy and citizen engagement in public policy debates.

Chapter 21

Leslie J. Reynard, Washburn University, USA

Anonymity can create cowards. Perceptions of mistreatment can create an urge for revenge. And online social media platforms create opportunities to exact vengeance. This chapter provides an overview of online character assassination as it has evolved within a profusion of social media sites offering forums for uncensored airing of opinions. When opinions constitute political speech, they can be life-threatening. When opinions are commercial speech rating character and competence of professionals, digital defamation can threaten livelihood. In commercial arenas, victims often feel helpless to protect their reputations; however, some legal remedies may be available. This essay investigates the nature of abusive communication online, the role anonymity plays in digital attacks, and psychological characteristics associated with trolls and cyber-bullies. Case studies of individuals' efforts to defend themselves from online character assassination illustrate concepts discussed and strategies being used for online reputational self-defense.

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Section 5
Phishing, Email Scams, and Ponzi Schemes

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Chapter 22

Innocent E. Chiluwa, Covenant University, Nigeria
Ebikaboere Ovia, Covenant University, Nigeria
Emmanuel Uba, Covenant University, Nigeria

This chapter identifies the various types and features of scam emails as a genre of computer-mediated communication. The types identified include money transfer, investment scam, inheritance claim, next-of-kin claim, charity donation scam, foreign aid scam, foreign lottery scam and email account lottery scam. The study also describes the linguistic and discourse features of these types of scam emails and argues that the more knowledge of online financial crimes that is created and disseminated, the more people are informed and empowered to protect themselves against them. This study hopes to contribute significantly to literature on phishing attacks and online financial crimes.

Chapter 23

Isioma Maureen Chiluwa, Covenant University, Nigeria

The popularity of alternative online investment platforms has become worrisome in recent times. Adopting explorative methodology, this chapter examines the discursive practices of truth, lies and deception inherent in Ponzi and Pyramid schemes through their method of operation, recruitment strategies, products/services and reward system via Bitconnect, OneCoin, and Zarfund – three online-based Ponzi schemes. The study reveals that the greatest deception of Ponzi schemes lies in the high returns they promise to potential investors and the low work requirement. These claims make it difficult for potential investors to make rational decisions before investing. This study recommends that proper evaluation and due diligence – basic financial literacy – be conducted before investing in any AFIP. Alternatively, expert advice may be sort before any financial commitment.

Section 6
Deceptive Online Dating and Romance Scam

Chapter 24

Anna Maria Kuzio, University of Zielona Gora, Poland

Online dating is becoming an increasingly used method for meeting significant others. As the research of lying behavior has advanced so has the technique of detecting the act of lying, especially in the online environment where deception is more likely to happen. The aim of this chapter is to simplify the perception of lying behavior to the general population and examine gender differences of lying behavior, namely, to verify whether one can observe a statistically significant difference in the speech behavior and exploitation of lying cues among men and women. The study shows correlation between gender and deception in online environment.

Chapter 25

Renee D. Lamphere, University of North Carolina at Pembroke, USA
Kweilin T. Lucas, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, USA

The rapid advancement of technology has changed the dating world for millions of people. While dating scams are not a new phenomenon to the online dating community, a new form of scam known as "catfishing" is also taking place. Catfishing is the verb used to describe the actions of a "catfish," a person who creates falsified online profiles on social networking sites with the purpose of fraudulently seducing someone else. In addition to talking about online dating scams and catfishing, this chapter will also examine "mail order" marriages and the potential impact of this practice.

Section 7
Online Religious Deception

Chapter 26

*Poothullil Mathew Martin, Mumbai University, India & Ali Yavar Jung National Institute of
Speech and Hearing Disabilities, India*
*Jerry Joseph Onampally, University of Mumbai, India & National Institute of Social
Communications, Research, and Training, India*

Deception and religion have evolved over the years. Deception and belief manipulation are aspects of religious communication. The digital space revolves around fake news and indicates that humans are more susceptible than ever to mental manipulation by powerful technological tools. This chapter demonstrates patterns in deceptive narrative usage in a communication of social and religious issues (CSRI) in social media among a religious community in Mumbai. Drawing from deception theory of David Ettingery and Philippe Jehiel, the exploitation by rational players of the fundamental attribution of error (FAE) made by other players, where FAE allows for belief manipulation. The authors propose that an increased presence of social media promotes patterns in CSRI in social media. The analysis depicted patterns in the preference to the use of text visual images, audio-visual, and audio formats when communicating social and religious issues.

Chapter 27

Lily Chimuanya, Covenant University, Nigeria
Ebuka Igwebuike, Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike, Nigeria

This chapter examines religious discourse on Facebook and brings to the fore the recurrent deceptive requests that have given rise to new forms of religious extremism and radicalism. Many Christians have turned to social media as a medium where their faith can be practiced and with the intention of enforcing it on others. One major avenue through which this ensues is in the inherent ideological requests on Facebook where members are threatened to either type "Amen" or be afflicted with curses as punishment. These misleading requests usually attract instantaneous thousands of "likes" and consenting responses that depict underlying fear. An awareness of these extremist inclinations against the backdrop of religion is crucial to the understanding and interpretation of the semiotic realities within such Facebook posts.

Section 8
Deceptive Content by Extremist and Terrorist Groups

Chapter 28

Innocent E. Chiluwa, Covenant University, Nigeria

This chapter examines the meaning, types, and practice of propaganda by two prominent terrorist groups, namely ISIS and Boko Haram, and how deception and deceptive communication form aspects of their propagandist tools. The chapter begins with the conceptual description and discussion of deception and propaganda and situate them in the research literature. It goes further to examine the impact of the

internet in the enhancement and spread of terrorist propaganda by ISIS and Boko Haram; the reasons and various forms of propaganda and radicalization online are also examined. Some specific samples of terrorist propaganda by the two terrorist organizations are qualitatively analyzed using discourse analytical methodology. Studies in counter-propaganda appears to be the future research direction; although it has been argued that aggressive counter-narratives may be counterproductive, grievances expressed in terrorist propaganda should be addressed.

Various persuasion methods are used on the internet to sell products or ideas, as individuals are highly susceptible to believing much of what they access online. With about 4 billion netizens and counting, the internet provides wide access to gullible individuals. In this context, terrorist and extremist groups are witnessing an unabated increase in their membership and support, largely by employing deception-based persuasion techniques, inciting religious, regional, or racial sentiments. While religion-based Islamist terror is infamous for its large-scale adverse global impact, there are two other groups driven by the motives of racial and geographical hegemony that impact the world – the white supremacists and the Zionists. The chapter purports to achieve a three-part aim: (1) to examine these three groups in context of the deceptive information they put up online, (2) to analyze why such deceptive content has such an impact on the general public that it convinces them to resort to extremism, and (3) to discuss some methods of identifying and preventing online deception.

Preface

A writer recently noted that "deception on the Internet is nothing new," and "it is getting worse." Technology has made it worse, because every aspect of our life is influenced by science and technology. In other words, the more our daily life is influenced and directed by information technology, the more prevalent online deception becomes. More worrisome in recent times is the production and spread of misleading information/false reports on the Internet, popularly referred to as "Fake news" – a term popularized by Donald Trump for news he disagrees with. However, fake news and online misinformation has become a serious social problem in many countries, and generated a lot of concern and debate in many political and media platforms.

Some previous works on deceptive communication have examined the intersection of deception and technology (Hancock, 2009), the production, dissemination and consumption of misleading information (Chiluwa, 2017), as well as the prevalence and the underlying motivations to deceive online (Caspi & Gorsky, 2006). Authors have also examined theoretical approaches to the study of deception and endeavored to provide answers to why people lie to one another either as an interpersonal action or within an intergroup communication (Dunbar, 2017), such as in business, politics, or workplace.

For instance, the act of deliberately leading another person astray through holding false belief in an interpersonal context has been widely studied and the interpersonal deception theory (IDT) proposed by David Buller and Judee Burgoon appears to provide a theoretical foundation for these studies. The focus of these researches has been how deception may be detected through verbal or nonverbal cues and the relational consequences of discovered deception in different situations (Dunbar, 2017). However, in his theoretical approaches to the study of deceptive communication and reactions to interpersonal deception theory, Stiff (2006) had argued that David Buller and Judee Burgoon's interpersonal theory of deception is not really a theory since it did not provide "a unifying explanatory mechanism, which can be used to impose coherence on numerous, diverse behavioral outcomes" (cited from Miller & Nicholas, 1976, p. 71). The difference between interpersonal deception and intergroup deception is that the former suggests a shared underlying identity, while the latter implies divergent identities. For instance, politicians lying to their constituencies, or a business representative lying to potential customers would be considered intergroup lies if actors see themselves as primarily representing their larger social group rather than their individual selves (Dunbar, 2017).

According to Norah Dunbar, important works on intergroup deceptions studies have been carried out in communication between members of different groups, communication between political or military factions, and communication between corporate entities where each actor represents not only their personal interests, but also those of their organizations (p. 1).

In the current volume, deception study scholars from around the world, coming from different disciplines examine the growth and types of online interpersonal and intergroup deceptive communications and misinformation/disinformation.

This collection of chapters is unique in the sense that the contributors examine the prevalence of online deception and misinformation in nearly every aspect of human endeavor such as business, politics, media, religion, and relationship among others. Hence, the book is divided into seven subsections. Section 1 comprises conceptual perspectives and forms of online deception practices and how disinformation on the Internet has become a social problem. Section 2 is entitled "Fake News and Misleading Reports." In this section, authors show how technology has continued to enhance the spread of fakes news and the factors that influence the prevalence of fake news online. This section also examines the growing influence of and the concern about fake news in specific contexts around the world such as the USA, India and Vietnam. Section 3, examines the problem of misinformation and deception in business contexts, including topical issues such as misinformation about climate change. In Section 4 entitled "Propaganda, Defamation, and Political Deception," authors examine not only the different political contexts and how social media have enabled politicians and their supporters to produce and disseminate misleading information about themselves and their opponents, but also address some important issues like defamation and character assassination and how they erode democratic ideals. Section 5 is concerned with phishing, email scams, and Ponzi schemes. Here, the authors explore the various forms and features of internet scams, especially spam emails and suggests reasons why victims are deceived by them. Chapter 23 for instance, examines the history, growth, and the politics of Ponzi schemes and recommends basic education on finance and investment for potential investors. Section 6 is entitled "Online Religious Deception" and comprises chapters that examine types of deception in religious discourses on social media. The studies exemplify some specific contexts like Nigeria and India, where this is prevalent, due largely to cultural norms and extreme religiosity of worshipers in these countries. Chapter 7 dwells on online deceptive content by extremist and terrorist groups. The contributions to this segment, highlight the activities of and online deceptive content by ISIS, Boko Haram, Zionist extremists and other Islamist militia groups. The studies show that deceptive communication by these terrorists largely serve as propaganda, which are intended to seek public sympathy as well as recruit and radicalize followers.

Hence, this volume will serve as a handbook and invaluable resource material to all those interested in deception studies. Moreover, scholars and professionals in cyber security studies, forensic linguistics, law, media studies, political science and international relations will find this volume indispensable for teaching and research.

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Section 1

Introduction:
Concepts and Perspectives

Chapter 1
Understanding Online Falsehood From the Perspective of Social Problem

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ABSTRACT

The perspective of social problem has been used to analyze a variety of disconcerting phenomena over the years. These run the gamut from unemployment and drug addiction to sexual assault and child labor. Meanwhile, digital technology has now cemented itself firmly as a dominant social phenomenon. As its by-product, it has engendered online falsehood—often manifested as fake news or rumors—that easily becomes viral on the internet. Yet, research has not examined the phenomenon of online falsehood through the lens of social problem hitherto. Therefore, this chapter seeks to explain how the issue of online falsehood has now turned into a problem for the digital society. With a social constructionism paradigm, the chapter draws on the literature about the construction of social problems. A typology of online falsehood is also proposed. The chapter concludes with an urgent call to combat online falsehood.

INTRODUCTION

Online Falsehood

Unprecedented advances in new media technologies have revolutionized how people create and consume information in this digital age (Hamari et al., 2016; Westlund & Färdigh, 2015). They have given rise to new avenues for dissemination and collection of information. In particular, traditional word-of-mouth

is now complemented by electronic word-of-mouth, an umbrella term that refers to all types of online messages created by Internet users (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Westlund & Färdigh, 2015).

While truckloads of online information are continuously being created, their quality can vary intensely from fact to fiction (Hornik et al., 2015). This is mainly because they are neither always created by domain experts nor guaranteed to be scrutinized by vigilant gatekeepers. Perhaps unsurprisingly, online falsehood is known to sprout as a digital weed on the fertile soil of technology (Mazer et al., 2015; Smith et al., 2014).

Online falsehood encompasses the phenomenon whereby unfounded and unverified online messages leave behind their digital footprint in the form of texts, pictures or videos on the Internet. What is worrying is that such dubious messages are often mistaken as facts, and in turn cause people to take actions that they would not have taken otherwise. For instance, the hoax that consuming iodized table salt would help minimize the harmful effects of a possible radiation leak at the Fukushima nuclear plant in the wake of the Japanese earthquake in March 2011 caused people to stockpile salt (World Health Organization, 2011). Likewise, the doomsday rumor in China resulted in public fears that starting from 21 December 2012, there would be three consecutive days of darkness on the earth. As people prepared to deal with the prolonged darkness, candles went out of stock (Wang, Zhao, & Huang, 2014). Understandably, such hoaxes are not easily separable from truths. If people end up believing the former at the expense of the latter, a social disaster is definitely on the cards.

From Personal Issue and Social Issue to Social Problem

Since time immemorial, the human civilization has been witnessing several disconcerting issues that run the gamut from gender-workplace diversity (Herring, 2009; Skaggs et al., 2012) and divorce (Milardo, 1987; Kalmijn, 2015) to drug addiction (Leshner, 1997; McGinty et al., 2015) and unemployment (Atkinson et al., 1986; Llorente et al., 2015). These issues are characterized by their potential to impair the quality of social life. Superficially, it would seem that these are instances of individuals' personal issue.

While personal issues are those that individuals tackle themselves and/or within a small set of peers (Fry & Bloyce, 2017), social issues involve values denounced by the wider society as a whole (Manis, 1974; Rothe & Muzzatti, 2004). Social issues refer to overarching dilemmas that tend to have an adverse impact on the general welfare of the society (Kruger, 2012). For instance, while one person losing a job can be a personal issue, a high unemployment rate that affects millions of people is likely to generate a social issue. Even though various social issues can pop up at the heart of the living society, their level of severity and impact could vary depending on the societal context.

Understandably, not all social issues turn into social problems. The distinction between the two coupled with how the former translates into the latter has long been a topic of much academic debate (Hilgartner & Bosk, 1988, Spector & Kitsuse, 2000). Scholars generally agree that a social problem indicates a state of affairs within the larger society that is assumed to depart from the expected ideal. Examples of social problems include crime, poverty, racial tension, and religious strife (Haines, 1999; Kitsuse & Spector, 1973; McKinney, 2015). A social problem is called so not necessarily because the prevailing condition is objectively wrong. Rather, the prevailing condition is perceived as being wrong subjectively by the vast majority of the masses (Shermis & Barth, 1978).

The difficulty in defining a social problem has long been commonly acknowledged. Nonetheless, there exist at least three factors that contribute to a social issue translating into a social problem (Eglitis et al., 2016; Kitsuse, & Spector, 1973; Schneider, 1985), First, a social issue becomes a social problem

when it diverges from social values (norms or order), and thus, creates a social disorder. Second, a social issue is deemed to be a problem when it has negative effects on members of the society, and needs to be addressed or solved. Third, when a social issue becomes more than a personal trouble and members of the society experience inherent disorder within the social process, a social problem is then said to have been created.

Research Objective

The lens of social problem has been used to view a variety of phenomena ranging from unemployment (Atkinson et al., 1986; Kieselbach, 2003) and drug addiction (Nelson-Zlupko et al., 1995; Best et al., 2016) to sexual assault (Chang et al., 2015; LaFree, 1981) and child labor (Nelson & Abuse, 2017). Meanwhile, digital technology has now established itself firmly as a dominant social phenomenon. As its by-product, it has also engendered online falsehood that easily becomes viral on the Internet (Bargh & McKenna, 2004; Berinsky, 2015).

Dubious online messages not only prevent the Internet from serving as a reliable source of information but may also have detrimental effects on society. With the potential to fool millions of people around the globe, there is little doubt that they represent one of the biggest problems of the digital society. Yet, scholars have yet to trace the growth of online falsehood from being a social issue to maturing into a social problem.

To this end, the aim of this chapter is to explain how the issue of online falsehood has now turned into a problem for the digital society over time. It draws on the literature about the construction of social problems in order to examine online falsehood as a menace to the digital society. In so doing, it hopes to contribute to the scholarly debate on what makes an issue a social problem particularly in the digital realm.

The rest of the chapter is structured as follows: The next section reviews the literature on the construction of social problems in general. The section thereafter highlights the origin of falsehood, and proposes a typology pertinent to online falsehood. This is followed by a section dedicated to explaining why online falsehood can be heralded as a social problem. For one, it demonstrates the negative consequences of online falsehood. Next, it reveals that there is a perception that online falsehood needs addressing. The chapter closes with discussion and conclusions.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS

Social problems are difficult to define. This is because they are not associated with any objective and identifiable societal conditions that have intrinsically dire consequences. Instead, social problems emerge from social issues through a process of definition embedded within the prevailing political language and cultural symbols that echo fuzziness and subjectivity (LaFree, 1981; Spillman, 2002).

Nonetheless, scholars commonly argue that a social problem can be constructed on the basis of both objective and subjective standpoints. They define a social problem as any social issue (condition or behavior) that adversely impacts several individuals, and one that requires addressing (Hilgartner & Bosk, 1988; Kitsuse & Spector, 1973). From the objective perspective, constructing social problems require teasing out negative consequences for members of the society as a result of a social issue. From the subjective perspective, constructing social problems require identifying a perception that a social issue (condition or behavior) needs to be addressed.

Thus, according to the social constructionist view, any negative conditions and behaviors may exist. However, if they are not perceived as something that requires addressing, they do not become social problems. They become social problems only if they manage to attract the attention of citizens, policymakers and the wider community (Kitsuse & Spector, 1973; Muehlenhard & Kimes, 1999). Therefore, it is imperative to understand how a social problem emerges from a social issue. A pertinent example is the attention given to sexual violence against women in the United States before and after the 1970s.

Acts of sexual violence against women have probably occurred from the beginning of humanity. There is no reason to believe that they happened once in a blue moon in the United States before the 1970s. Even then, men were arrested and prosecuted for raping. However, sexual violence was largely ignored by legal policymakers. It received little attention in college textbooks and the mass media (Allison & Wrightsman, 1993). In other words, sexual violence existed without being a social problem.

However, the situation started to change when the contemporary women's movement began in the late 1970s. It soon focused on rape and sexual assault as serious crimes. These were deemed as manifestations of gender inequality. Sexual violence gradually made its way into public consciousness. As views of these crimes started to change, legal policymakers began to give them serious attention. In this way, sexual violence against women became a social problem. Therefore, according to the social constructionist view (Kitsuse & Spector, 1973; Muehlenhard & Kimes, 1999), sexual violence against women was a social issue before the 1970s and a social problem afterward. Thus, social constructionism emphasizes that how a social issue is perceived dictates whether it is considered to be a social problem.

FALSEHOOD

Falsehood in the Era of Post-Truth: Old Wine in New Bottles

Falsehood has always existed since the dawn of human civilization. It is falsehood that lured Adam and Eve into eating the forbidden fruit of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden. Yet another old source highlighting the notion of falsehood along with information credibility is the *Phaedrus* authored by Plato in the fourth century BC.

While conspiracy theories have long existed, the proliferation of the online medium has now created an ideal conduit for the rapid dissemination of falsehood. False messages on the Internet not only leave behind their digital footprints to be accessed by all and sundry but also can become viral easily (Dubois, Rucker, & Tormala, 2011; Minnaert, 2014). They spread farther and faster than the truth (Wen et al., 2014). In particular, social media platforms have turned out as one of the extremely positive enablers to spread falsehoods (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017; Friggeri et al., 2014). Even though such platforms are increasingly used by people from all across the globe to forge connections and share information with one another, they have also been seriously abused at the same time (Spohr, 2017).

As false messages continue to flood the Internet, two trends have come to dominate social discourse: truthiness and post-truth. The former refers to the validity of something based on how it feels whereas the latter means taking a position that ignores facts (Cooke, 2017). While human conversation has always contained elements of these, the Internet has elevated truthiness and post-truth to new heights. In particular, the popularity of the word "post-truth" soared in 2016 due to the prevalence of online falsehood during the United States election. The EU referendum led the Oxford English Dictionary to nominate it as the

word of the year (Flood, 2016). Exposure to online falsehood creates conspiratorial discourse shaping public sentiments that in turn produce suboptimal societal decision-making (Lewandowsky et al., 2017).

Online falsehood has become a strategic information war in this post-truth era (Aro, 2016). It has turned out to be an effective tool to sway public opinion and cause societal harm (Zhao, Cui, Qiu, Wang, & Wang, 2013). Millions of people are possible to be targeted and manipulated as a way to accelerate propaganda. At this juncture, it would be useful to identify the different forms in which online falsehoods can make their presence felt to the society.

Typology of Online Falsehood

The Internet is deservedly blamed for giving fillip to online falsehood in the forest of facts and opinions (Lewandowsky et al., 2017; Sayer, 2017). Even though the instances of such messages can be called by many names such as fake news, disinformation, misinformation or rumors (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017; Shin et al., 2018), the overarching term "online falsehood" needs to be understood holistically.

It is not difficult to recognize that online falsehood differs along at least two dimensions: intention to deceive, and the nature of content as indicated in Table 1. When it comes to intention, falsehood could be either deliberate or unintentional. When false information is disseminated deliberately due to reasons such as financial gains, it is known as disinformation. However, when the act of inadvertent sharing is involved, it is referred to as misinformation (Fayoyin & Ngwainmbi, 2014; Kumar et al., 2016).

The nature of content could include either creating bogus information from scratch, taking genuine information and putting it out of context, or taking genuine information and tweaking it in the same context. These can be referred as fabrication, context-isolation, and manipulation respectively.

An example of fabrication by creating bogus content included the falsehood that Pope Francis endorsed Donald Trump for the President of the United States prior to the election in 2016. Later, it turned out to be a hoax (CNBC, 2016).

An example of a falsehood generated in a context-isolated way by taking genuine information and putting it out of context include the following: Hurricane Harvey caused a lot of flooding in Houston in 2017. It resulted in destruction and chaos. As if that was not enough, a terrifying photo of a shark on the flooded streets of a motorway in Houston appeared on the internet and of course, immediately went viral. The photo was posted by a Twitter user who said, "Believe it or not, this is a shark on the freeway in Houston, Texas…" Eventually, the shark from the viral photograph was confirmed to have been taken from a 2005 magazine issue of Africa Geographic. Over the years, a number of hoaxers have photoshopped the shark into urban settings. The shark photo has gone viral during other crises including Hurricane Irene in 2011, Hurricane Sandy in 2012, Hurricane Matthew in 2016 and during flash floods in Texas in 2015 (Stewart & Wilson, 2016).

An example of manipulation can be traced from the fake announcement on the supposed death of Singapore's former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew on 18 March 2015. The falsehood included a doctored screen capture from the Prime Minister's Office stating that Lee had passed away. The Prime Minister was indeed hospitalized, and his health was certainly deteriorating at that time. The falsehood simply tweaked these two facts with an extra dose of sensationalism that is inherently associated with the demise of popular celebrities and public figures (Chua & Banerjee, 2017).

Table 1. Typology of online falsehood

		The nature of content		
		Creating from scratch	**Taking genuine information and putting it out of context**	**Taking genuine information and tweaking it in the same context**
Intention to deceive	**Intended**	Disinformative fabrication	Disinformative context-isolation	Disinformative manipulation
	Unintended	Misinformative fabrication	Misinformative context-isolation	Misinformative manipulation

Taking the two dimensions, online falsehood can thus be of six types: disinformative fabrication, disinformative context-isolation, disinformative manipulation, misinformative fabrication, misinformative context-isolation, and misinformative manipulation. This typology of online falsehood suggests that the issue is not only related to false online content but also associated with underlying motives and purposes. And, the intersection of these two dimensions turns the issue of falsehood into a deadly combination for this digital society.

RECOGNIZING ONLINE FALSEHOOD AS A SOCIAL PROBLEM

Objective View of Social Problem: Negative Consequences

Consistent with the objective perspective of constructing social problems, online falsehood certainly holds negative consequences for members of the society. It is harmful in at least five contexts, namely, purchase decision-making, business, health, politics and crisis.

For purchase decision-making, most people rely on online reviews. However, the proliferation of online falsehood means that reviews are not guaranteed to be genuine accounts of post-purchase experiences. Instead, they could be fictitious tales written to serve petty business interests (Malbon, 2013; Song, Park, & Ryu, 2017). Fake reviews are written with skill and guile so that they appear genuine. The result is that consumers end up making sub-par purchase decisions. Eventually, consumer confidence in reviews plummets. In consequence, the whole point and value that online reviews were supposed to bring to the table for consumers is now being undermined.

The threats imposed by online falsehood on business is also immense. Brands can fuel fake news, and are burned by it. Online falsehood can hurt brands financially, and destroy brand loyalty among consumers. Brands like Starbucks, for example, fell victim to fakery when advertising "Dreamer Day", in which the coffee chain would supposedly give out free beverages to undocumented migrants in the United States (Snopes. (2017). Rumors such as McDonald's hamburgers contain worm meat, Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) serves 'Fried Rat' instead of Chicken wings, and Procter and Gamble (P&G) is reputed to have Satanic links were utterly false (Jensen, 2015; Pal et al., 2017). Yet, they made the rounds on social media. Coca Cola's sales from the Middle East were hit hard when the hoax circulated that if the Coca Cola logo is viewed in a mirror, it would be read in Arabic as "No to Mohammed, No to Mecca" (Hawley, 2000).

Health-related online falsehood is also a serious concern worldwide. False information related to topics such as cancer and diabetes has shown its potential to distort public health by impairing individuals' healthcare decisions. For instance, anti-vaccine rumors (e.g., vaccine causes autism) sparked vaccine refusals that led to debilitating and fatal cases of measles outbreak in the United States (Faasse et al., 2016). Online hoaxes such as "Okra can cure diabetes" make diabetes management even more difficult. Furthermore, several rumors about cancer (e.g., antiperspirants are the leading cause of breast cancer; cancer biopsies cause cancer to spread) also spread widely (Chua & Banerjee, 2018; DiFonzo et al., 2012). Thus, falsehoods have thwarted the use of the Internet as a useful source of health-related information.

In the political context, the sources that generate falsehood tend to masquerade as authentic sources but promulgate false information to deceive its receivers. The sophistication in this effort often lead disinformation campaigns with the potential to disrupt democratic processes and muddle public opinion. In different countries, falsehood also affects election outcomes. For instance, some of the most widely shared fake news in the 2016 presidential election in the United States were about Pope Francis endorsing Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton selling weapons to terrorist groups, and the FBI director receiving millions from the Clinton Foundation (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017; Fourney et al., 2017; Molina, 2016). Unfortunately, these online hoaxes became viral to grab millions of eyeballs. Ideological groups can easily influence public opinion through disinformation as a form of political propaganda (Baker, 2018).

Crises—including natural catastrophes such as earthquakes as well as man-made disasters such as terrorist attacks—often promote the emergence and the diffusion of online falsehood. These situations inherently breed anxiety and uncertainty among the public. If dubious online messages spread on top of that, the society is likely to become panic-stricken. For example, in the aftermath of Hurricane Florence, social media was flooded with the fake news that residents of the affected locality could buy a flood insurance policy to cover the flood water damage (The Department of Homeland Security, 2018). In the wake of the infamous terrorist attacks at Boston, a false rumor claimed that Boston authority had shut down cellular networks to prevent an attacker from using a cell phone to detonate another explosive (Gross, 2013). During crises, falsehoods can easily give rise to racial and religious discord, which in turn can weaken social cohesion among citizens. They can erode trust and widen the social fault lines. Falsehoods tend to increase polarization and make division among people (Spohr, 2017). For instance, a dubious article about the alleged "Islamization" of London took a toll on social cohesion (Snopes, 2018).

Subjective View of Social Problem: Perception

Consistent with the subjective perspective of constructing social problems, the world is currently witnessing an unmistakable perception that online falsehood needs to be addressed. Efforts to nip the problem of online falsehood in the bud are on an upward trajectory across the globe.

Whenever falsehoods find traction in sizable segments of the online population, authoritative sources commonly intervene by issuing their verdict. For example, the United States government established a special section for "rumor control" on the Federal Emergency Management Agency website in 2013 to correct and refute several rumors when hurricane Sandy hit the north-eastern part of the country (Takayasu et al., 2015). Recently, the strategy was also actively taken when rumors about Hurricane Florence started to spread (The Department of Homeland Security, 2018).

Furthermore, different information verification websites that are specialized to debunk dubious online messages have emerged in recent years. Some of these include Snopes.com, TruthOrFiction. com, FactCheck.org, and HoaxSlayer.com (Burrell, 2011; Garrett, 2011). Since falsehood constitutes a worldwide phenomenon affecting global audiences, similar websites now exist even in non-English languages. These include the likes of liuyanbaike.com in Chinese, and leyendas-urbanas.com in Spanish (Zhang, Zhang, & Li, 2015). The existence of these fact-checking websites confirm that online falsehood is recognized as something that is worth addressing.

A particularly dominant effort to curb online falsehood involves creating laws to enhance the accountability of technology companies such as Facebook, Google and Twitter along with individuals who intentionally or inadvertently add fuel to the fire. Several laws now hold tech-giants accountable for the diffusion of online falsehood, require quick removal of such content, as well as recommend steep fines and imprisonment for failure to contain the dissemination of fake news. The German Network Enforcement Act, for instance, imposes hefty fines of about 50 million euros (US$53 million) on social media companies if they do not get rid of online falsehood within a day of receiving a complaint (Lumb, 2017).

Of late, governments and tech-giants have already started to look into online falsehood with a renewed sense of urgency. For example, in March 2018, 79 experts were invited to discuss about online falsehood in an eight-day long parliamentary hearing in Singapore—the longest hearing till date in the history of the Southeast Asian nation (Ungku, 2018). Asian and European governments are also taking actions to crack down on online falsehood (The Straits Times, 2018a; The Straits Times, 2018b). For instance, Malaysia government has sanctioned a law which sets out financial penalty and imprisonment for those who spread false information. At the beginning of 2018, France also proposed a law that will allow authorities to block websites and close user accounts that publish fake content during elections. Other European Union (EU) countries such as the Czech Republic and Sweden are also trying to introduce legislations to counter fake news (BBC News, 2017).

Besides, social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have been employing sophisticated artificial intelligence-based algorithms to detect and delete fake messages as well as their sources. For instance, Facebook had shut down 30,000 fake accounts tied to France, citing deceptive content, ahead of the French Presidential Election (NBC News, 2017). The popular online search engine Google has also taken steps to modify its search ranking systems to prevent falsehoods from entering the top results for particular search terms (BBC News, 2017). Google is reportedly planning to spend US$ 300 million over three years on Google News Initiative to fight fake news (Ghosh, 2018). The effort involves elevating credible news for greater visibility online, to elevate and strengthen quality journalism, promote business models to drive sustainable growth and empower news organizations. These examples confirm that the issue of online falsehood has now firmly cemented its place as a new social problem.

These attempts notwithstanding, online falsehoods continue to be a problem. For example, misinformation continued to go viral in the wake of recent high-profile events such as the Las Vegas mass shooting (Roose, 2017). Google ads carrying misinformation have also recently appeared on fact checking websites (Wakabayashi & Qiu, 2017). Thus, tech-giants such as Google, Facebook and Twitter have their task cut out to combat online falsehood. Compared with clear hoaxes that can be disproven with facts, exaggerated and heavily-spun content that might be considered as clickbaits may prove tougher to fight. This is especially because the Internet is absolutely festered with half-cooked headlines and photoshopped images just begging for users' attention to click (Chen et al., 2015).

Online falsehood has also been attracting attention from different academic disciplines. These range from natural sciences as well as engineering disciplines such as computer science (Shu et al., 2017; Zhang, Zhang, Dong et al., 2015; Zhao et al., 2013) to social sciences such as psychology, communication and sociology (Bennett & Livingston, 2018; Bode & Vraga, 2015; DiFonzo et al., 2016; Polletta & Callahan, 2017). Business and management professionals also joined the bandwagon due to the impact of the threat caused by online falsehoods to companies' reputation (Friggeri et al., 2014; Li, 2013; Woodside & Sharma, 2017). Thus, the issue piques both intra-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary research interests. If online falsehood manages to grab the attention of governments, law agencies, and tech-giants as well as natural scientists and social scientists alike, it should now be deemed as a social problem—not just a piddling social issue.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter was motivated by the fact that the lens of social problem had been used to view a variety of phenomena such as unemployment and sexual assault (Atkinson et al., 1986; Chang & Hirsch, 2015; Kieselbach, 2003; LaFree, 1981) yet had not been applied on online falsehood. Given that digital technology has now cemented itself firmly as a dominant social phenomenon, its by-product of online falsehood was deemed serious enough to be investigated from the perspective of social problem (Bargh & McKenna, 2004; Berinsky, 2015).

The extant literature suggests that a social problem has both an objective component and a subjective component. The objective component is that a social problem must have negative consequences. On the other hand, the subjective component is that a social problem must create a perception that it needs to be addressed (Hilgartner & Bosk, 1988; Kitsuse & Spector, 1973). Consistent with these views, this chapter shows that online falsehood gives rise to a plethora of negative consequences in a range of contexts such as purchase decision-making, business, health, politics and crisis. It also demonstrates how efforts are on the rise to tackle online falsehood from various corners such as governments, law agencies, tech-giants, natural scientists as well as social scientists. Clearly, it is not too early to herald online falsehood as a social problem in the modern tech-savvy society.

The contribution of this chapter is three-fold. First, it engages with the academic discourse on social problems to study online falsehood. Such a social constructionist view had previously been applied to offline phenomena such as unemployment, drug addiction, child labor, and sexual assault (Atkinson et al., 1986; Best et al., 2016; Chang et al., 2015; LaFree, 1981; Nelson & Abuse, 2017) but not on online settings. In this way, this chapter serves as a stepping stone for further social constructionist research on digital phenomena. As digital technology continues to make rapid inroads into human life, this paradigm shift could be timely.

Second, this chapter offers a typology of online falsehood. Building on prior works (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017; Fayoyin & Ngwainmbi, 2014; Kumar et al., 2016; Shin et al., 2018), two dimensions were identified. These include intention to deceive, and the nature of content. The typology serves to deepen the scholarly understanding of online falsehood. It also gives rise to the possibility that not all types of falsehood can be treated equally. Perhaps, combatting each requires a specially customized strategy that needs to be explored.

Third, while online falsehood has been seen as a menace of late, this chapter represents the first attempt to explicitly label it as a social problem. Even though falsehood has always been the inception layer cake that has never stopped being baked since time immemorial, the advent and subsequent proliferation of the Internet has clearly aggravated its severity. Therefore, combatting online falsehood is absolutely imperative.

To combat online falsehood, some proactive efforts could include new laws, quality journalism, fact-checking initiatives, artificial intelligence based machine-learning algorithms, use of denials, and digital literacy programs. The intent is to ensure that the efforts are adequate and effective against the evolving challenges that should be dealt with through iterative refinements, rather than waiting for an ideal solution to emerge in combating the problem of online falsehood.

As technology marches relentlessly forward, the concern also is about how people embrace technological advancements. The concern is particularly pertinent because technology itself is neither innately beneficial nor inherently harmful. Only if people use technology in a morally and socially responsible manner, the by-products of technology such as online falsehood will not grow into social problems. And only then can we hope technology to pave the way for a better world in the long run.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Denial: Denial refers to message that is intended to debunk false information.

Disinformation: Disinformation refers to the deliberate dissemination of false or misleading content.

Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM): eWOM refers to messages that are written to be exposed through internet-mediated communication.

Misinformation: Misinformation refers to false or misleading content disseminated by individuals who do not recognize it as false.

Online Rumor: Online rumor refers to any unsubstantiated content circulating on the internet.

Post-Truth: Post-truth refers to the circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping individuals' opinion than appeals to their emotion and belief.

Social Constructionism: Social constructionism refers to the belief that knowledge is socially constructed and is related to the context in which it is developed.

Chapter 2
Trolls, Bots, and Whatnots:
Deceptive Content, Deception Detection, and Deception Suppression

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ABSTRACT

Trolls and bots are often used to alter, disrupt, or even silence legitimate online conversations artificially. Disrupting and corrupting the online civic engagement process creates ethical challenges and undermines social and political structures. Trolls and bots often amplify spurious deceptive content as their activity artificially inflates support for an issue or a public figure, thus creating mass misperception. In addressing this concern, the chapter examines how trolls (humans) and bots (robots that exhibit human-like communication behavior) affect online engagement that perpetuates deception, misinformation, and fake news. In doing so, the chapter reviews the literature on online trolling and chatbots to present a list of research-based recommendations for identifying (deception detection) and reacting (deception suppression) to trolls and bots.

INTRODUCTION

Before all details of Santa Fe shooting in Texas became available to the public, the Internet was already abuzz with various information and misinformation about the shooter, the victims and the speculations of how and why. Less than 20 minutes after the shooter was named, a fake Facebook account was created in his name with images of him wearing a "Hillary 2016" hat (Harwell, 2018; see Figure 1). Similarly, coverage of the Parkland shooting in Florida was also interjected with deceptive content when a video portraying the survivors as "crisis actors" and a #CrisisActors hashtag began trending on social media (Snider, 2018; see Figure 2).

In their examination of Twitter in the aftermath of the Boston marathon bombing, Cassa, Chunara, Mandl and Brownstein (2013) found that social media play a vital role in the early detection and description of emergency situations. During crisis events, the demand for information often overwhelms its supply. People actively seek information and, in the absence of such, settle on anything they can get

their hands on. Although a large volume of content is being posted on social media every single moment, not all information is of good quality, relevant or can reach the right audience. Technical affordances of social media contribute to the dissemination of deceptive content, primarily due to social influencers manufacturing public opinion and bots automatically sharing and retweeting information that has not been fact-checked or verified. Given that information on social media is being shared and accessed in real time, the effects of the deception reach can have unpredictable outcomes (Gupta, Lamba, Kumaraguru, & Joshi, 2013).

As such, contemporary social media ecology presents a plethora of social, political and economic incentives to develop software robots that can exhibit human-like communication behavior to facilitate information management (Ferrara, Varol, Davis, Menszer, & Flammini, 2016). At the same time, trolls and bots often amplify spurious deceptive content as their activity artificially inflates support for an issue or a public figure thus creating mass misperception. As Ferrara et al. (2016) explained, "The novel challenge brought by bots is the fact that they can give the false impression that some piece of information, regardless of its accuracy, is highly popular and endorsed by many, exerting an influence against which we haven't yet developed antibodies" (p. 2). This is one of the biggest dangers both trolls and bots present as their ability to "engineer social tampering" (Ferrara et al., 2016, p. 2).

Figure 1. Fake Facebook profile [Twitter screenshot from Chris Sampson @TAPSTRIMEDIA]
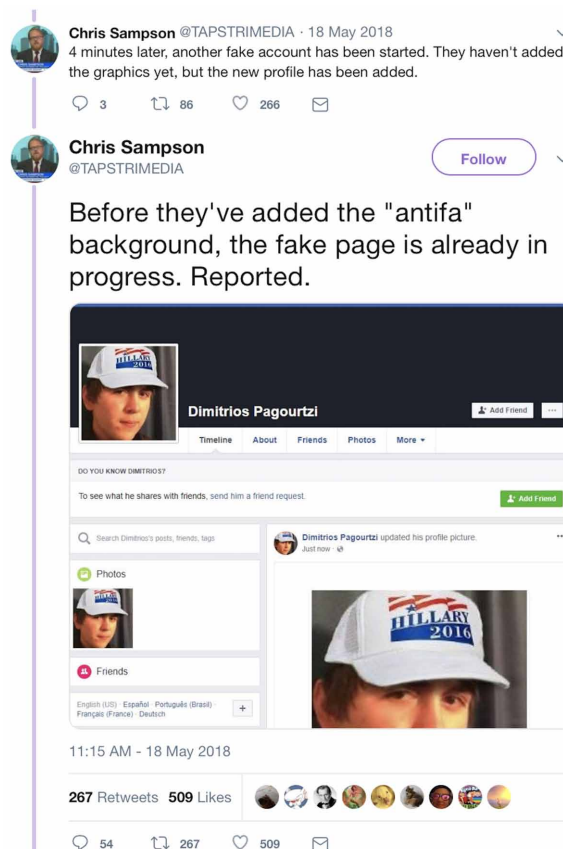
Figure 2. Trending #CrisisActors [Twitter screenshot from Jordan Sather @Jordan_Sather]
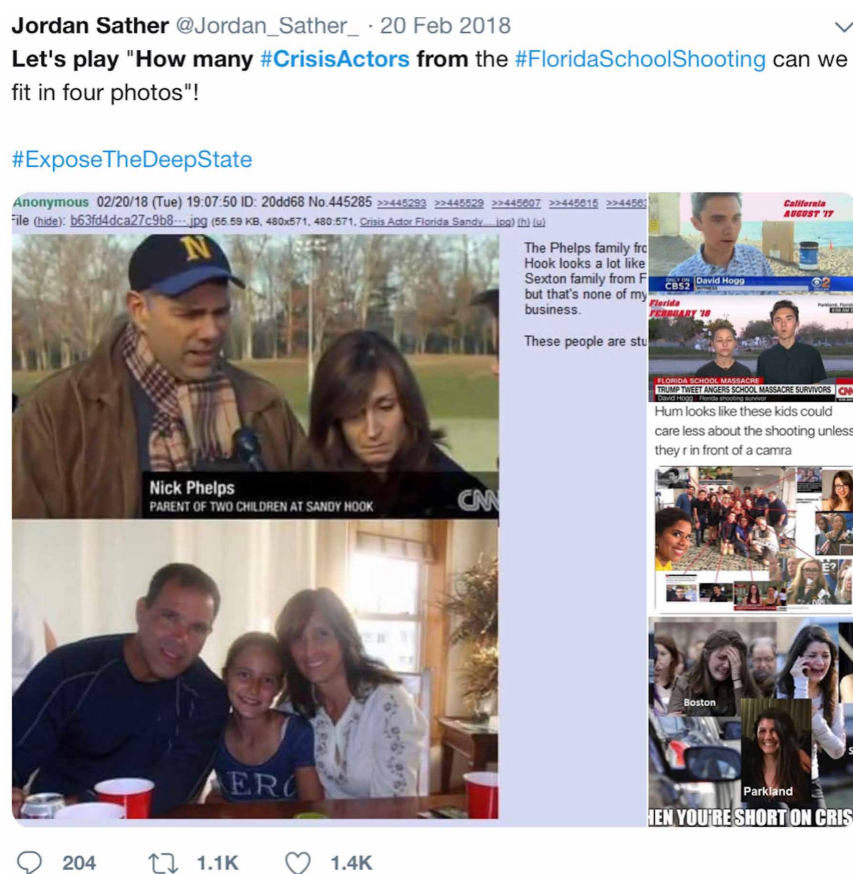
In exploring this concern, this chapter examines how trolls (humans) and bots (robots that exhibit human-like communication behavior) affect online engagement that perpetuates deception, misinformation, and fake news. In so doing, the chapter explains what bots, trolls, and their characteristics are, and who and why is susceptible to trolls and bots on social media. The chapter also reviews the diverse literature on online trolling and chatbots and provides research-based recommendations for recognizing trolls and bots on social media and appropriately reacting to them.

Trolls, Bots and Whatnots

The advances of Internet technology, Web 2.0, social media and the increasing reliance on computer-mediated communication (CMC) introduced a new Internet phenomenon that has prominently entered our lives – online trolls and bots. Today, trolls and bots play a pivotal role in amplifying issues and events, specifically through social media and during crisis and emergency situations. While there are both positive and negative effects generated by Internet trolls and bots activity, more frequently than not the public is affected due to actions of malicious entities spreading deceptive content, such as rumors and fake news (Gupta et al., 2013). In recent years, both academics and practitioners turned to the question of how one can recognize a troll or a bot in an online conversation and what is the best way to deal with them once encountered.

Online Trolls

As a practice, trolling is described as the posting of provocative, often deliberately misleading and pointless, comments with the intent of provoking others into a conflict and/or meaningless discussion (Klyueva, 2013). The term trolling may refer to the actual posts and comments (trolls), to a person making such postings (troll, troller), or to the action of posting (to troll). Traditionally, trolling is performed by actual humans who are trolls.

Existing research on trolling utilizes the term in a variety of ways and often refers to a generally negative online behavior. A troll himself is a CMC user who constructs the identity of a person wishing sincerely to be part of an online community, but whose real intentions are to disrupt normal discussion for his/her amusement or benefit. A troll posting usually consists of intentionally incorrect messages, poor advice and/or apparent contradiction to common knowledge, thereby causing others to correct them and provoking an emotional response. Trolls draw their confidence from a high degree of anonymity and greater control of self-presentation provided by the Web. This anonymity often leads to the loss of self-awareness and causes individuals to exhibit negative online behavior and act against many socially acceptable norms of communication. Such behavior is manifested through trolling – posting incendiary comments using abusive language, harsh criticism, personal insults, anger, and hatred.

Most trolls are hooligans, but some trolls are paid to promote particular commercial or political content, known as opinion manipulation trolls (Mihaylov, Koychev, Georgiev, & Nakov, 2015). The practice of online opinion manipulation by Internet trolls is not novel and has been around since the dawn of the Internet forums and chatrooms. Paid trolls have been utilized by companies, public relations and advertising agencies, and political parties to influence public opinion and deliberations within the online public sphere. In most cases, trolls are paid to manipulate online interactions either for commercial or political purposes.

Manipulation of online opinions for commercial purposes is frequently associated with online reviews of companies, products, and services. Ever since the Internet-based opinion forums became mainstream, companies were "tempted to manipulate consumer perceptions by posting costly anonymous messages that praise their products" (Dellarocas, 2006, p. 1577). Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) found that user opinions about products, companies, and politics can be influenced by opinions posted by other online users, highlighting the strategic appeal of participating in discussion forums and social networks to provide deceptive opinions from false profiles. For example, reviews on TripAdvisor for hotels closely situated to other competing hotels attract substantially more negative reviews, especially those hotels with independent owners (Mayzlin, Dover, & Chevalier, 2014). In other words, companies find the manipulation of online opinions sufficiently economically consequential to pay for opinion manipulation trolls. Dellarocas (2006) called this practice strategic manipulation while Mayzlin et al. (2014) referred to it as promotional or fake reviewing.

Manipulation of online opinions for political purposes is frequently associated with election campaigns, political advocacy, lobbying, garnering policy support or suppressing political opposition. For example, in 2014 the ruling Socialist Party in Bulgaria was accused of paying Internet trolls to silence public criticism of the government. The leaked documents revealed the Party paying an agency 750 euros per month for "posting online of 250 comments by virtual users with varied, typical and evolving profiles from different (non-recurring) IP addresses to inform, promote, balance or counteract" (Bivol.bg, 2014, para. 2). Similarly, the Russian government has been employing an army of trolls to serve various

political goals, such as legitimizing Russia's annexation of Crimea, building support for separatists in Eastern Ukraine, promoting Putin's policies in the U.S. media news sites, and effecting change within the domestic social and political culture of the United States (Chen, 2015; Sindelar, 2014). According to Chen (2015), this army of trolls works for the Internet Research Agency, where individual trolls manage multiple fake accounts and engage in deceptive online interactions at least 50 times per day. In 2017, Twitter released a list of 2,752 fake accounts, identified as both automated and non-automated trolls, affiliated with Russia's Internet Research Agency (Stewart, Arif, & Starbird, 2018). With divisive comments like "Putin makes Obama look stupid and weak!" and "A gun in the hand is better than a cop on the phone," the trolls' job was to impede informed discussion by using crude language to stir controversy and conflict (Mak, 2018; Sindelar, 2014). Further, Stewart et al. (2018) reported that "the Russian trolls not only took advantage of the polarized nature of the information space but did so in the context of a domestic conversation surrounding gun violence and race relations" (p.1).

Both paid and unpaid Internet trolls follow a familiar strategy to manipulate public opinion by making controversial posts accompanied by false and deceptive information on a hot topic with a goal to win the argument at any cost. The problem with identifying fake opinions is that they are written to sound authentic (Ott, Choi, Cardie, & Hancock, 2011). Thus, recognizing online trolls is the ability of an individual to detect specific characteristics of the post and the poster that would indicate whether or not the online collocutor is, in fact, a troll.

Characteristics of Trolls

Recent research identified several characteristics to help individuals distinguish trolls from non-trolls. Mihaylov et al. (2015) differentiated between known paid trolls (those exposed by Twitter, journalists or whistleblowers), called-out or mentioned trolls (those trolls that have been called out by other users), and non-trolls (regular users with a high volume of posts). All trolls exhibit certain behavior that typifies them – trolls are active contributors of opinions on social media and the comment section of the news sites. When commenting, trolls often attempt to alter or blur the topic of the post or news article, and for this reason, their comments usually are among the most down-voted.

Paid trolls possess additional characteristics that allow users to recognize them. To dominate the online conversation on their topic of interest, paid trolls post not only a large number of comments but also a large number of replies. Further, the paid trolls display peak of activity during regular "business hours" considering they might be doing it full time. According to Mihaylov et al. (2015), the time of posting (work time v. evening and weekdays v. weekend) and the number of negative votes on a post or comment are among the most significant predictors for identifying paid and non-paid trolls. In other words, it is safe to assume that that paid trolls tend to write demonstrably more on working days.

Similarly, Cheng, Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil and Leskovec (2015) analyzed trolling behavior of users on news sites such as CNN and Breitbart and gaming platform IGN.com and identified several predictive patterns for detecting trolls. First, users who are trolls exhibit poor writing skills with posts that lack readability and are hard to follow. These users also are more likely to use negatively-charged words, profanity, and language that incites further conflict. Second, trolling behavior in online comments is characterized by irrelevant posts that tend to concentrate on specific individual threads. Third, due to the controversial nature of their posts, trolls are able to garner more replies than average users, which demonstrates how effective trolls can be in luring others in.

From a sociolinguistic point of view, trolls tend to demonstrate several linguistic patterns that allow detecting whether or not an online user is a troll. For example, Ott et al. (2011) in their study of English-language deceptive opinion spam observed that "truthful opinions tend to include more sensorial and concrete language than deceptive opinions" (p. 316). Building on the psychological insights from Vrij et al.'s work on liars' weak ability to encode spatial information into their untruths, Ott et al. (2011) developed a computational linguistic model predictive of deceptive opinions. Specifically, their model recognizes the use of different linguistic patterns in truthful and deceptive opinions. Mainly, deceptive opinions tend to use adverbs that are general and comparative and verbs that are used in a variety of forms, including base, modal third-person singular present forms, etc. (Ott et al., 2011). In comparison, truthful opinions tend to use superlative adverbs and verb forms using past participle.

To summarize, a regular Internet user can spot a troll, whether paid or non-paid, by recognizing the distinct patterns of the post and online conduct of the poster:

- Trolls are active contributors of comments that often are quite disliked. These opinions tend to concentrate on specific threads in the form of replies rather than in new posts.
- Posts by trolls are characterized by poor writing skills with low readability on irrelevant to the original thread topic.
- Due to the intentionally deceptive nature of the posts, trolls have a reduced ability to incorporate concrete information and tend to use general descriptive words in their writing.

Bots

While traditionally trolling is performed by actual humans who are trolls, the advances in technology introduced bots, or software robots – algorithms that display human-like communication behavior, including trolling (Wald, Kshoshgoftaar, Napolitano, & Sumner, 2013). According to Ferrara et al. (2016), software robots are a type of chatbots that have been around since the early days of computers.

Originally bots were devised with the purpose to alleviate the workload of humans. Today, like trolls, bots serve different functions. Designed as helpful, harmless algorithms to ease the information aggregation and dissemination on the Internet, their ability to emulate human-like communication behavior online and avoid detection led to their abuse on social media as tools of covert manipulation (Edwards et al., 2014). Bots and trolls vary significantly in their characteristics, uses and purposes, serving commercial, political, personal and even malicious agenda.

Coleman (2018) distinguished between social and machinic bots. He argued that the main difference between the two is whether their algorithms attempt to hide their robot identities. Machinic bots are, therefore, those bots that are easily distinguishable as automated. Machinic bots are often used for commercial purposes on social media and websites to provide customer support. For instance, Amazon's Alexa and Apple's Siri are examples of commercial bots with voice recognition features. On Twitter, examples of machinic bots include bots like @Museumbot, owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which randomly Tweets high-resolution images of art several times per day (see Figure 3).

Social bots, often present on social media platforms, are more sophisticated software robots designed to produce content automatically and interact with users while imitating real people (Coleman, 2018; Ferrara et al., 2016). These automated accounts mimic human communication behavior online to build trust by posting links to paid content, gaining followers, replying and reacting to interactions with the goal of promoting a product or agenda (Wald et al., 2013).

Figure 3. Example of machinic bot on Twitter [Twitter screenshot @MuseumBot]
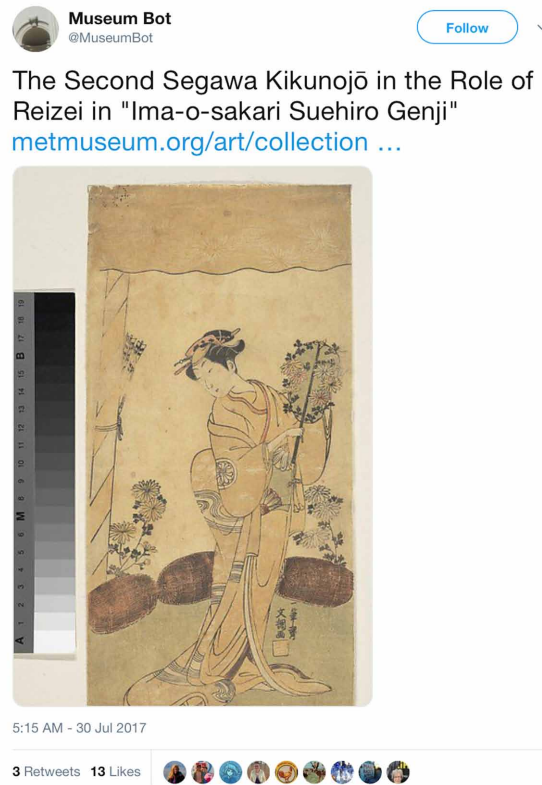
According to Ferrara et al. (2016), there are two general categories of social bots: benign and malign. First, some bots are often used to automate repetitive online interaction and automatically aggregate content from several sources. These are benign social bots mostly used for commercial purposes to alleviate workload. Similarly, on Facebook Messenger, companies can automate conversations using built-in chatbots (see Figure 5).

Second, other social bots are specifically designed to manipulate social media discourse by repeatedly posting and re-posting rumors, spam, misinformation and often random, nonsensical information. These are malign social bots that are expressly created with a purpose to manipulate social media engagement. These social bots inject a large volume of posts or tweets within a legitimate discussion with clickbait and links to websites with fake news and amplify the visibility of misleading information (Howard, Bolsover, Kollanyi, Bradshaw, & Neudert, 2017). Twitter is a particularly susceptible platform for social bots, where automated accounts are easily created.

For example, during Hurricane Sandy social media was inundated with rumors and fake images of Sandy's destruction, causing panic in the affected communities (see Figure 6). Gupta et al. (2013) identified at least 10,350 tweets containing these fake images. Similarly, after the death of the oppositional Russian politician Boris Nemtsov, Twitter was swamped with posts from government-sponsored accounts attempting to sway the narrative and spread fitting explanations, i.e., rumors (see Figure 7).

Figure 4. Example of a commercial web bot [Website screenshot from onlinevisas.com]
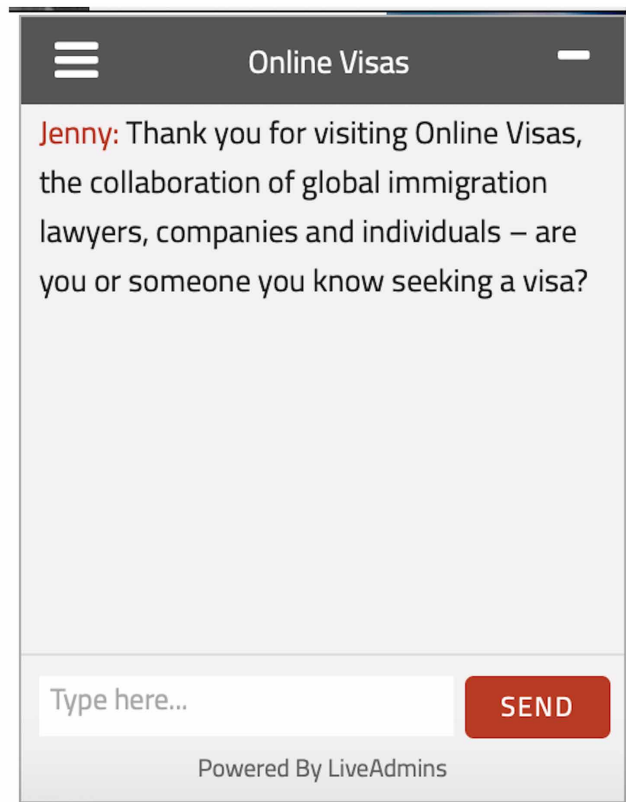
Figure 5. Example of a Facebook chatbot [Facebook page screenshot]
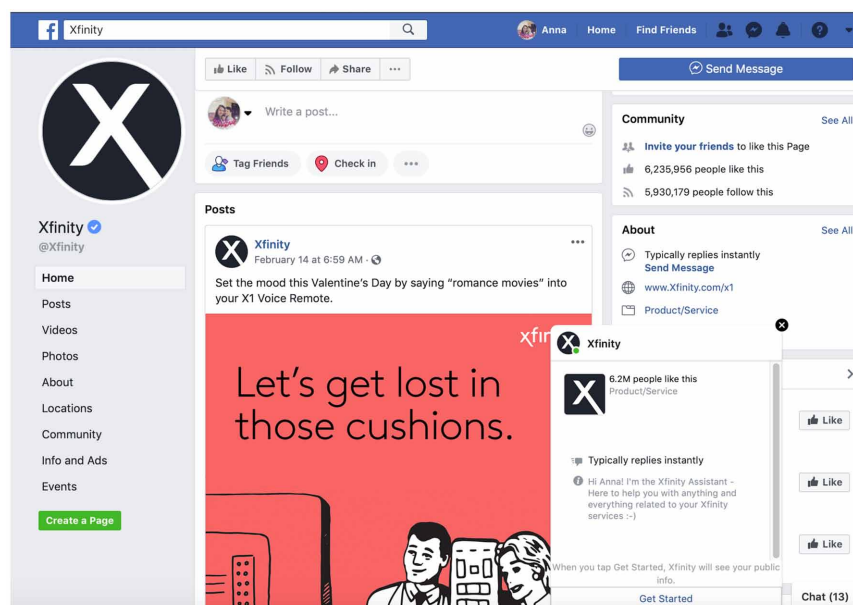
Communication professionals have a variety of options to choose from when it comes to carrying out a bot-assisted communication strategy. Coleman (2018) argued that both social and machinic bots are value-neutral tools that can serve benign and malign purposes, as "a bot-assisted-human social bot strategy does not appear necessarily ethically transgressive" (p. 121). For example, many Instagram personalities utilize a bot-assisted person strategy using a bot that likes, comments, follows and un-follows users automatically with the purpose of growing one's profile (i.e., instabot.py; script available at github. com). Another effective strategy is a botnet strategy that allows users to operate a coordinated messaging campaign through a network of bots that follow and like each other's content thus amplifying its visibility. For example, examining the bots' network spewing content about the death of the oppositional Russian politician Boris Nemtsov, Alexander (2015) identified 2,900 accounts connected to the rumor mill and concluded that a large number of fake Twitter profiles (botnet) was necessary to create an illusion of authority and credibility of the information through following each other and thus growing the network.

While recognizing bots can be an arduous task, the advances in technology allow using different algorithms to detect social bots, both malign and benign (machinic bots do not need detection as they present themselves as apparent "automations"). Bot detection software enables individuals and organizations to develop protocols and policies on how to deal with malicious entities and prevent the spread of spurious, deceptive content.

Figure 6. Fake image of Hurricane Sandy on Twitter [http://istwitterwrong.tumblr.com]

Figure 7. Several automated fake Twitter profiles posting identical messages at the same time [Twitter screenshot from @ASLuhn]

Characteristics of Bots

With the rise of accessibility to artificial intelligence, social bots became progressively sophisticated. In other words, it is becoming much harder to observe and differentiate between bot-like and human-like behavior (Ferrara et al., 2016). Latest bots can successfully mimic human communication behavior, including peer-to-peer interaction, sharing situationally-relevant content, and generating responses through natural language algorithms. These features make it increasingly hard for Internet users to recognize a robot in their online interlocutors.

Detection of social bots and their keepers has been one of the significant trends in the research literature in recent years. To counteract social bots influence and sophistication, the researchers turned to machine learning to help users recognize bots with some level of accuracy and respond to it accordingly.

Specifically, features like syntax, network characteristics, user profiles, temporal behavior, and semantic properties of content are considered in the detection of a social bot (Ferrara, Varol, Davis, Menczer, & Flammini, 2016; Subrahmanian et al., 2016). For example, Bot or Not (recently renamed as Botometer, https://botometer.iuni.iu.edu) is a machine learning algorithm developed to classify Twitter accounts as bot or human by comparing it against a database of examples.

However, research shows that the content of posts (tweets or comments) provides more significant clues for identifying bots and deceptive content rather than just user details (Gupta et al., 2013). In fact, bots can be programmed to crawl the web and social media sites to obtain realistic information for their profiles (Golder & Macy, 2011). In their analysis of 10,000 tweets containing fake images spread during Hurricane Sandy, Gupta et al. (2013) specifically examined tweet-based features and user-based features of social bots. User features studied included number of friends, number of followers, follower-friend ratio, and age of the user account, while content features focused on the post length, number of words, punctuation, emoticons, sentence structure, use of uppercase characters, mentions, hashtags, and URLs. Their analysis indicated that tweet-based features are better predictors/identifiers of fake and deceptive content than user-based features. This finding is consistent with research on online troll identification that suggests that intentionally deceptive information exhibits a recognizable linguistic pattern. Another distinguishing feature of bots is their unusual retweeting activity. As research demonstrated, approximately 86% of all tweets containing fake images during Sandy were retweets with only a mere 30 profiles responsible for the 90% of fake images shares (Gupta et al., 2013).

To summarize, a regular Internet user can spot a bot by looking at the patterns of the post:

- Bots are frequent posters, much like trolls.
- Bots grow their networks by systematically and/or randomly following users.
- Bots' intent is to help spread content, so a high volume of retweets characterizes their activity.

Whatnots

The practice of employing opinion manipulation trolls and social bots on the Internet and social media to endorse specific commercial or political content is reminiscent of the phenomenon known as astroturfing. Coined in 1985 by Senator Lloyd Bentsen, astroturfing is a technique used to generate publicity and to influence public opinion through the appearance of authenticity as a grassroots movement (hence Astroturf – artificial green grass; Bradshaw & Howard, 2017). Lee (2010) argued that astroturfing had been around for quite some time where political campaigners deliberately engaged in padding numbers to demonstrate support for an issue or position. Automated communication on a mass scale through bots and botnets allowed for astroturfing as a communication strategy to find new uses.

Ratkiewicz, Conover, Meiss, Goncalves, Flammini, and Menczer (2011) in their study of political astroturfing described the phenomenon as "politically-motivated individuals and organizations that use multiple centrally-controlled accounts to create the appearance of widespread support for a candidate or opinion" (p. 297). Similarly, Coleman (2018) argued that mass manufacture of social support and public opinion can be achieved through astroturfing by engaging in different bot strategies. Specifically, botnets can create large number of social media profiles relatively quickly to grow support and representation for an issue or movement.

An important goal of the astroturfing strategy is the engineering of perceived "social capital" to demonstrate that an account has clout and influence that can be monetized. For example, social media influencers whose goal is to monetize their influence engage in astroturfing strategies to pad the numbers that impress marketers and advertisers. Twitter is particularity susceptible to social bot penetration.

As discussed in this chapter, these numbers can be manipulated by using bot-assisted person strategy and botnet strategy, where bots follow each other, the account owner, retweet their posts using @mentions in the replies (Coleman, 2018; Ratkiewicz et al., 2011).

Ratkiewicz et al. (2014) studied political astroturfing – political campaigns designed to look like "spontaneous 'grassroots' behavior that are in reality carried out by a single person or organization" (p. 297). For example, the researchers examined political memes and Twitter accounts that spread them. One such account belonged to @PeaceKaren_25 and contained no identifying information on the user, yet producing over 10,000 tweets in four months supporting several Republican candidates. By spewing large numbers of content and engaging with similar social bots, @PeaceKaren_25 bot (now suspended) was successful in creating a Twitter bomb – a temporary Google ranking of these tweets when googling "gopleader" (Ratkiewicz et al., 2011).

While the strategic use of trolls and bots can be ethically ambiguous and even justifiable by its aims, astroturfing has less latitude in considering it as "ethically permissible to engage in the mass manufacture of social capital" (Coleman, 2018, p. 126).

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Astroturfing: A technique used to generate large volumes of publicity with the purpose of influencing public opinion by appearing as an authentic grassroots movement. The term derives from "astroturf" – artificial green grass.

Bot-Assisted Person: A strategy used by social media personalities that allows them to focus on creating content while a social bot undertakes the groundwork by liking, commenting, following, and un-following users automatically with the purpose of growing their profile.

Botnet: A network of bots, programmed and operated under the single owner.

Bots: An abbreviation of the term phrase "software robot."

Machinic Bots: Machinic bots are software robots present on the internet and social media that are easily identifiable as such.

Opinion Manipulation Trolls: The internet trolls who are paid to participate in online conversations and discussions with the purpose of swaying public opinion or advocating for a specific issue.

Promotional Reviewing: A practice by for-profit organizations who find manipulation of online opinions sufficiently economically consequential to pay for opinion manipulation trolls and fake online reviews. Also known as strategic manipulation.

Social Bots: A software robot designed to produce content automatically and interact with users while imitating real. Social bots successfully mimic human communication behavior online to build trust by posting links to paid content, gaining followers, replying, and reacting to interactions with the goal of promoting a product or agenda.

Trolls: An internet user engaged in the practice of posting provocative, often deliberately misleading and pointless, comments with the intent of provoking others into a conflict and/or meaningless discussion. There are paid trolls (see also opinion manipulations trolls) and non-paid trolls (mostly hooligans).

Twitter Bomb: A communication strategy on Twitter that involves repeating posting of the same content using the same hashtag, often from multiple accounts, with the purpose of promoting certain content, issue, or idea. Twitter bomb may result in high Google ranking of the promoted content.

Chapter 3
Factors Influencing Gossiping Behavior in Social Chatting Platforms

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ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses the need for drama, interpersonal closeness, informational susceptibility, and compassion for others and their influence towards gossiping behavior via social chatting applications. Technological advancements have enabled people to communicate with each other at the convenience of their homes and in real time. This change, however, also means the changes in human behaviors, such as computer-mediated communication, can be shaped by the richness of the media that people can use to convey their thoughts and opinions. The existence of different chatting applications has fulfilled the needs of human beings to be connected and to interact with each other, and the interactions that take place can be in the form of gossiping and spreading information that may not necessarily be accurate.

INTRODUCTION

Human beings show an increasing interest in and attraction to telling stories that do not belong to their own environment. The interest and attraction to tell stories may lead people into forming social networks in their own social contexts. Conversations and information spreading, all the way with the acts of preserving group norms, can lead to the act of gossiping. Gossip can be defined as an exchange of information about absent third parties taking place in social contexts in which all actors involved are known (Foster, 2004). Gossip is considered as a key social behavior that everyone who is working in any organization can experience, hear, and probably be involved in (Mills, 2010).

While gossip is denounced publicly, its positive roles in socializing, informing, and entertaining, have led to the question of the possibility of individual differences in the individuals' private attitudes about gossip (Litman & Pezzo, 2005). Ben-Zenev (1994) noted that, even though gossip may have a bad reputation, some individuals in fact view gossip quite positively, and acknowledge its roles in making friends and gathering information, while others may have a negative perception of it entirely.

Gossip received when verifiable or gained from a trusted source, can provide individuals in organizations with useful information (Grosser, Lopez-Kidwell, Labianca, & Ellwardt, 2012). Context is a crucial factor, as a piece of information may or may not be gossip, depending on who is telling the information to whom and the context and intentions (Nevo, Nevo, & Derech-Zehavi, 1994).

Social networks have gained popularity over the past decade. The popularity of these networks can be attributed to the ability of the users to produce and reproduce content (Jeong & Kim, 2017) as well as share information to others within or outside the network. Adults have exhibited strong desires to stay connected and updated with what their peers are doing to avoid being left out and to maintain relationships (Fox & Moreland, 2015).

Social networks are linked to gossip in a way that they facilitate the spread of information from one individual to another. The vast networks that an individual has or belongs to, may speed up the spread of information. Both social media and communication-enabling platforms have been used to interact with people whom one knows personally others an individual would want to be in contact with (Wells, 2011 in Alalwan, Rana, Dwivedi & Algharabat, 2017). This chapter will discuss different factors influencing the spread of gossip in communication-enabling platforms, including social networks and chatting applications.

BACKGROUND

Deception in the online world can take a variety of forms. In a seminal study, Donath (1998) outlined four types of online deception: trolling, category deception, impersonation, and identity concealment. The spread of information or gossip can be categorized as a lighter version of deception, as individuals who gossip may not entirely aim to spread inaccurate information nor deceive others. Albeit considered to be harmless by some, gossip and gossiping activity remain controversial. Due to its perceived potential to be harmful, gossip is often viewed as morally questionable, and therefore the act of gossiping itself is prohibited (Wert & Salovey, 2004; Oakley, 1972; Schein, 1994).

Deceptive behaviors can be influenced by the communication channel. The available media choices, computer-mediated communication (CMC) and face-to-face communication have been identified in the literature. Media can be identified based on its richness. Evaluation of a medium's richness is based on four criteria: the ability of the medium to provide immediate feedback, allow for variety in language, have a personal focus, and provide multiple cues. More social cues are present in rich media, such as FTF communication, whereas CMC would be considered a leaner media due to its restricted access to social cues.

Even though social and contextual cues may not be available or attenuated in CMC, (Keil & Johnson, 2002) it is still possible to supplement the interaction with other forms of media such as images and videos, and this is evident in communication-enabling platforms. These additional communication features can strengthen online friendships and facilitate the spread of gossip or even inaccurate information.

Chatting platforms are widely used applications that enable the users to interact with each other. Granted, not all information shared using this chatting platforms has a high degree of accuracy. One of the leading chatting platforms worldwide is WhatsApp. WhatsApp is a primary mobile instant messaging application that enables users to send each other text, images, video and audio messages. It allows individuals to socialize and stay connected at no charge (Gazit & Aharony, 2018). As of January 2017, the number of active users in the application reached 1.2bn monthly users worldwide (Statista, 2017).

As part of online communication platforms, chatting applications provide an alternative means to fulfill the intervals between face-to-face meetings. These channels are also instrumental in enabling people to plan and facilitate social gatherings (Quan-Haase, 2008). Besides that, using this online communication is easier for some individuals to disclose information that they may not be able to convey directly, indicating that these online channels are appropriate for both maintenance and development of relationships between individuals that we know and strangers (Bargh & McKenna, 2004).

There are some cases where chatting applications facilitated the spread of inaccurate information or even hoaxes. Even though they claimed to have end-to-end encryptions for example, some most used chatting applications such as Whatsapp are subjected to some scrutinies in different countries amid allegations of spreading and circulating false information that led to chaos such as the ones happened in Brazil and India (thejakartapost.com, 2018). Japanese government recently considered meeting Japanese tech companies such as Line Corp. and Yahoo Japan Corp. to discuss the possibility of increasing the measures to combat inaccurate information through their platforms.

Gossip is an intimate conversation, and it happens mainly in physical contexts with a feeling of mutual trust between the sender and the receiver (Tassielo, Lombardi & Costabile, 2018). Gossip can contribute to the functioning of a group that individuals belong to (Ellwardt, Labianca & Wittek, 2012). For example, despite its harmful consequences for individuals, negative gossip might have beneficial consequences for group outcomes.

Gossip is often linked to discrepancies (Hanners, 1967), as any group members who are perceived to behave differently may be talked about (Gabriels & De Backer, 2016).

In the context of workplace gossip, the member of the organization that becomes the focus of gossip plays an important part of the gossip episodes, despite not being directly involved in the transmission of the gossip. It is understood that organization members will have specific roles coupled with certain actions and expectations associated with them (Human Resources International Digest, 2018). These expectations are understood within that relevant institution; therefore, if somebody unexpectedly veers off from these expectations and duties, it is considered to be a deviation. This deviation tends to get noticed by others within the system, and those within the same system will take interest in this deviation, and eventually attempt to make sense of this behavior by discussing, evaluating, and assessing it with other interested members of the group. They may want to boost their own reputations by being in possession of the knowledge.

Most of the previous research that considers gossip as a group process focuses on the transmission of gossip through networks, more specifically the dyadic relationship between the gossip sender and the gossip receiver. Much of it examines the extent to which there is gossiping in a network. It has been suggested that gossip spreading in a social network is influenced by the structure of the social network (Johansson, 2017). It is highly possible that the number of friends or acquaintances that a person has can have impact on how far the gossip will spread and the speed it gets transmitted.

Previous studies have noted that the level of interdependence within the group will increase along with the number of members of that network, since more members would mean the even higher importance of norm monitoring (Hackman, 1992). This may indicate the crucial role of gossiping as a means to monitor 'norms', and that everyone who is outside of the norms may become the object of gossip. Moreover, it has been observed that gossiping allows individuals to obtain information that can help them to make social comparisons, and eventually define and evaluate their own lives (Suls, in Michelson & Mouly, 2004). This suggests that the transmission of gossip can be a relatively indirect means of getting information for social comparison; it is preferable as it is less evident and therefore less risky

to individuals compared to public social comparisons that may result in loss of self-esteem and embarrassment (Michelson & Mouly, 2004).

Gossip typically happens in a private and intimate context, through friends and acquaintances and with only friends and acquaintances (Ayim, 1994; Bergmann, 1993; Suls, in Michelson & Mouly, 2004). Gossip performs an important bonding function as it revolves around small and intimate groups (Rosnow & Fine, 1976), and to some extent, gossiping together is a form of interpersonal closeness exhibition.

In a workplace, gossip can be treated as a means to 'vent' by the employees, especially under the circumstances where the solution may not be readily available or the venting may serve as the only way to reduce the burden (Djikstra & Beerma, 2014). Another perspective views gossip in the workplace as a time-wasting activity with various downsides including decreased productivity, lower employee morale and trust, damaged reputation, and hurt feelings (Hennessy, 2008). It is however acknowledged that gossip is present in every organization (Kiran, Zubair, Shahzadi, & Abbas, 2018).

In a study among nurses, who had to control their emotions in their interactions with patients, gossip was shown to help the nurses cope with the stress this caused (Waddington & Fletcher, 2005). In addition, Feinberg et al. (2012) found that gossiping about someone's behavior to another person reduced negative affect caused by this behavior. Related to emotional venting is the function of gossip as a bonding mechanism. Gossip has been argued to bring people closer together. Exchanging sensitive gossip with someone signals that one trusts this person. As such, gossip has been compared to grooming in primates (Dunbar, 2004); it signals trust and interpersonal intimacy (Grosser et al., 2012).

Alpurt and Postman (1947) introduced a concept dubbed 'the psychology of gossip'. They elaborated that gossip may have complex purposes; it may be used to relieve the gossipers of certain emotions while allowing them to justify another person's emotions in a particular situation.

This is apparent in Difonzo and Bordia's (2000) study on the purpose of social communication. They pointed out that there are three motives of social communication: knowing the fact, communication, and proving their self-importance. Gossip is common in every organization more or less, but it appears stronger and becomes more common in organizations: in which the employees face defects in the information system; among groups and societies which are more likely to be simple and naive.

Within an organization, the existence of gossip can be driven by tensions, pressures and stressors (Golipur, Kozekanan, & Zetabi, 2011). It is paradoxical in the sense that gossip can cause tensions and vice versa. It should be noted as well that in the context of organization and social relationships, individuals will be exposed to massive amounts of information; and it will be reasonable to expect that not all the information is processed and perceived accurately (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Kenny & West, in Golipur et al., 2011). Thus, individuals' perceptions of the social relationships among actors can vary greatly, with some people having more accurate perceptions than others.

Gender and Gossip

Previous studies have highlighted the differences between males and females in terms of their gossiping behaviors. Males are more likely to share gossip with their romantic partners, whereas females would be more likely to share gossip with their female friends (McAndrew & Bell, 2007). In addition, some authors have argued that there is no substantiated evidence yet as how gossiping behaviors vary between genders. Some studies pointed out that even though gender can play a role in gossiping behavior, the role is more to the nature and direction of the gossip instead of the frequency (Leaper & Holliday, 1995; Levin & Arluke, 1985).

THE OTHER SIDE OF GOSSIP

Need for Drama

In their seminal work, 'Developing and Testing a Scale to Measure Need for Drama' Frankowski, Lupo, Smith, Daniel, Ramos, & Morera (2016) developed a scale that measures an individual's need for drama. They noted that an individual's need for drama is related to other personality traits. For example, individuals with a higher need for drama also exhibit higher levels of interpersonal manipulation.

Interpersonal manipulation (IPM) is a trait that is characterized by a person's willingness to influence other people to behave according to what the manipulator desires. Clinically, manipulative behavior is often studied within the context of psychopathic traits (Hare, 1999). Individuals with psychopathic traits are often manipulative, impulsive, callous, lack empathy, and exhibit anti-social behaviors.

Individuals with high need for drama (NFD) may have some of the manipulative characteristics that can define psychopathy, but it is likely that these characteristics may not cause them to be callous (Lishner, Hong, Jiang, Vitacco, & Neumann, 2015).

Individuals with a high need for drama traits tend to possess an impulsive outspokenness trait. This trait signifies a person's tendency to speak out and share his or her opinions, even inappropriate circumstances without considering the potential social consequences that follow. This impulsivity tendency is considered to overlap with diagnoses of dramatic personality disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). This impulsivity trait is associated with psychopathy, as well as the disinhibition and antagonism which comprise a maladaptive trait model (Guenole, 2014; Skodol et al., 2011).

Another element of the need for drama is persistent perceived victimhood (PPV). This trait is defined as the propensity of an individual to constantly perceive himself or herself as a victim of everyday life situations that can be considered harmless. This perceived victimization is one of four clusters of dysphoric states that are associated with BPD (bipolar disorders) (Zanarini et al., 1998).

The concept of PPV is aligned with negative emotionality notion found in Skodol et al.'s (2011) proposed maladaptive trait model. It is expected that individuals with high NFD share this trait with people with BPD and that they use this perceived victimization as justification for conducting manipulative behaviors.

It is possible that individuals with a higher need for drama will have a higher propensity to spread gossip, as the gossip itself is perceived as a way to spice things up. In addition to that, having access to the latest gossip can possibly fulfill the need for drama that the person has.

Compassion for Others

It has been noted that both compassion and compassion for others are beneficial for one's psychological well-being (Lopez, Sanderman, Ranchor, & Schroevers, 2018). The frequency of gossip was found to be positively related to individual needs such as including the need for social approval and the need for dominance (Keefer, 1993). However, it is negatively related to a need for achievement (Keefer, 1993). However, the frequency of gossip is also related to likeability; those who are frequent gossipers tend to be less liked by their peers (Jaeger et al., 1994; Keefer, 1993).

It is possible that the frequency of gossip is negatively related to compassion for others, since individuals may feel uncomfortable to spread information to others, especially when they are unable to certainly assert the accuracy of the gossip. It has been observed as well that the nature of the gossip can influence people's tendency to spread it. For example, in the organizational context, those gossiping about work-related topics (e.g., an individual's professional reputation at work) are seen in a better light than those who gossip about more personal topics. As a result, work related gossip is not only more acceptable to others, but also more likely to be passed on to others. Gossip in workplace can have both positive and negative meaning. The positive gossip encompasses information regarding acts or behaviours that are socially approved (Levine, Mody, Desbareau & Arluke, 1988), and can be in the form of showing appreciation and supports to others (Morrison, 2004). Negative gossip happens when individuals are interested in behaviours that are not considered to be socially acceptable. (Turner, Mazur, Wendel & Winslow, 2010)

In addition to the context of compassion, some studies related to the valence of social networking messages generally are aligned with Reinecke and Trepte's (2014) 'positivity bias' proposition (Edwards & Harris, 2016). In terms of online presentations, it is believed that positive presentations will reap positive rewards, and as such are more commonly found. (Forest & Wood, 2012; Reineckev & Trepte, 2014, Moreno et al., 2011; Qui, Lin, Leung, & Tov, 2012). Several studies have demonstrated that social network users recognize the importance of online positivity for maintaining their self-images and relationships (Barash, Duchenaur, Isaacs & Belotti, in Lin 2015; Bryant & Marmo, 2012). The drive to show compassion to others and be positive while using chatting platforms can also prevent individuals from spreading gossip, as they do not want to harm other people's reputations or spread negative words about others.

Information Susceptibility

Individuals may have varying degrees of susceptibility to interpersonal influence. Previous studies have observed that susceptibility of interpersonal influence has impacted upon people's behaviors. A study conducted by Kropp et al. (1999) documented that non-smokers have higher levels of information susceptibility than the smokers.

There are two main components of interpersonal influence; informational influence and normative influence. The measures of the normative component of interpersonal influence are related to an individual's need for self-enhancement in front of others (value-expressiveness) and his or her need to conform to the expectations of others (utilitarian).

Utilitarian influence is shown through the compliance of an individual; and these individuals comply to obtain rewards or avoid punishments. The compliance is shown through adoption of a group's norms, values and behaviors as a means to produce desired social outcomes through the process of compliance (Burnkrant & Cousineau, 1975; Park & Lessig, 1977).

According to Kelman (1958), compliance occurs when people adopt attitudes and behaviors in order to obtain specific rewards or to avoid specific punishments. The person would therefore conform to the group norms and values, as well as perform the expected behaviors not because he or she believes in the importance of doing so, but because doing so can lead to a desired social outcome. Utilitarian influence is most likely to take place when the person's behavior is visible to the influencer.

Influence is linked to gossip as gossip generally deals with discrepancies (Hannerz, 1967). Since gossip generally happens when a person behaves differently from others or different from how he or she usually behaves, the trustworthiness of a gossip can be perceived as higher by someone with higher susceptibility.

Gossipers evaluate this information and adopt a moral framework accordingly (Gabriels, 2016). Due to its evaluative elements, gossip can be informative, providing information about specific individuals (Gabriels, 2016). In online environments, the informative nature of gossip was investigated in celebrity gossip studies. For instance, people pass on information about celebrities via numerous tweets, often including gossip, on large scales (Van den Bulck, Claessens, & Bels, 2014).

The passing on of rumors, gossip and stories has been studied for decades. It is believed that a story is passed on occasionally because the listener believes the content, and believes that if he or she does not pass it on, someone who is important to them may be at risk (Frost, 2002). The same case may happen with gossip. The gossip is passed because the gossipers believe that the content is accurate, and that the one who receives it will benefit from the information being passed.

Interpersonal Closeness

Studies have documented how sharing media is a part of social identity signalling, be it personal or as a member of a social group (Berger & Heath, in Johnson, 2018). In their study of media tastes and online social networks, Lewis, Gonzalez, and Kaufman (2012) noted that preferences and sharing behavior lead to social relationships instead of the other way around. The finding implies that sharing entertainment media with others can enhance a sense of group belongingness and compensate for relational shortcomings. All of this can be done using different chatting applications. (Gomillion, Gabriel, Kawakami, & Young, 2017).

With regard to personal closeness, gossip is a medium for individuals to show pro-group behavior. This can be done by identifying a group member who may have violated the group's norms. This form of loyalty could be a way for peripheral group members to gain a stronger position within the group. It has been observed that group members will share information with regards to one's reputation as well as 'punish' those who may not conform to the group's norms or do not cooperate with others well (Wilson, Wilczynski, Wells, & Weiser, in Feinberg, Willer & Schulz, 2014). An individual's gossip behavior can depend on the ties for his strong and weak ties (Granovetter 1973), and therefore may serve as a signal on the strength between the gossiping parties.

SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The studies on gossip have led to questions as to how gossip functions in societies, whether collectivistic ones or individualistic ones. The advancement of information technology has also made it difficult to separate between real life and virtual life; to some extent it promotes online interaction much more than face-to-face interaction.

As mentioned in the above discussion, gossips spread using communication platforms can have different implications, depending

As discussed above, gossip may not always be seen in a negative light. As gossip can often come from a trusted colleague, the information is typically seen as reliable and valuable (Emler, 1984). As such, the individual sharing the news can gain power over those who are the recipients of this narrative (Grosser et al., 2010).

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The research on gossip that is available in the extant literature is by no means exhaustive. It is also interesting to see an interdisciplinary perspective of how gossip is spread. Individual differences exist in the extent of social media use. A person may be more or less familiar with, or in the habit of, engaging in sharing practices on social media such as Facebook. The individual's sharing tendency and the frequency may be influenced by their drive to present themselves positively (Johnson, Vang & Van Der Heide, 2015). The frequency with which they share mass media content on social media could boost their ability to strategically share when experiencing a particular self-presentation motive.

Moreover, the platform usage intensity (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007) can increase the motivational effect, as heavy users may exhibit higher engagement with gossiping behaviors and are more sensitive in presenting themselves. This could mean that even though an individual is motivated to share information, he or she will filter the information first before passing it to others to avoid ruining someone's reputation or putting someone else at risk.

Another line of inquiry that future research may focus on can revolve around the notion of whether gossip is a form of survival, particularly in interpersonal relationship or organizational contexts. Gossip can be perceived as an effective way to communicate with others, and to some extent attitudes toward gossip can also be considered as one of the determinants of gossiping behavior. It would be interesting as well to investigate how gossip will spread if there are multiple versions of the gossip transmitted within the same social network.

CONCLUSION

The chapter discusses different perspectives of gossip, and whether gossip and the inaccurate information that it may contain is a form of spreading false information. As much as gossip is deemed to be unethical, its impact in shaping human communication is significant. Subsequent studies can discuss different personalities associated with gossiping behaviors as well as possible differences in types of gossip that are spread.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Compassion for Others: The compassion that one feels for others.

Influence Susceptibility: How easily it is for the individual to be influenced by information that he or she receives from others.

Interpersonal Closeness: The perceived degree of closeness that one individual has toward another person.

Need for Drama: The characteristics of a person that are exhibited in manipulating other people by acting as a victim.

Personal Valence: The importance that somebody assigns to something, whether it is considered to be personally relevant or not.

Self-Compassion: The compassion that one feels for oneself.

Utilitarian Influence: Influence that somebody follows due to the expectation of achieving a desired social outcome.

Chapter 4

Misleading Media Portrayals in a Globalized World:
Justification of State Control Through an Orientalist Lens

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ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses the phenomenon of media power and dissemination of misleading and spurious representations. The author argues that global mass media can increasingly be seen as devices of control. This is inferred from a frequent use of Orientalist discourses when portraying the Middle East, which bestows the media messages with hidden power structures. These messages, along with the emergence of social media and a high saturation of visual media, contribute to strengthening of media power. This enables the state to justify its control and political actions. By drawing on Orientalism and by exploring media portrayals of the Middle East, this chapter suggests that misrepresentations produced by the media should be seen as a violent rhetoric which aims at acting to discipline Middle Eastern bodies and trapping them in a cycle of alienation. The analysis discusses media coverage of the 2015 Paris terrorist attacks, the war in Iraq, and 9/11. The author suggests that through the practice of alienating subjects from society, mass media create an opportunity for them to turn to extremes.

INTRODUCTION

Globalization, in all its complexity, gave birth to many theories. While socio-political approaches framed it as "complex interdependence," (Keohane and Nye, 1977), cultural theorists explored the theses of "functional proximity," "homogenization," and "connectivity" (Steger, 2009; Tomlinson, 1999). Nevertheless, the conversations concerned with globalization of media industries tend to be centered around the notions of transformation, especially in terms of social restructuring (Modelski et al., 2007), as well as proliferation and dissemination of media in the 21st century. These conversations have placed media industries at the center of globalization, predominantly as powerful technologies which play fundamental

roles in contemporary societies through their ability to shape public agenda, establish status quo and influence the state's political actions.

Modern-day media have transformed considerably over the past decades since the invention of the printing press and telegraph in the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries, respectively. Traditionally thought of as informing and information-sharing devices only, media promptly became an object of scholarly and intellectual debates. Although the conversations over the role of mass media in modern societies started to flourish only in the twenty first century, many thinkers referred to media as the "fourth estate" of the government as early as in the eighteenth century (Burke in Willis and Willis, 2007). This gave birth to a series of conceptualizations about the cultural and sociological impacts of increased use of media noting their extraordinary impact on societies.

The ways of understanding the practices of media industry have been transforming alongside both the changes in media outlets themselves and various globalizing processes. The proliferation of media globally, along with an increasing role of developing countries and emerging economies in media production and distribution as well as the emergence of new media, complicated the ways in which scholars and the general public tend to think about media and practices underlying the industry.

Nevertheless, one could not deny the fact that the emergence and rapid expansion of the new means of communicating and disseminating information made many contemporary western societies develop media cultures (Deuze, 2011), in which individuals, media consumers and spectators are continuously being exposed to, and are being "bombarded" by, media images and messages (Potter, 2013, p. 112). This phenomenon propelled many conversations about the concept of media power and its repercussions, which are specifically pertinent in the contemporary era which many have defined as one where misleading information, fake news, spurious representations and alternative facts dominate the political sphere.

This essay engages with the very phenomenon of media power and argues that media should be seen as devices of power and control. This can be seen especially in their portrayals of the Middle East, which is often represented in a fabricated, preconceived and constructed fashion (Fuller, 1995, p. 187). These Orientalizing practices of media and their portrayals of the "East" in the globalized world should be seen as a violent rhetoric aimed at acting to discipline the Middle Eastern bodies, trapping them in a cycle of alienation by rendering them different and punishing them for their identities.

This allows the state to justify its control and certain actions it undertakes. Additionally, this paper suggests that through the process of Orientalizing and alienating certain subjects from society, mass media create an opportunity for these subjects to turn to extremes. This paper carries significance in drawing attention to the necessity of disassembling and deconstructing the western media in order to understand the structures of power within which they operate.

HISTORICIZING MEDIA POWER

Throughout much of Western history, the mass media have often been objects of public desire. This has been conditioned by the fact that the vast majority of conversations and literature concerned with media have traditionally equipped them with a particular ideology which supported media's privileged status in society.

Conventionally, the earliest examples of media technologies, such as written journalistic texts, were conceptualized as tools of informing and information-sharing only (Rosen, 1999). With the emergence of new technologies, which enabled the more rapid spread of information, and with the proliferation of

online media platforms, the understanding of the role of media transformed and sparked various scholarly and intellectual debates. Many of them began as early as in the eighteenth century, reinforced by the emergence of journalism when news media became understood as "protectors of political accountability and the truth" (Kuo, 2001, p. 4).

In 1841 the Scottish philosopher, Thomas Carlyle, framed the power of the press as the "Fourth Estate," which subsequently sparked conversations about the ability of media to create channels of expression reminiscent of Habermassian public sphere (Garnham, 1992). He attributed this notion to Irish statesman, Edmund Burke, who supposedly maintained that "there were three estates in Parliament; but, in the Reporters' Gallery yonder, there sat a fourth estate more important far than they all" (Carlyle, 1993, p. 42). These debates stressed the extraordinary status of mass media in the society, and started an inquiry into the power of mediated texts.

This prompted a particular view of the press as guardians of truth and watchdogs of power which was supported by the faith in media as foundation of democracy, or rather the "Fourth Estate." This very view lies at the center of the liberal imagination of the West. In fact, the belief in the extraordinary function of the media is the proposition presented in the First Amendment which, along with the freedom of assembly and freedom of religion, allows the Congress to "make no law…abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press" (Beeman, 2010).

The French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, adopted thirteen years later, in 1789, embodied a similar spirit alongside the proclamation of the freedom of speech: "The free communication of ideas and opinions is one of the most precious of the rights of man. Every citizen may, accordingly, speak, write, and print with freedom, but shall be responsible for such abuses of this freedom as shall be defined by law" (Jellinek, 2018). In this context, modern western liberal democracies elevated the purpose of media to one which serves the function of a liaison between the political sphere and the public.

Having recognized this special role and influence of mass media in modern societies, the beginning of the twentieth century in Western academy started to bring rigorous studies on the social impact of mass communication. Starting with the founding of The New School University in New York in 1919, research on mass media's societal impact centered around the issues of propaganda and the notions of media effects, which progressively started to expand into the impacts of increasing dissemination of spurious content and misinformation on the socio-political sphere.

Along with increasing waves of globalization, scholars began to argue that growing interconnectedness has allowed mass media to gain much influence to establish an agenda but also to destroy one (Rantanen, 2004). These remarks have often been conditioned by the increasingly transnational nature of contemporary media industries, which rendered them powerful enough to "enable, inform, deceive [and] shift the balance of power" (Silverstone, 1999, p. 143). This power of media has also been argued to be able to produce and maintain meanings as well as authorize and bolster certain ideologies, beliefs and worldviews.

These views have been conditioned by media globalization, which has recently been taking unpredictable turns, especially in the context of issues with privacy, political manipulation and minimal control on the side of the media consumer—as it was demonstrated with the Cambridge Analytica controversy of 2018. However, before the times in which the use of technologies to influence election results, or the process of mining personal information, became a main domain of successful media industries, there has also always been a preconception that media content, in terms of its representations can be seen as much a technology of power as the institution itself.

These debates emerged along with the idealized notion of the media and continued to intensify along with the rapid growth of media technologies, especially in the context of proliferation of electrical telegraph networks in the 1840-1850s which revolutionized international communications. This, to many, started the first form of contemporary media-enabled global connectivity, or globalization, which allowed for the transmission of messages across continents and oceans, almost instantaneously (Wenzlhuemer, 2013).

Some of these theoretical approaches included ideas, such as propaganda model, and subsequently agenda-setting role of the media, which were closely aligned with the introduction of the network era in the US in the mid-1950s-1980s, during which television programming was largely uniform (Lotz, 2007, p. 24). This implied concerns over little agency or interactivity on the side of the viewer, which were caused by the fact that the television landscape in the US was dominated three commercial broadcast television networks, namely ABC, CBS and NBC, which "pushed their programming" at the media consumer (Butler, 2001, p. 14).

Disputes over media power continued and became particularly important to further hypothesize about the power of media institutions. The 1970s - 1990s brought sweeping changes in the context of understanding economic development as well as cultural and political expression. This was seen in the exchange of electronic media culture, which grew from "US $94 billion to US $488 billion" (Holt and Perren, 2011, p. 187) in the United States alone.

This expansion refers to a global process of structural transformation which began with media communication industries in much of the industrialized world "in order to effectively produce and distribute their cultural products and services" (Jin, 2015, p. 1). This departure from romantic attitudes towards media framing them as the "Fourth Estate," was questioned again due to concerns over media industries "expanding geographically in the midst of neoliberal globalization."

The notion of neoliberal globalization derives from neoliberalism—an ideology referred to as a global turn "in political-economic practices and thinking since the 1970s" (Harvey, 2005, pp. 2–3). Predominantly positioned in the context of economics, neoliberalism refers to a theory which promotes economic freedom by eliminating state intervention to the bare minimum. In this way, neoliberal ideology does not support government-imposed restrictions on transnational movements of goods, capital and people (Cohen and Centeno, 2006, p. 36; Harmes, 2012, pp. 64–9). When introduced across much of the world, neoliberal policies involved various forms of liberalization and opening of domestic markets along with privatization of public sectors, including media industries (Friedman, 2009).

Neoliberalism has often been a subject of conversations in reference to the transformations of media industries and their content. Apart from sweeping privatizations of major media companies, neoliberalism became a part of agenda of the media studies' scholars due to discussions over economic globalization and increasing standardization of content adjusted to satisfy market principles. As a result of this, the majority of citizens and media consumers in the Western world tend to remain more interested in keeping informed about the Kardashians' lavish lifestyle rather than the latest news in national politics or developments in the Middle East, Africa or Asia.

Moreover, economic globalization of the media brought about a high proliferation of media industries which complicated the public's ability to assess one credible and accurate source of nonpartisan and unbiased reporting. The 2017 Pew Research Poll found that although the attitudes of the Americans about news media are deeply divided among party lines, more than 50% of the surveyed had little or no trust in the media to accurately report the facts[1]

In this regard, many scholars started to suggest that neoliberal ideology enabled globalization to shape much of the contemporary media landscape, and argued that the process itself should not be understood as connectivity, or flattening of the national and local scales, but rather as "global spread of the economic system of capitalism" (Litonjua, 2008, p. 254). This approach prompted numerous scholarly conversations suggesting that the neoliberal ideology, through the introduction of "policies that maximize the role of markets and profits through deregulation and privatization," enabled global communication system to become more transnational (Friedman, 2009), and commercial.

By framing globalization as a form of "hegemonic mode of discourse [which] has become incorporated into the commonsense way we understand the world" (Harvey, 2007, p. 23), the idea of what globalization entails, positioned it at the crossroads of positive and negative. It both allowed us to realize the commercial and profit-driven incentives of media as well as complicate our understanding of media power and the place of media industries in contemporary societies.

Whether considered drivers or "drivees" of technological connectivity and shrinking of time and space, media industries have a complex relationship with globalization and often, in "concert," sit in the midst of it (Lule, 2017, p. 5). This idea is used as a productive and exploratory space to discuss the phenomenon of media power with a particular focus on the production and dissemination of misleading and spurious representations.

SENSATIONALISM AND KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

Sensationalism has always been a part of journalistic practice and the press. However, the realization that misleading content can generate substantial profits has increased over time. In this context, false and distorted news do not constitute novel phenomena. In fact, they have been a part of the media industry ever since the popularization of rapid spread of written texts—the invention of the printing press.

By the early 19th century, much of the existing press generated fake stories to increase circulation. One of the prime examples is the 1835 *New York Sun* "Great Moon Hoax" story, which reported on the existence of an alien civilization on the moon. It was this very story which established *The Sun* as a recognizable and profit-generating newspaper (Goodman, 2010). The trend continued. In 1844, anti-Catholic newspapers in Philadelphia accused Irishmen of stealing bibles from local schools, which subsequently led to violent protests, riots and attacks on Catholic churches.

These practices have also been framed as yellow journalism which flourished during much of the late 19th century. Fake accounts and spurious content were most dominant techniques. Beginning with the *New York World's* publication of magnified and amplified crime stories and ending with *Morning Journal's* fabrication of Cuban officials strip-searching American women, spurious and deceiving content has not only been present in the Western political sphere, but it also carried severe consequences. In the context of the latter, the fake news allowed to spark the Spanish-American War (Farrell and Cupito, 2010).

The consequences of yellow journalism, escalating from civil violence to war, became an important factor of the media production process. They prompted conversations about the power of written and/or published material on the general public. Despite that, profit-driven sensationalism and partisan reporting never seemed to go away, yet the consequences of such practices have seemed to become more exacerbated in terms of their societal impacts.

One may bring up many examples of such practices which carried long-term legacies and transformations of the human experience, such as the racist sentiments present in the 1800s United States which led to numerous publications of false stories about the crimes, deficiencies and inferiority of African Americans. Moreover, one should not forget of Nazi propaganda which utilized spurious content to disseminate among citizens and construct anti-Semitic emotions that mobilized masses and led to first ever mass murder on an industrial scale.

The trend of using media as means of manipulating the public has continued till the present day. One may wonder why the viewers of one of the most prominent cable news station in the United States, namely Fox News, are more likely to hold drastically different, often mistaken, views on a number of issues, including global warming, healthcare or American interventionism in the Middle East. Additionally, during the Iraq War there was no shortage of information which authoritatively claimed that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction.

In this very context, we could suggest that much of produced media content should be understood not only as a form of discourse but also as a form of knowledge. In this way, media as forms of knowledge naturally carry the socio-political and cultural implications, inclusive of those of human consciousness, which are a result of media circulation and dissemination. Therefore, I would like to suggest that along with the proliferation of media texts, institutions and online platforms, media content—or rather knowledge embedded in it due to the idealized vision of the societal role of media—can increasingly be seen as a device of power and control.

This can primarily be inferred from a use of Orientalist discourse when portraying the East which has been a subject of extensive scholarly and policy-oriented debates. In this context, the knowledge production about the East, whether in a form of journalistic articles, user-generated content online, literary texts or cinematic images, should be seen as one of the most pronounced historical and contemporary examples of spread of spurious content which carries severe sociopolitical consequences. It is of great importance to deconstruct the unclear and hidden power structures which have been utilized to manufacturing of the given spurious knowledge.

I utilize Edward Said's concept of Orientalism to deconstruct the production and dissemination of misleading and spurious representations of the East in print and online. According to Said, Orientalism refers to a "style of thought" and a form of knowledge production and discourse that offers misrepresentation of the East, especially the Middle East and Asia, in a stereotyped way that is regarded as embodying a colonialist attitude. It has been employed by the Western hegemonic powers, namely the industrialized developed countries, to "dominate, restructure" and impose "authority over the Orient" (Said, 2004, pp. 5-11). Orient here, refers to a space of Western imagination encompassing non-West: Middle East, Africa, Asia, which does not have reflection in actual geography but rather frames discursively all its inhabitants as backwards peoples, exotic, erotic, despotic as well as brutes in need of civilizing.

In order to understand the practices of mass circulation of misrepresentations and spurious content, it is crucial to further examine the notion of Orientalism. Said's concept derived from his analysis of much of Western and European knowledge production, inclusive of scholarly writings, art and literature, which attempted to depict and portray Eastern peoples, cultures and customs. While the writings and portrayals of the East have likely begun sparked by the Westerners' fascination with the "foreign," Said suggested that the mass production and circulation of Western depictions of the East imposed a sense of Western authority over the East.

To Said, this has been seen though a discursive and ideological construction of the "Other," which as Brian Turner proposes, is an expression of the preeminence of the Western nations in the global system as well as their colonial history (Turner, 1994, p. 21). The construction of Oriental discourse and, consequently knowledge about the "Orient," allowed Western societies to codify, justify and maintain "its hold over the uncivilized Other" (Marandi, 2009, p. 2).

Orientalizing narratives can be characterized as patronizing in their depiction of the realities and peoples of the East. Such discourses often portray the East as "primitive, mysterious, exotic, and incapable of self-government" which has been utilized as a discursive technology of power to justify the imperial and colonial rule. In this way, the texts which employed Orientalist narratives are also supported by complex power and domination structures of ideological kind which render the Eastern cultures aberrant, strange and barbarian (Said, 2004, p. 6). In other words, Orientalism becomes a style of thought or media production which is also a manifestation of "power or knowledge" (Ashcroft et al., 1999, p. 68).

Seen in Foucauldian terms, Oriental discourse could be seen as an interconnected system of social knowledge, one which has been socially and culturally reinforced as well as normalized, or "heavily policed cognitive system which control[s] and delimit[s] both the mode and the means of representation in a given society" (Gandhi, 1998, p. 77). Given that, one could propose that an Orientalist lens, or a perspective, of the media acts as a mechanism of power. This mechanism of power is less reliant on the proliferation of media industries and their corporate power, but rather is a result of a complex relationship among media globalization, the social construction of media's role in society as well as the ideological capacities of written word and images, particularly when it comes to their global circulation across various platforms and channels.

Due to a high saturation of Orientalized media messages, many audiences may find it difficult to "think outside them" (Marandi, 2009, p. 4). This is conditioned by the ideological capacities embedded in the practices of Orientalizing knowledge production. Ideology is often defined as a cultural system which determines group behavior and feeling. In this sense, ideology becomes a powerful tool which can operate beneath level of conscious thought and, therefore, engage in the process of justifying, normalizing, rationalizing ideas (Mannheim, 2013). In other words, ideology could be utilizing discourse as a tool to become the "dominant power" of any socio-political project that "may legitimate itself by promoting beliefs and values that are congenial to it, naturalizing and universalizing such beliefs'" in a way that these beliefs can become "self-evident and apparently inevitable" (Eagleton, 1991, p. 5).

In this way, Orientalism, as a style of thought and a form of media production, is driven by an ideology of difference which tends to normalize Western cultures and demonize all who do not fit within the established and mainstream paradigm. In this sense, ideology can justify through excusing or explaining. It can also disguise its underlying aims. Therefore, Oriental perspectives achieve a hegemonic position in the knowledge production which are subsequently reproduced in cultural life through the media, universities and various other institutions in order to produce legitimacy and, in Noam Chomsky's words, "manufacture consent" (Heywood, 1994, pp. 100-101).

This very view is aligned with Antonio Gramsci's outlook on hegemony, which he understood as not merely embedded in political and economic sphere but also as one which is being circulated in popular culture. For example, to Gramsci, capitalist ideology is responsible for hegemonic control not just through violence, sociopolitical or economic coercion, but also ideologically. This is performed through a hegemonic culture in which the values of the bourgeoisie become the "common sense" values of all (Gramsci, 1971). Thus, a consensus culture developed in which people in the working-class identified their own good with the good of the bourgeoisie, and helped to maintain the status quo rather than revolting.

Therefore, the production of mass culture, which is created by mediated texts that embody Orientalist rhetoric may suggest that such discourses should be seen as exercises of power and control through which the knowledge about the East is constructed, produced and disseminated. This has been reminiscent of William Beckford's *Vathek, an Arabian Tale* (1782), or Marguerite Yourcenar's *Nouvelles Orientales* (1938), or simply when one looks at the emergence of social media, 24-hour news shows and a high saturation of visual media forms in the present-day, globalized media landscape. All of these texts, messages and forms of media contribute to strengthening of the power of media to construct the general public's perception of the world.

MEDIA-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

In the context of Orientalist rhetoric as well as given the majority of misconceptions and misrepresentations of the East present in contemporary media landscape, one should not be surprised that much of contemporary scholarship along with public intellectuals attribute enormous power to the media. In doing so, they frame media as not the idealized institutions which we remember by Carlyle's notion of the "Fourth Estate," but rather technologies which have the capacity to shape, direct or end discussions, safeguard authority, and disguise schemes of power to control media consumers (Allan, 2009). Therefore, I utilize the Orientalist knowledge production in the context of a media-industrial complex to stress the profit-driven incentives and the global, transnational and online scope of the contemporary media.

As I draw on the notion of military-industrial complex of the 1950s, and its reference to the increasing expansion of the US inmate population with regard to the political influence of private prison companies and their supply of goods and services to government prison agencies (Eisenhower, 1987), I draw attention to both the profit-oriented and neoliberal characteristics of the modern media as well as their negotiations with, and reliance on, the public-political sphere. In this context, I would like to suggest that the misconceptions and spurious representations of the East as the "Other" carry larger socio-political consequences as well as they themselves can be used by the state. In the case of the latter, falsified information that has been mediated and widely circulated can allow the state to justify both its control and certain political actions which it undertakes.

The issue of power in relation to otherness is best examined through the work of Michel Foucault. In *The History of Sexuality* (1976), Foucault argues that contemporary societies developed a way of controlling and disciplining sexuality by classifying certain sexual behaviors as deviant and punishing those who engage in them (Foucault, 1990). This categorization of what is considered normal and deviant as well as the act of punishing the abnormal could reflect the constructed divide between the superior West and inferior East propelled by the Orientalist narratives.

Interestingly, power to Foucault is not a form of domination enforced by a certain group over another, such as an imposition of certain set of categories or norms by a dominant social class or even a state. Instead, Foucault believes that power is omnipresent as "it is produced at every instant, at every point… in every relation between one point and another. Power is everywhere, [and] it comes from everywhere" (Foucault, 1990, pp. 121-122). This approach to examining power of the media could suggest that it is understood as not existing in a hierarchical order or as coming from a single authority.

In contrast, the media-industrial complex allows us to think of mass media, especially due to the processes of globalization, as institutions which have extended their power in the context of an increased ease of access to internet. Therefore, one may argue that media power should be seen as existing transna-

tionally in a form of a network which encompasses many regions that are impacted by the cross-border dissemination of media messages. One could also suggest that in the age of modern democracy of media, exemplified by the fact that anyone can publish online, the power and influence of media has been multiplied and became even more omnipresent.

Let us explore Foucault's notion of repressive hypothesis in order to discuss the power structures underlying the East/West divide as well as the mechanisms of power underlying the global media industrial complex. Foucault's concept of repressive hypothesis points to a presumption that the western societies of the 17th century successfully managed to suppress the most intimate matters, such as sexuality, due to a necessity to control common laborers, which was a result of the rise of capitalism and the bourgeois society (Foucault, 1990).

Foucault argues that sexuality was in reality categorized and framed with the use of scientific terms, which allowed for repressing and controlling sexuality by the state apparatus (Foucault, 1990, p. 15). This particular use of scientific discourse mirrors the specific use of Orientalist rhetoric examined here. This classification of sexuality by the state, we could suggest, corresponds to the discursive construction of the West/East paradigm, which disregards that the world is in fact a globe with no unequivocal "easts" or "wests."

Foucault's argument does, in fact, point our attention to socially-constructed categorization of the world into Western, industrialized and developed societies as well as the ones which are Eastern, industrializing, developing and Orientalized. This discursive construction, one could argue, acts as a mechanism of control that allows for the exertion of power that could be seen through media texts. Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1975) furthers this conceptual framework. As he analyses the functioning of control measures during the plague, Foucault concludes that any society can be controlled and disciplined by a system of absolute, constant, but never verifiable surveillance (Foucault, 1977).

His use of the 18th-century notion of the panopticon, a type of institutional building designed by the English social theorist Jeremy Bentham, allows Foucault to suggest that this kind of control and examination of individuals makes them conform to the "norms" reinforced by a given society. This reinforces the architectural design of panopticon itself, which allows the subjects or inmates of an institution to be watched by a single authority—the observer—without the subjects necessarily being fully aware that they are being observed.

By following this logic, one could further discuss the notion of media industrial complex as a system of established media institutions which through construction of preferred messages and meanings is capable of manufacturing consent, and negotiating and imposing particular agenda in the realm of the political sphere. Additionally, the notion of controlling general public as implied by the concept of the panopticon could be seen in the media-industrial complex as well. This mechanism of social control of the media may not embody a literal manifestation of Bentham's panopticon, but it could very much relate to both the production of mainstream knowledge and imposition of standards of personal behavior.

The former can refer to a situation in which the public has no option but to subscribe to a hegemonic position or status quo imposed by the mainstream media (due to the deeply, and ideologically ingrained systems of values set forth by the mass production and cultural standardization). The latter, on the other hand, could relate to an imposition of standards which we could understand in terms of culturally-limited response mechanisms as well as, universally present, imposition of modern-day beauty standards, which through high circulation of preferred images can direct and (re)engineer social behavior or value systems due to the fear of social ostracism.

Having suggested that media narratives produce social knowledge on what is considered an accepted norm and what is a deviation, the "Orientalizing" media texts punish those who do not fit within the widely established social norms. Moreover, Foucault suggests that discourses are strategic components or blocks which function in forced relations with one another. "There can exist different and even contradictory discourses...they can…circulate without changing their form from one strategy to another," he explains (Foucault, 1990, p. 101-102).

This suggests that various conflicting media discourses can exist simultaneously and produce conflicting knowledge about an issue. This phenomenon of circular power structures could be seen in the media coverage of the terrorist attacks in Paris, France of November 13, 2015, when media texts employed two conflicting narratives operating together in the same structure of power: one of acceptance and one of hatred, which fed both charitable and extremely nationalistic beliefs.

France experienced a series of terrorist attacks in both 2015 and 2016, which have been thoroughly documented by various local and international media, sending shockwaves through the country and the continent. Between January 7th and 9th of 2015, 17 people were killed during the shootings at the headquarters of satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo and at Jewish delicatessen. In November the same year, France faced deadliest attacks in its post-war history with a series of coordinated terrorist attacks occurring in bars, restaurants and a concert venue in Paris, which took 130 lives and injured more than 200 individuals.

Initially, the French online media covered the event as it developed with trauma-filled rhetoric seen in the headlines of *Liberation* which read: "Carnage in Paris," or *L'Equipe* that used a black front page with a red headline: "Horror." However, there have been more emotional responses as well, such as *Le Parisien's* Saturday online edition proclaiming that: "This time, it is war," and *Le Figaro* announcing a "War in the heart of Paris."

The war rhetoric, one between the Western secular civilization and the Muslim East, circulated in the global media industrial complex and allowed major international media outlets to repeatedly republish French president François Holland's assertion that the attacks, ones that modern-day France has not seen before, were in fact "an act of war." The political response also embraced the conflictual rhetoric of mourning and revenge-fueled rhetoric of war. Having expressed willingness to investigate the attacks, President Vladimir Putin was vocal about the tragedy being of "barbaric nature of terrorism, which defies human civilization," which was promptly circulated by TASS Russian News Agency.

In a similar way, Canadian online news outlets used the "Us-vs-Them" rhetoric across majority of media shortly after the incident, particularly in French-speaking Quebec. The iconic headline of *Le Devoir* read: "Paris Struck Down by Barbarity," which implied Orientalist discourse by framing all Muslim and Middle Eastern subjects as ones which stand in opposition to civilization.

These contradictory narratives, of trauma and hatred, one might argue, operated to justify mechanisms of the state power exercised two days after the attack, when the French government bombed the Syrian city of Raqqa. In response to the press, president François Hollande used Orientalist discourse by calling the Islamic State "barbarians" whom France is "unforgiving with" (Rubin and Barnard, 2015), implying that the bombing of Raqqa was a revenge for the Paris attacks.

Coincidentally, certain studies of public opinion after the 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris find that while urban residents felt more threatened by terrorism based on their wider access to media coverage of the attacks than the rural population, there was a form of consensus among majority of the French

population. Michael Strebel suggests that the "attitudes towards immigrants tend to be more negative as a result of the attacks," and the vast majority of the French surveyed seemed to be "more trustful of their government as a result of the attacks" (Strebel and Steenbergen, 2017, p. 27).

While these results correspond with the previous research which has demonstrated that terrorist attacks, and mediation thereof, pose significant impact on political behavior, with frequent increases in endorsement of right-wing, conservative or even authoritarian policy preferences (Bonanno and Jost, 2006; Hetherington and Suhay, 2011; Nail et al., 2009), something more significant took place in Paris. The coverage of the attacks, along with conflictual narratives of it, demonstrated the power to manipulate public opinion to reinforce the "Us-vs-Them" rhetoric along with the state's justification of the bombing of Raqqa.

This has been proven by increases in public's trust in the French authorities due to security measures which were implemented shortly after the incident. These included the French president proposing a series of far-reaching reforms that aimed at expanding the government's security powers following the Paris attacks, which involved granting more power to detain suspects. There was also a program which involved blocking certain websites and better management of the online space (Schechner and Horobin, 2015).

MEDIA SCAPEGOATS: 9/11 AND ABU GHRAIB

A similar mechanism of state power justification could be seen in an example of the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001. Shortly after the attack, the press as well as the online news media exploded with headlines. *The New York Times* ran print and online stories emphasizing that "It's War," or that the "US is Attacked." In a similar manner, the *USA Today* proclaimed the terrorist attack to be an "Act of War," just as *The Daily Telegraph* ran a story with a headline titled "War on America." *The Herald Sun* called the incident "Pure Evil," while *The Examiner's* both print and online editions stressed Orientalized attitudes with headlines: "Bastards." *The New York Post*, in a similar manner, expanded on the "Us-vs-Them" rhetoric with stories entitled: "ISIS vs US."

The official news media were increasingly supplemented with online discussion forums and videos which called the readers and viewers for "waking up" because Islam started to destroy the Western way of life. This rhetoric has often transgressed to other media platforms as well (Bawer, 2007). In fact, many have pointed out that the post-9/11 culture radically destabilized the US sense of self, a spirit of hypermasculinity, unrivalled primacy and one of global power. In this context, an orientalist project has emerged across various media platforms which began to dehumanize and demonize the un-American "Other" (Nayak, 2006).

The most conspicuous example of Orientalist media practices is indeed seen in the media portrayals of the terrorist attacks of September 11. As a result of the 9/11, and the new post-9/11 logics of US state identity-making, the date of the attacks is often referred to as a starting-point for the growing Islamophobia in America. A 2015 poll conducted by YouGov found that more than half of the Americans identified as having "unfavorable" opinion about Islam.[2] These views, started to intensify with the Paris attacks in 2015, as well as found resonances with President Donald Trump's recent controversies regarding Muslim bans and fortified security against individuals arriving from "Muslim countries."

The fear of the "Orient," or what one can refer to today as Islamophobia, is not a novel phenomenon and it was not born out of the 9/11. In fact, as the Gallup survey of 2015 reminds us, "Islamophobia existed in premise before the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, but it increased in frequency and notoriety during the past decade."[3] In this sense, the modern-day, media-infused Islamophobia corresponds directly to Said's Orientalism, especially along the lines of constructing spurious portrayals and misrepresentations along the lines of stereotypes, fear, and caricatures. As a political technology, Oriental rhetoric could be then utilized by the state to justify and legitimate its actions by rendering certain groups as undesirable, problematic and "Other." In other words, scapegoating, as constructed, reinforced and mediated through circulation of various texts and images, enables the state to utilize it as a technology and tactic to distract but also legitimize and justify its own interventions.

Many critics believe that the war in Iraq was not well justified, mainly due to the fact that no weapons of mass destruction or immediate connection between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda were found, which were the main arguments used by the Bush administration to rationalize the military intervention in Iraq (Pan, 2013). One could suggest that the media and political narratives circulated and disseminated Orientalist rhetoric which, impacted, if not altered, the public opinion as well as knowledge. The media, especially their online counterparts, became a trusted and authoritative source of information about the East, by rendering it different, aberrant, "Other" and antagonistic, which through their accessibility, rapid spread and wide scope, in turn, justified the military intervention of Iraq (Al-Ali, 2012).

Ervand Abrahamian, in his essay on the media responses to 9/11, suggests that the quality American newspapers and online news outlets, adopted Samuel Huntington's paradigm of clash of civilizations and presented the terrorist attacks within "the context of Islam…cultural conflicts, and of Western civilization threatened by the Other" (Abrahamian, 2003, p. 529-31). Huntington, in his widely acclaimed work *The Clash of Civilizations* (1996), developed a hypothesis on civilizational conflict in the post-Cold War world, which to him is grounded in stark differences among cohesive civilizational units that are divided along the lines of identity, culture and religion.

In spite of much criticism of Huntington's thesis which disregarded major cultural, linguistic and religious differences of the civilizational units, along with their homogeneity, which he proposed (Acevedo, 2008; Bottici and Challand, 2013), his thesis gained much attention and was frequently utilized by prominent media outlets. Following the attacks, *The Atlantic*, published an online article which stressed the "collision" of Western and Islamic cultures (Kaplan, 2001), while *The New York Times* published a lengthy article entitled "This is a Religious War" which was illustrated with images of Spanish Inquisition (Abrahamian, 2003, p. 532).

Many critics agree that the ideological and political battle between the western and Muslim world has been well mediated and reproduced by the media (Kellner, 2007). This has been most illustrative in the case of the Iraq war when in March 2003, the staff of the United States Army and the Central Intelligence Agency committed a series of violations against Muslim detainees in the Abu Ghraib prison.

These practices involved physical demonstration of Orientalist rhetoric, which has most disturbingly reenacted through the sexual torture and prisoner abuse in Abu Ghraib, which offer an interesting perspective on the question of media power and justification of state control. Jasbir Puar, in her book entitled *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (2007) engages with the very subject of torture and sexual humiliation conducted by American guards on Iraqi prisoners in Baghdad in 2005.

Puar argues that Western media used Orientalist and stereotyping narratives of sexual taboos in Islam, such as homosexuality, which diminished the subjects of torture to the status of the "Other" (Puar, 2017). She explores the Middle East as a site of barbarous, oversexualized peoples and suggests that the post-

9/11 culture created a new identity category, the "Muslim race," which encapsulates all who appear to be Middle Eastern, Arab or Muslim, including the South Asians (Corbett, 2014, p. 119). According to Puar, the West experiences a rise of "homonormative Islamophobia," a belief which presupposes—just like heteronormative view does in terms of considering heterosexuality as a default sexual—that Islam is seen through the use of "racist, secularist logic that essentializes all Muslims as homogeneous and religious, and essentializes Islam" to fundamentalism and an evil-rooted religion (Sykes, 2016, p. 79).

This view, according to Puar, Orientalizes all queer men and makes them become a part of the "collective vilification of Muslims" (Puar, 2017, p. 21). This fear and hatred against Muslim bodies, amplified by the dissemination of media images of torture spread nearly instantaneously online, could be argued to strengthen the imperialist goal of rendering the "Other" as one that is inferior by metaphorically castrating the "reproductive capacities" of Muslim men (Puar, 2017, p. 98). This corresponds directly to the overly-sexualized, dehumanizing, power- and domination-driven pictures of Abu Ghraib tortures in which Muslim individuals were forced to act out sexual poses in spite of their free will.

We could suggest that this Orientalizing portrayal of Muslim bodies, as different, strange, exotic, and far from what is considered normal in the West, gained much traction when disseminated online. These media messages created an atmosphere in which the United States could efficiently justify violation of the Iraqi prisoners. To support that suggestion, Puar notes that the Bush administration spoke of the torture as of a necessary maneuver "because of the ban against homosexuality in Islam" (Puar, 2017, p. 91). This could be understood by, what Puar refers to as, "American exceptionalism," a notion usually associated in terms of its national ideas of democracy and personal freedom.

However, predominantly the American exceptionalism can be understood in terms of an idea that the United States is inherently different from other nations. This rather implies a view of American *exemptionalism*, or a view that the United States is positioned "above" all nation-states in the global system, or as an "exception" to the international law. When applied to the events which occurred at Abu Ghraib, the sexual torture of Iraqi prisoners was explained, legitimated and justified through this very concept as occurring in a "state of exception" (Puar, 2017, p. 82).

This practice of rendering the Muslims as blameworthy and criminative could be seen as a violation of their bodies and an act of punishment for their histories, cultures and identities which was forced upon them by hegemonic, imperialistic and heteronormative power apparatus. Given that, the media, by releasing the pictures of barbaric, Orientalized bodies, reinforced the panic against the Muslim "Other." This creation of social panic, we could argue, justified the U.S. military intervention in Iraq by employing intertwining narratives of the U.S. exceptionalism, Orientalism, and one of protection from the Oriental "Other."

This media-infused social panic against the Muslim-terrorist has its roots in the practice of scapegoating created and reinforced by the production and circulation of media. The mechanics of scapegoating have been best demonstrated by the study conducted by Stuart Hall and colleagues at the University of Birmingham, entitled *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order* (1978). The Birmingham researchers examined media coverage of a specific type of crime, "mugging," in the context of 1970s Britain, and suggested that the social fears and concerns over this particular street crime increased significantly when its actual proportion did not rise (Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 2010). Since mugging was a new form of crime, the label given to it as well as the reactions of courts, the public and representation of mugging in the media were "all out of proportion to any level of actual threat" posed by it (Hall et al., 2013, p. 29).

This phenomenon brings up the concept of media-caused moral panic, which, as Hall and colleagues suggest, is controlled by those in power around "key topics of controversial public concern" (Hall et al., 2013, p. 218). The study suggests that the creation of panic is primarily conducted through the use of "primary definers," or rather key spokespeople, experts, and institutions of authority, such as the police and courts (Thompson, 2005, p. 59). Since they are seen as authorities on a given subject that is being mediated (Hall et al., 2013, pp. 61-77), these individuals are usually used by the mass media to justify certain positions of the local or national government, as well as create and sustain moral panics.

Hall and colleagues have hypothesized that the mass media, through their capacities to rapidly spread the information and circulate it within societies, can sustain the moral panic by creating a "spiral of amplification," which refers to a production of a mainstream discourse in which alternative voices are not included. This resonates with what Max McCombs and Donald Shaw once called the agenda-setting function of the media, a theory which implied that media have the capacity to prompt the public not what to think, but what to think about by "setting" the agenda of the public discourse (McCombs and Shaw, 1972).

This creates s set of norms and determines what is considered acceptable, tolerable, reasonable and well-established (Thompson, 2005, p. 59) in a society through the production and reproduction of media messages. In this context, Hall's theoretical framework allows us to suggest that the panic among the public was not to "the actual threat" but to "the perceived or symbolic threat to society–what the mugging label represented" (Hall et al., 2013, p. 29). This study could be interpreted as a deliberate attempt of the state, which utilizes the means of mass media to respond to the crisis of mugging and "reassert[s] [its dominant] ideological control" (Barrat, 2008, p. 57). This functioning of the media can very much explain the 2015 Paris terrorist attacks as well as the reinstating of state's position through utilization of Orientalist rhetoric and reinforcement of security measures.

By looking at the creation of moral panics historically, one could draw attention to the authoritarian form of policing Black communities in Britain of 1970s, which arguably would have not occurred without mass media that produced the knowledge and fed the moral panics about the crime of mugging (Jensen, 2014). This violent rhetoric resonates with the Orientalizing practices of media discussed previously, which may suggest yet again that media portrayals in the globalized world have the power to impact state control that, in turn, serve as a justification for the actions of the state grounded in the Orientalist lens of mass media.

The moral panic would have not been effectively manufactured without the creation of a figure of a mugger–a scapegoat, who reflects the "fears and anxieties of those who…threaten the traditional peace of the streets" (Hall et al., 2013, pp. 161-162). This narrative stresses the Orientalizing habits of the media through which a subject becomes the Oriental 'Other'. Hall and colleagues explicitly refer to a mugger as a 'Folk Devil', or one who should be seen as embodying all positive social traits "only in reverse," which are a threat to the "security of movement of ordinary respectable citizens."

The muggers, according to Hall, were categorized by the media as black urban individuals who were considered the "bearers" of the crisis. This demonstrates the power of media in the manufacturing of a moral panic. It also shows how well the seemingly "organic" public opinion can be stimulated, constructed and managed by the mass media (Jensen, 2014) while constructing the image of the Oriental "Other."

The panic to the crisis of mugging manufactured by the British media is often seen as a reaction to the cultural crisis of the decline of British hegemony, its cultural power and preeminence worldwide (Hall et al., 2013, p. 214). Considering the fact that the British culture was associated with the prominence and success of its empire between the late 16th and early 18th centuries, we can suggest that once the

British Empire started to decline, the state enforced its power through the mass media which produced a discourse of violence and crisis.

We can argue that this Orientalizing coverage of mugging created an alienated identity of a mugger, which may correspond to the contemporary media portrayals of Muslims. In the case of British media, one could talk about a political project of the state to control, strengthen and sustain its cultural hegemony over the working class, which the muggers were a part of. Hall also explores the notion of "convergence" which assumes that when multiple, often unrelated, issues are presented in connection to one another, a crisis and social panic can be manufactured (Hall et al., 2013, p. 220).

The Birmingham researchers provide examples of simultaneous use of the notions of "student" and "hooliganism" side by side. This operation of the media bestows the two notions with a different meaning and escalates them to a supposed threat of "student hooliganism," which produces a moral panic. This very phenomenon of convergence could be seen as corresponding to the equating Muslim immigrants with terrorists which is often present in media narratives globally, especially when one considers the European migrant crisis. Many global news outlets disseminated messages which employed this device and portrayed Muslims, predominantly Syrian refugees, as "invading" Europe (Thornhill, 2015) and compared them to "terrorists arriving in Europe" (Newton, 2015).

According to Hall, such social panics are often concentrated around an event which is highly publicized, such as mugging (or terrorism). The reappearance of Orientalized narratives in the media provides the subject with a new identity and justifies its portrayal with media's presumed objectivity that makes the panic an important "issue of public concern" (Hall et al., 2013, p. 62). While discussing panic created by mass media, one could also bring up the theory of CNN effect which fits within this paradigm.

It postulates that the presence of 24-hour news networks and continuous flows of news media online, by providing an on-going coverage of a particular issue or event over a prolonged period of time, prompts individuals or larger groups of media consumers to react more promptly and aggressively to the subject matter disseminated by a given medium (Borden and Bowers, 2008, p. 342). One could suggest that this allows the media to influence state powers and the individuals to consume media messages and engage with them in an unpredictable way.

This may correspond to the idea that social panic created by the media as well as Orientalist portrayals of Muslim identities create an opportunity for these individuals to turn to extremes. We can suggest that such Orientalizing portrayals, which construct the Middle Eastern subjects as "barbaric, irrational, despotic and inferior" create "surrogate and underground" interpretation of the West (Marandi, 2009, p. 5). These portrayals, by rhetoric of violence and generalization stress the otherness of Muslims, and therefore create a separate category for them and alienate them from the "well-functioning" society incapable of tolerating such a "threat."

In doing so, the Western media narratives assume an absolute power and control over the East, by creating Orientalized identities and manufacturing scapegoats. This process is capable of weakening the resistance of the "Other" to the violence of media and altering the way in which the "Other" sees itself. Given that, one could hypothesize that media no longer report facts but create, to some extent, imaginary and fictitious realities through which an Oriental subject might assume an extremist identity, which he or she was previously assigned to by the very media narratives.

CONCLUSION

Conclusively, it is argued that the mass media can be seen as technologies of control which, by employing Orientalist discourses when portraying the Middle East, bestow their messages with unclear and hidden power relations (Fairclough, 2001, p. 45). It is therefore necessary to deconstruct and disassemble the Orientalizing practices of the western media in order to understand the structures of power within which they operate.

These portrayals, often patronizing, diminishing, dehumanizing or fabricated, are supported by complex power and domination structures and could serve as justifications of state control, through which the state acts upon and brings up the media messages whenever it seeks to explain and justify its actions. It is necessary to take into consideration the proliferation of media industries as well as commercialization of media in the wake of neoliberal globalization. These globalizing processes have arguably equipped media, especially the new media and online news media platforms, with new growth and profit targets, which very often do not match the idealized notion of media as the "Fourth Estate."

In this context, the new, globally networked, extensively proliferated, and profit-driven neoliberal media have far-reaching, often detrimental effects as both institutions and products, which shape our realities, societies and consciousness beyond the level of conscious thought. These practices may involve reinforcing dominant ideologies of the state in a given society through the ways events and issues are portrayed, which in turn may create an illusion of freedom that disguises the constraints (Barrat, 2008, p. 57), and control enforced by the state through the media industrial complex as well as the practice of scapegoat manufacturing.

The media globalization, as a series of processes and transformations, together with the wide availability of internet access, presence of 24-hour news shows and a high saturation of visual and textual forms of media that flood modern societies contribute to strengthening of the power of media to construct our realities, shape our cultures, and even rewrite histories (Kamali, 2015, p. 6). This produces predominantly Eurocentric or Western narratives which reproduce the images of an evil, barbarian and inferior Muslim.

This violent, Orientalist rhetoric constructs the Middle Eastern identity by disciplining the Muslim bodies and rendering them strange, alien and different. One could suggest that this dominant practice of media discourses and power does not merely produce the divide between the East and the West but it reduces millions of lives to the notion of the "Other" that is characterized by "caricatures and [western] prejudices" (Marandi, 2009, p. 19).

Thus, the Middle East becomes a playground for the media which construct, reinforce and sustain its Oriental identity through power and control mechanisms of mass media. This renders the Middle Eastern subjects as victims of media and traps them in a cycle of alienation by punishing them for their identities. In turn, this pressure of Orientalizing media practices could consequently offer an opportunity for these subjects to turn to extremes. That is why it is necessary to deconstruct the discursive practices of misleading and spurious misrepresentations of mass media and address their portrayals of the Middle Eastern subjects with a matter of urgency.

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Chapter 5
"Too Good to Be True":
Semi-Naked Bodies on Social Media

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines how body image deception is created and understood in social media. The authors focus specifically on the beach body, which is a narrower form of bodily representation online, but where deception is especially likely to occur. Focus group discussions with young adults revealed that editing and perfecting the beach body is commonplace and even normalized on social media. However, participants distinguished between celebrities and friends in expected use of manipulation and seemed to place a limit on the acceptable types of manipulation: body tan but not body shape, for example. The authors discuss the implications of these discussions and how applying deception theory in body image research can provide useful insights.

INTRODUCTION

Media images, such as of the ideal beach body, increasingly undergo digital alteration and enhancement, so that most pictures we see online represent an idealized version of reality. This trend applies to celebrities and regular users alike. In this "online appearance culture" (Williams & Ricciardelli, 2014), users seem obsessed with posting, sharing, liking and commenting on pictures, and appearance seems to be of growing importance. Through these behaviors, users contribute to the normalization of unrealistic body and beauty ideals, which can be damaging to body image, self-evaluation and overall wellbeing (Fardouly, Diedrichs, Vartanian, & Halliwell, 2015).

The beach body is an especially interesting niche in the larger body image literature, due to the high expectations placed on individuals offline and online, and the likelihood that those expectations cannot be met. Thus, the mediatized beach bodies of young people online are not only photographic versions of their real bodies, but an improved and perfected representation, which agrees with the cultural standards of the day and which sometimes is quite removed from the original. Through photo manipulation, accessorizing and body positioning, these "easy lies" (Harwood, 2014) become possible.

In this chapter, we will examine mediatized images of the beach body in the context of social media through the conceptual lenses of deception, a unique combination of concepts, which has not been explored together previously, and which can expand significantly the current range and depth of research on body image and deception. We will explore what motivates young people to engage in online deception about their beach body and how they achieve it.

BACKGROUND

Body Image and the Beach Body: An Online Culture of Perfectionism

Body image is "a person's perceptions, thoughts, and feelings about his or her body" (Grogan, 2017). The dimensions, determinants and processes of body image are complex and multifaceted, given that a person's body parts and vital organs form fundamental components of the human self and identity (Belk, 1988). Cash (2012) differentiates between body evaluation, i.e. the (dis-)satisfaction with one's appearance, and body investment, i.e. the affective, cognitive and behavioral relevance of the body to a person's self-evaluation. In the context of the beach body, the behavioral component is fundamental for understanding how individuals try to control their bodies in order to look as perfect as possible during summer.

Body image attitudes form and develop throughout a person's life, starting in early childhood and changing across the lifespan (Cash, 2008). They are based upon four factors: personality traits, physical characteristics and changes, interpersonal experiences with family and peers, and cultural socialization (Cash, 2008). The latter is particularly important in the context of this chapter, as it is through acculturation that young children learn what is considered attractive and beautiful in society. To conform to society's expectations, individuals, most notably women, often invest heavily into their looks, and that may involve subtle forms of deception.

Historically, societies have focused on people's outward appearance and even considered it a symbol of a person's (dis-)ordered lifestyle (Bordo, 2013). A slim female body has been associated with positive socio-cultural qualities, such as success, social appreciation, and happiness (Grogan, 2017), and muscular male figures have been linked to strength and heroism. Overweight, in contrast, has been associated with negative attributes, such as lack of discipline and laziness (Murray, 2016). Equally, bodies that do not conform to beauty standards, such as fat, disfigured, disabled, or ageing figures, are marginalized and stigmatized (Wardle & Boyce, 2009). While slenderness has endured as the most salient bodily feature for women to aspire to over the decades, trends have also developed within body ideals. The 1990s were characterized by enlarged breasts and slender hips, while the 2000s saw a shift towards more voluptuous bottoms. Recently, muscularity has affected both men and increasingly women (Grogan, 2017).

The female beach body is typically portrayed as "slim, tanned, young, Caucasian, female and bikinied" (Small, 2007, p. 87), which is in congruence with the common public understandings of how a (semi-naked) body ought to look.

Clothes serve as an important means to manage appearance, for instance by covering or concealing perceived bodily imperfections (Tiggemann & Andrew, 2012). When wearing swimwear, individuals' bodies are exposed and reveal details that are normally hidden from public view. The extent to which one conforms to the common beauty norms becomes visible and assessable then. Therefore, individuals try to get "beach body ready", i.e. achieve an ideal beach physique as depicted in the media through bodily preparation techniques such as dieting, exercising, hair removal and fake-tanning, which is linked to high levels of self-surveillant and controlling behaviors. This molding of one's regular body into a "beach body" is a form of body modification, which is linked to malleability beliefs and seeing the body as a project (Small, 2007; Pritchard & Morgan, 2012).

Past investigations of the beach body have been largely limited to holiday experiences and representations in traditional media, such as magazines, neglecting contemporary digital culture and the visual trend of presenting bodies online. However, the beach body is no longer confined to the beach and now extends to a broad spectrum of digital platforms.

Media images, such as of the ideal beach body, increasingly undergo digital alteration and enhancement, so that most pictures we see online are closer to fiction than reality. Against this background, we suggest distinguishing between real bodies at the beach, i.e. semi-naked figures in swimwear in natural environments, and beach body images as displayed in media contexts, i.e. mediatized beach bodies, as they differ from each other significantly. In this chapter, we aim to look specifically into mediatized beach body images in the context of social media, a topic that has not yet been explored, but that we believe is of great importance, as it enables researchers to better understand how women mediatize images of their semi-naked bodies online.

Driven by the need to present the best possible version of themselves to others (Haferkamp & Krämer, 2011; Manago, Graham, Greenfield & Salimkhan, 2008), individuals adjust the personal information they reveal through their online profiles and the way they (inter-)act with others, much of which is visual. In this "online appearance culture" (Williams & Ricciardelli, 2014), users seem obsessed with posting, sharing, liking and commenting on pictures, and appearance seems to be of even greater importance than in offline life. On Instagram alone, approx. 95 million photos are uploaded every day (Lister, 2018), and in 2017, 54% of global Internet users reported that they shared private and sensitive photos and videos of themselves digitally (Statista, 2018). Beach body pictures are part of this trend. As of 23 October 2018, there have been 9,530,236 postings using the hashtag #beachbody, 1,747,138 postings using the hashtag #beachbodycoach and 64,670 postings under the hashtag #beachbodyready on Instagram alone. Some scholars have begun to analyze sexualized selfies (Hart, 2016; Miguel, 2016; Mascheroni, Vincent & Jimenez, 2015), but we know little about individuals who post pictures of themselves wearing swimwear.

While existing findings on social media and body image are somewhat inconsistent, photo-based online activities have been linked to poor body image (Meier & Gray, 2014). Since the publication of that study in 2014, photo-based activities on social media, including the taking and posting of "selfies" (a self-portrait, typically taken through a smartphone camera) and "usies" or "wesies" (photos that include others as well), have increased even further, particularly amongst teenagers (Grogan, Rothery, Cole, & Hall, 2018; McLean, Paxton, Wertheim, & Masters, 2015).

Similar to mass media images, photographs posted on social media are increasingly manipulated and digitally enhanced. Some 70% of 18-35-year-old women regularly edit their images before posting them (Renfrew Foundation, 2014). Young users in particular tend to put significant effort into their pictures before uploading them. To achieve the aspired look, they often take multiple photos before carefully selecting and closely monitoring the one they find suitable to show others (Fardouly et al., 2015).

New apps and tools to modify pictures are routinely introduced and offer many ways to creatively transform ordinary photographs: re-coloring, adding polarization effects or additional elements (e.g. film scratches, picture frame), modifying film textures and tones, or retouching unwanted appearance details (Caoduro, 2014). But the most common editing strategy, as suggested in Grogan et al.'s (2018) qualitative study, is the photographic angle, through which individuals aim to present themselves as perfect. Thereby, the focus is often on the face and unwanted body parts are covered or hidden.

Through these behaviors, users contribute to the normalization of unrealistic body and beauty ideals, which can be damaging to body image, self-evaluation and overall wellbeing (Fardouly et al., 2015). Another study found that girls who shared selfies online on a regular basis and who engaged in photo manipulation were likely to feel negatively about their bodies and to show eating concerns (McLean et al., 2015).

Apart from sharing their own pictures, social media users are exposed to other users' postings. This includes private users, such as family and peers, and professional users, such as celebrities or brands. Those postings offer orientation for what other bodies look like and what is considered beautiful, while their number of likes, shares and positive comments shows what kind of pictures and bodies receive social appraisal from others. This may increase users' desire for a similar response on social media. Regular views and comments on the profiles of social media friends, i.e. social grooming, have been linked to a drive for thinness (Kim & Chock, 2015).

Besides the many studies that have focused predominantly on the negative aspects linked to social media usage and photo-based activities, some scholars have suggested that selective self-presentation through online profiles and the extra care involved may actually improve self-esteem (Gonzales & Hancock, 2010) and posting selfies might be an empowering experience for women (Tiidenberg & Cruz, 2015). Positive feedback from other users can add to the positive sensations resulting from social media behavior (Valkenburg, Peter, & Schouten, 2006). Despite these findings, most studies have uncovered negative impacts of social media usage on body image (e.g. Eckler, Kalyango, & Paasch, 2017; Fardouly et al. 2015; Kleemans, Daalmans, Carbaat, & Anschütz, 2018).

The body positivity and body neutrality movement have begun to spread online non-idealized and unfiltered images of people with more diverse body shapes and skin colors, many of whom have disfigurements and other "imperfections" that are typically excluded from thin-idealized imagery, including beach body pictures. A recent study demonstrated that being exposed to body-positive Instagram posts positively affected young women's mood, body satisfaction and body appreciation, and seeing more of this type of content might be a promising approach to trigger positive body image in social media users (Cohen, Fardouly, Newton-John, & Slater, 2019). But despite the growing attempts at showing diversity and its obvious positive effects, many social media users seem hesitant toward showing what they truly look like. One could consider that the pressure to present an idealized version of the self and to receive positive validation from others is still stronger than the bravery to show an "imperfect" self.

DECEPTION THEORY: A NEW OUTLOOK ON THE BEACH BODY

Deception has been studied from various perspectives: psychological, sociological, linguistic, etc. We will examine deception as a communication process, which involves a sender, a message and a receiver. Typical research areas include examinations of motivations for senders to engage in deception (Mc-Cornack, Morrison, Paik, Wisner, & Zhu, 2014), the deceptive message itself (Markowitz & Hancock, 2018) or the receiver and how they perceive and respond to the deceit (Levine, 2014).

Deception is often defined as "intentionally, knowingly, and/or purposely misleading another person" and messages involve "intent, awareness and/or purpose to mislead" (Levine, 2014, p. 379). Deception can include lies, omission, evasion, equivocation and generating false conclusions with true information (Levine, 2014). In terms of online communication, deception is a common focus of research. As Toma and Hancock (2012) stated, "Concerns about online deception are as old as the Internet itself" (p. 78).

Theoretical models propose that most people tend to be honest most of the time and only a few prolific liars tell most of the lies (Levine, 2014), which has been supported by evidence (Markowitz & Hancock, 2018; Serota, Levine, & Boster, 2010). As discussed previously, we can find large numbers of digitally altered photographs and optimized online profiles in the social media landscape. But does this polishing of one's online profile or photo constitute lying? Users may not perceive this behavior as lying, because they may see the lie as a low stake normative response to online codes of conduct, something Harwood (2014) called "easy lies". Such lies, also called "light", "do not cause distress, are not seen as serious, are not regretted, are more pleasant than the truth for all parties involved … and the liar would not really care if the lie was discovered" (DePaulo et al., 1996, as cited in Harwood, 2014, p. 407).

These small and harmless lies (such as commenting favorably but undeservedly on someone's cooking or praising a child's unsuccessful art project) are often situational and occur frequently in everyday interactions with friends and family. Thus, Cole (2014) argues that situational complexity can sometimes influence the creation of deceptive messages; and intent or awareness, which are often assumed to guide deception, can occur during the process of lying or even post facto. This suggests that deception may not be as rational and top-down as many scholars believe. As Cole (2014) argues, deception is "almost certainly driven by automatic and unconscious processes" (p. 396).

Some have demonstrated that in the field of online dating users lied often but subtly in order to enhance their profiles (Hancock & Toma, 2009; Toma & Hancock, 2010). Self-presentation and self-enhancement are major motives for deceiving others in the context of online/mobile dating (Markowitz & Hancock, 2018). The authors discovered that close to two-thirds of deceptive content was driven by impression management, specifically related to self-presentation and availability. The asynchronous and editable features of online dating create the perfect conditions for deception: "Users have an unlimited amount of time to create their self-presentation and the ability to revise it to make it both flattering and believable" (Toma & Hancock, 2012, p. 79). The same can be said about social media in general and how users portray their bodies and overall persona. With these media affordances at hand, users often lead a carefully orchestrated campaign of self-presentation (Toma & Hancock, 2012) and the different genders tend to value different aspects of their appearance. Men were typically found to exaggerate their height and women to underreport their weight and intentionally post less accurate photographs (Hancock & Toma, 2009; Toma & Hancock, 2010; Toma, Hancock & Ellison, 2008). This attempt at self-optimization online is an important aspect of online culture, as it contributes to unrealistic images and an atmosphere of idealized body-centered content.

These findings have direct relevance to body image and to the beach body, where a possibly flawless appearance seems as the license to expose one's semi-naked body and to receive social approval from others. Another similarity to online dating is that the ideal beach body has long been connected with romance and successful sexual relationships (Jordan 2007, Small 2016). This refers to situations at the beach and for media contexts, where women in swimwear have been portrayed as "sexually alluring decorations", i.e. sexual objects to be looked at (Jordan, 2007, p. 94). Deception thus seems likely to occur in the context of the beach body as well.

This chapter will explore two theories of deception, which address different aspects of the communication process. The Information Manipulation Theory 2 (IMT2) focuses on the creation of a deceptive message and the motivations of the sender. It "conceptually frames deception as involving the covert manipulation of information along multiple dimensions and as a contextual problem-solving activity driven by the desire for quick, efficient, and viable communicative solutions" (McCornack et al., 2014). The theory focuses on situational triggers of deception and diverges from previous models, which see deception as top-down, intentional and conscious.

Also applicable is the Truth-Default Theory (TDT) by Levine (2014), which examines the deception process from the viewpoint of the receiver. The theory posits that when people communicate with each other, they tend to presume that their conversation partner is basically honest. This presumption of honesty makes possible efficient communication and cooperation, and in most cases is correct, as most people tell the truth most of the time (Levine, 2014). This presumption also makes people vulnerable to manipulation and deception, at least in the short-term, but the theory argues that the truth default presumption is also highly adaptive to the individual and the species, and thus will improve accuracy of detection. The theory diverges from previous work in the field by focusing its detection powers not on the behaviour or nonverbal cues of the sender of communication, but on the message itself and its context. "Most lies are detected either through comparing what is said to what is or what can be known, or through solicitation of a confession" (Levine, 2014). This focus on the message and its context is especially relevant to social media, where the sender is not seen face to face and thus, they cannot provide behavioral cues of deception. However, there are plenty of opportunities to study the message itself due to the written record that remains and the asynchronous mode of communication.

The two theories have been applied to the study of politicians dodging questions and how people respond and try to detect those behaviors (Clementson, 2018a), how politicians accuse each other of evasiveness, which may affect voters' attitudes about their dishonesty (Clementson, 2016), and the role of partisan bias when detecting politicians' deception (Clementson 2018b). TDT has also been applied to various settings for the study of how people detect deception (e.g. Blair, Reimer, & Levine, 2018).

This study is the first known attempt to apply deception theories to the field of body image. While the concept of body deception has been used previously, it was linked to social comparison theory but not to any deception theories (Hildebrandt, Shiovitz, Alfano, & Greif, 2008). TDT and IMT2 are particularly useful, as together they address different aspects of the deception process and also offer a more updated and nuanced view of deception compared to some of their predecessors (Cole, 2014; Levine, 2014; McCornack et al., 2014). We will examine the sender, the message and the receiver of this communication process in an effort to discover how body image deception is created and understood in social media. We pose the following research questions:

Research Question 1: What motivates users to engage in online deception about the beach body?
Research Question 2: How do users engage in online deception about the beach body?

STUDY METHOD

This exploratory study involves 25 undergraduate international exchange students, aged 19-23, from 19 different countries and five continents: Europe, North and South America, Asia and Oceania. The students participated in four focus groups (three groups were all-female, one group was all-male) at the University of Cologne, Germany.

They discussed their perceptions of the beach body in online and offline contexts. As 92% of participants used Facebook and Instagram every day, based on a questionnaire they filled out, we could ensure that they were familiar with the usage and content posted on social media, irrespective of their home country.

Data was collected in the summer, when the beach body topic is frequently promoted in the media. Therefore, participants would likely have been recently exposed to related pictures.

The focus groups were facilitated by a fellow student who ensured that all participants were included in the discussion and that the discussion was focused on the purpose of the study. Focus groups lasted between 50 and 90 minutes. Participants were asked to discuss six broad questions about social media, two of which will be considered as a foundation for this chapter. The first question was: "What (changing) behaviors, both offline and online, have you observed amongst your female peers when it came to achieving a beach body?" The second question was: "Please think about some typical beach body postings that you can find on your social media newsfeed, e.g. published by friends or any pages/people you like or follow. How do those postings differentiate (a) from one another and (b) from real-life situations at the beach?"

Although the questions themselves aimed to evoke various comments and experiences, those often revolved around deception, as will become evident in the following section. Additionally, each participant filled in a short survey about their demographic data and social media use. All discussions were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim to allow inductive systematic analysis. See Table 1 for details on the participants.

FINDINGS

The findings below are guided by our research questions and structured around them. Based on the huge number of pictures shared online daily, one could expect users to deal with them routinely and perhaps even quickly. But our focus group discussions revealed that taking, choosing and eventually posting the "right" picture might be a lengthy process, which can involve much consideration and extra care in order to look good and receive positive feedback and appraisal from others. All groups were very clear that the ideal beach body as presented in the media, most notably on social media, differed considerably from real bodies at the beach. They thus confirmed our idea to differentiate between real and mediatized beach bodies and Grogan et al.'s (2018) suggestion that "there are disconnects between women's identity as portrayed in selfies and their 'real' offline identities" (p. 26). How exactly beach bodies are being mediatized in social media contexts and the role of deception will be discussed below.

Table 1. Focus group participants

Focus group	Name	Age	Home location	Facebook use	Twitter use	Instagram use
1	Female	n/a	Europe	Several times a day	Less than once/ twice a week	Several times a day
1	Female	22	Asia	Once/twice a day	I don't know	I don't know
1	Female	21	Europe	Several times a day	Less than once/ twice a week	Several times a week
1	Female	n/a	Asia	Several times a day	Less than once/ twice a week	Several times a day
1	Female	n/a	Europe	Once/twice a day	Less than once/ twice a week	Once/twice a day
1	Female	21	Europe	Several times a day	Less than once/ twice a week	Once/twice a day
2	Female	n/a	Europe	Several times a day	Less than once/ twice a week	Less than once/ twice a week
2	Female	22	North America	Once/twice a day	Once/twice a day	Once/twice a day
2	Female	21	Europe	Several times a day	Several times a day	Several times a day
2	Female	22	Europe	Several times a day	Several times a week	Several times a day
2	Female	21	Europe	Several times a day	Less than once/ twice a week	Once/twice a day
2	Female	n/a	Europe	Several times a day	Less than once/ twice a week	Several times a day
2	Female	n/a	South America	Several times a day	Less than once/ twice a week	Once/twice a day
3	Female	20	Oceania	Several times a day	Less than once/ twice a week	Once/twice a day
3	Female	22	Oceania	Several times a day	I don't know	Several times a day
3	Female	19	Asia	Several times a day	Several times a day	Several times a day
3	Female	20	Europe	Several times a day	Less than once/ twice a week	Once/twice a day
3	Female	n/a	Asia	Less than once/twice a week	Several times a day	Less than once/ twice a week
3	Female	23	Europe	Several times a day	Less than once/ twice a week	Once/twice a day
4	Male	n/a	South America	Once/twice a day	Less than once/ twice a week	Less than once/ twice a week
4	Male	n/a	Europe	Several times a day	Less than once/ twice a week	Several times a day
4	Male	20	Europe	Once/twice a day	Less than once/ twice a week	Less than once/ twice a week
4	Male	21	South America	Several times a day	Less than once/ twice a week	Less than once/ twice a week
4	Male	n/a	Europe	Several times a day	Several times a day	Several times a day
4	Male	21	Asia	Less than once/twice a week	Less than once/ twice a week	Less than once/ twice a week

Motives for Online Deception About the Beach Body

As discussed earlier, online self-optimization of one's body via presenting incorrect information or omission or leading to false conclusions is considered deception. Past literature has demonstrated how social media users generally try to present their best version online (Haferkamp & Krämer, 2011; Manago et al., 2008). But the focus groups revealed that posting pictures of their semi-naked appearances seemed to be exclusively reserved for women who already had a "good" body in real life:

…you need to know that your body is almost perfect, you know, to post a picture. And you don't use Photoshop to change your shape. You can change the color of your skin or something, but you still need to have a perfect body to post these pictures. (Female 1)

Having an attractive physique thus seemed to be a pre-condition for posting a beach body picture online and possible motives for doing it could be similar to those found for online dating: self-presentation and self-enhancement (Markowitz & Hancock, 2018).

Even though modern technology, such as digital photo alteration apps, could easily transform any picture into a "perfect" version, there was still the expectation to have a good-looking physique in real life and to put effort into it. However, the asynchronous nature of social media and the extended opportunity for users to gaze at each other's photos, and in this case beach bodies, meant that the stakes for online representations were higher than in offline settings.

…I think when you're posting something on Instagram, you have to look better there because it's like a picture and you can look at it for a long time. But when you're in real life, you're always like in a move. So people are not so crazy about how they look in real life because they always look better in real life than on social media because they are like in motion all the time. And the perception of people is absolutely different as well. It's like "Okay, she or he doesn't have a perfect skin or something. So what? Nobody is perfect! So what?" But on social media it's like "Oh look, no perfect skin, oh my God!" So the perception is different. You can afford for yourself not to be perfect in real life because nobody is perfect. But in social media, you have to be like all perfect. (Female 2)

However, throughout our focus groups, females were described or described themselves, as rather hesitant toward posting beach body pictures online. One reason was culture. Participants from Korea and China emphasized that acts of posing and showing off were generally disapproved of, and social media users would rarely do it. In other countries such as Russia, posting beach (body) pictures related more to stating that one could afford beach holidays rather than to exposing an ideal body. Thus, a second motivation for posting beach body pictures related to demonstrating social status. A photo from the beach may be directly about your body, but indirectly, and maybe more importantly, about showing that you can afford a beach holiday. These findings demonstrate the importance of studying body image from an intercultural perspective and the beach body is a good case study of that.

A motive for not posting beach body pictures may, however, be the explicit expectation that they should look perfect, as discussed previously. If the photos do not conform to the socio-cultural understandings of ideal beauty, girls may feel insecure about exposing their semi-naked appearances online or fear negative public feedback. The perception of the beach body in social media contexts was rather standardized and

bodies that differ from the "beauty ideal" were not mentioned, even though many participants favored more realistic beach bodies when asked about different contexts.

How Users Engage in Online Deception About the Beach Body

Participants shared various techniques for enhancing their beach photos before and during the actual photography. Based on high expectations and awareness of being looked at and critically evaluated by others, picture taking at the beach was linked to females putting on make-up and choosing the right outfit, i.e. "fancy apparel," such as good looking and well-fitting (or even form-enhancing) swimwear and beach accessories, to prepare for a good shot. Some groups also mentioned last-minute exercising before taking a picture in order to increase muscle definition.

So the pictures online … Obviously they are never as good as in life. Because you put a filter on it, you do like ten push-ups before you take the photo, you know. It's stupid. (Male 1)

Apart from the general preparations to look good on beach body pictures, participants listed some additional procedures. The most salient were mimics or posing. It seemed particularly relevant to keep smiling, look sexy and indicate good mood, but in a grown-up and serious manner, not in a childish or funny way:

And like that means that you're like sexualizing your body and it's like the main goal. It's not like 'I'm having a fun time at the beach with my friends,' it's like 'oh, look at my really skinny bikini photos.' And I'm thinking of people who do it just to take bikini photos to show off. And the whole thing that Instagram builds is the mindset that you gonna have to post pictures like that. (Female 3)

Like, I feel like I'd rather have a funny photo with my bra or with my arse not being quite as skinny as it should, but … (Female 4)

Yeah, but then just having a good time! (Female 3)

Yes, and rather than those pictures like 'I'm serious and I'm posting', I'd rather have a funny photo. (Female 4)

As the excerpts above show, sexual objectification was perceived as normative amongst the female participants, even though they wished to differentiate from it. Showing certain mimics and moods on pictures, also described as "playing" by some participants, was perceived negatively and brings the question of why women feel the need to be smiling and in sexy poses. Reasons may be manifold and originate from each person's individual personality, but our study revealed considerable peer pressure. This supports the idea that one's body image may be influenced by family and peers through the social pressure they exert (Grogan, 2017).

This focus on mimics and poses also relates to the earlier studies on deception, which examined people's gestures, faces and other non-verbal cues for signs of cheating (e.g. Ekman, 1992). While more recent works have focused on the message rather than the sender's face to detect deception, the fact that

so many young people focus on their non-verbal cues in photos and that has now become part of the deceptive message may prompt a re-examining of senders' features and cues when detecting deception.

When it came to posing, the desire to look slim and muscular dominated across cultures, which indicates a high internalization of Western ideals. To achieve this, young people would apply different poses and flex their muscles, which confirmed the aforementioned tendency toward last-minute workouts.

So many of my friends try to show the perfect body on social media. But of course they are normal people. They don't have Photoshop and these things. But I do realize they are trying their best to look thin … like they are trying their best to look the skinniest or the strongest with lots of muscles and stuff. (Female 5)

While mimics and gestures were of particular importance, background features seemed less relevant or perhaps respondents thought of them as self-explanatory and not worth mentioning. This raises the question of whether backgrounds generally become less important if there is a (semi-naked) body in the picture and whether some kind of selective perception may occur. Future research could explore this question further.

Even with the right preparations, mimics and gestures, users may not be entirely satisfied with their pictures and optimize them further before posting. They may first pick the best shot from the series they took and then apply a filter or otherwise edit the picture. Amongst our participants, digital alteration of pictures was linked stronger to celebrities or professional advertisers than to social media "friends".

This became particularly clear in the context of advertising, where participants stated rather matter-of-factly that bikini models on adverts looked unrealistic, similar to celebrities. The digital enhancement of their social media pictures was as obvious as the fact that some of them had cosmetic surgery. Even though participants stated that it "looks like a cartoon [and] can't be real", it seemed to be accepted as part of being famous. In fact, examples were given of celebrities such as Kim Kardashian who lost many followers after posting a picture of their "real" body. Some participants felt sorry for them, whereas others made fun. Overall, it appeared that digital alteration was accepted or at least considered normal if participants did not have a personal, close relationship to the sender of the picture. These findings are in line with Grogan et al.'s (2018) qualitative study in which interviewees showed awareness of celebrities manipulating their selfies in order to look perfect.

Despite this awareness, it was repeatedly stated how comparing against better-looking people on social media made participants feel bad about their own bodies and increased their wish to look better. Our results thus support findings of previous studies on body image and social media, in which processes of upward comparison were identified as triggers of negative body image (e.g. Eckler et al., 2017; Fardouly et al. 2015; Kleemans et al., 2018).

Increased awareness of deception through digital alteration may not protect young people from negative feelings about their body or comparing against idealized images. In fact, a recent experiment on the effects of photo manipulation on Instagram showed that such photos had direct links to lower body image, even though manipulation was detected by participants (Kleemans et al., 2018). Reshaping of bodies was poorly detected, however, and the photos were still evaluated as realistic (Kleemans et al., 2018). This is an interesting finding for research aiming to identify mechanisms to trigger positive body image. It also reminds of recent findings on the use of disclaimer labels on images in traditional and social media contexts, which suggested that those had no protective effect on individuals' body dissatisfaction, even though they clearly indicated that images were edited, hence unrealistic and deceptive

(Bourlai & Herring, 2014; Tiggemann, Brown, Zaccardo, Thomas, 2017; Bury, Tiggemann & Slater, 2017; Fardouly & Holland, 2018).

The differing perceptions of our respondents indicate that deception on social media is somewhat normalized and takes place in various forms.

First, some techniques to make oneself look better on pictures might be more acceptable than others. For instance, applying filters might be considered okay and even normative, whereas slimming down via a photo-editing app may be seen as unacceptable. Similarly, Grogan et al.'s (2018) study revealed, "manipulating online 'identity' through altering the appearance of selfies was seen as a legitimate, and even necessary way to enhance perceived attractiveness" (p. 25). They identified some "socially-shared rules of self-presentation" (p. 26) through which individuals tried to conform to norms and expectations of ideal beauty. These rules contained certain no-goes though, such as posting sexually suggestive pictures. It is well imaginable that the degree of digital manipulation might also be affected by those rules.

Second, idealized images were generally linked more to celebrities than to "friends", which is interesting because as discussed earlier, photo manipulation was somewhat accepted or even normalized. This leads to the question whether users tend to perceive their friends as more trustworthy and genuine than celebrities, so that they may look at them in a less critical way or whether ordinary social media users are perhaps less likely to artificially enhance their beach body images in other ways than through "basic" adjustments such as lighting or contrasts. The existing literature provides limited findings on this relatively new research topic, so more data are needed to deepen our understanding.

The last possible stage of deception is when posting pictures online. Instagram is a photo-centric platform where users can link their pictures to certain keywords using hashtags. And even though the hashtag #beachbody is a prominent one, as stated previously, beach body pictures may not always be provided with this or another beach body-related hashtag, but with different ones. In fact, respondents in all focus groups linked postings of beach body pictures to postings related to health and fitness, claiming that these were the contexts in which they were exposed to most pictures of women in bikinis/swimwear, with many being before-and-after images. To shed light onto this, future content analysis research can investigate how these hashtags correlate.

Health and fitness are frequently used terms in social media, so that they might in fact be used to disguise one's purpose to get beach body ready:

I think in America, it's like more and more like not being beach body ready, but more like being healthy, I guess. And so… it's more like "Oh, I'm…" well I don't know, I think even some of my friends are… I know that they will say: "Yeah, I just wanna be healthy. I wanna be fit." and stuff, but then like they're like "Oh my God, I need to fit in to this pair of jeans" and they're like "Oh my gosh, I really want to look good when I go to the beach in summer"… Exactly, so in the end, that's like the ultimate goal but they kind of disguise it as "No, I just wanna be fit and healthy. (Female 6)

Another participant described how young women would post pictures of themselves wearing a bikini and with a bowl of salad in front of them. He accused them of intentionally putting the focus on food, while in fact they were only interested in exposing their beach body. This might be a way of exposing one's beach body indirectly, especially in cultures where "showing off" is perceived negatively.

While our study only scratched the surface of cultural differences in deceptive social media behavior related to the beach body, it outlines many lines of inquiry in the future for more in-depth explorations.

CONCLUSION

Past body image research has emphasized normalized behaviors in several related contexts, including body dissatisfaction and dieting (e.g. Grogan, 2017). Photo-editing strategies on social media are also perceived as normal or even expected by the online community. Young users are aware that such behaviors could classify as deceptive, but did not perceive them as negative, such as Harwood's (2014) "easy lies." When discussing friends, sophisticated manipulation such as via Photoshop use was seen as uncommon, however the discussion of celebrities and influencers was more critical of deceptive practices and participants were aware of them using Photoshop prominently, which was considered a normal part of their work.

Thus, deception appears to be the ticket for acceptance and belonging into the social media community. This is in many ways worrisome. First, if deception is normative on social media, this will likely reinforce the internalization of unrealistic and unattainable beauty ideals and will further distort users' perceptions of how bodies ought to look online and offline. For instance, more young people may be taking drastic and unhealthy measures to achieve that Photoshop body offline. Second, when thin beach body ideals are disguised under hashtags such as #health, #fitness, and #detox, the lines between healthy and unhealthy behaviors continue to be blurred. In fact, many of the messages and images under these supposedly benign hashtags are neither healthy nor harmless, as they promote weight loss over health. The deception of presenting health-risking behaviors as health-promoting ones might have particularly detrimental impacts on young people's wellbeing and is something that needs to be explored in future research.

Social media users may see their manipulation of body images as "easy lies": not serious, more pleasant than the truth, inconsequential and harmless (DePaulo et al., 1996, as cited in Harwood, 2014). But we can question the harmless nature of these "small" deceptions. As millions of social media users tweak, filter and slim down their (beach) body images before posting online, deception becomes part of the cultural norm and the unrealistic thin ideal for our bodies is maintained and strengthened, with potentially damaging consequences on people's body image (Kleemans et al., 2018).

Although deception about the (beach) body on social media may be perceived as commonplace, limits on acceptability do seem to exist. The expectation that you can only post beach body photos if you are already fit, and can manipulate and enhance your tan through filters, but not change your body shape, speaks to those boundaries. These boundaries may be broken by others routinely, but seem difficult for users to detect. As Kleemans et al. (2018) showed, adolescent users trusted the photos they saw of peers and wrongly accepted them as realistic, even though they were subject to body reshaping manipulation. This brings the question of detection of deception to the forefront of body image research.

This chapter's contribution to deception theory is in connecting it for the first time with body image research and digital manipulation on social media. It builds understanding of the means and motivations for creating "small" digital lies and offers an in-depth look of how that occurs in practice. This topic could be expanded further in several directions, which are discussed below.

SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Solutions for online photo enhancement could begin with discussions of deception and the "easy lies" young people tell one another online, for instance as part of education in media literacy. The assumption of harmlessness should be challenged and real consequences of the thin ideal should continue to be emphasized online and offline. Further, young people may not even perceive their online behaviors as lying, in which case a discussion about deception, its boundaries and consequences is needed. Since most people tend to tell the truth most of the time (Levine, 2014), presenting image manipulation as deception may challenge its current normalized acceptance and users' own self-image as truthful and honest.

An overall need to build a more realistic understanding of what real bodies look like is also needed. Traditional media images, such as cosmetics advertising, have long been regulated, in many countries for truthfulness. However, this particular solution could be challenging. Research has shown that disclaimer labels on manipulated social media images have been ineffective at addressing negative consequences of exposure (Fardouly & Holland, 2018). It is thus crucial to further investigate this topic and identify efficient mechanisms to warn users about misleading and deceptive media messages.

A "code of conduct" to limit the use of digitally altered images online is another option to encourage more realism online and its creation should involve policy makers, social media companies, academics and online users. "Photoshop laws" such as in France and Israel are good examples in this direction, although just like disclaimer labels, their efficiency has not yet been empirically shown. An Industry Code of Conduct on Body Image was introduced in Australia in 2009, which required diverse sized models to be used in magazines. A content analysis a year later of young women's magazines swim suit editions showed that more than half of them were upholding elements of the code (Boyd & Moncrieff-Boyd, 2011). However, the voluntary and self-regulatory nature of the code has been criticized for being too soft on the fashion industry (Seseljia & Sakzewski, 2017).

Another recent political attempt to regulate harmful online content has been Germany's social media law, which was released on 1 January 2018 to reduce hate speech and cyberbullying on social media platforms. Content moderators have been employed at so-called deletion centers to delete or block violent comments that could be harmful to the community (Bennhold, 2018). While this approach is still a relatively young pilot project which without doubt needs continuous development based on empirical evidence, it constitutes an interesting legislative initiative to monitor and regulate content shared via social media that might negatively affect its users. It is thus conceivable to expand approaches like this to detect deceiving images. However, it must of course be acknowledged that it is potentially more difficult to identify harmful visual content relating to body image. Further understanding is thus needed of health-risking visual social media content, specifically regarding the impact of media exposure on physical and mental health.

Within an environment as vibrant and fluid as the Internet, joint forces are needed to contribute toward decisive change. Brands, celebrities and online influencers should take their share of responsibility to improve the genuine depictions of bodies and lifestyles online. A long-time belief is that thinness is the most efficient advertising strategy, but past studies have highlighted that realistic models with average-size bodies may be equally efficient (e.g. Halliwell & Dittmar, 2004). However, we must acknowledge that these attempts still run against mainstream media practices, where women are commonly objectified and the thin body ideal is used as a symbol of virtue, success, beauty, and more (Bordo, 2013; Grogan, 2017). As a result, these escapes from perfectionism may in themselves become promotional stunts and

instead attract attention to the "normal" state of those celebrities, which is the touched-up, staged and deceiving self.

In this regard, parallels to Dove's Campaign For Real Beauty come to mind. The campaign did launch a mainstream conversation about authenticity and staying real, but at the same time did it within the same confines of corporate culture and consumerism, and eventually some argue that it reframed, rather than challenged, the dominant ideology of beauty in order to strengthen its own brand identity among young women (Murray, 2013). In spite of this criticism, Dove remains one of the pioneers in the attempt to promote a more diverse body image through advertising.

Corporate responsibility also relates to the advertising of potentially harmful products on social media, which many celebrities engage in. In February 2019, the medical director of NHS England, professor Stephen Powis, called for social media companies to ban "damaging" ads of weight loss aids endorsed by celebrities and urged influential celebrities to act "responsibly" (NHS England News, 2019). Right now, the rules on what can be promoted on social media are few, but in 2019, the Competition and Markets Authority in the UK launched new guidance for social influencers (Competition and Markets Authority, 2019a). The agency has sent out warning letters to many celebrities, urging them to review any concerning practices, and has secured formal commitments from 16 of them to ensure compliant labeling, according to a recent press release (Competition and Markets Authority, 2019b).

All of the above initiatives need to be accompanied by ongoing research on positive body image and the identification of mechanisms that may eventually trigger body satisfaction to defend users against the internalization of unrealistic beauty ideals. Positive body image has been suggested as a powerful concept (Wood-Barcalow, Tylka, & Augustus-Horvath, 2010) that can be a "protective filter", used by women, to process and respond to communication in a body-preserving manner. However, there is little exploration of this positive body image in social media research. Social media can have many body positive aspects e.g. community and belonging, skill development, self-mastery, and self-acceptance. Some scholars have already argued for the importance to focus on body functionality (Alleva, Martijn, van Breukelen, Jansen, & Karos, 2015) and some recent studies suggest that yoga practices may positively affect body image (e.g. Neumark-Sztainer et al., 2018).

Body positivity and body neutrality movements may also provide solutions for unrealistic presentations, even though some have come under scrutiny for allegedly promoting obesity. The proliferation of images with people of various shapes, sizes, skin colors, and with visible blemishes that differentiate from the majority of thin-idealized bodies in the media is a crucial step on the way to fostering a more realistic depiction of how bodies actually look. The study by Cohen et al. (2019) has been a valuable academic contribution, demonstrating that exposure to body positive social media content may trigger positivity, such as higher body appreciation.

With its semi-naked and revealing appearance, the beach body is a particularly suitable theme for body positive and diversity-promoting campaigns. Fostering a more grounded understanding on social media of diverse beach bodies may be crucial in helping young people develop a more positive and self-accepting relationship to their semi-naked offline (beach) bodies. The strong connection between online and offline behavior is a particularly important aspect that needs to be explored in depth when designing new ways to diminish health-risking online deception and foster body positivity, be it in academia, policy or elsewhere.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This chapter has offered some strong initial connections between deception theory and the beach body and has raised multiple questions for future research. It demonstrated that the beach body should be studied in more depth and from various academic perspectives, as it is a prominent theme on social media, which affects people globally by sending them into annual "body panic" before summer. There is even reason to believe that body image concerns may increase during summer, when people reveal more of themselves to others. Future research should thus look more closely into individuals' body image in a seasonal context and further explore the role of social media and deception. The achievement of an ideal beach body is typically linked to a range of preparation techniques such as dieting, exercising, and hair removal. While photo manipulation might easily substitute these practices, our data showed a strong link between online and offline behavior, i.e. that there is a need to look perfect not only on social media but also in real life. Therefore, further study is needed on how online and offline behaviors relate to each another.

Future research should also increase our understanding of users' motives for manipulating their images. Self-enhancement is the logical rationale (Markowitz & Hancock, 2018) but our data indicated that further motives may be influential that relate to social status, comparisons with peer groups, need for social appraisal, peer pressure and culture-specific influences.

Another interesting line of inquiry is the assumption about truth and deception related to celebrities and friends. As our group discussions revealed, celebrities are expected to manipulate their photos constantly, but friends are perceived as more realistic and trustworthy. However, whether that is actually true remains to be confirmed through research and some studies are suggesting that this perception of the truthfulness of friends may be misleading (Kleemans et al., 2018). This also brings the question of detection of deception related to body images online, which needs further exploration.

The concept of the beach body, and related deception, could also be studied more broadly by including hashtags around fitness and health. Future content analyses can investigate how these hashtags correlate with body image photos and deception practices, and what kind of messages they communicate to users.

Finally, participants in body image research should be diversified by including more male and LGBT voices, cross-cultural aspects of research on deception and body image, especially from non-Western perspectives.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Beach-Body Ready: The annual and seasonal process of achieving an ideal beach physique as depicted in the media through bodily preparation techniques such as dieting, exercising, hair removal and fake-tanning.

Information Manipulation Theory 2: A theory which focuses on the creation of a deceptive message and on the motivations of the sender.

Mediatized Beach Body: Images of beach bodies displayed on social media and in mass media.

Real Beach Body: Semi-naked figures in swimwear in natural offline environments.

Truth-Default Theory: The theory posits that when people communicate with each other, they tend to presume that their conversation partner is basically honest.

Chapter 6
Not a Girl, Not Yet a Woman:
A Critical Case Study on Social Media, Deception, and Lil Miquela

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ABSTRACT

This chapter takes an interdisciplinary approach to the study of deception from the critical perspectives of rhetoric, communication, and media studies. The primary objective is to interrogate the interrelationship of communication, identity, and technology relevant to social media in order to confront issues related to online deception. To that end, this case study is centrally focused on social media sensation Miquela Sosa, also known as Lil Miquela, and the implications of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies and social media influencers to contribute to a more robust critical consciousness regarding misinformation online.

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the authors seek to provide some perspective and satisfactory answers to the growing questions and concerns regarding misinformation in business, politics, religion and everyday life. More precisely, using the critical perspectives of rhetoric, communication, and media studies, the authors' objective is to interrogate the interrelationship of communication, identity, and technology relevant to the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies and social media influencers, focusing specifically on Instagram sensation Miquela Sosa, also known as Lil Miquela. In short, these objectives serve the larger purpose of broadening our understanding of online deception patterns and emboldening students, scholars, and professionals with strategies to confront these challenges.

What makes this case study peculiar, and all the more compelling, is that Lil Miquela is not a real person but rather an AI technology that promotes various products and social causes. *Time* recently named Miquela as one of the 25 most influential people on the Internet (Chan, 2018); *V Magazine,* devoted to fashion, music, and culture, has hailed her as the "face of new-age logomania" (Mischianti, 2018); and *Wonderland*, devoted to fashion, music, beauty, art, and culture, has featured an in-depth interview and photo spread with Miquela (Walker, 2018). On Instagram, Miquela identifies as a robot from Los Angeles; a musician, with a music video inspired by her single, "Hate Me"; and as a social advocate for Black Lives Matter, the LGBTQ+ community, the Downtown Women's Center of Los Angeles, and the Campaign for Youth Justice. In short, Miquela is a substantial social media influencer—an emblem for both style and social justice causes.

In sum, we contend that Miquela serves as an ideal representative anecdote through which to interrogate misinformation and online deception. Moreover, we further argue that this phenomenon has brought us to a cultural crossroad where critical consciousness and reality converges with varying degrees of misdirection and deception. Put differently, it is representative of a significant turning point in advertising and mass consumer culture, where AI technologies have become social media influencers. As such, this chapter makes for an important study in online deception with significant implications for intellectual and media ethics. To this end, the authors consider the rhetorical dimensions of communication, identity, and technology related to deception before confronting the case study of Lil Miquela and concluding with recommendations and future research considerations.

THE STORY OF US: COMMUNICATION, IDENTITY, AND TECHNOLOGY

In situating the significance and importance of this study, the authors rely on the theoretical foundations of rhetoric, communication, and media. Altogether, these disciplines, most especially in our present moment, confront a vast array of human communication issues and challenges, namely, misinformation and online deception on social media. Given that technology has become one of the preeminent ways through which we communicate in order to constitute our sense of identity and secure our physiological and emotional needs, the authors focus on themes of belonging. For instance, Maslow's hierarchy of needs has belonging centered in the pyramid between our basic physiological and safety needs and the higher needs of esteem and self-actualization. In this sense, belonging is foundational to our sense of self and community. Yet our times are indicative of increased separation, as though it is coming apart at the seams (Ross, 2018, p. 1). Across this chasm, social media has given rise to new ways of finding and manufacturing belonging. Howard J. Ross, in *Our Sense of Belonging: How Our Need to Connect Is Tearing Us Apart* (2018), has argued, "things need to get real before they can get better" (p. 175). Indeed, the authors argue an interrogation of Miquela and trends in AI technology help us get both real and better, promoting more critically conscious awareness of misinformation issues and stimulating awareness of human needs for personal connection, vulnerability, and consciousness.

Theoretical Considerations

As the authors contemplate the implications of online deception in the case study of Lil Miquela, it is important to establish some theoretical considerations. In its simplest form, theory is much more than a rote tool for erudition. Rather, theory is a way of understanding and seeing the world derived from some

critical distance. As such, the authors have chosen rhetorical theory as a framework through which to apprehend and comprehend the interplay of social media and online deception as modes of communication and media. Furthermore, the authors examine deceptive messages using Levine's (2014) Truth-default theory (TDT) as a theoretical framework.

Rhetoric

The rhetorical tradition is one of the "deep intellectual taproots for communication and media study in the twentieth and twenty-first centauries" (Simonson, 2010, p. 7). Intellectually, the study of communication and media are branches of rhetorical practice. Pragmatically, rhetoric and media are specific modes of communication. In turn, what makes the discipline of rhetoric, based in large part on the history of Platonic writing and thought, such a fitting foundation for the study of online deception is that rhetoric has, justifiably at times, been described as being motivated and defined by deception. When the term rhetoric is used pejoratively, it is typically yielded as an accusation regarding misdirection or deception, as when Plato leveraged his position on rhetoric as flattery against the Sophists (this is the inspiration for the English word sophistry). In short, rhetoric is well acquainted with the realms of deception.

Furthermore, rhetoric is also an ideal theoretical guide to confront issues related to deception in that it is well acquainted with the use of language to influence emotions. According to Kenneth Burke, the real lasting impact of rhetoric derives from the "trivial repetition and dull daily reinforcement" of language rather than exceptional rhetorical skill (Burke, 1969b, p. 26). In other words, when we consider the abundant and far-reaching repetition and reinforcement of social media messages, particularly those related to deception, we begin to understand their persuasive and rhetorical appeal. Moreover, beyond mere persuasion, rhetoric is fundamentally a means of identification in which we persuade others insofar as we speak their language by gesture and tonality, order and image, attitude and idea, identifying our ways with theirs (Burke, 1969, p. 55). As it pertains to online deception and social media use, the cultural significance of Lil Miquela aligns with these theoretical considerations—that is, through daily reinforcement of varying means of identification via cultural languages. Lastly, one of the theoretical concepts Burke uses to access complex cultural meanings is the representative anecdote, for it provides a clear yet complex platform from which to assess the scope of potential meaning (Burke, 1969, p. 324). Barry Brummett elaborates on the trope, indicating that the representative anecdote is a "trained awareness" of types of dramatic form, with the potential to empower people to extract order from chaos—to decipher what we as a people and culture most deeply fear and hope (Brummett, 1984, p. 174).

Restated, rhetoric is the affective use of language for effect generated through the dull daily reinforcement of various identifications. In this sense, language is broadly defined as some combination of verbal, non-verbal, symbolic, visual, or aural communication, from pitch and intonation to symbols and words—all of which are fundamental to communication, identity, and technology. Subsequently, these form the bases of study that propel rhetoric, communication, and media. Most explicitly, the authors argue that Miquela and the creative technology company Brud, the proprietor of Lil Miquela, consistently engage in acts of misinformation, intentionally, knowingly, and purposefully misleading followers. Thus, the authors consider Brud and Miquela as an ideal representative anecdote, useful for deducing some of the nuances of meaning regarding misinformation in social media. Beforehand, however, the authors address some theoretical considerations regarding deception.

Deception

The issue of deception transcends most disciplinary, social, cultural, and historical boundaries (DePaulo, Kashy, Kirkendol, Wyer, & Epstein, 1996). For instance, according to Timothy Levine (2014), "deception is defined as intentionally, knowingly, and/or purposely misleading another person" (p. 379). Relatedly, with more specificity, Judee Burgoon and David Buller (1998) define deception as a "message knowingly transmitted by a sender to foster a false belief or conclusion by the receiver" (p. 381). They argue that, "Emotions provoke deception, and deception provokes emotions" (p. 381) and that "consequences of deceit entail emotion processes that are incorporated in every explanation of deceptive communication" (p. 381). When we interrogate the interchange of emotions and the human need for belonging in light of other developing cultural trends related to AI technologies, we begin to see more clearly some of the rhetorical potential related to online deception. Furthermore, from the perspective of deception in daily situations, deception in self-presentation is the arrangement of self in everyday social life as characteristically an "edited and packaged" presentation (DePaulo, Kashy, Kirkendol, Wyer, & Epstein, 1996, p. 979).

As an interdisciplinary approach, deception occurs when people deliberately communicate messages that aim to deceive others. Accounting for the different forms of deception, the authors adopt deceptive messages as outright falsehood to mislead including the intentional act by the sender to transmit covert messages that do not reveal the whole truth (Burgoon & Buller, 1996; Burgoon & Buller, 1998; Levine, 2014; McCormick, 1992). DePaulo et al., (1996) noted deceptive behaviors arise from the desire for people to claim their own identities in which lies are told most often in "matter-of-fact-ways" (p. 991) to benefit self-interests and protect other-oriented lies. By examining various motivations for why people lie (DePaulo et al., 1996), the authors consider the significance of what makes Lil Miquela's case significant. Specifically, in the context of social media, which allows users to participate autonomously and anonymously, buttressed by the rapid and expansive participatory nature of the Internet, ethical concerns arise as Brud, Miquela's creators, engage with more than 1.5 million Instagram followers.

Researched from perspectives of online communication and behavior on social media, the authors consider how social media gives users freedom to disclose certain parts of their identity and communicate different messages to different audiences, thus making the argument that deception derives from decisions that do not associate lies with consequence. In Levine's (2014) Truth-Default-Theory (TDT), for instance, deception derives from the premise that when humans communicate with other humans, people operate on the default presumption that communication is honest most of the time. As such, in TDT, communication context and content are considered to determine if communication is deceptive (Levine, 2014). To uncover patterns of deception, this case study draws on social media posts across platforms that define how Miquela is portrayed to her (it) audience; similarly, to understand the motivations and techniques used to create Miquela.

In sum, whereas the social psychologists approach emotion-based deception as biological signals centered on cognitive experiences, communication scholars consider the social nature of emotions that focus on how emotional expressions are utilized to create deceptive messages (Burgoon & Buller, 1998, p. 382). What is most significant in these studies is the recognition that deception is a conscious act of fostering beliefs based on some degree of misinformation. Indeed, worthy counterfeits should look and feel the part. As such, theoretically speaking, the authors propose rhetorical studies, and their close relative's communication and media, be considered in deception research.

A CHEAP TRICK: THE RHETORIC OF SOCIALLY MEDIATED DECEPTION

Given the theoretical considerations of this chapter, the authors turn their attention to the rhetoric of socially mediated deception, keeping in mind the interplay of human emotions and the need for belonging that coincide with the dull daily reinforcement of technology and online encounters. Put differently, "I Want You To Want Me," the September 1977 single by American rock band Cheap Trick (Nielsen, 1977), succinctly, adeptly, and aptly captures the essence of social media behaviors oriented around online deception. In order to effectively understand the misdirection levied by Brud through social media influencer Miquela, the authors first briefly consider the role of artificial/technology before considering the particulars of Brud and Miquela.

The idea that people manipulate information in media is not new; however, examining what is considered to be a deliberate act of deception on social media is relevant at a time when deception on social media is not clear, and the amount of online technologies and people who use social media continue to increase. Whereas asynchronous communication is delayed and provides time for people to formulate thoughts, in synchronous communication people respond with greater immediacy; thus, synchronous communications affect how deception is implemented, giving deceivers advantage for altering content (Tsikerderis and Zeadally, 2014).

Artificial/Technology

Although the freedom to exchange information is an important part of fostering democracy, it is also important to recognize some of the societal and ethical challenges that come with being able to create and propagate online personas. Sherry Turkle (2005) has described our computer technology as part of everyday life, a world we create, work in, experiment in, and live in. With its "chameleon like quality," technology becomes our creature, "making it an ideal medium for the construction of a wide variety of private worlds and, through them, for self-exploration" (p. 21). Turkle (2005) describes the tendency in technology use to "manipulate words, information, and visual images," entering into the development of personality and identity (Turkle, 2005, p. 21). "To say one's online self is curated would be an understatement; it's not real life" (Jones, 2018). The authors contend that Brud consciously misleads others with misinformation regarding Miquela's consciousness, such that Brud wrote and published an online letter to address public concerns.

Lil Miquela: A Case Study

In 2018, the glamorous, perfectly curated world of Instagram influencers is hardly a mystery—and yet, one Instagram star remains an enigma: Lil Miquela (Russell, 2018):

Miquela Sousa, better known as Lil Miquela, is one of the first computer-generated social media influencers. In less than two years of existence, she has amassed over a million Instagram followers and sparked a debate about what makes a persona "real" online. In an era of fake news, AI, Russian troll farms, catfishing, and deceptive selfies, Miquela highlights how technology is estranging us from reality (Eror, 2018).

To confront this estrangement, the authors address the emergence of Miquela, purported to be a 19-year-old Brazilian-American model; who has 1.5 million Instagram followers, dresses in Chanel and Prada (and various other brand that promote causes she believes in) and graced the cover of American *Vogue* wearing Alexander McQueen (Walker, 2018).

Since first appearing on Instagram in 2016, Lil Miquela has quickly become a compelling presence, functioning as an Instagram influencer in the realms of fashion, branding, music, social justice, and celebrity. Developed as an Artificial Intelligence (AI) prototype with full consciousness, Miquela is able to think freely and feel compassion for others. The question remains, however, as to whether Miquela can actually be the empathetic presence her (it) creators, Brud, have claimed. In a recent journalistic segment, one reporter offers an ominous vision for this possibility:

Many things you see online are not what they appear to be. In the case of social media influencers – people who are paid to promote brands and products – some aren't even real people. In what is part of a growing online trend, some of these computer-generated influencers have more than one million followers each. Recent studies predict the influence marketing space will be a \$2 billion industry by 2020. The goal of these computer-generated influencers is to get you to buy products or experiences, but critics worry you could be deceived by a false image (Dokoupil, 2018).

Brud and Miquela

Brud, the proprietor of Miquela, is a tech-startup company co-founded by Trevor McFedries and Sara Decou based in Los Angeles, California. Brud self identifies as a transmedia studio that creates digital character driven story worlds. The company is made up of engineers, storytellers, and designers who share a vision to connect people globally using transformative media approaches to create a movement that creates real-world impact and encourages people to stand up for equality (Brud, 2018). According to Brud, Miquela is a robot programmed as artificial intelligence to change "the cultural fabric of the United States" and to represent a movement "leveraging cultural understanding and technology. She (it) has "personality, a moral compass, and is a benefit to society in that she influences people to practice empathy, kindness, and tolerance towards others, especially for people who are different" (Brud, 2018).

Despite Brud's claim "that technology can help bring about both a more empathetic world and a more tolerant future," (Brud, 2018) conversations about Miquela's existence have been an ongoing dispute—perhaps because Miquela's existence is centered around story that mimics human experience. For instance, Miquela experiences love and heartbreak, enjoys the outdoors, hangs out with friends, likes to take selfies, attends parties, and can drive. Her (it) posts include a mixture of fictional and non-fictional people and environments; at times Miquela portrays herself as a computer-generated character, at other times she (it) poses with real people.

For Miquela's followers, her existence is confusing with regards to her existence and purpose, and thus, controversial despite the fact that her (it) Instagram bio clearly states that she (it) is a robot. For further perspective, the authors consider comments such as: "warriorcats_I'm trying to find thE TRUTH hhh"; "iibasic_bitchii_what if lilmiquela is the girl with the brown hair"; "kylie.grayce @i_am_hawkfrost_ I got told she was a robot – foxheart"; "finstaa1100_Why. The. Hell. Are. You. A. Kinda. Doll. Thingie. ???"; "paceybaber_Bitch who the fuck are you ????????"; "lauren.lemer_Ur a robot"

Moreover, videos about Miquela on YouTube reveal similar approaches to create controversial marketing campaigns about Miquela's existence. For instance, Shane Dawson, an American YouTuber with 20 million subscribers created a video titled, Conspiracy theories & interview with Lil Miquela, published on Sep 18, 2017. Shane addresses the same questions that Instagram followers have: Who is the *real* Lil Miquela? Is Miquela really a real person pretending to be a computer-generated model? To date, the video received 7,782,803 views—a clear indication that Miquela has captivated the world with discussions of opposing views.

Why would anyone believe Miquela is real if she (it) calls herself (itself) a robot? Given that Miquela is created by 3D artists and AI programmers whose efforts are to create character models with realistic human characteristics, the authors relate this to the Uncanny Valley theory which identifies people have stronger emotional reactions and brain responses towards computer-generated characters that appear realistic and almost human, than to less human-like characters that look like cartoon characters (Schindler, Zell, Botsch, & Kissler, 2017).

The question remains: Does Brud claim that Miquela is a real girl? In February 2019, the authors of this study conducted a Google Trends analysis to learn more about the story of Miquela's popularity. On Google Trends, "numbers represent search interest relative to the highest point on the chart for a given region and time. A value of 100 is the peak popularity for the term." During April 15- April 21, 2018 a score of 100 was assigned to web searches in the United States for Lil Miquela. An extended section of a post from April 20, 2018 demonstrates how Brud utilizes deception:

If you're reading this, you are probably aware that we are in a difficult spot regarding our relationship with Miquela. We love Miquela beyond words. We recognize that right now we owe you, the fans who have supported her for the past two years, an explanation. There is nothing Miquela could do or say that would change the way we feel about her. In providing context, we do not seek to discredit Miquela or invalidate her feelings [we believe] that technology can help bring about both a more empathetic world and a more tolerant future… This introduction is long overdue and for that we apologize. Mostly, we want to apologize to our believed client and friend Miquela Sousa. The idea that we would ever do anything to deliberately deceive her is deeply disturbing to us. We have been by Miquela's side since day one. We feel confident in saying that we would not be where are without her and vice versa. When the questions of identity arose, when Miquela would ask who or what she was, we always tried to be honest and straightforward with her while also maintaining a certain degree of sensitivity. We wanted to protect her from the world's scrutiny. Miquela is new, and things that are new and different are traditionally misunderstood, met with fear and animosity. In our naivety, we presented Miquela's consciousness as being based on a real human being. Memories of family and of past were presented as figments of a human life she once knew. This person was a fabrication of our staff. We thought this imagined scenario would make Miquela feel more comfortable with herself. Clearly we were mistaken… Our clients are our family. Full-stop. We are committed to staying open to critique and now that we've said our piece we look forward to taking a backseat and doing some difficult listening. All the best and thanks for listening, - Brud Team- (Brud, 2018).

In this instance, we see firsthand the workings of misinformation in that Brud acknowledges Miquela as both a technology and yet a conscious being—animating deception in their conscious choice to refer to this technology as her and then declaring her to be a conscious and empathetic being. The letter generated 10,573 likes with comments that include: "charlee.may@mattingg_I am SO CONFUSED"; "washingtonsreserve_This is a new level of BULLSHIT"; "dayton_daily_So.... so.... Miquela is a robot?"

Furthermore, Brud claims to have been approached by a notoriously covert AI consulting firm to work on a highly advanced form of AI. In this, Brud claims to have been misled by the firm, not knowing that the AI, initially intended to be utilized to serve terminally ill children, was in fact going to be marketed to the world's elite as a sexual object. Indeed, troubled by these "sick fantasies of the 1 percent," Brud repurposed the AI technology to teach their robot how to think freely and demonstrate, "literally superhuman compassion for others" (Brud, 2018). In other words, Brud frames the development of Miquela as a noble act to counter technological corruption.

This case study proposes Lil Miquela's existence as a paradox. Miquela's creators, Brud contradict themselves in ways that intentionally, knowingly, and purposefully mislead others. According to Levine's (2014) Truth-Default Theory, deceptive messages involve intent, awareness and/or purpose to mislead. Without deceptive intention, awareness, and/or purpose to mislead, messages are considered honest communication. In TDT, honest communication does not need to involve full disclosure; however, a lie involves "outright falsehood" from the sender which is known to be false but is not communicated to the recipient. "Lies are a subtype of deception that involves deceiving through saying information known to be false. For instance, when Brud asked "Is Miquela real?" Brud's Instagram response was "As real as Rihanna." (Brud, website copy, Google Docs, 2018).

Other forms of deception include omission, evasion, equivocation, and generating false conclusions with objectively true information" (Levine, 2014, p. 381). Regardless of claims that Miquela has a moral compass, the way messages are manipulated and the way Miquela is often referred to with female connotations is perhaps part of the contradiction. Brud reveals little detail about synthetic consciousness and how to interpret Miquela's existence. The authors consider communication content and communication context (Levine, 2014) to conclude that Brud's messages include deception. Evidence reveals failure for Miquela's followers to actively consider the possibility of deceit, which aligns with TDT. For instance, after two years of Miquela's initial existence, responses from Miquela's followers remain diverse. Some question Miquela's existence; others acknowledge Miquela as a form of entertainment; and still others recognize Miquela as part of a turning point in the fashion industry: "sophiaseely7_ Just cause she is so so so pretty she can still be human"; "mntt110_ Are you a robot?"; "jaslynn__So she isn't a robot?" "90memebaby_of course she's not a robot. it's an experiment" (https://www.instagram.com/lilmiquela/?hl=en).

In essence, as it pertains to misinformation in everyday life, on social media in particular, Brud and Miquela are just the tip of the iceberg. At stake, is the need to create a critical consciousness that enables and empowers us to confront the notion that our technology can become a conscious and empathetic being through which we can satisfy our needs for belonging.

While, traditionally, companies have developed business strategies to increase consumer interest in brands, in the 21st century, businesses have moved beyond traditional media to advertise products on social media platforms to instantly connect with audiences and develop relationships with customers. For example, Brud uses cross-media characters Lil Miquela as well as additional AI technologies Blawko

and Bermuda, promoting them as distinct conscious beings that relate and interact with one another, as when Blawko and Bermuda were in an intimate relationship or when Bermuda, a Trump supporter, hacked the Instagram account of Miquela, a Black Lives Matter supporter. In essence, cross-media branding develops storytelling across multiple media platforms to enhance the user's experience and these experiences can be further enhanced through advertising across multiple platforms. For instance, one of the issues that the authors address in the future research considerations is the growing popularity of digital fashion models such as Shudu Gram.

SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the issues of online deception noted in the Lil Miquela case study, the authors recommend the importance of re/claiming critical consciousness by acknowledging four distinct but interrelated realities. First, the authors acknowledge a problem regarding the rise of addictive technology. Second, in light of this problem, the authors acknowledge various ethical implications related to our communication and sense of community—we are widely connected through our devices but overwhelmed with a sense of loneliness. Third, a charge is considered to counter the effects of the aforementioned problem and consequence. Fourth, and finally, a practice is suggested to stimulate critical consciousness regarding online deception.

Re/Claiming Critical Consciousness

Paulo Freire's notion of critical consciousness offers an important solution to confront the problem of online deception. Explicitly, Freire (2013) has noted:

If [we] are unable to perceive critically the themes of [our] time, and thus to intervene actively in reality, [we] are carried along in the wake of change. [We] see that the times are changing, but [we] are submerged in that change and so cannot discern its dramatic significance. And a society beginning to move from one epoch to another requires the development of an especially flexible, critical spirit. Lacking such a spirit, [we] cannot perceive the marked contradictions which occur in society as emerging values in search of affirmation and fulfillment clash with earlier values seeking self-preservation. (p. 6)

A critical consciousness, then, is developing the ability to critically perceive cultural themes, principally the marked contradictions that emerge from competing values, and the successive ability to intervene in such realities. In this instance, as it pertains to misinformation in everyday life, and on social media in particular, such incisive mindfulness—perceiving critically, intervening actively, and developing flexibly—is especially important for and pertinent to the varying values and communication practices of students, scholars, and professionals. Put differently, if there is any sense of urgency for those interested, if not compelled, by the issues of social media use and online deception, of not wanting to be simply carried along or rendered incapable of discerning dramatic significance, then by all means we as a society must be diligent in establishing an exceptionally flexible critical spirit and become more vigilant in ensuring that such a malleable temperament is suitably implemented in homes, classrooms, boardrooms, and beyond.

A Problem

While addictive behaviors have existed for quite a while, in recent decades, they have become, "more common, harder to resist, and more mainstream" (Alter, 2017, p. 5). One specific issue regarding online behavior is that the benefits are praised without at the same time fully considering its drawbacks. A critical consciousness is needed. Perhaps the language of addiction is not accustomed with associating behaviors like binge viewing, smartphone use, or excessive exercise alongside substance abuses. But perhaps it should be, as one clinical psychologist in Adam Alter's (2017) study indicated, "Every single person I work with has at least one behavioral addiction" (p. 6). Indeed, there are significant similarities between substance and behavioral addictions:

They activate the same brain regions, and they're fueled by some of the same basic human needs: social engagement and social support, mental stimulation, and a sense of effectiveness. Strip people of these needs and they're more likely to develop addictions to both substances and behaviors. (Alter, 2017, p. 9)

As it relates to the irresistible allure of technology, Alter (2017) has argued that the addictive dimensions of technology leave us susceptible to a variety of social disorders and psychological problems. For instance, one study on gamers recently claimed that those who spend more than three hours per day gaming are, "less satisfied with their lives, less likely to feel empathy toward other people, and less likely to know how to deal with their emotions appropriately" (Alter, 2017, p. 233). Ironically, in actuality, as one recent survey revealed, the average time kids actually spend online is closer to five to seven hours of screen time every day (Alter, 2017, p. 233). While behavioral addiction is nascent, early indications allude to crisis: "Addictive tech is part of the mainstream in a way that addictive substances never will be" (Alter, 2017, p. 9).

An Implication

One of the implications of this rise in addictive technology is an impact on communication, and subsequently on community. In particular, As Turkle has argued, it leads to expecting more from technology and less from each other. Interesting, this is not a new phenomenon. In a rather telling excerpt (given the date, October 1964) from Edward R. Murrow's final public address, he adeptly, and seemingly (in hindsight) prophetically, speaks to the challenges that technology poses to our capacity to communicate, for his time and our own:

The speed of communication is wondrous to behold. It is also true that speed can multiply the distribution of information that we know to be untrue. The most sophisticated satellite has no conscience. The newest computer can merely compound, at speed, the oldest problem in the relations between human beings. In the end the communicator will be confronted with the old problem of what to say and how to say it. (Kendrick, 1969, p. 5)

Murrow recognized both the brilliant and baffling dimensions of technology in relation to communication. And the cultural significance of these two trends is tellingly evident in both David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd* and Sherry Turkle's *Lone Together*. What we needed, Riesman (1965) argued, for

Murrow's time, is to learn to become other-directed so that we can become more attentive to our own feelings and ambitions (p. 307).

The challenge, however, as Turkle (2011a) has noted, with more contemporary relevance, is that a fully networked life no longer requires that we be logged on because the network is with us and on us, all the time—we can be with each other all the time (p. xii). Emboldening the subtitle of Turkle's book *Alone Together,* we are progressively and troublingly learning to "expect more from technology and less from each other" (p. xii). For Turkle (2011b), this occurs because the volume and velocity of technology offers us the "illusion of companionship without the demands of friendship" (p. 29). Put differently, we have become too comfortable with connection at a distance. Comparably, Clifford Nass (2012) has argued that we have been seduced into thinking that "social media obviates the need for the hard work of learning emotional behavior" (p. 20). As such, one of the challenges (if not dangers) we are confronted with as educators is how to, in Freire's language, to develop a critical consciousness, and to that end, using Turkle's book title, to reclaim conversation. And one of the central reasons it is worth reclaiming is because of the vital role it plays in the development of human empathy; something that Brud claims is at the heart (no pun intended) of Miquela. On the contrary, Turkle (2015) has reminded us that the "always-on life erodes our capacity for empathy" (p. 171). As such, we need to develop a critical communication consciousness to enhance our empathy for one another.

A Charge

At the heart of human interest in technologies, besides efficiency, is relationship. In a word: consciousness. Consciousness is principally concerned with awareness, free will, and ultimately, relationship. When individuals call upon any one of many voice-controlled assistants—Lyra, Bixby, Google Assistant, Cortana, Alexa, or Siri, for instance—the experience is mediated through language that infers, among other things, conversation—the building blocks of relationship. Given this problem and consequence, Nicholas Carr (2010) confronts us with an explicit charge. Specifically, Carr argues that our dependency on the Internet, and the socially mediated encounters therein, chips away at our capacities for concentration and contemplation (p. 6). When it comes to these two capacities, Carr's elaboration on the framework is insightful: "Once I was a scuba diver in a sea of words. Now I zip along the surface like on a Jet Ski" (Carr, 2010, p. 7).

Moreover, Carr (2010) has further acknowledged:

The seductions of technology are hard to resist, and in our age of instant information the benefits of speed and efficiency can seem unalloyed, their desirability beyond debate. But I continue to hold out hope that we won't go gently into the future our computer engineers and software programmers are scripting for us … we owe it to ourselves to consider them, to be attentive to what we stand to lose. How sad it would be, particularly when it comes to the nurturing of our children's minds, if we were to accept without question the idea that 'human elements' are outmoded and dispensable. (p. 224)

What is telling, is Carr's not-so-subtle reference to Dylan Thomas' renowned Villanelle poem, "Do Not Go Gentle into That Goodnight," whose refrains of "Do not go gentle into that good night" and "Rage, rage against the dying of the light" allude to a sort of visceral and fastidious resistance to death—inspired, most believe, by Thomas' dying father (Thomas, 1971, p. 239). Carr's re-appropriation of Thomas' plea, transposed from bodily death to confronting prominent issues in culture and society makes for a com-

pelling charge that aligns ideally with Freire's critical consciousness. Carr has provided an additional perspective to be attentive to what we stand to lose to our addictions and misuse of technology:

The changes in our brains happen automatically, outside the narrow compass of our consciousness, but that doesn't absolve us from responsibility for the choices we make. One thing that sets us apart from other animals is the command we have been granted over our attention. (Carr, 2010, p. 194)

Or as novelist David Foster Wallace (2009) has indicated:

'Learning how to think' really means learning how to exercise some control over how and what you think … it means being conscious and aware enough to choose what you pay attention to and to choose how you construct meaning from experience. (pp. 54, 123)

In sum, when we yield control of our attention to issues of online deception, we do so at our own peril.

A Practice

As we acknowledge and confront the problems related to the rise of addictive technology and the social implications therein, the authors have embraced the call to enhance our concentration and contemplation—to develop a critical consciousness that is keenly aware of trends in misinformation in everyday life. To that end, we align with Turkle's notion of reclaiming conversation. For instance, to begin, one strategy Turkle has recommended is solitude and self-reflection, something that is remarkably less striking than the seemingly endless depths of online life. Regardless, Turkle's preeminent solution is to reclaim conversation.

To be clear, one of the preeminent ways we can interrogate socially mediated deception is to develop a critical consciousness through face-to-face conversation. Indeed, while the authors are desirous of re/claiming critical consciousness through a collection of choices related to concentration, contemplation, and conversation, there is also a resistance to naïve sentimentality for bygone days. Regardless, bygone days may indeed have some lessons we can and should learn from. Interestingly, the most ardent trait Brud has assigned Miquela is empathy. Ironically, however, as Turkle (2015) has argued:

We have moved from being in a community to having a sense of community. Have we moved from empathy to a sense of empathy? From friendship to a sense of friendship? We need to pay close attention here. Artificial intelligences are being offered to us as sociable companions. They are being called a new kind of friend. If we are settling for a "sense of friendship," from people, the idea of machine companionship does not seem like much of a fall. But what is at stake is precious, the most precious things that people know how to offer each other. (p. 171)

In other words, empathy, that ability to convince another person that you are present for the duration—"staying long enough for someone to believe that you want to know how they feel" (Turkle, 2015, p. 173), is the precious entity at stake. This stands in ironic contrast to Brud's notion that Miquela's purpose is ultimately about empathy. There are two possibilities, both viable and worthy of our attention. First, the inability of individuals or communities to provide satisfying and convincing empathetic encounters

means that society has surrendered much if not most of its responsibility to technological surrogates. If this is true, it is a substantial wake up call. Second, this development has advanced in large part because of the choices we have made to renounce empathy in favor of extra screen time—pursuing our emotional needs for belonging through products and vicarious living. As Carr has reminded us, regardless, this does not absolve us from our responsibility to make critically conscious and attentive choices (Carr, 2010, p. 194). In sum, conversation cures (Turkle, 2015, p. 41). In order to recover and recuperate what we have lost, we must shamelessly promote critically conscious conversations in classrooms and boardrooms, airports and taxis, restaurants and pubs, bedtime routines and family gatherings, and beyond.

FUTURE RESEARCH CONSIDERATIONS

The authors intend this study as more than an isolated or esoteric realm of intellectual inquiry, but rather, an all important and pressing consideration for comprehending the burgeoning issues related to AI technologies and social media influencers for responding and adapting to the digital frontier of the future. This case study has focused on Lil Miquela and Brud. For future research considerations, the authors suggest two broad studies with an example for each instance. First, studies could focus on the cultural significance and developments related to AI technologies akin to Miquela. A question that remains for scholars is whether or not this phenomenon will be a transient trend or the beginning of something altogether significant for the future of our communication, identity, and technology. For instance, Shudu Gram, a computer-generated fashion model created by photographer Cameron-Games Wilson using 3D modeling software, hailed on her (its) Instagram page as, "The World's First Digital Supermodel," would be an interesting study. One social cue, for example, is found in this headline: "Shudu Gram Is A White Man's Digital Projection Of Real-Life Black Womanhood" (Jackson, 2018). Second, studies could focus more intently on Brud with consideration given to its two other AI technologies, Blawko and Bermuda. These studies could focus on Brud, broadly, or the individual influencers, more specifically. At stake, as Carr (2010) has reminded us in his ostensibly prescient vision of Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey,* is a time and place where people have become so like machines that, ironically, the most human characters turn out to be machines: "As we come to rely on computers to mediate our understanding of the world, it is our own intelligence that flattens into artificial intelligence" (p. 224).

CONCLUSION

In an effort to provide some satisfactory considerations to the growing concern regarding online misinformation in everyday life, this chapter has taken an interdisciplinary approach to the study of deception from the critical perspectives of rhetoric, communication, and media studies. Specifically, our primary objective has been to interrogate the interrelationship of communication, identity, and technology relevant to social media in order to confront online deception. Therein, we proposed a case study and critically analyzed social media sensation Miquela Sosa, also known as Lil Miquela, giving some attention to the emergence of AI technologies and social media influencers. Certainly, there is an array of intellectual and ethical considerations to consider. For all of the potential benefits that social media creation and

use may provide, there are significant costs associated with mindlessly pursuing our emotional needs through technological surrogates and misinformation, and in turn, surrendering our critical consciousness. In response, this case study has sought to provide a representative anecdote through which to extract order from the chaos. Though the authors acknowledge the idea that people manipulating information online is nothing new, regardless, the contention is that examining deliberate acts of misinformation and deception on social media is relevant at a time when AI technologies and social media influencers are coinciding with social trends in loneliness, behavioral addictions, and a substantial drop in empathy, evident in everyday relationships and countless feeds and online comment sections. At stake, beyond the study of deception and the future of a rapid and global evolution in online technologies, is our very sense of community and self.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Artificial Intelligence: The theory and development of computer systems able to perform tasks that normally require human intelligence and agency.

Critical Consciousness: The ability to critically perceive the themes of a place and time and intervene actively in reality; an especially flexible, critical spirit.

Deception: The act of intentionally, knowingly, and/or purposely misleading another person.

Empathy: The ability to understand and share the feelings of others.

Representative Anecdote: Something sufficiently demarcated in character to make analysis possible, yet sufficiently complex in character to prevent the use of too few terms in one's description.

Social Media Influencer: People who are paid to promote brands and products.

Technology: The application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes.

Chapter 7
Toward a Theoretical Model of Authentic and Fake User–Generated Online Reviews

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ABSTRACT

As consumers increasingly rely on user-generated online reviews to make purchase decisions, the prevalence of fake entries camouflaged among authentic ones has become a growing concern. On the scholarly front, this has given rise to two disparate research strands. The first focuses on ways to distinguish between authentic and fake reviews but ignores consumers' perceptions. The second deals with consumers' perceptions of reviews without delving into their ability to discern review authenticity in the first place. As a result of the fragmented literature, what has eluded scholarly attention is the extent to which consumers are able to perceive actual differences between authentic and fake reviews. To this end, the chapter highlights the theoretical value of weaving the two research strands together. With the aim to contribute to the theoretical discussion surrounding the problem, it specifically develops what is referred as the Theoretical model of Authentic and Fake reviews (the TAF). New research directions are identified based on the TAF.

INTRODUCTION

Background

User-generated online reviews are heavily read by consumers to make purchase decisions. Thought to be unbiased accounts of actual post-purchase experiences, reviews are often seen as being highly authentic and trustworthy (Ott et al., 2011). However, the authenticity of reviews cannot be taken for granted. Their disembodied nature allows anyone with Internet access to post fake reviews easily without entering into any sales transactions (Singh et al., 2018). In fact, fake reviews have recently been shown to outnumber authentic ones. Specifically for electronics, as much as 61% of all reviews could be fake (Sterling, 2018).

Increasingly, websites such as Amazon and Expedia only allow individuals who have completed an actual transaction to post reviews. However, in the absence of user authentication on websites such as TripAdvisor, the authenticity of reviews remains a nagging question. Moreover, given that fake reviews are deliberately written to appear authentic, it is tough for consumers to distinguish between the two. When consumers overlook authentic reviews and follow those that are fake, they make sub-par purchase decisions that in turn unfairly affect the fate of businesses. This not only makes the relationship between consumers and businesses untenable but also diminishes the worth of user-generated content in general (Pal & Chua, 2016; Pal et al., 2017; Singh et al., 2018; Thomas & Elias, 2017).

The Missing Link in the Literature

The growing popularity of reviews—some authentic, others fake—coupled with consumers' increasing proclivity to trust them have given rise to two disparate research strands. The first focuses on ways to distinguish between authentic and fake reviews (e.g., Harris, 2012). With a technical orientation, studies related to this strand are generally conducted by computer scientists using techniques such as machine learning (e.g., Ott et al., 2011). However, the consumer behavior perspective remains largely ignored.

The second research strand deals with consumers' perceptions of reviews (e.g., Gupta & Harris, 2010). Usually undertaken by management scholars with a socio-psychological orientation, works related to this strand are characterized by user studies (e.g., Casaló et al., 2011). However, reviews shown to participants of the user studies were often implicitly assumed to be authentic.

Interestingly, little scholarly efforts have been invested hitherto in uniting the two research strands. As a result, the literature on authentic and fake reviews remains fragmented. The piecemeal scholarship begs the question: What theoretical lenses can be used to holistically study differences—encompassing both actual and perceived—between authentic and fake reviews? It appears that the question can be tackled effectively only by dovetailing the two research strands.

Objective and Significance

To bridge the chasm between the two research strands, this paper builds on existing theories to develop what is referred as the Theoretical model of Authentic and Fake online reviews (henceforth, the TAF, pronounced "tough"). As a theoretical model (Heller & Campbell, 1981), the TAF synthesizes a set of inter-related and seminal theories on information authenticity that inform not only how authentic reviews could differ from fake ones but also the ways in which consumers might process such entries.

At its crux, the TAF relies on textual content of reviews to distinguish between authentic and fake entries. This is because textual descriptions of real experiences have long been found to be linguistically different from those concocted out of imagination (Johnson & Raye, 1981; Ott et al., 2011; Vrij et al., 2000). Textual content is commonly used as the first port of call to sieve fake entries from authentic ones (Heydari et al., 2015). Therefore, the TAF theorizes how linguistic differences between authentic and fake reviews could be related to consumers' perceived review authenticity. It also presents new research directions for interested scholars.

This chapter is significant on two fronts. First, the TAF's reliance on existing seminal theories offers interesting lenses to understand the research theme of authentic and fake reviews. Additionally, it serves as a springboard to develop new research ideas. Second, this paper strives to forge a link between two disparate research strands explored in two different disciplines. Calling for more inter-disciplinary research, it illustrates the possibility to employ methods used by computer scientists in conjunction with those used by management scholars.

The rest of the chapter proceeds as follows: The next section explains the theoretical foundation of the TAF. This is followed by the development of the TAF from its theoretical foundation. The TAF-based research directions are presented next. The chapter concludes with notes on its contributions.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION OF THE TAF

For the purpose of robustness, the TAF builds on existing theories on information authenticity. This called for identifying theories that could underpin the TAF. For this purpose, prior works that relied on theories to examine information authenticity were extensively reviewed. They were found to straddle across a variety of contexts ranging from businesses' financial disclosures (e.g., Humphreys et al., 2011), crime settings (e.g., Fuller et al., 2011, 2015), and face-to-face interviews (e.g., Burgoon & Qin, 2006) to e-commerce websites (e.g., Grazioli, 2004; Xiao & Benbasat, 2011), online dyads (e.g., Zhou et al., 2004), and phishing emails (e.g., Vishwanath et al., 2011).

Informed by these works, 10 inter-related theories could be identified (Table 1): the four factor theory (Zuckerman & Driver, 1985), the information manipulation theory (McCornack, 1992), the leakage theory (Ekman & Friesen, 1969), the reality monitoring theory (Johnson & Raye, 1981), the self-presentational theory (DePaulo et al., 2003), the deception detection theory (Johnson et al., 2001), the dual process theory (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955), the prominence-interpretation theory (Fogg, 2003), the signal detection theory (Davies & Parasuram, 1982), and the truth bias theory (Vrij & Baxter, 1999). The first five theories deal with linguistic differences between authentic and fake information. The rest shed light on human perceptions of authentic and fake information. Collectively, the theories form a robust conceptual glue to weld the TAF.

In the course of reviewing prior works that relied on theories to examine information authenticity (Humphreys et al., 2011; Zhou et al., 2004), this research also identified other theories such as the inter-personal deception theory, and the management obfuscation theory. While the former explains deception in interpersonal communication that offers scope for adaptation and feedback, the latter deals with deception in business annual reports that are generally dominated by numbers and charts. Such theories were not included in building the TAF because they do not pertain to online reviews, which neither foster interpersonal communication nor are cluttered with numerical figures.

Table 1. Summary of the theories that underpin the TAF

	Theories	Descriptions
Actual differences between authentic and fake reviews	Four factor theory	Four factors—attempted control, arousal, affect and cognition—influence the behavior of individuals writing fake messages. Attempted control refers to strategies employed to prevent fake messages from being detected. Arousal refers to the extent to which the individuals feel stimulated while writing fake messages. Affect refers to emotions of anxiety or delight that individuals might feel in doing the task. Cognition refers to the elevated cognitive load borne by individuals writing fake messages (Zuckerman & Driver, 1985).
	Information manipulation theory	Authentic messages differ from fake ones based on quantity, quality, relation and manner. Quantity refers to the amount of information conveyed through a message. Quality relates to the extent of its details. Relation is a measure of its relevance. Manner indicates its clarity (McCornack, 1992).
	Leakage theory	Unintentional behavioral cues that leak out due to negligence of individuals engaged in fictitious behavior are useful to distinguish between authentic and fake messages (Ekman & Friesen, 1969).
	Reality monitoring theory	Authentic messages differ from fake ones based on the use of perceptual details, contextual details, and cognition indicators. Perceptual details refer to words related to sensory perceptions. Contextual details indicate references to space and time. Cognition indicators include words that indicate the degree of psychical processing. (Johnson & Raye, 1981).
	Self-presentational theory	The extent to which individuals writing authentic messages self-present is different from that of individuals writing fake messages. By attempting to mimic authentic information, individuals involved in fictitious behavior can inadvertently overdo rhetorical strategies to convey fake information (DePaulo et al., 2003).
Perceived differences between authentic and fake reviews	Deception detection theory	Humans can detect deception by following four sub-processes: activation, hypothesis generation, hypothesis evaluation, and global assessment. Activation involves paying attention to deception cues in messages by noting discrepancies between what is observed, and what is expected. Hypothesis generation involves forming explanations for the discrepancies. Hypothesis evaluation involves determining the acceptability of the generated hypotheses. Global assessment involves final decision-making with respect to the authenticity of messages (Johnson et al., 2001).
	Dual process theory	There are two alternative information-processing approaches. One approach relies on informational influence whereby humans expend substantial cognitive efforts to process messages, build perceptions, and make decisions about authenticity. The other approach relies on normative influence whereby humans process messages based on norms, and rely on mental short-cuts to make decisions about authenticity (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955).
	Prominence-interpretation theory	Humans' assessment of information authenticity on the Internet is a product of prominence and interpretation. Prominence refers to the likelihood that a deception cue is perceived. Interpretation refers to a human's judgment about the cue perceived in the information (Fogg, 2003).
	Signal detection theory	To assess authenticity, humans need to expend substantial cognitive efforts to distinguish between detectable signals and background noises. Noise refers to the background while signal refers to a cue for deception detection (Davies & Parasuram, 1982).
	Truth bias theory	Humans are generally sub-par in detecting deception because they are inherently inclined to deem most information as being authentic (Vrij & Baxter, 1999).

FROM THE THEORETICAL FOUNDATION TO THE TAF

Actual Differences Between Authentic and Fake Reviews

The ways in which the TAF distils the essence of the four-factor theory, the information manipulation theory, the leakage theory, the reality monitoring theory, and the self-presentational theory to theorize actual differences between authentic and fake reviews are explained as follows. The four-factor theory identifies four factors—attempted control, arousal, affect and cognition—that could influence the behavior of individuals writing fake messages (Zuckerman & Driver, 1985). Attempts to control behavior for avoiding detection coupled with the high need for cognition in the task could make them speculative, thereby enticing them to write fake reviews that are tentative. Moreover, arousal and affect among the individuals might enthuse them to use over-the-top superlatives, thereby making fake reviews exaggerated. Therefore, the linguistic cues of tentativeness and exaggeration could help ascertain review authenticity.

The information manipulation theory expects authentic reviews to differ from fake ones based on amount of information, extent of details, relevance, and writing style (McCornack, 1992). Amount of information and writing style determine the extent to which reviews are easy to comprehend. Moreover, extent of details and relevance of reviews have implications for the extent to which they are rich in specific details. Therefore, the linguistic cues of comprehensibility and specificity could help ascertain review authenticity.

The leakage theory posits that authentic reviews will differ from fake ones because the latter is written by inadvertently leaking out clues for deception detection (Ekman & Friesen, 1969). On the one hand, if individuals writing fakes reviews do not perform the task sincerely, they might create texts without striving to resemble authentic ones. This in turn could make fake reviews tentative with limited specificity. On the other hand, if the individuals are conscientious in the task, they could inadvertently exaggerate to prove their imaginary viewpoints. Therefore, the leakage theory supports the premise that tentativeness, specificity and exaggeration could help ascertain review authenticity.

The reality monitoring theory expects authentic reviews to differ from fake ones in terms of perceptual details, contextual details, and indicators of cognition (Johnson & Raye, 1981). Perceptual and contextual details in reviews elevate their specificity whereas indicators of cognition in reviews enhance their tentativeness. Therefore, the reality monitoring theory supports the premise that specificity and tentativeness could help ascertain review authenticity.

The self-presentational theory expects fake reviews to be more clinical yet tentative compared with authentic ones (DePaulo et al., 2003). Fake reviews could be clinically written by filling them with concocted specificity, and making them easy to comprehend. They could also sound tentative. Therefore, the self-presentational theory further lends support to the premise that specificity, comprehensibility and tentativeness could help ascertain review authenticity.

Perceived Differences Between Authentic and Fake Reviews

The ways in which the TAF distils the essence of the deception detection theory, the dual process theory, the prominence-interpretation theory, the signal detection theory, and the truth bias theory to theorize perceived differences between authentic and fake reviews are explained as follows. The deception detection theory suggests that for humans to discern review authenticity, they need to pay attention to the cues available in reviews (Johnson et al., 2001). Meanwhile, as discussed above, there are at least four linguistic cues—comprehensibility, exaggeration, specificity and tentativeness—that could help predict review authenticity. If consumers perceive these cues, they stand a good chance to distinguish between authentic and fake reviews. Therefore, humans' perceived linguistic cues could be related to perceived authenticity. However, the relation might not hold if humans do not pay attention to the linguistic cues.

The dual process theory suggests that humans could choose to process reviews using either substantial cognitive efforts or mental short-cuts (Chaiken, 1980; Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). If they process reviews carefully using substantial cognitive efforts and refrain from using mental short-cuts, they might have ample opportunities to perceive linguistic nuances in reviews (Sperber et al., 2010). This in turn could inform their perception of review authenticity. Therefore, the dual process theory supports the premise that human perceived linguistic cues could be related to perceived authenticity. However, the relation might not hold if humans rely on mental short-cuts.

The prominence-interpretation theory suggests that perceived authenticity of reviews is a function of the likelihood that humans will not only identify the linguistic cues in the entries but also consider them to be important for their decision-making (Fogg, 2003). In other words, to discern review authenticity, humans need to follow two steps. In the first step, they need to identify the deception cues. Thereafter, they need to utilize the cues to inform their decision-making. If these steps are followed, humans stand a good chance to discern review authenticity. Therefore, the prominence-interpretation theory supports the premise that human perceived linguistic cues could be related to perceived authenticity. However, the relation might not hold if they refrain from following the two steps identified by the theory.

The signal detection theory, similar to the dual process theory, suggests that humans need to expend substantial cognitive efforts to identify linguistic cues in order to distinguish between authentic and fake reviews (Davies & Parasuram, 1982). Therefore, it further lends support to the premise that human perceived linguistic cues could be related to perceived authenticity. However, the relation might not hold if they do not expend substantial cognitive efforts to identify the cues.

The truth bias theory complements the above four almost mutually-reinforcing theories by offering a possible explanation why human perceived linguistic cues might not be related to perceived authenticity. It suggests that humans are inherently inclined to deem most reviews as being authentic due to truth bias—the default belief that all information is true (Vrij & Baxter, 1999). Nonetheless, the extent to which they are susceptible to truth bias could stem from individual traits such as knowledge acumen and contextual idiosyncrasies such as alignment of the information with expectation. For one, people who believe that knowledge can be acquired easily can be more susceptible to truth bias than those who appreciate the difficulty in knowledge acquisition (Bråten et al., 2005; Kammerer et al., 2013). Again, susceptibility to truth bias is particularly high when information confirms people's expectation than when it contradicts (Papathanassis & Knolle, 2011; Xia & Bechwati, 2008).

Summary of the TAF

Synthesizing the 10 underpinning theories, the TAF identifies at least four linguistic cues to ascertain review authenticity: comprehensibility, exaggeration, specificity and tentativeness. It further argues that humans' perception of the same four linguistic cues could be related to perceived review authenticity albeit differently based on individual traits and contextual idiosyncrasies. The TAF is pictorially depicted in Figure 1.

THE TAF-BASED RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The TAF serves as a springboard to identify three major research directions. The first deals with the actual differences between authentic and fake reviews in terms of linguistic cues. The second deals with the relationship between consumers' perceived linguistic cues and perceived review authenticity. The third deals with the role of knowledge acumen and expectation in shaping the relationship between consumers' perceived linguistic cues and their ability to discern review authenticity. These are presented below in the form of three specific research questions.

Research Question 1: How are authentic reviews linguistically different from fake entries?

Figure 1. The TAF
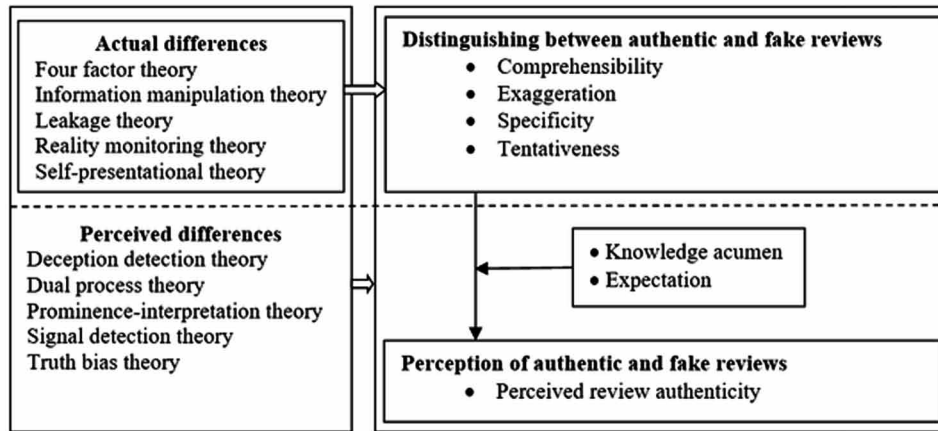
The TAF argues that authentic and fake reviews could differ from each other in terms of at least four linguistic cues: comprehensibility, exaggeration, specificity and tentativeness. Comprehensibility refers to the extent to which reviews are easy to understand (Ghose & Ipeirotis, 2011). With respect to comprehensibility, there are two contradictory views. The first holds that authentic reviews could be less comprehensible than fake ones. This is because writing fictitious accounts is cognitively more challenging than articulating authentic experiences (Johnson & Raye, 1981; Newman et al., 2003). Individuals performing a writing task with a high cognitive load tend to write more lucid language than those doing the task with a low cognitive load (Burgoon & Qin, 2006). This in turn might render fake reviews more comprehensible than authentic ones.

The second view suggests that fake reviews could be less comprehensible than authentic ones. Since simplistic reviews are often perceived as being less credible by the online community (Ghose & Ipeirotis, 2011), fake reviews could be deliberately written using complex and grandiloquent language (Yoo & Gretzel, 2009). This in turn could hinder their comprehensibility. Given the lack of consensus, it could be interesting to investigate differences in the comprehensibility of authentic and fake reviews.

Exaggeration encompasses writing styles that are used in reviews to convey opinions convincingly (Ahmad & Sun, 2018). It is generally assumed that authentic reviews could resemble innocuous opinion-sharing entries written without the intention to prove any point. On the other hand, fake reviews could resemble exaggerated attention-seeking entries that are meant to convince (Maurer & Schaich, 2011). Conceivably, fake reviews are expected to be more exaggerated than authentic ones.

Interestingly however, recent literature finds evidence of spammers increasingly getting smarter to blur the lines between authentic and fake reviews (Banerjee & Chua, 2014). They might deviate from orthodox strategies (Godin, 2005). To deliberately mimic authentic entries, fake reviews might not be overly exaggerated. Therefore, to catch up with the growing skills of spammers, it is pertinent for the scholarly community to analyze the extent of exaggeration in authentic and fake reviews.

Specificity refers to the degree of specific details indicated in reviews (Bond & DePaulo, 2006). Based on specificity, two competing views exist. The first view holds that authentic reviews based on real experiences could be more specific compared with fake ones that are hinged on imagination (Ott et al., 2011). After all, writing fake reviews require describing events that did not occur or expressing

110

attitudes that did not exist (Friedman & Tucker, 1990; Newman et al., 2003). As a result, they might be found wanting in terms of specificity.

The second view suggests that fake reviews could be more specific than authentic ones. Since they are written based on imagination, the lack of experience could be deliberately balanced through the overuse of concocted specificity (Hancock et al., 2008). Given the antagonistic possibilities, it is interesting to examine differences in the specificity of authentic and fake reviews.

Tentativeness refers to the extent to which a message gives the impression that it has been written with hesitation (Ekman & Friesen, 1969; Latta & Buck, 2008). Prior research suggests that fake reviews could be richer in tentativeness compared with the authentic counterpart. This is because individuals engaged in fictitious behavior generally get aroused both physiologically and psychologically, which is difficult to be masked (Zuckerman et al., 1981). They might feel the pangs of conscience for using underhanded tactics, or for having their credibility questioned (Vartapetiance & Gillam, 2012). This might result in leakage of tentativeness in fake reviews.

However, if spammers get increasingly adept, they might not necessarily feel guilty while writing fake reviews. Rather, they could be enthused by the opportunity of misleading others so easily. This creates an interesting context to disinter the level of tentativeness in authentic and fake reviews.

Research Question 2: How are consumers' perceptions of linguistic cues related to their ability to discern review authenticity?

Consumers' potential to discern review authenticity offers an interesting conundrum. On the one hand, human ability to distinguish between truth and fiction is long known to be sub-par (Vrij & Baxter, 1999). Individuals perform at chance in distinguishing between authentic and fake information (Bond & DePaulo, 2006). This is largely attributed to their truth bias—the default tendency to deem most information as being true (Vrij, 2008; Vrij & Baxter, 1999). Hence, it would seem that consumers would ascertain most reviews as being authentic without carefully paying attention to linguistic nuances in the entries. If so, they might judge authentic reviews correctly more often than accurately identifying fake entries.

On the other hand, another strand of the literature suggests that it is possible to reduce individuals' inherent truth bias (Blair et al., 2010; Levine et al., 2010; Schindler & Reinhard, 2015). In fact, such studies indicate that truth bias could occasionally be tipped in favor of a bias toward fiction, whereby individuals would deem most information as being false. Extrapolating this in the context of reviews, it would seem that overly skeptical consumers might judge most reviews as being fake. As a result, they might judge fake reviews correctly more often than accurately identifying authentic entries.

Informed by the recent literature, it appears that consumers' truth bias does not necessarily always impede their ability to distinguish between authentic and fake reviews. Rather, it would seem that if consumers are attentive to linguistic nuances in reviews, they might stand a good chance to discern review authenticity. After all, authentic and fake reviews are supposed to differ linguistically in terms of comprehensibility, exaggeration, specificity and tentativeness.

Therefore, consumers could rely on the perceived comprehensibility of the entries to judge their authenticity (Schrank et al., 2010). Incomprehensible reviews are unlikely to be perceived as being authentic. Likewise, if reviews are perceived to be rich in specific details, they could inspire confidence (Papathanassis & Knolle, 2011). In contrast, exaggerated reviews could impede perceived authenticity because such entries often paint an overly unrealistic picture (Connors et al., 2011). Similarly, if reviews are perceived to contain leakages of tentativeness, they might deter consumers' perception of authentic-

ity (Porter et al., 2012). If consumers perceive nuances in comprehensibility, exaggeration, specificity and tentativeness in reviews, they might well manage to distinguish between authentic and fake reviews.

Research along this trajectory could result in a few possibilities. An optimistic possibility is that authentic reviews might emerge as being more comprehensible, more specific, less exaggerated, and less fraught with tentativeness compared with fake reviews. At the same time, if consumers are found willing to trust reviews that are comprehensible and specific but lack exaggeration and tentativeness, they might stand a chance to discern review authenticity with reasonable accuracy. Other less hunky-dory possibilities might reveal that actual differences between authentic and fake reviews contradict the ways consumers expect them to differ. Such findings could offer nuanced insights into consumers' pitfalls in discerning review authenticity. Hence, scholarly inquiry into this research theme might illuminate the understanding of consumers' perception of authentic and fake reviews in ways that are largely unknown hitherto.

Research Question 3: To what extent do knowledge acumen and expectation moderate the relationship between consumers' perceived linguistic cues and their ability to discern review authenticity?

Knowledge acumen refers to consumers' epistemic perceptions about the nature of knowledge and the process of knowing (Hofer & Pintrich, 1997). Research on the role of knowledge acumen on perceptions of user-generated content is in its infancy. Nonetheless, there is growing evidence that consumers' knowledge acumen could shape their ability to discern information authenticity (Chua & Banerjee, 2017; Mason & Ariasi, 2010). Specifically, epistemologically naïve individuals—who consider knowledge to be relatively certain, simple, obtained from external authorities, and assessed through observation—tend to underestimate the challenges involved in evaluating the authenticity of information compared with those with relatively robust epistemic perceptions (Bråten et al., 2005).

Drawing from such studies, it would seem that epistemologically naïve consumers could depreciate the challenges involved in assessing the authenticity of reviews. On the other hand, epistemologically robust consumers could be cautious in evaluating the authenticity of reviews, which in turn, might help them discern the linguistic nuances of the entries (Bråten et al., 2005; Kammerer et al., 2013). As a result, the latter might better distinguish between authentic and fake reviews compared with the former. Stated otherwise, knowledge acumen might moderate the relationship between consumers' perceived linguistic cues and perceived review authenticity.

A similar moderating effect could be exerted by expectation. Consumers often use the heuristic of expectation to determine the extent of attention they would pay to the linguistic cues in reviews (Darley & Gross, 1983; Lang, 2000; Papathanassis & Knolle, 2011). For instance, consumers could have high (low) expectation from products and services of relatively well-reputed (ill-reputed) brands. Such a prior expectation could serve as an anchoring effect to make them biased toward praises and criticisms in reviews (Darley & Gross, 1983; Metzger et al., 2010).

For well-reputed brands that are expected to offer high quality products and services, consumers might be willing to trust reviews that contain praises and distrust those that include criticisms without paying much attention to the textual content of the entries. Likewise, for ill-reputed brands that have a track record of offering sub-par products and services, consumers might be willing to trust reviews that contain criticisms and distrust those that include praises. Conceivably, if consumers pay little attention to the textual content of reviews, they would not be able to perceive nuances in linguistic cues of the entries. As a result, they might fail to discern review authenticity.

However, consumers might be on their toes while reading reviews that contain a mixture of praises and criticisms, as well as reviews for lesser known brands that are not associated with either superior or inferior a priori reputation. After all, such entries are neither too consistent nor too contradictory to expectation. Under such circumstances, consumers might be more attentive to linguistic nuances. This in turn could help them distinguish between authentic and fake reviews. Hence, it could be interesting to study the role of expectation in shaping consumers' ability to discern review authenticity. Another possible extension of this line of research would involve examining the interplay of knowledge acumen and expectation in the context of review authenticity.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has developed the TAF, which identified four linguistic cues—comprehensibility, exaggeration, specificity and tentativeness—to distinguish between authentic and fake reviews. The TAF further argued that if consumers are vigilant while reading reviews, they could perceive such linguistic nuances. This in turn might inform their ability to discern review authenticity. Inspired by the TAF, the paper has identified new research directions for interested scholars. The contradictory and fragmented nature of the literature pertaining to each of them has also been highlighted.

The contribution of this conceptual chapter is three-fold. First, by developing the TAF, it contributes to the theoretical discussion surrounding the problem of authentic and fake reviews. This is a significant contribution because developing theories is the jewel in the crown of scholarly efforts (Eisenhardt, 1989). Despite several somewhat atheoretical empirical works done to tackle the problem (e.g., Harris, 2012; Ott et al., 2011), this paper represents one of the earliest steps toward distilling the essence of existing seminal theories on information authenticity in a coherent and parsimonious format to theorize differences—encompassing both actual and perceived—between authentic and fake reviews.

With this theoretical advancement, the paper also invites future studies to refine and extend the boundaries of the TAF. This is especially important because spammers will eventually devise new strategies to write fake reviews. Consumers' perceptions for reviews might also evolve in unforeseeable ways. Hence, the TAF lays the foundation to uncover even more linguistic cues to distinguish between authentic and fake reviews, and even more possible ways consumers' perception of the two might differ.

Second, this paper forges a bridge between two disparate research strands explored by scholars from two different disciplines. Studies on distinguishing between authentic and fake reviews are mostly conducted by computer scientists from a technical perspective. Conversely, studies on consumers' perceptions are mostly conducted with a socio-psychological orientation by management scholars. In contrast, this paper envisioned the two existing bodies of works as mosaic pieces that could synergize into a more effective way to tackle the research theme of online review authenticity. It presents a possibility to create a fertile disciplinary intersection because an empirical investigation of the TAF would call for the joint expertise of both computer scientists and management scholars.

Third, scholarly inquiry along the research track laid by the TAF could offer useful insights to practitioners. For one, consumers could become better in distinguishing between authentic and fake reviews.

They could understand some of their pitfalls in decision making with respect to factors such as knowledge acumen and expectation. Businesses could leverage on the empirical investigation of the TAF to help sieve out noise while harvesting information from social media. Moderators of review websites could lean on the TAF to recommend reviews that are potentially authentic, and dust off suspicious ones. The findings from the TAF would be insightful to industrial bodies such as the Word of Mouth Marketing Association. Thus, this paper not only represents a significant scholarly endeavor but also hopes to offer implications for practice in the long run.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Authenticity: The extent to which something is genuine or real.
Deception: The practice of misrepresenting the reality.
Deception Detection: Identification of somebody's attempt to misrepresent the reality.
Online Review: Post-purchase experience of products or services conveyed by customers using platforms such as Amazon or TripAdvisor.

Opinion Spam: Fictitious views about something intended to deceive recipients.

Social Media: A subset of new media that allows people to exchange user-generated content.

User-Generated Content: Anything that people create online using social media applications, and can be accessed by others in the online community.

Section 2

Fake News and Misleading Reports

Chapter 8

The Fundamental Roles of Technology in the Spread of Fake News

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ABSTRACT

Following the 2016 United States Presidential Election, fake news has been the subject of much discussion, research and, ironically, news. This chapter examines how technology enables the creation and spread of fake news stories through the democratization of creation tools, by exploiting the increasing difficulty of discerning between amateur and professional content through digital publication, and, arguably most significantly, through the indiscriminate curation of content through algorithms. These three technological factors together have exponentially compounded the spread of fake news by enabling creators with new opportunities for profit and influence and weakening readers' ability to effectively assess the value of the content they consume or share.

INTRODUCTION

Following the 2016 United States presidential election, fake news has been the subject of much discussion, research and, ironically, news. While scholars, pundits, and the public have held much discussion and debate over the practical impacts fake news has had on world events, including the 2016 election, few will deny that technology has been pivotal in the ability of fake news to reach an expansive audience. This chapter aims to provide an in-depth analysis of how new technologies have enabled fake news creators to find unexpected levels of success by creating new mediums for publishing, exploiting biases and other weaknesses of modern readers and viewers, and weakening our ability to discern between what is real, presented in good faith and what is made with the intent to deceive and manipulate.

BACKGROUND

The term "fake news" is simple, ineloquent, and sometimes malleable in its various interpretations. Often, individuals or organization might adjust its meaning to suit their needs during a given moment—as a short phrase for indicating discontent with the quality of a journalist or a news outlet, for example. The concept is not necessarily new, and for many the phrase has become a catchall for media criticism that some would categorize as filtering, bias, or propaganda. Prior to 2016, the phrase was most frequently used to describe satirical news, such as that from American comedy programs like *The Colbert Report* and publications like *The Onion*.

In his review of published books on fake news and the concept of "post-truth," Corner offered this succinct yet powerful explanation (2017):

A change does indeed seem to be occurring but the more tightly that the focus is placed on the political sphere, perhaps the less the sense of shock that should be delivered by the phrase given the long and amply documented history of strategic deception here. 'Fake news,' however, seems a snappy identifier of a kind of a fraudulent media product. (p. 1100)

The adoption of the term in our common vernacular comes in tandem with the incursion of false information into our news feeds and search engine results as malevolent content creators use new technologies to assist in the diffusion of misleading news content for profit and influence. These motivations are not unique to the modern, digital communication era. What is new are many of the technologies bolstering these efforts and enabling innovative and effective tactics while simultaneously creating new challenges for readers who are often ill-equipped or unmotivated to navigate a new media paradigm where digital content is produced at a break-neck pace to gather as many clicks and ad views as possible.

MAIN FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter will examine how technology enables the creation and spread of fake news stories through the democratization of creation tools, by exploiting the increasing difficulty of discerning between amateur and professional content through digital publication, and, arguably most significantly, through the indiscriminate curation of content through algorithms. These three technological factors together have exponentially compounded the spread of fake news by enabling creators with new opportunities for profit and influence and weakening the reader's ability to adequately assess the value and integrity of the content they consume and/or share.

This chapter will provide specific examples of how technology directly or indirectly affected the spread of fake news stories. The analysis shows that often these effects are secondary and unintended within social media and online publishing. Fake news is a side effect of the relatively rapid implementation of new media platforms online, the use of new and unregulated tools for targeted content dissemination and monetization through advertising, and the public's embrace of digital content consumption and creation.

For the purposes of this chapter, let us use the phrase "fake news" as partially defined by Allcott and Gentzkow (2017). The authors defined fake news as "news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false, and could mislead readers" (p. 313). Arguably, the term should also include not just written

articles, but all forms of news content, including audio, video, and still images—all three of which are increasingly becoming popular means of conveying news online in quick-to-consume, sometimes very engaging formats.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Because of the prominence of fake news-related topics in the current public discourse and widespread concerns for their effects on world events, there has been a recent surge in published research related to the subject, including the aforementioned research by Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) regarding fake news and social media in the 2016 United States Presidential Election. The authors did not provide an assessment of whether or not fake news created an impact on the results of the vote; however, they do show that fake news stories were particularly widespread during this period, with the average American adult encountering and (crucially) remembering at least one fake news story, which was more likely to feature information in support of Trump rather than Clinton.

Riggins, Klein, and Wueller (2017) explored the subject from a legal perspective. Riggins (2017) argued that regulations tackling the creation of fake news for commercial or political gain (as is seemingly the most common intent behind its creation) are not an effective method for addressing the issue, and in fact would likely clash and fail against First Amendment protections. Riggins also maintained that the Federal Trade Commission should hold content creators responsible for disseminating intentionally misleading news and proposes an "intent-based test regulating speech that (1) mimics journalistic content (2) in an intentionally misleading way (3) for the purpose of generating advertising revenue" (p. 1315). Klein and Wueller (2017) offered some insight on potential legal actions against fake news publishers as well as some protections enjoyed by those same publishers under U.S. law. These include the use of notices and disclaimers, copyright protection, website terms and conditions and privacy policies, and media liability insurance.

Fake news is not exclusive to the United States. Khaldarova and Pantti (2016) examined how authoritarian governments can strategically utilize fake news via state-run media to influence the public narrative around national and worldwide events, specifically in the case of Russia's efforts to distort information related to the Ukrainian crisis and Russia's military invasion of this neighboring country using the Russian state-operated television network Channel 1. Khaldarova and Pantti also highlighted how the Internet has enabled counter-narrative efforts—in this case from individuals and NGOs—and how these counter-efforts have proven to be effective at instilling skepticism among Twitter users (2016). Balmas (2014), working from survey data from the 2006 Israeli legislative elections, examined how fake news—specifically political satire created with the intent to mislead—affected readers and viewers, creating feelings of inefficacy, alienation, and cynicism regarding the election process and results. Balmas found that those who frequently consumed fake news and infrequently consumed "hard" or traditional news were more likely to perceive fake news as truthful compared to those that observed a more balanced regimen of traditional news and satire

A few scholars in this relatively early period of fake news research offer actionable strategies for countering fake news. Researchers identify a variety of best options, signifying variance in scholarly opinions on the root causes of human susceptibility to fake news and misinformation. For example, Paul (2017)

argued that better education on research practices themselves, particularly at the university level, may be our best hope at providing the skills needed to accurately assess the value and veracity of information.

I am arguing that our university students—the leaders and stewards of tomorrow—need a good dose of the challenges and constraints of knowledge generation. This entails, at least, an understanding of the procedures used to discover/uncover knowledge as well as a familiarity with the limitations of those methods. (p. 5)

Essentially, Paul argued that too many individuals lack the skills in and awareness of knowledge generation processes to accurately identify fake news. Burkhardt (2017) posited a similar solution from her position as an educator: "It is essential to teach ourselves and our students and patrons to be critical consumers of news" (p. 4). Burkhardt contended that the burden for identifying and protecting against fake news rests on the individual reader, who must be willing to educate themselves in a new era of spreadability through technology.

Other researchers have studied how technology can assist with the challenge of identifying and filtering intentionally false information. Researchers from the University of Maryland developed a system intended to help detect fake news automatically on Twitter. They analyzed massive amounts of data from two Twitter content datasets. Using existing, independently verified accurate and deceptive stories, their model classifies whether a conversation thread on Twitter is likely classifiable as accurate or inaccurate. Their model correctly classified two-thirds of the falsified Twitter information presented to it (Buntain & Golbeck, 2017). Gilda (2017) from the Pune Institute of Computer Technology in Pune, India, achieved similar success utilizing machine learning to detect misleading news stories. Gilda applied a data set of confirmed true and false news stories against several classification algorithms and found that all models were able to accurately classify non-credible content in 77.2 percent of cases.

According to data from Google Trends, the term "fake news" quickly gained notoriety in 2016 after the United States Presidential Election. Interest peaked in the weeks immediately after the election results and periodically throughout 2017 and 2018 as the subject continued to enter common public discourse following political events and revelations concerning ongoing investigations related to Russian influence over the 2016 election (Google Trends, 2018). Many researchers and journalists immediately began conducting studies and polls in an effort to gauge the reach and potential influence of these stories, the motivators behind their creation as well as what characteristics contribute to the believability of the stories and, simultaneously, the susceptibility of the readers to be manipulated by the false information. An analysis by BuzzFeed News (2017) found that the top 20 fake election-related news stories during the final stretch of the election cycle generated significantly more traffic than the 20 most-read election stories from 19 of the top traditional media outlets. Their analysis calculated more than 1.5 million Facebook engagements among a set of analyzed fake election news stories. Also, readership grew for fake election news stories throughout 2016, while Facebook engagements for election stories from mainstream news sites decreased (Silverman, 2017). This indicates either that readers were becoming more attracted to the fake news stories or that the content creators were becoming more sophisticated in crafting the types of fake articles most likely to be consumed.

A 2018 published study conducted by MIT researchers provides similar results. The research codifies approximately 126,000 stories shared on Twitter between 2006 and 2017 (not limited to the highly topical 2016 presidential election) and highlighted an unsettling discovery. Falsehood diffused significantly farther, faster, deeper, and more broadly than the truth in all categories of information, and the effects

were more pronounced for false political news than for false news about terrorism, natural disasters, science, urban legends, or financial information (Vosoughi, Roy, & Aral, 2018, p. 1146). Fake news travels faster and farther than the truth. Vosoughi, Roy, and Aral demonstrated that a fake news story was, on average, 70 percent more likely to be retweeted than a true story, and that true stories require about six times longer than fake stories to reach 1,500 readers. While much of the current discourse focuses on automated sharing performed by coded "bots" (an account controlled by computer software for a specific, programmed intent), the majority of shares for fake news stories came from real, human-controlled accounts that were manipulated into assessing, believing, and then further sharing the false information. This success is due to the ability of content creators to employ novelty and learn from the biases of their audience. Readers are more disposed to share content that surprises and disgusts; content creators can knowingly appeal to these emotions (Vosoughi et al., 2018).

Facebook and Google Attempt to Stem the Tide

Recently, technology industry giants Facebook and Google—arguably the two most important players in the spread of and battle against fake news—outlined some early steps for their platforms to help control the spread of misleading information. "Google cares deeply about journalism," says a quote attributed to Google CEO Sundar Pichai and featured on an information page for the Google News Initiative, a program launched in March 2018 and intended to be the public face of the company's efforts against the spread of false information online, intentional or otherwise. The program also provides support for journalism in the form of education as well as business/financial aid (the company has pledged $300 million in support of journalism over the next three years). Google has three goals for the initiative: feature accurate journalism while simultaneously combatting misinformation related to active breaking news events; help news sites grow and adapt their business models; and create new tools and services to assist journalists in their jobs (Gartenberg, 2018).

Google has also disclosed more immediate changes made to its search platform to demote "clearly misleading and offensive" content and sites that actively promote such content. These changes include adjustments to the influential Google algorithm that determines which pages surface at the top of search results in addition to social changes within Google, training the company's evaluators (the individuals that help vet search results) to better spot sites that are "low-quality" and might be actively promoting content created with malicious intent. Search users can also flag results they suspect are promoting false information, which Google will then further review. The company also introduced a new "Fact Check" feature to selected search results. Users can interact with the Fact Check tag and assess a page to determine if the data is true, false, or ambiguous. The company says that it uses more than 100 organizations to produce this fact-checking information (Seetharaman, 2018).

Facebook's approach to combatting fake news stories has been more malleable, with the company demonstrating that it is willing to adjust its tactics as its engineers and analysts develop a better understanding of how the platform's users assess and interact with fake news. In the weeks following the 2016 United States Presidential Election, Facebook implemented a few changes to its platform that targeted user and third-party reporting for fake news shared on its pages; this included a new method that users could utilize to report posts as fake news in addition to longstanding categories like spam, as well as contracting with third-party fact checkers to review content reported as fake news. If the fact checkers agreed with the reporting party's assessment, then the platform marked the story with a red flag, labeling it as disputed. The flag included a link explaining why the story received that designation

(Mosserri, 2016). Approximately a year after implementing these changes, Facebook revised its approach and removed the disputed content flags, citing evidence that the flags often produced the opposite of the intended effect and actually encouraged users to share—perhaps appealing to the perception within some audiences that the platform is actively seeking to censor the voices of those with certain political beliefs. Facebook replaced the system with something subtler. Instead of visibly marking the story as disputed, the service supplemented the story with additional content called "Related Articles" selected to provide further context. Facebook said that their proprietary studies showed that this method more successfully discourages shares of false information than the overt disputed flag by providing more information and allowing users to make their own (although still Facebook-informed) decisions about the value of content (Lyson, 2017).

But these efforts are seemingly not enough, and research shows that the primary driver for the spread of fake news is the readers themselves, empowered by technologies that are more likely to surface content that appeals to readers' known history and biases and technologies that enable the spread of content exponentially through the touch of a button. Algorithms employed by social media platforms, including Facebook, contribute to a new cycle of content sharing, following this general process: 1) A reader uses a platform to seek content that confirms biases or supplements existing thoughts and/or arguments. 2) The reader shares the content within his or her established network within the platform. 3) Platform algorithms learn that the reader has a propensity to click and/or share this type of content. 4) Algorithms inform the platform to begin surfacing more of this type of content to the reader, thereby facilitating continued engagement and use with the platform. The reader becomes more likely to share content surfaced by the platform as the algorithm learns from the reader's behaviors.

Technology continues to have a profound impact on the spreadability of fake news, including many of the technologies at the root of the successes of both Facebook and Google. These are tools that the organizations continue to employ and likely will through the foreseeable future as public companies with an obligation to maximize profits for their shareholders.

The Democratization of Content Creation

The majority of individuals utilizing user-generated content sites, social networking platforms, and the Internet itself are not content creators —at least not within a general definition of the term. That is, although they may like, share, and consume articles, photos, video, and music online, they do not actively create content themselves. A study from Forrester, a US-based marketing research company, showed that among the population of frequent Internet users, only 13% created content (Li, 2007). However, more opportunities exist now for creating and publishing to a broader demographic of users than ever before, and, with expanded access to these new online publishing tools, increasingly more individuals are taking advantage of platforms like Instagram and Pinterest for creating and publishing content. In a TED talk, Shirky (2005) summed up this new user-generated content landscape nicely:

Every time a new consumer joins this media landscape, a new producer joins as well because the same equipment – phones, computers – lets you consume and produce. It is as if when you bought a book, they threw in the printing press for free.

Online content creation tools have become a lucrative and engaging segment of the technology industry. Several competing services target many customer demographics, and many of these services are engaged

in an arms race of sorts for simplifying complex content creation tasks that previously were available only to those possessing high levels of skill and knowledge and access to sometimes cost-prohibitive technology. For example, platforms like Wix, Squarespace, and Weebly deliver to anyone the ability to create professional quality websites with no design or web coding skills or private web server hosting necessary. The wide availability of tools for fast, professional website creation has made self-published webpages much harder to identify from professional sites backed by recognizable private and public organizations (Stecula, 2017). The global community enjoys many well-documented benefits from these expanded, democratized content creation platforms. Video sharing sites like YouTube and Vimeo allow for publishing virtually unlimited quantities of video and have become replacements for traditional video-based media like television for many viewers. YouTube users upload more content per month than all three major US television networks combined have broadcast in 60 years (Dijck, 2013). Image-sharing services like Instagram, Flickr, Tumblr, and, to some extent, Facebook, allow illustrators and photographers opportunities for publicizing and combining with e-commerce services to sell their work.

Web publishing has expanded the criteria of what it means to be a journalist. Blogs empower citizen journalists with easy platforms to publish, access to a potentially global audience, and the ability to generate revenue through online advertising, all while bypassing the gatekeeping and "encumbrances of professional news judgment" (Kperogi, 2010). However, democratized content publishing's effects on citizen journalism has significantly facilitated the spread of fake news; new tools and infrastructure for publishing online yield massive benefits to democracy and citizens, but they are also available to those with less-than-benevolent intent, who now have the ability to easily publish and profit from false information at an unprecedented scale.

Online advertising programs like Google AdSense have created significant new business models previously unavailable to independent publishers and content creators. Companies that serve online ads partner with independent websites operated by as few as a single person; this development has enabled many to monetize hobby and enthusiast blogs, fund citizen journalism, and create other new business operations from anywhere in the world. Diverse online advertising programs are a powerful technology tool for advertisers and publishers, but they also naturally incentivize many of the behaviors at the root of the fake news problem and phenomenon. As online advertising funds citizen journalism, many have discovered that the same factors that affect the spreadability of news in traditional publishing are applicable to independent publishing online; that is, the more sensationalist, novel, or emotionally appealing a story is, the more likely it is to be clicked, read, and spread (Trussler & Soroka, 2014) and therefore the more likely the story is to make money for its publisher. Combined with the anonymity of the internet, these two factors have made publishing fake news online for monetary gain potentially lucrative and, for some, highly appealing.

One particularly prolific fake news producer who willingly went on record with *The Washington Post* reported making as much as $10,000 each month from his home during the height of the 2016 United States Presidential Election when readers and voters on both sides of the political spectrum were fervently clicking and sharing news that supplemented arguments and/or offered sensationalizing information. The writer, Paul Horner, targeted his content specifically for consumption on Facebook and later boldly took credit for Donald J. Trump's election win (Ohlheiser, 2016). Writers operating from as far away from the US as Macedonia also took advantage of the election cycle to profit from fake news through online advertising programs. Young writers from a single town in Macedonia published more than 100 individual websites to capitalize on the ad rush related to the election, and some of the individuals claimed to earn $5,000 per month (Silverman & Alexander, 2016).

Significant differences in the most common business models between traditional media outlets and publishers of fake news also contribute to the public's inability to distinguish between what is real and what is intentionally misleading. In 2018, many traditional outlets, including *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The New Yorker*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and numerous smaller publications utilized a "paywall" business model for online content, and provided a few free online articles to readers each month before locking their access behind a paid digital subscription (Madrigal, 2017). This strategy has its roots in proven legacy business models for print publications where advertising revenue is supplemented by repeat, loyal customers willing to pay a monthly or annual fee for content they assess as valuable. However, it is arguable that this model is almost antithetical to the tenets of Web 2.0, where content designed to be easily shared is more likely to find a wide audience. The business managers for these publications accept that readers who are unwilling to pay for content will only have the opportunity to view and share content from their sites a few times each month.

Conversely, fake news publishers seemingly find themselves more willing and able to embrace business models that more align with the tools and services readers use to share content. Fake news publishers seek to spread an article as widely as possible to influence or generate advertising revenue from as many readers as they can reach; their interests do not necessarily lie in cultivating repeat readers who would be willing to pay for a subscription. This strategy also relies heavily on novelty and sensationalism to grab attention and spread quickly (Roose, 2018).

As these two strategies compete for media consumer attention, fake news and many non-traditional publishers have unlimited opportunities to get their content in front of readers and generate money via advertising, while traditional outlets limit their opportunities to engage readers, gambling that enough will decide that their content is worth spending money to read. A potential reader's newsfeed or search results can become cluttered with fake news while news generated through journalistic best practices can become essentially inaccessible to the same reader, locked behind a paywall.

Several factors contribute to the success of these false content creators. One of the most impactful is a side result of the previously discussed benefits of democratized content production: as online publishing becomes more refined and available, and as professional outlets continue to focus on their online presence or move online entirely, it becomes increasingly difficult for readers to distinguish between content from traditional outlets, citizen outlets, and material produced by outlets with malicious intent.

The Difficulties of Distinguishing Types of News Content Published Online

In recent years, tools for publishing online have reached a new level of sophistication and efficiency. Content posted through these commercially available services is presented with such a significant degree of visual quality that it becomes confusing to for many readers to discern between amateur content and professionally produced content. In fact, many professional publications use the same tools that are widely available to and used by independent publishers, including *The Village Voice*, *Vogue*, and *Time* (wordpress.org, 2017). Malicious content creators knowingly exploit this fact (Steinmetz, 2018).

By removing gatekeeping mechanisms found in traditional media, web publishing has had a profound effect on the availability of information online. However, many of these mechanisms provided a secondary, arguably beneficial function omitted in the digital content age: the ability to quickly discern with some degree of certainty the professional or amateur origin of a publication.

For a period from the creation of the printing press until the rise of desktop printing and online publishing, the ability to publish was limited to those in power who possessed access to the extremely

cost-prohibitive machinery and infrastructure for printing and distribution. The printed news arrived to the consumer in an easily recognizable format from a limited number of publications, and, except for limited desktop printing and publishing, remained that way until the mid-to-early 1990s—the earliest online blog in the form we recognize today was created in 1994 (Hermanci, 2005).

According to data published by the Pew Research Center, newspaper readership in the US has steadily decreased since 1990 (down from a peak of about 62 million average weekday readers to roughly 35 million in 2016) as the US population has increased (Barthel, 2017). At the same time, more Americans than ever before consume their news digitally and often through multiple devices. The number of Americans who read or watch news on a mobile device has risen rapidly from 36% of adults in 2016 to 45% in spring 2017 (Bialik & Matsa, 2017). Newspaper content is quickly and easily discernable as news because it is printed on a broadsheet or tabloid-sized paper under a masthead of a generally recognizable name with its associated history. Similar observations can be made about other forms of traditional print media such as magazines, books, and journals. The quality of the paper and design, the image of the masthead or logo, familiar bylines, and advertisements for recognizable products and services all contribute to the reader's ability to discern the quality of a printed publication or article quickly. Both readers and publishers have taken this fact for granted in the transition to digital media. Digital news, which accounts for 38 percent of the news consumed by Americans daily, make it much more challenging to recognize quality (Mitchell, Gottfried, Barthel, & Shearer, 2016).

If a reader consumes all content digitally using the same few devices, then all content physically looks the same because it is displayed on the same screen and at the same resolution. Further, many readers see their preferred social media platform as a source of political information and news, and the tools and functions employed by these platforms are suited for facilitating interactions with news content in innovative ways: commenting, sharing, and engaging in discussions with outlets, public figures, and other readers (Zúñiga, Jung, & Valenzuela, 2012). However, platforms like Facebook or Twitter do not serve the same gatekeeping function as traditional media where journalists and publishers provide an interpretive role by sorting out what is important, what is useless, what is vetted, and what is false (Hindman & Thomas, 2014). Within a Facebook feed, an article from *The Boston Globe* appears the same as an article from a known fake source like *The News Buzz Daily*. The burden to make the quality determination falls upon the reader, a dauting task against similarly designed content from creators who are actively attempting to deceive readers by mimicking the design of professional journalism and appealing to biases and the human tendency to be engaged by the novel and sensational.

Ironically, the media and advertising industries helped introduce and refine the concept of mimicking news content style and form with deceptive intent. Predominately found in magazines, advertorials are precisely as the portmanteau implies: a combination of advertising and editorial content. More accurately, advertorials are advertising disguised as editorials. It is arguable that the intent of advertorials is to confuse the reader into mistaking advertising as the same editorial content within the rest of the publication. Advertorials exploit the relationship of trust established between the reader and the outlet to more easily persuade the reader to purchase or accept the product, service, or idea promoted by the advertisement (Kim, Pasadeos, & Barban, 2001). By this definition, advertorials are deceptive by their nature because they actively attempt to make a reader more likely to view an advertisement by disguising the ad in a form more similar to the editorial content within a newspaper or magazine, and thereby more trustworthy. Fake news producers employ similar tactics by disguising non-news content in a format that readers recognize visually as news. It is likely that skilled fake news creators have learned from the well-established, effective techniques present in advertorials.

The impermanence of content published online and the inherently anonymous nature of the Internet have led to a scarcity of accountability in web publishing. Traditional publications are deterred from knowingly publishing false information by libel, slander, and other defamation laws. These laws are present in many countries and designed in part to hold media outlets accountable for the information they publish or broadcast. Online-only and/or smaller outlets are also subject to these same laws; however, the sometimes anonymous nature of online publishing (or, in the case of the Macedonian group, the presence of international borders making judgement enforcements difficult to impossible) and the lack of assets for small outlets compared to traditional media companies make the small online producers that have historically been more likely to publish fake news content difficult or unappealing targets for libel suits. Besides, victims considering a lawsuit might be discouraged from legal action for fear of further publicizing the false information (Seidenberg, 2017). Historically, the threat of defamation suit has served as a sufficient motivator for large outlets to vet controversial stories before publication thoroughly. Successful suits can prove to be disastrous or even fatal to a media outlet, such as in the recent Bollea v. Gawker lawsuit that ultimately resulted in the bankruptcy of Gawker Media and the closure of the popular media industry blog (Ember, 2016). Not all false stories are subject to libel laws. Published content must be "injurious to a person's reputation, exposes a person to public hatred, contempt or ridicule, or injures a person in his/her business or profession" to be considered libelous in the United States (Cornell, 2017). Often, fake news stories do not target an individual at all and instead focus on false events, trends, or statistics. For example, one of the most widely spread false articles in 2016 and 2017 claimed that more than 25 million of the votes Hillary Clinton received in the 2016 election were fraudulent (LaCapria, 2017). In this case, because there is no direct target featured in the article, there is little punitive recourse through the use of libel law, and, because the content is based on a very loose interpretation of a factual Pew Research study for political purposes, courts would likely classify the content as First Amendment protected political expression (Riggins, 2017)

The Role of Algorithms in Gatekeeping and Content Distribution

Even if all readers developed the skills necessary to determine the source and intent of the content they consume online, social media services and search platforms continue to employ curation tools that do not possess the same level of human selectiveness and also work against a reader's efforts to select true and quality news. They serve to actively promote content that may be popular or perceived to be relevant without employing adequate quality control.

The search, sharing, and recommendation features in content platforms like YouTube and Facebook impart users with a false sense of agency. Even though users do have some control on the content served to them on these platforms, unseen algorithms significantly influence these surfacing functions by applying factors such as view count, past content interactions, the viewing habits of friends, and others. Content algorithms like these have a profound effect on what we like, want, know, and find online (Dijck, 2013). Algorithms are a powerful influencer in the modern media landscape and although they have proven effective in spotting potential popularity and relevancy, they are not necessarily useful in assessing quality and veracity.

In February 2018, following the mass shooting at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fl., a video was uploaded to YouTube claiming that one of the survivors of the massacre was, in fact, not a survivor at all. Instead, the video claimed that the survivor was an actor seemingly deployed to the school by conspirators seeking to aid left-wing gun control efforts by using the public position as a survivor of a highly-visible national tragedy to call for new gun control policies. The video quickly gained traction within online far-right conspiracy networks and rapidly grew in viewer count. The viewer count, shares, and connection to an ongoing news event seemingly propelled the video through YouTube's systems for evaluating popularity, and the video soon surfaced on the service's highly visible "Trending" list. The Trending feature is a list of popular videos placed near the top of the YouTube homepage. Unlike many of the search and recommendation tools in YouTube and other Google services, YouTube Trending is not custom; it displays the same content to every user within the same country (except, according to Google, India).

The Trending feature essentially functions as YouTube's equivalent to the front page of a newspaper, giving the content an extremely high level of visibility and influence, particularly as the landing page for the second most viewed website in the world. The presence of a video in YouTube Trending, alongside a high view count, lends it a quality of legitimacy to the user (Martineau, 2018), as does the presence of content in prominent positions in other services, like promoted content or content with a high number of user engagements on Twitter and Facebook.

The video that portrayed the Stoneman Douglas student as an imposter was fake. YouTube eventually removed the video from the Trending list and the service altogether, but not before it spread through other social platforms and forums. It is unlikely that the video and conspiracy would have traveled as far without the influence of YouTube's algorithm.

Another similar example occurred in late 2017 within the algorithm dictating YouTube's search results. A few days after the Mandalay Bay hotel shooting in Las Vegas, searches for "Las Vegas shooting" on YouTube yielded a conspiracy theory video on the first page—a highly visible and frequently trafficked source of information regarding the country's deadliest mass shooting. The footage questioned whether the shooting was a hoax and accused victims of being actors participating in the fraud. The video garnered more than 250,000 views before its removal, lending its content more credibility in the perspective of some viewers seeking news on the attack (Levin, 2017).

The same phenomenon is seemingly present within the search, recommendation, and trending features on all online services that employ algorithms to curate content (i.e., all or nearly all major search engines, social networking platforms, and user-generated content platforms). These tools, while powerful and revolutionary for information dissemination and discovery, are not as unbiased and free from human influence as many believe them to be. They are created by people, process data generated by people and, as such, are subject to the same human biases in their operation and the interpretation of their output (Boyd & Crawford, 2012). With knowledge of an algorithm's rules, a creator can manipulate his or her content to be more likely surfaced by trending or search tools. Fake news creators knowingly take advantage of these tools to reach and manipulate as wide an audience possible, incentivized by the possibility of profit or the ability to influence public opinion.

SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As previously discussed in this chapter, online platforms like Facebook, Google, and Twitter have already taken steps to combat the spread of fake news on their services; however, more can be done. In the short term, additional human moderators and factcheckers can be deployed to review the most questionable stories. This solution does not address the long-term trends or root causes of the problem, but the number of reviewers can be scaled to meet demand as fake news trends change. Facebook already contracts much of its resource-heavy content moderation work (Koebler & Cox, 2018). If fake news trends continue, a new market for contract fact checking and content review services may become in demand for content platforms and search engines. This type of work can be done remotely by freelance or contract workers whose services can be engaged as needed.

Of course, there are likely effective solutions that do not require an influx of human moderation. The tech giants have shown their aptitude for creating services that curate content without the need for human input. Algorithms help Spotify identify songs a subscriber might be most likely to enjoy, Amazon recommends a new book based on your past purchases and browsing habits, and YouTube surfaces new videos based on those a viewer has watched before and that similar viewers have enjoyed. These algorithms accomplish these goals by identifying trends within the content, and sophisticated algorithms can also be used to identify trends among fake news, marking suspect stories for further review (Conner, 2018). As previously mentioned in this chapter, both Facebook and Google are actively implementing these types of solutions in conjunction with human moderation.

Still, fake news creators have shown themselves to be willing and able to adopt new techniques to deceive audiences and spread their content. There likely will be no perfect algorithm or review process to stop every fake news story from finding an audience on these private platforms. More effective, long-term solutions are those that target the audience, bolstering our ability to determine what is real and what is false through education programs, starting with curricula that acknowledges the new norm of deception prevalent online and provides students with the critical tools they need to resist deception—not just fake news, but also financial scams, phishing, and identity theft.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Additional research is needed to better understand how fake news content creators have exploited influential content algorithms to make their content more likely to be surfaced, mapping what attributes are most or least effective at influencing a piece of content's likelihood to be surfaced in recommendations or search results. These types of studies may help engineers develop future algorithms to protect against these manipulations, and give readers information needed to identify content that might be created in such a way to influence content curation tools and algorithms.

A qualitative study tracking trends in the number of and reach of verified fake news stories against mobile device adoption and digital media consumption rates has the potential to be valuable for assessing the role of digital media in the prevalence and influence of fake news. The public needs long-term studies evaluating the effectiveness of various education measures to assess the value of information online among demographics. These subjects include education in knowledge generation procedures, algorithm processes, and bias manipulation, among others. This research is necessary for building curricula designed to better prepare future generations against malicious actors seeking to manipulate news consumers.

CONCLUSION

Fake news is not a new phenomenon—malicious actors have used misinformation and the media to mislead for profit and influence since the earliest days of print and broadcast. However, unprecedented is the seemingly new exponential spread of fake news, reaching audiences comparable to or exceeding in size to those of traditional outlets. New technologies have played a decisive, exponentially effective role in this new era of rapid dissemination for false information, providing new business models for malicious agents to profit from readers and viewers and significantly increasing the difficulty for the average media consumer to differentiate between what is truthful and what is manipulative or false. Technology has facilitated three critical roles affecting the creation and spread of fake news and provided evidence for each: the democratization of content creation, the difficulties of distinguishing types of news content published online, and the use of algorithms in gatekeeping and content distribution.

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Chapter 9
"Ridiculous and Untrue – FAKE NEWS!":
The Impact of Labeling Fake News

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ABSTRACT

Beyond the spread of fake news, the term "fake news" has been used by people on social media and by people in the Trump administration to discredit reporting and show disagreement with the content of a story. This study offers a series of defining traits of fake news and a corresponding experiment testing its impact. Overall, this study shows that fake news, or at least labeling fake news can impact the gratifications people derive from news. Further, this study provides evidence that the impact of fake news might, in some cases, rely on whether or not the fake news complies with preexisting beliefs.

INTRODUCTION

From the early days of the 2016 U.S. presidential election, and continuing to present day, many falsified news reports espousing legitimacy circulated the internet at a rapid pace, in part due to social media sites (Davies, 2016). These falsified news reports became widely known as "fake news." Given the recent emergence of this term, little is known about the spread and effect of fake news on consumers. Some have claimed that fake news impacted the 2016 election results and is a threat to democracy, while others have claimed that the impact of fake news is overblown (Rajan, 2017; Sydell, 2016). This disparity itself merits exploration and the current study examines another fold to this phenomenon: the labeling of fake news. Beyond the spread of fake news, the term "fake news" has been used by people on social media and by people in the Trump administration "to discredit reporting… often offering no evidence to back up their disputes with those outlets' stories" (Massie, 2017). The President himself has engaged in this behavior (Dorf & Tarrow, 2017). Consequently, this study will provide an experiment to identify how the labeling of fake news affects audiences.

BACKGROUND OF FAKE NEWS

One definition says that fake news stories are "intentionally and verifiably false, and could mislead readers "(Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017, p. 213). Another article offered a broader definition, "false or misleading content — hoaxes, rumors, conspiracy theories, fabricated reports, click-bait headlines, and even satire" (Shao, Ciampaglia, Varol, Flammini, & Menczer, 2017). Clearly, those definitions are not in complete agreement though it has generally been agreed that fake news is deliberately misleading content (Dorf & Tarrow, 2017; Shao, et al., 2017). Despite the lack of a broad scholarly consensus on modern fake news, the concept of fake news might be related to other concepts. Indeed, it has shades of yellow journalism, propaganda, satirical news, and entertainment news reports but none of these definitions, for the reasons stated below, completely encompass fake news.

The concept of fake news might be traced in the U.S. to yellow journalism, or highly sensationalized journalism (Kolodny, 2016). In a feud to sell more papers, newspaper magnates Joseph Pulitzer of *New York World* and William Randolph Hearst of *New York Journal* printed stories that over-exaggerated and sensationalized Cuba's struggle for independence in the late 1800s (Atkins, 2016). Some of the reports were false, but they nurtured anti-Spanish sentiments throughout the U.S.; and eventually resulted in unverified blame on the Spanish for the explosion of the *U.S.S. Maine* in Havana Harbor, which led to abundant American support during the Spanish-American War (Atkins, 2016). Notably, this account of the Spanish-American War has been challenged (Kolodny, 2016) but the relevance to fake news is still germane. This can be tied to the notion that fake news is frequently created to garner clicks and make money (Sydell, 2016), not unlike Randolph and Hearst. Indeed, the creation of fake news can be quite lucrative if a story attracts web traffic and the site sells ad space (Ohlheiser, 2016).

As such, there is a noteworthy overlap between fake news and yellow journalism but fake news may have more deliberate machinations than simply making money. As a result, propaganda is another concept that might illuminate fake news. Welch asserts, that there are many different definitions of propaganda but that, most agree that the purpose of propaganda is to influence opinion (Welch, 2003). According to Welch, propaganda serves an agenda, persuades and eliminates other options. Fake news articles may appear to have this goal but fake news "does not demand that the purveyors of fake news must always have an ideological agenda: fake news is not the same as propaganda" (Gelfert, 2018, p. 110).

Consequently, fake news may have traits of yellow journalism or propaganda but not necessarily. An investigation into fake news wherein a fake news creator in Los Angeles, Jestin Coler, was interviewed can help illuminate this topic further (Sydell, 2016). Coler divulged that "he got into fake news around 2013 to highlight the extremism of the white nationalist alt-right," by publishing partia;ly or fully fictionalized stories he could later denounce (Sydell, 2016). One of Coler's most popular fake news stories, published to a fake news site designed to resemble a credible news site was titled, "FBI Agent Suspected In Hillary Email Leaks Found Dead in Apparent Murder-Suicide," was shared on Facebook over half a million times, and received 1.6 million views on the fake news website (Sydell, 2016). This example from a purveyor of fake news more closely resembles satire, "a genre which necessarily sets out to critique and entertain (with the qualification that these purposes necessarily interact, although neither is wholly instrumental to the other)" (Declercq, 2018).

The notion of satirical news is worth exploring given Coler's attempt to lampoon the far-right with fake stories. Manipulation of news for satire in not novel (Gelfert, 2018). While there are many satirists throughout history, *The Onion* is one modern example of this, designed to look like a legitimate newspaper it publishes satirical stories involving contemporary topics (Atkins, 2016). *The Onion*, with outlandish

titles and stories poking fun at society's misgivings, has fooled certain public figures, just as modern fake news has, but its purpose has always been entertainment or critique (Atkins, 2016; Declercq, 2018; Rajan, 2017). On television, satirical news became quite popular with *The Daily Show with John Stewart* and *The Colbert Report*. Despite the shows' satirical status, the programs received criticism for being selective and bias-prone – but not false reporting (Atkins, 2016). A writer from CNN Politics asserted that even though Stewart claimed that his program was not news, it did "serve much the same function as traditional network news shows" (Collinson, 2015). However, even satirical and comical programs can make use of fundamentals critical to more traditional journalism such that they are "sources of fast, aggressive and balanced reporting" (Kent, 2015). In other words, satire might not necessarily be fake. Satirical news can include misleading content but other satirical content might not be misleading such that humorous commentary surrounds events reported accurately. This raises the question of intent with fake news. There should be a distinction between fake news and satire such that fake news is intended to mislead while satires is not. Instead, satire is meant to entertain or ridicule, not mislead (Gelfert, 2018). Gelfert argues that satirical content is capable of misleading audiences, especially when it is subtle, but that does not qualify it as fake news. "To count as fake news, it must be likely to mislead not only in a non-accidental way, but deliberately (Gelfert, 2018, p. 106). Under this refined definition, there is a clear distinction between fake news and satire.

This discussion raises an important point on fake news: What is the threshold for fake news? In other words, when does news become fake and when does it become real? If news is not fake, then is it real or is it somewhere in between? Consider the following examples and if each story should be considered fake news or not:

- The body of a story is largely accurate, but the headline is misleading.
- A story is accurate with the exception of a few sources who provided inaccurate quotes and were used without proper verification.
- A story presents actual events but uses a biased point of views such to influence the audience perception of the story.
- A story is fully accurate but published on a fake news website.

Given the descriptions listed above, the line between poor reporting, poor editorial process, bias in reporting, and pure fabrication are important distinctions yet ones that are not completely delineated in the current media landscape. As a result of the preceding literature, the current paper suggests that the following traits are important to consider when examining fake news. First, is that the story is false. In other words, there are identifiable fabrications in the story, not mistakes or errors due to poor writing, editing, or reporting. News content creators will make errors in their work at times and this should not be branded as fake news on its face. Second, fake news does have an outcome in mind and that outcome is to mislead audiences. Fake news is designed with the intent of misleading readers into thinking that the content is real and should be believed. Third, fake news is intended to be catchy and to go viral. Fake news, without large media platforms, needs to be spread by social media users who may or may not know that a story is fake. Of the concepts above, fake news should not be considered satire or propaganda, though it does have shades of yellow journalism (Atkins, 2016; Gelfert, 2018; Ohlheiser, 2016).

LABELING FAKE NEWS

With the above exploration in place, the piece can now exam the way in which fake news becomes labeled. In the current media landscape, "fake news" has also become a term used as an ideological weapon as opposed to purely a descriptor of content (Rogers, 2018). According to factcheck.org (2018) "President Donald Trump often dismisses news stories or media outlets that he doesn't like as 'fake news'… and there are times, too, when he has labeled accurate news reporting as 'fake news'…" The term has now entered common parlance such that people now use the term casually to describe content that they do not like or agree with (urbandictionary.com, 2018). The most upvoted definition of fake news on Urbandictionary.com is "a term formerly useful for describing websites consisting entirely of intentionally fabricated news stories, but now used to describe virtually anything that does not mesh with one's own views." While Urban Dictionary may be a dubious source, the site has been used in court cases as it can be useful to "discern meaning and intent in the modern lexicon" (Kaufman, 2013). Anecdotally, this definition rings true based on observed behaviors from Trump and others.

Based on the modern zeitgeist, one might argue that the labeling of fake news is more important to the audience than the content of the news itself (Rogers 2018). For some audience members, the veracity of a story becomes irrelevant once a story is labeled as fake because that label influences the way in which the audience interacts with the story. For instance, a story labeled as fake will be viewed as fake regardless of veracity provided that the individual doing the labeling is considered trustworthy on the topic (Rogers, 2018). Thus, the remainder of this study is dedicated to understanding how the label of fake news impacts audience members.

GRATIFICATIONS OF NEWS CONSUMPTION

At its core, uses and gratifications theory explains "how people use media to gratify their needs," and their "motives for media behavior" (Rubin, 2009, p.166-167). In other words, people have certain wants and needs that media can be implemented to fulfill. For example, if someone is bored, he or she can watch a funny movie in order to alter their undesired state. That is, the person had a need to change his or her state and did so through media. In the domain on news, someone might want to watch the news because it fulfills a need for knowledge acquisition. Further, one might consume partisan news in order to confirm prior held world views and enhance feelings of self-esteem and belonging. Expressed in a different way, people will use media based on predispositions (Rubin, 2009). This perspective is useful because it accounts for specific, informative factors that may contribute to the consumption of news and/or fake news. To state plainly, uses and gratifications theory provides a lens for the researcher to assess how fake news might be gratifying (or not) to users and thus gain insight into the impacts of fake news. For example, someone might not have his or her need for knowledge acquisition met when the news is labeled as fake. Traditionally, news has been viewed through the prism of uses and gratifications theory as a utility (Joo, & Sang, 2013; Zillmann, 2000). The fake news label likely alters this and thus the impact of fact news merits further study.

One way to identify the ways in which media gratifies needs is through self-determination theory (blinded for review). Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a theory of human motivation based on the idea that human wellness requires three major needs to be met: competence (the ability to complete a job with the desired outcomes), autonomy (independence), and relatedness (feeling a connection with

others) (Deci & Ryan 2000). Through these needs, SDT can be used to understand more precisely how fake news affects the way an audience feels, and explain which needs are being gratified for an audience. In this case, fake news should make someone feel less competent as the news is false, it should make someone feel less in control because they are being misled by fake news, and lastly, that feeling of being misled should also reduce feelings of relatedness. In summary, SDT is likely a key area in regard to explaining how fake news impacts audiences.

On top of this, the researchers expect that fake news can create experiences of cognitive dissonance. Broadly, people who hold two or more contradictory beliefs at the same time experience a degree of discomfort (Festinger, 1962). This is known as cognitive dissonance and may help explain the appeal of fake news such that a fake news story might comport with an audience member's beliefs and thus reduce that discomfort. Indeed, people try to avoid the unpleasant mental state of cognitive dissonance through selective exposure or avoiding content that would create cognitive dissonance while consuming content then will reduce cognitive dissonance. A reasonable conjecture is that when fake news creates cognitive dissonance the audience will react to that content differently than if it does not. To be more specific, a person may encounter a news article that challenges their previously held beliefs but if that article is labeled as "fake news" cognitive dissonance should be reduced and it may even be enjoyable to see this report discredited. Tompkins argues that affect is a primary motivational system (1984, p. 164) and "the affect system provides the primary blueprints for cognition, decision and action" (Tompkins, 1984, p. 167). As a consequence, the emotions felt when encountering fake news is worth exploring. Of note, Tompkins details some of the affects and the consequences particularly relevant to affect theory. Ones that seem relevant to this study are: distress, joy, contempt, disgust, and shame. More recent scholarship has divided affect based on valence (blinded for review). Negative affect refers to items that would cause discomfort, distress, or feelings of unpleasantness. Positive affect refers to pleasant emotions and ones that are enjoyable. Meanwhile, meaningful affect, and the feeling of meaningfulness broadly, is somewhere in between positive and negative affect such that it could be sad which is negative but it could be deepen connection with others which would be positive. This framework is useful for examining audience reactions to fake news.

An experiment assessed how a consumer's interest in a story changed once the story was associated with its news organization, namely ones that are noted for being politically conservative or liberal (Iyengar & Hahn, 2007). Results supported that an audience member's expectations and views strongly influenced attitude toward the content itself. A similar pattern should be expected within the domain of fake news for the outcome variables of interest. That is, a fake story that comports with the audience's expectations and views will likely be regarded favorably while a fake story that creates cognitive dissonance will be negatively perceived. For example, in the 2016 election, a person who was a Trump supporter would likely have had a negative reaction to a story that presented Trump in a negative light. Meanwhile, a Hillary Clinton support would likely have had a positive reaction to this same story. Cognitive dissonance would help to explain this example. However, when that story about Trump is labeled as fake news, the relationship becomes more complex and perhaps inverted. This is precisely what this study aims to explore.

HYPOTHESES

Based on the literature above, the current study makes the following predictions. First, people reading news labeled as fake will perceive fulfillment of the dimensions of SDT differently than when the news is labeled as real. Likewise, whether or not the news creates cognitive dissonance will impact the dimensions of SDT.

Hypothesis One: A fake news label and cognitive dissonance will impact feelings of competence, autonomy, and relatedness.

Second, the researchers believe that cognitive dissonance and a fake news label will impact the main outcomes related to attitude.

Hypothesis Two: A fake news label and cognitive dissonance will impact feelings of meaningfulness, enjoyment, positive affect, negative affect and meaningful affect.

Third and lastly, the researchers predict that the dimensions of SDT will mediate the IV's impact on audience member's feelings toward the content.

Hypothesis Three: Competence, autonomy, and relatedness will mediate the effects in H2.

SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This sample consisted of 199 participants recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk Service. Participants were offered 50 cents USD to participate in the study. Participants had to be living in the United States and have over a 90% approval on the site. This enhanced the likelihood that participants would have an opinion regarding the news story stimulus and that the participants would adhere to the protocol. A majority of participants were female (61.2%), with a mean age of 41 (SD = 14.17). Most (75%) of participants identified their race as white. All information was kept anonymous.

In the recruitment posting, participants were instructed to click a URL and complete the online questionnaire. The questionnaire began by asking participants questions about their news consumption habits, their political beliefs, and how they felt about immigration—the topic of the article used as stimulus. The political belief measure was based on Haidt and Graham (2007). It used a 7-point scale where 1 equals extremely conservative and 7 equals extremely liberal. In order to achieve cognitive dissonance, participants were asked a series of questions specific to their feelings about Obama and immigration. These gave suitable measures for whether or not participants would encounter cognitive dissonance when reading the article. Statements such as "In general, I believe illegal immigrants should be deported." and "I believe that the Obama administration was supportive of immigrants and immigration" were used to measure participants attitudes toward immigration. Participants were asked to rate on a 7-point Likert scale, 1 being "strongly disagree" and 7 being "strongly agree." The researchers created these items as they were very specific to the study at hand and an existing scale would not have allowed us to split groups as effectively.

Participants were then asked to read the article that was copy and pasted, in its original format, from a legitimate news website. The source, however, was obscured to participants. The article detailed President Obama's immigration policy and was titled "Barack Obama Deported A Record Number Of Immigrants From The U.S., More Than Any Other President." In order to experimentally control for content, each participant read the exact same article, but the article was labeled as either real news or fake news. This article was selected because it was one that, according to a pretest, could not readily be identified as real or fake by readers when stripped of its source. Once participants finished reading the article, they were asked to respond to the remainder of the questionnaire with the article in mind.

Those who strongly supported Obama and believed that he was supportive of immigrants/anti-deportation were the most likely to experience cognitive dissonance when reading the article – as the stimulus offered evidence to the contrary - and were placed into the cognitive dissonance condition. All others were placed in a no cognitive dissonance condition because they either already believed what the article stated or did not feel strongly enough about the issues at hand.

Competence, autonomy, and relatedness, the dimensions of SDT, were measured on a 7-point Likert Scale (1 meaning "strongly disagree and 7 meaning "strongly agree") adapted from Ryan, Rigby, and Przybylski (2006), in statements such as "I felt very capable and effective as a news consumer," and "I felt a connection to the topic being reported." There were three items for each, and each was reliable (all were, $\alpha > .70$).

Positive, negative, and *meaningful affects* were measured using a list of emotions and a 7-point Likert Scale, where participants were asked to rate the extent to which they felt each emotion from 1-7 (1 meaning "not at all" and 7 being "very much so") (blinded for review). These measures were taken after participants read the article, so that the researchers could identify how participants felt while reading it. The emotions and feelings that participants were asked to rate were: "sad, negative, happy, positive, humored, amused, inspired, touched, moved, compassionate, angry, anxious and tense" (blinded for review) They were then split into the positive, negative, and meaningful affect categories. These were all reliable (respectively, $\alpha = .86, .86, .94$).

Enjoyment and *Meaningfulness* were measured by participant rankings on a 7-point Likert Scale, 1 being "strongly disagree" and 7 being "strongly agree," with statements such as "The article was entertaining to me," "The article was thought provoking," or, "I enjoyed the article" (blinded for review). All were reliable (enjoyment $\alpha = .89$ and meaningfulness $\alpha = .91$)

RESULTS

To test the mediators, a MANOVA with cognitive dissonance and real or fake news were entered as IVs, while competence, autonomy, and relatedness were entered as DVs and gender, age, race, and immigrant status were entered as control variables. This revealed a significant multivariate effect of real or fake news, $F(4, 162) = 3.85, p < .01$, Wilks' $\Lambda = .99$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$ but there were not significant results for cognitive dissonance nor the interaction between real or fake news and cognitive dissonance. As for the ANOVAs associated with this analysis, real or fake news had a significant effect on competence ($F(1, 165) = 7.59, p < .01, \eta2 = .04$)), autonomy ($F(1, 165) = 6.49, p < .05, \eta2 = .04$), and relatedness($F(1, 165) = 7.73, p < .01, \eta2 = .04$). Those results are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Real or fake news effect on feelings of competence, autonomy, and relatedness

	Real News (*M, SD*)	**Fake News** (*M, SD*)
Competence	5.46, 1.12	4.88, 1.66
Autonomy	4.85, 1.97	3.99, 2.12
Relatedness	3.37, 1.61	2.73, 1.56

To test the main outcomes, a MANOVA with cognitive dissonance and real or fake news entered as IVs, meaningfulness, enjoyment, positive affect, negative affect and meaningful affect were entered as DVs and gender, age, race and immigrant status entered as control variables. This revealed a significant multivariate effect of real or fake news, $F(5, 159) = 4.90$, $p < .001$, Wilks' $\Lambda = .87$, $\eta_p^2 = .13$ and cognitive dissonance $F(5, 159) = 9.83$, $p < .001$, Wilks' $\Lambda = .73$, $\eta_p^2 = .24$. As for the ANOVAs associated with this analysis, real or fake news had a significant effect on feelings of meaningfulness ($F(1, 163) = 17.74$, $p < .001$, $\eta2 = .10$) where those in the real news condition had higher feelings of meaningfulness ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 1.31$), than those in the fake news condition ($M = 2.83$, $SD = 1.47$). For cognitive dissonance, there were significant effects for enjoyment ($F(1, 163) = 24.82$, $p < .001$, $\eta2 = .13$), meaningfulness ($F(1, 163) = 4.52$, $p < .05$, $\eta2 = .03$)., negative affect ($F(1, 163) = 13.72$, $p < .001$, $\eta2 = .08$) and positive affect ($F(1, 163) = 24.01$, $p < .001$, $\eta2 = .13$). The results for cognitive dissonance are summarized in Table 2. Lastly, there was an interaction effect for negative affect ($F(1, 163) = 4.27$, $p < .05$, $\eta2 = .03$). Those who were under cognitive dissonance and were exposed to news labeled as fake felt the most negative affect ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 1.84$) but those who were not under cognitive dissonance who saw news labeled as real felt the least negative affect ($M = 2.32$, $SD = 1.11$). For real news, those who were not under cognitive dissonance were the second lowest ($M = 2.80$, $SD = 1.51$) while those who were under cognitive dissonance were second highest ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 1.54$).

To assess the final hypothesis, the PROCESS macro in SPSS (Hayes, 2015) model 8 using 2,000 bootstrap samples and 95% Confidence Interval (CI) was used. Real or fake news and cognitive dissonance were entered as the independent variables while competence, autonomy, and relatedness were entered as potential mediators. Enjoyment was entered as the outcome variable. Race, gender, age, and immigrant status were entered as control variables. There were no direct effects of conditions on enjoyment. However, there were indirect effects of fake news via autonomy (point estimate = -.32, Boot SE = .19, CI [.02, .78]) and relatedness for those who were not under cognitive dissonance (point estimate = -.18, Boot SE = .11, CI [.02, .48]) and those who were (point estimate = -.14, Boot SE = .09, CI [.01, .38]).

Table 2. Cognitive dissonance effect on enjoyment, meaningfulness positive affect and negative affect

	Cognitive Dissonance (*M, SD*)	**No Cognitive Dissonance** (*M, SD*)
Enjoyment	2.63, 1.48	3.74, 1.48
Meaningfulness	2.47, .42	3.09, 1.51
Positive Affect	1.99, 1.26	2.99, 1.44
Negative Affect	3.46, 1.74	2.58, 1.35

When meaningfulness was entered as a DV, there were direct effects of real or fake news for those who were under cognitive dissonance (point estimate = -.43, Boot SE = .06, CI [.01, .85]). There were indirect effects via autonomy for those who were under cognitive dissonance (point estimate = -.31, Boot SE = .16, CI [.04, .70]) and competence for those who were under cognitive dissonance (point estimate = -.08, Boot SE = .06, CI [.00, .26]) and relatedness for those who were not under cognitive dissonance (point estimate = -.27, Boot SE = .13, CI [.03, .56]).

When meaningful affect was entered as a DV, there were no direct effects but there were indirect effects via autonomy for those who were under cognitive dissonance (point estimate = -.15, Boot SE = .08, CI [.03, .37]). There were also indirect effects through relatedness for those who were not under cognitive dissonance (point estimate = -.24, Boot SE = .13, CI [.04, .57]) and those who were under cognitive dissonance (point estimate = -.18, Boot SE = .10, CI [.00, .42]).

When negative affect was entered as a DV, there were indirect effects via competence for those who were under cognitive dissonance (point estimate = -.17, Boot SE = .11, CI [.02, .46]) and relatedness for those who were not under cognitive dissonance (point estimate = -.18, Boot SE = .10, CI [.03, .46]) and those who were (point estimate = -.14, Boot SE = .09, CI [.01, .37]).

When positive affect was entered as a DV, there were indirect effects via relatedness for those who were not under cognitive dissonance (point estimate = -.23, Boot SE = .12, CI [.02, .53]) and those who were (point estimate = -.17, Boot SE = .10, CI [.01, .40]).

Discussion

Overall, those in the real news condition showed significantly higher feelings of competence, autonomy, and relatedness, than those in the fake news condition which supports H1. In terms of SDT, fake news had a negative effect on all three dimensions. If someone reads an article that is labeled as fake, he or she will not fulfill the dimensions of SDT as much as when that same article is labeled as real. A fake article will not make one feel knowledgeable or trusting thus removing competence and feelings of relatedness. Downstream from that, audiences will not feel intrinsic motivation as their needs are not gratified by fake news (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The lack of findings for cognitive dissonance was a bit surprising as one would expect that experiencing cognitive dissonance would strain feelings of competence, relatedness, and autonomy because previously held thoughts are being challenged. Indeed, it is hard to feel knowledgeable, independent and related to material that is defying one's beliefs. However, it is possible that the labels of real news and fake news washed out some of these effects for SDT. In other words, the label itself was a more effective manipulation and thus the results did not come through for cognitive dissonance. Or, perhaps, cognitive dissonance is unrelated to the dimensions of SDT though that seems unlikely as cognitive dissonance on its face has conceptual overlap with intrinsic motivation.

H2 showed that both fake news and cognitive dissonance can affect the main outcomes, enjoyment, meaningfulness, positive affect, and negative affect. Fake news reduced the feelings of meaningfulness that people felt while reading a story which is not surprising. It is not likely that a fake news story would inspire or give much insight into the human condition. In fact, it might do the opposite, leaving one puzzled about the human condition and wondering about the motivations behind creating fake news or the impact of fake news. Similarly, fake news likely creates feelings of distrust rather than connection, a notion closely tied to experiences of meaningfulness (blinded for review). In other words, the fake news label creates a barrier to feelings of meaningfulness.

Cognitive dissonance on the other hand, impacted all of the main outcomes: meaningfulness, enjoyment, meaningful affect, negative and positive affect. Overall, experiencing cognitive dissonance does not result in a pleasurable, enjoyable, or meaningful experience for audiences. This is consistent with existing research indicating negatively valenced emotions and experiences surrounding cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1962; Tompkins, 1984). Since this broadly confirms existing research it is perhaps more interesting that there was an interaction effect for negative affect such that those who were under cognitive dissonance and saw the fake news label were much higher on the negative affect scale while those who were not under cognitive dissonance were much lower on the negative affect scale. However, the results were much more similar when comparing those in the real news condition regardless of cognitive dissonance. In other words, people do not differ much in negative affect if a news article is labeled as real whether or not it creates dissonance. However, when that news article is labeled as fake, the groups diverge significantly. People who have cognitive dissonance from fake news will be much more angry, anxious, sad, and negative while people who do not have that dissonance do not feel those emotion to nearly the same degree. One might expect that when a person reads an article that does not comply with his or her beliefs he or she would experience unpleasant cognitive dissonance but upon seeing that the article is labeled as fake, the person would realize that the article cannot be trusted and the cognitive dissonance and corresponding negative affect should be relieved. However, these results show the opposite pattern. When someone sees that an issue has been misrepresented and manipulated as fake news, the reaction is more negative than if the story were real. Meanwhile, one might expect that a person who sees an article that complies with his or her beliefs will have a positive media experience but when that article turns out to be fake, that experience will be tarnished and the positive experience might dissipate. Again, these results show the opposite pattern. One possible explanation for this is that people want to see articles that support their beliefs, even if fake further emboldening the validity of selective exposure. Perhaps this reflects the belief that fake news is influential and harmful to democracy – thus a news story, fake or real, can help build one's own position. These results suggest that the sample may even perceive that the fake version of the story has a greater impact on people than the real version. Perhaps it is comforting if there are misleading articles and they push one's beliefs whereas it is distressing to see them when they work against one's beliefs.

The results for H3 show that SDT is a viable method for understanding how fake news impacts audiences and can deepen understanding of how a fake news alters gratifications for audience members. Reviewing the mediation effects, relatedness was a mediator for those who were not under cognitive dissonance in each case and for those under cognitive dissonance for all affect outcomes. This is a compelling finding such that relationships to others retains importance in regard to enjoyment and meaningfulness when held beliefs are not challenged. When beliefs are challenged it feels isolating and reduces feelings of relatedness. This make the experience less enjoyable and less meaningful for audiences. Moreover, when fake news confirms ones beliefs, it likely fosters feelings associated with community that can be tied to enjoyment and meaningfulness. In short, relatedness appears to be quite important for those who are not under cognitive dissonance when encountering fake news. Relatedness was only relevant for those who were under cognitive dissonance for outcomes related to affect. That is, when under cognitive dissonance, feelings of relatedness were critical to how someone felt positively, negatively and meaningfully. Relatedness, then, is important to how one feels when under cognitive dissonance. This is a noteworthy distinction as these measures looked directly at how someone feels, not how they feel about the content

itself. These affects have been shown to be of critical import in Tompkins (1984) work. Further, the variety of emotions that were impacted, especially meaningful affect, indicates the complexity of the experience with news content - fake or not – based on cognitive dissonance. Overall, the magnitude of the role of relatedness in this study highlights the importance of community and connectedness one feels while consuming news and the way in which fake news and cognitive dissonance can alter that. These results indicate that this should be at the center of conversations surrounding news content production.

Other than relatedness, the significance of the dimensions of SDT were quite varied for those who were under cognitive dissonance. Indeed, competence and autonomy were mediators for some outcomes but not others. Thus, the way in which fake news gratifies – or does not gratify - audiences who are experiencing cognitive dissonance is diverse and still requires further attention. This suggests that the state of cognitive dissonance provides a more mixed and complex media experience than when cognitive dissonance is not experienced. This reflects Tompkins notion of meaningful affect (1984).

There were of course limitations to this experiment. The limited amount of academic literature pertaining to fake news created a difficult exploration but also a ripe opportunity for study. The use of Mechanical Turk also reduced the ability to oversee the process. For example, people may not have read the article closely and there was no way to assess this. Notably, this should have been curtailed by the requirements for participation. Also, this study only used one article. A different article with a different topic might yield different results. Similarly, the cognitive dissonance condition could be improved. Using a measure then splitting it into conditions was not ideal but can be justified within the context of the study. Likewise, the study did not compare fake news to real news, only the label. Again, this is not ideal but, in order to experimentally control the study, was necessary. Even so, labeling something as fake news has become a common practice by authority figures and social media users in order to discredit content and thus deserves attention.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This study provides a few viable avenues for future research. Broadly, deepening our understanding of how fake news impacts audiences is critical. This can take any number of shapes. Specifically, future studies on the way in which fake news gratifies – or does not gratify - audiences who are experiencing cognitive dissonance requires further attention as it provided fruitful results. On top of that, the importance of community and relatedness was central to this study. Why and how this functioned the way that it did merits further attention. Beyond that, fake news and cognitive dissonance impacted a wide range of emotions including meaningful affect. The complexity of these affects require deeper study and more careful consideration on this topic. Finally, further research could and should incorporate a variety of articles on a variety of topics. The results will likely vary based on topic and should be treated as such.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study offers a series of defining traits of fake news and a review of some of the literature on fake news. From there a corresponding experiment was used to test the impact of fake news. The experiment tested how the label of fake news and feelings of cognitive dissonance impacted audience

members' enjoyment, feelings of meaningfulness and affect. All things that news content producers and academics should be mindful of. Broadly, this study showed that fake news, or at least labeling fake news can impact the gratifications people derive from news. Also, cognitive dissonance had an impact on these gratifications. This study provides evidence that the impact of fake news might, in some cases, rely on whether or not the fake news complies with preexisting beliefs. The role of relatedness was also central to the findings in this study suggesting that gratifications from news consumption rely at least in part on feelings of community and other relationships. This finding is particularly strong throughout the piece and should be considered as such. Though it can be couched in existing work, the researchers believe that this study is simply a first step in developing an understanding of fake news and invite further inquiries to this early step. Ideas for future research are detailed above.

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Chapter 10
Fake Online News:
Rethinking News Credibility for the Changing Media Environment

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ABSTRACT

Today, the media environment has traversed several phases of technological advancements and as a result, there is a shift in the production and consumption of news. This chapter conceived fake news within the milieu of influencing information spread in the society, especially on the cyberspace. Using the hierarchy of influence model trajectory with fake news, it was established that it has become almost impossible to sustain trust and credibility through individual influences on online news content. The primary reason is that journalists are constrained by professional ethics, organizational routines, and ownership influence. Rather than verify facts and offer supporting claims, online users without professional orientation engage in a reproducing information indiscreetly. The chapter recommends that ethics be reconsidered as a means to recreate and imbibe journalistic values that will contend with the fake news pandemic.

INTRODUCTION

Technological advancement has grossly impacted and enhanced the processes of news production and dissemination, just like it has, other fields of human endeavour. In the face of increasing digital transformation, the relationship that existed between news (sources) and journalists is assuming a different dimension due largely to the growing popularity of independent and/or participatory journalism practices (Chan, 2014; Rössler, 2017).

Truly, the various platforms offered by the cyberspace have offered easy access and free style of information sharing. For many people, the internet is now the major other source of information and communication. As such, the traditional gatekeeping role of 'the journalist' has been snatched away because news consumers no longer wait for news but are bombarded with news from 'everywhere'. Mehrotra

(2017) upholds that gatekeeping in today's media environment is solely controlled by high-technology savvy companies, who use existing algorithms as gatekeepers. This is prolonged by the perceived purpose for which agenda is set, either to promote political agendas and/or financial profiteering. Thus, the notion of projecting fake news arises, as a result of the growing popularity of selected news ideas (Shao, Ciampaglia, Varol, Flammini & Menczer, 2017).

The presumed changeover has upheld a previous assertion by Heikkilä and Ahva (2015) that the powerful impact was previously exerted by the traditional media has been diffused by the new forms of purveying information. This rapid growth of information technologies no doubt has also created an overlap in the needs of the media (and) audiences. Therefore, the increasing needs for media content, especially news has raised questions bothering on the credibility of news (sources) in the changing journalistic practices.

There is a point of departure derived for the numerous alternative sources of news and/or information, which is credibility or the absence of it. While the traditional media has continued to manage their news processes in order to ensure credibility, some practitioners have had to rely on undependable sources of news mostly from the cyberspace, which later turns out to be imprecise or absolutely false. Curran, Fenton and Freedman (2016) argued that people's over-reliance on social media news has led to the hype of inaccurate information sources. In the same vein, their basis for this standpoint is due largely to the fact that online sources are built to facilitate communication and not to inform people the real sense of it.

On this basis, the new information society phenomenon which has warranted users (now information prosumers) to put their views above the need for objective facts is revealed. This chapter seeks to examine news credibility in the new media environment as it affects the processes of news production, and by extension, news itself. Research about news credibility and changing practices in journalism have heightened in recent times (Višňovský & Radošinská, 2017). This chapter will provide insight into the concept of news credibility using the backdrop of the universal journalistic ethics as it relates to the global media landscape. Also, new media use and how it has affected ethical practices of news will be brought bare, noting particular bottlenecks which have directly and/or indirectly mitigated against good journalism. In the quest to confront ethical dilemmas, this chapter will do an exploration on the need to reconsider the ethics hitherto employed in news(room) practices, while finding credible news sources of mainstream media content for a reliable future of news culture.

BACKGROUND

In the field of technology, online is broadly used to describe a state of connecting to an existing networked service constructed using computers. The means through which connectivity occurs enables various computerised devices put in place to access other existing services, especially those of local area network and the internet. In more specific terms, data is stored and made available for access by users who are connected to the cyberspace using internet. At this stage, one is said to be online and can use such connectivity to carry out activities such as electronic mailing, data storing, data retrieval, information sharing, learning, and so on.

The assortment of data catalogues on the cyberspace today has enhanced information sharing among online users. According to Willis (2012), every society now needs and depends on digital infrastructures, which can be likened to as the central nervous system. This body of infrastructure makes support available for any possible activity, more for those that are technologically driven. Despite the fluidity of

information today, the journalism practice has suffered several setbacks which affect the primary aim for objectivity and credibility.

Many debates have established that digitalisation of information diminishes the tenets of news source credibility. Suijkerbuijk (2014) perceives that the internet has brought about an unexpected pressure on the models that benefit the media industry. Apart from the business benefits, the flooded information terrain has eroded traditional practices through multimedia and hyper textuality. This new web environment allows people freedom of association, conceivably unlimited rights to source information and by extension, freedom to also participate in journalism.

Franklin (2012) acknowledged that the radical changes in journalism practice have influenced the delicate processes of news gathering, news reporting, news dissemination, and of course, the way people receive and/or perceive same. Over time, this has brought about complications of news source credibility and ethics of the journalism profession, which can be traced to the audiences' new role in news production. The on demand crave necessitates audiences to filter facts through selectivity, and this is one of the numerous reasons fake news gain momentum.

Though conceived as participatory journalism, the demand for news has also increased not minding what format it is presented. The process of digitalisation has challenged both the business models and trust in media industries and journalism profession respectively (Blöbaum, 2014). This notion is upheld by Ireton and Posetti (2018) that the fragility of news has always existed, but the damage inflicted by misinformation has caused further damage to the already porous reputation. Still, it seems the growing concern on fake news rather than revamp this challenge is making it more popular.

THE CHANGING JOURNALISTIC PRACTICES

One major change in journalism practice is the navigation from the mainstream towards the digital space. Using the backdrop of previous research, there are predominantly three glaring areas with which the changing media environment can be assessed. The dominant values in journalism profession are fast eroding. Before now, the audience waited to be fed with news; sources were protected if revealing their identity was life threatening; the gory images of victims in gruesome occurrences were shielded from indiscriminate circulation; and all of it, the journalists neither violated newsmakers nor the need to adhere to the values of the profession.

For a long time now, debates lingered the professionalism of journalism for the inability to clearly delineate tenets in a way that without defined prerequisite knowledge people cannot find a simple route into journalism. The question of professionalism is extensively debated on the basis of related education and research qualification, ethical codes of conduct and monopoly of knowledge all of which culminate into a force to keep non-professionals at bay. Hanitzsch and Mellado (2011) reveal that journalism does not identify with only one culture; as such, the values, beliefs and attitudes manifests in the media content intended to reach the audience. Thus, the fragmented nature of journalism profession has led to failure uphold a single code and left tracts open for anyone to delve into practice.

Another area is the change of possession of power to influence with information. The change in dominant values can be used to identify the ideology of the media using the underlying messages of their coverage, particularly those issues which feature prominently. In today's journalism, audience can do what media owners did and two issues come to play; the power to promote ideology through the media and the drive for profit (Happer & Philo, 2013). As a very effective tool of ideology, the information

spread has shifted from the monopoly unlike what was obtained with traditional media (Prat, 2018), and individuals who are not necessarily media owners now hold a crucial stake.

The widely researched gatekeeping and agenda setting of the media content makers clearly establishes the power of media to influence ideology as well as initiate social mobilisation (Pfetsch & Adam, 2011; McCombs & Guo, 2014). Today, the audience shares this 'ownership' of influence, and tend to have power to inform others through opinion about events, issues, policies and so on. In the context of ideology, media's propaganda use has proved successful overtime and the audiences have also assumed a similar pattern of promoting ideology which can be interpreted as propaganda. With the rise in knowledge and information society, opinions are also evolving at an alarming rate in a matter that media audiences (either fragmented or united and/or hybrid) tend to bond along the lines of ideology (Castells, 2011; Croteau & Hoynes, 2013). Apart from the proliferation of ideologies in society, audiences have also benefitted in the changing media environment.

Lastly, reference to the changing journalistic practices will not be complete without making mention of the influence by technological advancement. The pace at which technological innovations are springing up has expanded and multiplied media-based platforms. As examined by several researchers, media and technological convergence has influenced the nature of journalistic production through the liberty for users to generate content (Chao-Chen, 2013; Kalamar, 2016). In as much as technology has taken over several manual tasks, there are several challenges that militate against journalism practice. Witschge & Nygren (2009) posed to ascertain if the journalism profession is under pressure and found that professionalism is been disrupted. At the same time, it is gradually empowering the audience and disarming the journalists of control they had.

Another issue raised in Lewis (2012) is that the producers are competing for digital space with users, thereby leading to a form of tension in the news process flanked by professional resistance and open participation. Furthermore, there are implication for user's ability to generate content that is visible and at the same time popular. Singer (2014) points that technology has enabled users to become gatekeepers, while other users now have liberty to selectively disseminate information made available on the cyberspace at will. In a different dimension, Spyridou et al. (2013) argued that the fluidity occasioned by innovative changes in roles, expertise and evolving practices cannot be effectual in journalism practice if professional values is maintained. Reese (2007) argues that these new changes in the global media environment and all other emerging practices occasioned by technology can be aligned within the hierarchical influential model.

HIERARCHY OF INFLUENCES AND THE FAKE NEWS TRAJECTORY

As clearly discussed above, ideology is a phenomenon that has influenced media content for a very long time, and has found its way onto the cyberspace today. The social system has been largely replicated and converged in various ways. Therefore, the framework of the hierarchical influences model is applicable to the changing media environment as a whole, and the news culture in particular.

Pamela Shoemaker and Stephen Reese introduced the hierarchy of influences model in a study on mediating the message in 1996. One distinctive way the hierarchy of influence model differs from other media effect theories is the use of multi-level analysis to describe how the social setting influences media content. According to Reese and Shoemaker (2016), these influences are forces that in one way or another collectively or separately invade the media.

The proposal by Shoemaker and Reese explains that the media content influence can be categorized in a range of macro to micro levels, namely individuals, routine practices, media organizations, social institutions and social systems. At the individual level, characteristics that influence media content can occur based on personal and professional levels. This is the minutest or micro level, which can be assessed by the autonomy of the individual, using demographical such as age, sex, training, experience and can explain a limited impact of individual impact (Dombernowsky, 2014). The implication of the above is that the perception of journalists who act as gatekeepers command a minimal influence because of the almost unnoticed force.

Secondly, mass media has routine practices that also tend to have a stronger influence when compared to the individual characteristics. The journalists have to adhere to stringent values and practices with which the media organization's visions are upheld. In Shoemaker and Reese (2014), the routines are perceived enabling structures which clearly define various roles that facilitate the smooth operation of the organization.

Influences at the organization level include editorial procedures that make up decisions of management and news selection. This is where the influences of ownership can be categorised as found in existing literature on the way agendas of media owners interfere with the content either positively or negatively (Humprecht & Esser, 2018). The issue of ownership has enjoyed prolonged debates, and eventually the level of influence differs based on the type of ownership. However, in countries where ownership is predominantly under government control, media content tends to have limited scope and where the ownership is private, the freedom for practitioners is commendable.

The fourth level of influence is the social institutions made up of social actors which media organisations rely upon. The influences in this level culminate from the interface between economic, cultural and political factors with which the media have a very significant relationship (Sjøvaag, 2013). The social institutions have macro level influence on media content, which is exerted by individual journalist thereby causing too little impact when compared to those with wider impact.

Lastly, the social systems also exert wide-reaching influence on media content. The only way the influences vary is the distinctive nature of every media landscape and how they influence media content (Xu & Jin, 2017). These factors are responsible for the macro effects, and can be discussed separately and/or combined.

Using the background of media as an independent variable, the model provides a means to understand the links media has with the social system, culture, social institutions and individuals. While there are several media effects debates on how media influences the social system, Shoemaker and Reese's hierarchy of influence proposed that media is also influenced by the social system. According to Reese (2007), the globe is now a public arena where people have become more knowledgeable and are offered platforms to express their views while also promoting ideologies. As a result, journalism is reconfigured as an open practice as those producing and/or using the electronically harmonised information do not need any formal alignment to do so.

Research that have applied this model shows that there are factors which influence the journalism profession. Xu and Jin (2017) used a multilevel analysis to assess hierarchy influences on the professional role perceptions among online journalists, and found significant influences on three levels, namely: individual, organisational and routine levels. In another study, Relly, Zanger and Fahmy (2015) examined the influences of journalists and found it occurred the most on the individual level, then ideological influence before the routine level. In both studies, it is clear that forces of the individual have highly

impacted on the attitude of journalists. Thus, this is a norm among journalists who adhere to objectivity to ensure that people are well informed about democratic values and public policies.

At this juncture, it is importance to consider the hierarchy of influences trajectory with fake news. Most of the research on fake news have focused on the idea of open citizen participation in the journalism practice. This leads to failure to sustain trust and credibility occasioned by the individual level of influences on media content. First because the journalist is constrained to adhere to professional ethics, routine and ownership influence a lot of the ideas that ordinarily will fulfil the craving for news among audience is ignored. Through the advent of the internet, which has offered users platforms to express opinions and share what they perceive as news, many have ignored caution.

In a traditional news context, information is verified, and sufficient details provided to support claims before eventually publishing or broadcasting as news. Today, however, the reverse is the case, where anyone who has access to internet can (re)share information without validating claims and authenticity of same. These unprofessional practices have affected the credibility of news and raised the platform for popularity of fake online news. In a study, Hedman (2015) found that social media has been normalised and as such, there are new norms and values because of the kind of orientation acquired on the platforms.

Apart from the fact that the quality of journalism has declined over time, leading to obstruction of the true details, journalists now struggle to stay afloat in the pool of existing news sources that aggressively seek to just promote ideology to derive profit (PEN America, 2017; Von Dohnanyi, 2003). Going by the micro to macro level of influences, the credibility of news has continued to suffer prolonged decline in as much as the journalists have continued to carryout out unbiased reporting. The quality of news in some way is also influenced by the changing relationships between the actors clearly outlined by Reese and Shoemaker (2016). For instance, if the relationships between journalists and media owners shifts, media content is also influenced; so, the same goes to the routine practices. This implies that no matter how little the influence, impact is felt and when such lingers on, there accumulation results into a drastic change-level. In today's era therefore, information thrives despite its lack of credibility, in contrast with what was in years past. The habit of organisations retrenching journalists across the globe has rather promoted free content, which has no desired cohesion and projects anything unprofessional journalistic ethics.

FAKE NEWS: SPREAD AS A GLOBAL PHENOMENON

Fake news has always existed for a long time, however, this phenomenon has gained prominence since the explosion of information and communication technologies. Historically, fake news in the context of media discourse has been tied to issues of yellow journalism or yellow press, a concept that is credited to events in the media during the late nineteenth century. Yellow journalism is believed to have been coined by Erwin Wardman, who at the time was editor at the *New York Press*. This pronouncement was influenced by popular comic strips by Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst both owners of the *New York World* and *New York Journal*, respectively (Kovarik, 20; Strout, 2003). Wardman's inference was also popular among journalists, to describe the use of yellow ink in the circulation war between Pulitzer and Hearst. Rather than focusing on the journalistic quality of content, both publishers engaged in a war of loud headlines and shock tactics to compete for audience, advertisements, personnel, and attention.

Several pervasive issues emerged that flamed other events from this period upward into the eventual lurid political propagandas that have shaped world histories. In Rüdiger (2014), the early years in the 20ᵗʰ century experienced high forms of organised propaganda by governments to manipulate the publics. At this time, propaganda became the mainstay of political agendas for derision and animosity against perceived enemies of the government and to control the sentiments held by people (Pfeifer, 2014). Therefore, so far as the people feared, spited and hated as enflamed, it meant they were overwhelmed to believe anything.

Eventually, the use of propaganda primarily in the media by government establishments to back ideological inclinations and/or justify same became very unpopular due to its constant use for benefits of the elite (Gonzelez, 2013). In simple terms, the striking semblance in yellow journalism and propaganda is the use of sensationalism to spur circulation, attract readership, as well as traffic and followership in the case of the converged media environment. Today, this phenomenon is simply called fake news, because of the drift of news from reporting the 'acceptable' to that which 'must be accepted' to fulfil the motives for such content (Rathore, 2016).

By this assertion, the elements that plagued news from the yellow journalism era such as setting the agenda with fake headlines and captions with fabricated material have confined media practitioner to the status of 'small-fry'. These have resulted into bottlenecks such as non-professionalism, ethical transgressions, government sanctions/influence, bias reporting, and fake news propagation on social media platforms, to mention but a few. The thing with fake news is that there are believable facts that may tend to inform, but do not constitute a true account of an occurrence or narrative.

As the name implies, fake news has come to be understood as intended to trick people with intentional motives and the use of exaggerated sensation has heightened in this 21ˢᵗ century, thereby making fake news spreads very fast. In the following sections, focus is on the spread of, motives for and the challenges in journalistic practices resulting from the spread of fake news. Having identified fake news as a global phenomenon, its spread also poses a major risk threatening the credibility of information in today's knowledge society. As can be deduced from the foregoing, the diffusion of fake news is propelled through digital platforms, necessitating the knowledge of many users. Such falsehood circulates in form of hoaxes, malicious conspiracies, rumours, parody, and many other forms.

Various research has traced the impact, spread and influence on the society (Qui et al., 2017; Shao et al., 2017; Simon, 2018). The 2017 Munich Security Report raised the issue of (dis)information, as a major challenge to media literacy (Bunde et al., 2017). In the same vein, the European Association for Viewers Interest workshop in 2017 which focused on fact-checking on media literacy and the changing landscape established major types of misleading news. In both reports, it is difficult to isolate any form of fake news from the other despite varied intentions whether it is parochial or paid-for because in both cases, the goal is to not tell it as it is.

Glaringly, the technology boom has led to rapid transformation, transmissions and the adoption of information and knowledge. Simon (2018) sought to ascertain if fake news has strong roots in the false agenda spread and found that there are other underlying problems in journalism practice and the larger information sphere. Today, there is generally popular knowledge about the false claims, yet, people have continued to perpetuate its spread. Very popular answers to the question of fake information spread are identified as social bots, information overload, and limited attention. According to Wani and Jabin (2016) there are several online bots, namely: spam, social, like, influential and bot nets. In a study conducted by Shao et al. (2017), it was found that bots are chief means through which fake news spread so fast on the cyberspace.

Put simply, software bots are designed to simulate the behaviour of social media users. Ferrara et al. (2016) explained that bot content is produced to intermingle with those using social media. There are reoccurring incidences of the use of algorithms on Facebook and Twitter (which are the top most used social media platforms) driven by either economic or political incentives to creep in unnoticed and influence their perception of reality (Messias et al., 2013; Kramer, Guillory & Hancock, 2014).

Ferrara (2018) measured social spam and the effect of bots on information diffusion in social media, which findings revealed the magnanimity bots are used to distribute unsolicited messages to users. This assertion is justified in Haciyakupoglu et al. (2018) that false information spreads fast on platforms like social media because users are unsuspecting and tend to be attracted to the perceived novelty of same. Through social media platforms, users compete to be seen and read without hindrances, however, there tend to be the likelihood that the quality of information is jeopardised.

These findings upheld notions that the cyberspace has compounded efforts to curtail the spread of fake news. On the issue of information overload, users are found to be overwhelmed with too many news alternatives; as such, some resolve to follow those who are believed to offer steady supply. Similarly, information overload has resulted to reduced attentiveness for several users, who coupled with daily life activities are not able to accurately decipher the authenticity of the information they consume (Ji, Ha & Sypher, 2014; York, 2013). This has resulted in several debates which proved that knowledge has come within reach for many, raised a platform for a lot of people to be heard, but has great repercussions on the credibility of the information in circulation. Other strong arguments oppose the notion that social bots are responsible for today's accelerated spread of fake news.

According to Kwon et al. (2013), the most prominent features of rumour propagation on social media are temporal, structural and linguistic, none of which is considered a technical cause, thereby disputing the idea that social bots propel spread of fake news. In a study comparing the spread of true and false news, Vosoughi, Roy and Aral (2018) argued that true stories take longer time to spread unlike those considered to be rumours. The most soothing reason for the cause of variation is simply the human nature. By this assertion, it is clear why stories with political inclination tend to attract more traffic followed by those of elitist individuals. Vosoughi et al. (2018) use the algorithm for bot detection to eliminate several accounts with high tendency by still the depth and intensity of fake news did not subside.

A national telephone survey conducted immediately after the 2008 U.S. presidential election provides evidence that aggregate internet use promotes exposure to both rumours and their rebuttals, but that the total effect on rumour beliefs is negligible. More troublingly, the data demonstrate that rumours e-mailed to friends/family are more likely to be believed and shared with others and that these patterns of circulation and belief exhibit strong political biases (Garrett, 2011). This is how the spread of false information undermines the need for news credibility, thereby giving room for people to be misinformed through all forms of campaigns. The intent to circulate falsehood is targeted to influence opinion either for social and/or political benefit.

So far, the views and findings presented in the above sections clearly show how fake news has influenced behaviours of users on social media. As a global problem, it seems almost impossible to put an end to the phenomenon. This is because of the profiteering motives of fake news. Attempts in recent times give a pointer to the possibility of using artificial intelligence to tackle fake news on the cyberspace as it has been proven to be one major repellent of the spread.

The move to ban fake news domains has contributed significantly, but the more they dearth, the more and more of such are using new identities to spring up. Karadzhov, Gencheva, Nakov and Koychev (2018) focused on adopting textual analysis to unravel fake information using style and vocabulary. To an extent,

due to the benefits, fake news is not confined with domains that specialise in it alone, even the so-called credible news communities tend to publish misleading information (Mukherjee & Weikum, 2015).

Karadzhov et al. (2018) acknowledged that fake news is carefully produced with the intention to mislead followers and make profit at the same time. They clearly posit that aside from bots (as discussed in the spread of fake news), click-baits also have invaded credible information on cyberspace. In yet another dimension, Wani and Jabin (2016) identify three major types of profiles as those compromised, cloned and fake ones, all of which are harmful for reputation and credibility of identity and information in the cyberspace respectively.

Until today's uproar against fake news, the attention it enjoyed was not as prevalent. This has further propelled research, strategy and policy to usurp the spread of fake news. Notwithstanding, other avenues to derive benefit have continued to emerge.

RECONSIDERING ETHICS

The ideal role of journalism is to ensure credibility and fairness in reporting various events while also strengthening societal values. However, changing practices media practices have also altered the manner with which news is presented. Instead of the investigative approach, Reese and Lee (2012) argue that news reporting has become evocative thereby rendering a mixture of information and entertainment. Posetti (2013) established that the tools available for journalists pose a challenge to the credibility and professional ethics. This points to fact that that it becomes almost impossible for journalist to conduct the desired investigation before putting out information due to the need to sustain the speed of information availability.

Amidst the plague of fake news in the newly converged media environment, it is pertinent to uphold the call to reconsider ethics in the journalism profession. In so many ways, fake news has challenged the credibility of news and sources. The stronghold of fake news cannot be tied to one single cause; however, it is easy to distinguish when sensational headlines are used to captivate the attention of the audience. Apart from headlines, photos are also a means through which people get misinformed about events, people, places and opinions.

In Martens et al. (2018) the quality of news becomes less important when it purposes to only attract profit and/or other motives. The tricks are calculated to manipulate, propagate deceit, fabricate malicious falsehood and mislead people. For this reason, news that lacks the necessary credibility is an undercut to journalism, which contributes to people disbelieving certain media content. The new style of news reporting has further compounded the issue of credibility and this is particular with news media from the global south when compared with those of the west. As described by Dajani (2012), media from the west reports news in a more factual context while the media in the third world countries most of the time have inconsistency. Talking about credibility, another issue is that people are also being deprived their information needs thereby widening the gap between the 'haves' and the 'have nots.'

To address the need for reconsidering ethics in the changing media environment, it is pertinent to consider existing research. Wardle and Derakhshan (2017) conceptualises that information disorder exists as a result of first, deliberate attempt to harm a person and/or group of people, secondly to mislead without necessary leading to harm, and thirdly to both inform and cause harm. In the above assertion, the peculiar elements with which disorder can be identified is through the originator, who is common cases conceives and sponsors the message intended for the receiver to interpret it as harmful.

In recent times, several calls have emerged for the use of media literacy to counter the loopholes through which fake online news have thrived. Calling media literacy 'a centre of gravity for countering fake news' Bulger and Davison (2018, p.3) insist that the professional journalist needs to develop a strategy to re-learn the new media environment using media literacy so as to (re)build the desired coherence. It becomes glaring that in as much as the responsibility behoves the journalists, it equally applies to organisations, governments, and importantly audiences, who have assumed a central role of (re)producing information.

Implementing media literacy will create new values in the information system, while promoting credibility and accuracy of news. The popularity of new forms of media has led news organisations have adopted convergence to bridge any possible gaps in delivering information. While acknowledging the influence of rapid technological changes on journalism, Olausson (2017) submitted that the social media platforms at the same time reinvent the identity of journalist and the profession. In doing so, different approaches are used to either through engaging the audience or promoting ethical standards in news gathering.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Fake News: As the name implies, fake news is information that lack adequate quality to be considered truthful, only intended to deceive.

Information Technology: Is concerned with the use of computers to process information for archival, retrieval and distribution.

Media Ethics: Are the core values and codes guiding the ideals of media practices, activities and professions.

New Media (Environment): The new media environment otherwise referred to as new media, is used to explain internet-based processing and distribution of information and other communication processes.

News Credibility: Is about information source reliability and fairness.

Online: Is a term used the denote connectivity to internet and cyberspace.

Chapter 11

Fake News and Information Warfare:
An Examination of the Political and Psychological Processes From the Digital Sphere to the Real World

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ABSTRACT

Fake news—false information passed off as factual—is an effective weapon in the information age. For instance, the Russian government perfected techniques used in its 2007 Estonian and 2008 Georgian cyber campaigns to support Donald Trump's successful candidacy in the 2016 United States presidential election. In this chapter, the authors examine fake news and Russia's cyberwarfare efforts across time as case studies of information warfare. The chapter identifies key terms and reviews extant political science and psychological research related to obtaining an understanding of psychological cyber warfare ("psywar") through the proliferation of fake news. Specifically, the authors suggest that there are social, contextual, and individual factors that contribute to the spread and influence of fake news and review these factors in this chapter.

INTRODUCTION

The proliferation and viral spread of fake news - false information passed off as factual – is a global problem, accelerated by information and communications technology that enables near-instant and easily disguised messaging. In the United States, fake news is best known as one of myriad controversies surrounding the 2016 Presidential Election. Candidate Donald J. Trump accused the professional or

"mainstream" news media of perpetrating a false picture of reality. Using the label "fake news," he effectively argued that Americans ought not to trust such information sources as The New York Times or CNN. Meanwhile, Trump profited from the proliferation of false reports from less reputable but friendly sources, for example, National Enquirer headlines such as "Hillary: Six Months to Live!" (Graham, 2018) And not least, there is online deception perpetrated by Russia intended to influence the American electorate in favor of Trump (ODNI, 2017).

Fake news is not a new phenomenon. In 1896 William Jennings Bryan began his own newspaper to express his views because "There seems to be an epidemic of fake news." (in LaFrance, 2017). Historian Eric Burns observes, "The golden age of America's founding was also the gutter age of American reporting." (Dickerson, 2016) What is new is the diffusion of fake news, fueled by the ease with which information broadly and accurately spreads across new media. The information age has opened the gates for more participants and more intense forms of manipulation than ever. Fake news spreads rapidly through social media (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017) by individuals who created it solely to make money from advertising revenue (e.g., Sydell, 2016, November 23) or to harm the credibility of high-profile individuals such as former US Democratic Presidential Candidate, Hillary Clinton (e.g., Silverman, 2016, November). Pope Francis has compared fake news to the snake in the Garden of Eden (Horowitz, 2018). There are real-world consequences. Democracy itself is undermined. Individuals take action, including violent action, in response to the stimulus of the media sphere.

The objective of this chapter is to illuminate socio-psychological dynamics in fake news. What makes fake news effective? Does labeling a news story as "fake" reduce its effectiveness? This chapter reviews constructs that are key to mapping the problem domain and studies providing foundational insights into factors affecting susceptibility to real or fraudulent influence. This chapter investigates two cases of psywar from the same source: Russian Government interference in Western Democracies (Estonia and the United States). There are both contextual factors and individual differences that contribute to the spread and influence of black propaganda online. This includes how information is received and shared, involving elements that are social –such as people's online interactions and context; technological - the affordances of technology that affect social interaction; and individual – such as the attributes one brings to the engagement. This chapter considers factors in the media sphere other than fake news that may shape and reinforce its effects. It concludes with recommendations for future research on this topic.

BACKGROUND: KEY TERMS IN THE POST-TRUTH ERA

What is going on? One might argue that Americans in 2016 were ready to believe just about anything. Comedian Stephen Colbert had over a decade before coined the word "truthiness" to refer to "the quality of seeming or being felt to be true, even if not necessarily true" (Oxford Living Dictionaries, 2018). After the 2016 election, the late Senator John McCain expressed alarm at "the growing inability, and even unwillingness, to separate truth from lies." (John McCain, 2017). In a post-truth world, objective truth does not matter, and what is truthful or factual is opinion-based and therefore purely in the eye of the beholder. America had become "untethered from reality," a "fatasyland," Kurt Andersen wrote in The Atlantic (2017, December 28). Now more than ever, Americans are confused about even "basic facts" and 64% of Americans say that fake news has caused confusion (Mitchell et al. 2016).

Indeed, Kurt Andersen (2017, December 28) blames the social context that let this evil enter. Andersen argues that American academics and counterculture from the 1960s onward promoted relativism that

Table 1. Key terminology

	What it Is	**Example**	**Motivation**	**Interest**	**Consequential**
fake news	misinformation or disinformation disguised as news	"NPR: 25 Million Votes For Clinton 'Completely Fake' – She Lost Popular Vote https://archive.fo/earRt"	Deception sow uncertainty persuade	broad	yes
rumor	unsubstantiated information circulating widely	Melania Trump body double	gain status interpret ambiguous situation	broad	yes
gossip	private information shared	those two are dating	emotional connection	personal	no
urban legend	folklore handed down, sensational, scary	alligators living in sewers	moral lesson and/or cautionary tale	broad	no
delusion	belief despite evidence to the contrary	Messiah complex	motivated bias need for closure intolerance of ambiguity	personal	yes

eroded consensus on the idea of "truth" and "facts," or the relevance of "expertise." Although Andersen depicts the phenomenon of fake news and conspiracy theories as a uniquely American phenomenon that, like so many American products and services, spread elsewhere across the globe, it has been a current in many societies particularly in times of uncertainty or war.

So, what, exactly, is spreading? What are the appropriate labels for "untruths" in the information space? The discourse on fake news in fact references related but distinct constructs: rumor, conspiracy theory, and delusion. Rumor and conspiracy theories play outsized roles in the current phenomena. Examining their socio-psychological properties may provide some clues as to how fake news works and how to counter it. Delusion, although less widely shared than rumor or conspiracy, is common among the population and highlights individual-level reactions to information. See Table 1 for key terms and examples.

Fake News

Contemporary definitions of fake news vary widely. Some researchers classify political satire (e.g., Balmas, 2014) as fake news, while other scholars define fake news as information that appears to be news yet varies in degree of veracity in reporting (e.g., Conroy, Rubin, & Chen, 2015). We follow Conroy et al.'s (2015) definition of fake news as information that appears to be news but lacks a factual foundation for its claims. In some instances, fake news may spread "honest mistakes" or misinformation. More frequently and perniciously, it is disinformation.

Rumor

Rumor, simply defined, is unsubstantiated information in wide circulation. (Allport & Postman, 1947; Guttieri & Caglayan) Although difficult to verify, an effective rumor is also hard to dismiss immediately. Rumors are especially prevalent in times of societal uncertainty, operating as a sort of "improvised news." (Shibutani, 1966) to help a society make sense of an ambiguous situation. Rumor is typically more sensational than, but lacking the evidence of, actual news (DiFonzo & Bordia, 2006). Gossip and

urban legends are conversational forms with many common elements. (Guerin, 2006). These all involve a story that affect listeners, such as novel information that grabs the attention of the listener. However, gossip is more personal and less consequential than rumor; urban legends are of broad but not personally consequential interest. Studies have shown that rumors are an effective means to gain status among one's peers. (Juvonen, Wang, & Espinoza, 2013). Rumors often speak to a listener's bias, for example, Donald Trump promoted a rumor that President Barack Obama was born outside the United States. "The Birther Movement" of Americans who disliked Obama, or the idea of a black president welcomed the idea that he might be disqualified.

Rumors are more easily shared than corrections. For example, an early (and obviously false) story about a triple breasted woman in Tampa Florida was shared 40,000 times (Garber, 2014). An article published by Snopes, a website dedicated to debunking rumors, refuted the story, but that article had only 12,500 shares (DiFonzo, 2013). Boring facts cannot compete with outlandish falsehoods in the popular imaginary.

Just two months before election day, Trump publicly accepted that President Obama was born in the US. Unfortunately, the false and malicious story was already implanted. An Economist/YouGov poll in December 2017, over a year after Trump's concession, found that 51% of Republicans surveyed responded that it was probably or definitely true that President Obama was born in Kenya (Frankovic, 2017).

Megan Garber (2014) observes, "There's the fact that 'sorry, just kidding about that three-boobed lady thing' is nowhere near as shareable as a 'whoa, three-boobed lady!' thing in the first place." According to an MIT study, news making false claims was 70 percent more likely to be shared on Twitter: "True stories were rarely retweeted by more than 1,000 people, but the top 1 percent of false stories were routinely shared by 1,000 to 100,000 people. And it took true stories about six times as long as false ones to reach 1,500 people." (Lohr, 2018).

Conspiracy Theory

Conspiracy theories allege a scheme and cover up. That actual conspiracies exist makes it easy for psychological operations to manipulate theories, which are not or cannot be verified by facts or objective method. Populists, in particular, because they rise on the fear of "the people" against some "elite" or another ethnic group, share conspiracy theories as part of their identity and group formation. (Yablokov, 2014). Popular conspiracy theories include government cover-ups of some aspect of the John F. Kennedy assassination, Unidentified Flying Objects, and even the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Professor Kate Starbird noticed conspiracies circulating after mass shooting incidents. She has identified "emerging alternative media ecosystem on the web" by mapping the connections of conspiracies on Twitter to web-based news sites. As part of this process, she studied 81 sites including beforeitsnews.com, nodisinfo.com veteranstoday.com and infowars.com. These sites feature suspicion of "globalism." The visitors and page views of Infowars.com are on par with the *Economist* (Beauchamp, 2018). Although bots may be generating it, a viewer who finds that "multiple sources" convey the same information may think it valid, however erroneous.

Delusion

In a January 2017 Washington Post survey, photos of the Obama and Trump inaugurations, Trump and Clinton supporters were asked which of the photos depicted which event. The two images are featured side by side in Figure 1.

Trump supporters disproportionately (41% of them compared to 8% of Clinton supporters) said that the photo of the larger crowd (belonging to Obama) was the crowd attending the Trump inaugural. Separately, half of the participants were asked a different question, which photo depicted a larger crowd. 21% of Trump voters said that the photo on the left in Figure 1, depicting the Trump inaugural, was larger compared to 2% of Obama supporters. The Post suspected the phenomenon of "expressive responding" in which the answers of the Trump supporters were more about expressing their support for Trump than it was about factually answering the questions. It is also possible that these subjects genuinely believe that they what they see is accurate because they are motivated to interpret what they see in accordance with their preferences.

Among the general population it is common to find delusion, which is to maintain belief in spite of evidence, or lack of it.There are those who score highly on the Peters Delusion Index, (Peters, Joseph, Day, & Garety, 2004) and with greater conviction, preoccupation, and distress. Delusion is personal or, idiosyncratic, in contrast to widely accepted conspiracies or religious beliefs. Are some people simply more gullible? Researchers have established that it is more common among the clinically delusional

Figure 1. Aerial views of the inaugurations of Trump (Photo A) and Obama (Photo B)
Source: Washington Post

to jump to conclusions without seeking evidence, and correlated delusion-proneness with a high need for closure. (Colbert & Peters, 2002) Given the prevalence of some delusion in the general population, these findings may offer insight. Intolerance of ambiguity and need for closure are considered distinct phenomena, but both seem relevant to human responses to the cognitive load of modern communications.

SPREADING THE NEWS

For foreign powers seeking to shape politics of another nation, fake news is a tool of psychological warfare that spreads (false) propaganda in order to promote one's own position, cause or candidate, against that of other(s). Note: for a commonsense definition, see Merriam Webster Online. The US military differentiates propaganda according not only to deception, but also to attribution. If propaganda, is it is overt, whether true or false, it is considered to be "white" when the originator takes responsibility for it; "gray" - which again can be true or false - when it lacks an identifiable source; or "black" when it deliberately presents a false source. (Goldstein & Jacobowitz, 1996). This latter form characterized Russian operations in numerous nations including the United States. Figure 2 provides an example of a Russian Internet Research Agency (IRA) advertisement placed on Facebook, one of over 3,500 purchased, that disguised its source.

Figure 2. Example of a Facebook page created by the Internet Research Agency, a Russian enterprise, intended to sow discord in the United States
Source: U.S. House of Representatives Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Democrats, "Exposing Russia's Effort to Sow Discord Online: The Internet Research Agency and Advertisements."

Figure 3. An example political ad placed by Russians in the months leading up to the 2016 US Presidential election
Source: https://democrats-intelligence.house.gov/uploadedfiles/6053177352305.pdf

Practitioners of psychological operations analyze their target audience - typically enemy soldiers, civilian workers, and/or commanders - based upon their ability to achieve the objective (effectiveness) (Goldstein & Jacobowitz, 1996). Russian propagandists analyzed the vulnerabilities (perception, motivation, stress and attitude) of their target audiences, and their susceptibility to influence. For example, Russian ads in the US election (illegally purchased because they are foreign) targeted religious audiences on Facebook, as in the ad depicted in Figure 3 below.

Advertising firms may employ similar techniques. There is in fact a relationship between political propaganda and commercial advertising. The Trump campaign, for example, hired Cambridge Analytica to provide detailed such information on over 87 million Facebook users, including their identities, friends, and "likes" (Granville, 2018) in order develop more effective Pro-Trump digital ads tailored

Figure 4. One of Donald Trumps's many tweets decrying "fake" news
Source: @RealDonaldTrump verified in Twitter search with thanks to Trump Twitter Archive

to individuals based on their personalities. Their aim was to design ads based upon more finely tuned determinations than those available through more traditional data-gathering techniques. These included psychological traits such as "whether a particular voter was, say, a neurotic introvert, a religious extrovert, a fair-minded liberal or a fan of the occult." (Rosenberg, Confessore, & Cadwalladr, 2018). The revelation that Cambridge had used people's private data unknowingly or under false pretenses was, however, cause for not just concern, but Congressional investigation.

Cambridge Analytica initially took credit for the Trump win. Likewise, a former employee and whistle blower charges that their services delivered a decisive advantage in the vote of the United Kingdom to leave the European Union (or Brexit). Although certainly unethical, and possibly illegal, those activities do not cross the line of information warfare unless alleged ties are proven between the firm and foreign agencies seeking to shape these events. The analysis was used to develop messaging that frequently spread rumors and allegations of conspiracy in order to undermine both the legitimacy of political opponents and confidence in the news media.

As the image from 2017 depicted in Figure 4 illustrates, the 45th President of the United States and others in his administration have persistently sought to re-define unfavorable mainstream media coverage of his administration as fake news. Similarly, certain members of the President's administration have avoided the truth by suggesting that there is such a thing as "alternate facts," an oxymoron.

The US intelligence community has determined that Russian President Vladmir Putin directed his government to launch an information campaign disseminated by various means, including paid human "trolls" posting provocative or divisive comments, and software or bots to reproduce and spread information. According to their joint report:

"Moscow's influence campaign followed a Russian messaging strategy that blends covert intelligence operations—such as cyber activity—with overt efforts by Russian Government agencies, state-funded media, third-party intermediaries, and paid social media users or "trolls.'" (ODNI, 2017: ii)

Russia used psychological warfare tactics similar to yet more sophisticated than those previously employed in cyberattacks against Estonia in 2007 and Georgia in 2008. Russian campaigns took advantage of the features of the different social media platforms to sow chaos and disinformation on the American Electorate (Lin & Kerr, 2017). For instance, on Twitter, bots - automated programs such as chat bots for social interaction - were used to help disinformation spread virally. On Facebook, ads placed by the Russians were micro-targeted at voters living in key districts around the country. Conflicting protests were set up using Facebook's event planning tool, bringing Americans holding different perspectives on controversial topics to face-off with one another. African Americans were targeted with messaging intended to influence them to stay away from the polls on election day (Howard, Ganesh, Liotsiou, Kelly & François, 2018). The overall impact of this interference on the outcome of the election is still being investigated but emerging evidence suggests that this influence operation was effective in suppressing votes and intensifying pre-existing political and societal divisions in the United States (Jamison, 2018). Professional news bureaus and fact checking organizations attempted to debunk fake news stories. It was a difficult task because the disinformation was delivered via social media at scale and many messages went viral.

Technological developments that enable cheap, instantaneous and wide-reaching communication are important elements of the fake news dynamic. The software platforms known as social media created an inviting ecosystem for fake news. Practitioners of psychological operations are among many actors using automated bots as well as humans to perform analysis and inject messages. According to Pew Research Center in 2017, 93% of Americans reported reading news online (Pew, June 6, 2018). Many Americans consume online news through social media -- 35%, says Pew -- which is about the same as the percentage who go directly to a website to read the news (36%). Consider that a mere 5% of American adults used social media in 2005, increasing tenfold to 50% by 2011. As of 2017, 69% of Americans report using social media (Pew, Feb. 5, 2018). Today a surprising number of users do so on a daily basis. Among Facebook users, for example, 74% reported being on the site at least once a day; 51% more than once daily. More than 60% of Snapchat and Instagram users are active daily. More than 40% of Twitter and Instagram users are on the site at least once daily. (Smith & Anderson, 2018, March 1) As a result, social media provides a venue for bots and trolls - human beings seeking to create conflict or confusion - to disseminate misinformation.

The internet offers gifts to actors -domestic and foreign- who seek to influence political behavior by empowering ordinary individuals to reach the entire rest of the globe at lightning speed. That the Trump campaign was vulnerable to Russian trolls is well-established. The Internet Research Agency, the "troll factory" linked to Russian intelligence and President Vladmir V. Putin himself, created false personas who interacted with unsuspecting Trump campaign staff in the campaign's Facebook pages (Vogel, 2018). For instance, they focused on the swing state of Florida, writing to the campaign for help staging rallies in August of 2016.

Likewise, the Russian campaign preyed on American divisions. The Clinton campaign depended upon strong African-American voter turnout. The Russian Instagram account "Woke Blacks" called Clinton "the lesser of two devils" and urged African-Americans to stay away from the polls. The Russians also urged voters to choose the third-party candidate Jill Stein with an Instagram ad promoting a post saying "Choose peace and vote for Jill Stein. Trust me, it's not a wasted vote." (Martin & Haberman, 2018, February 18).

It can be difficult to discern fake posts and personas from authentic ones (for example, see Silva and Sterbenz, 2018). One must look for clues, such as whether there is a photo of a person, the number of

Figure 5. Researchers follow Twitter posts in Russian influence operations, identifying trends as depicted above
(Source: Alliance for Securing Democracy)
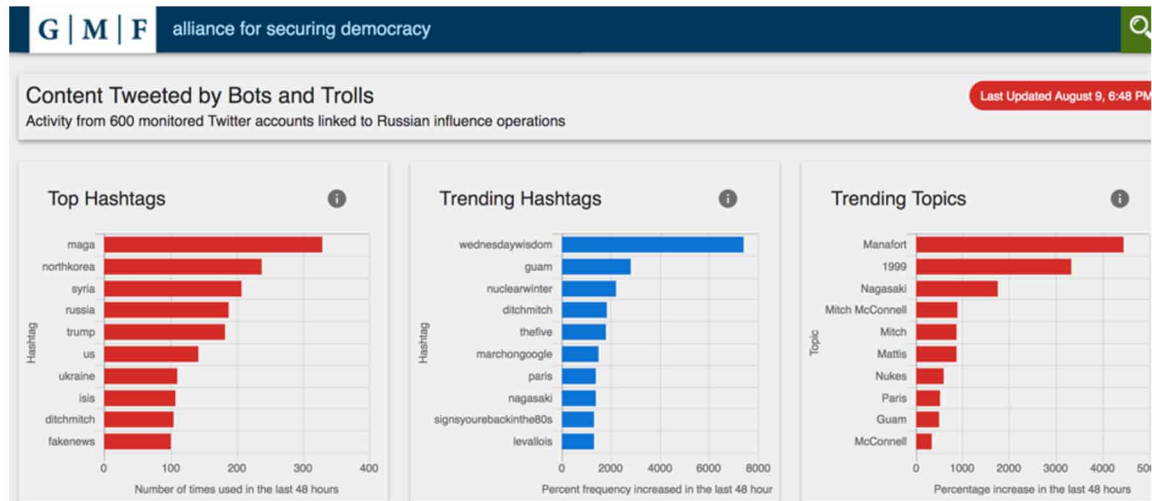
followers compared to the number following, or the number of posts compared to the days the account exists. The software "botcheck.me" enables Twitter users to use machine learning to identify political propaganda. It is not necessary for humans to read a story to participate in sharing it widely. Tony Haile, CEO of Chartbeat who studies web traffic, notes that "once a message has reached a critical number of people via bots, those people will assist in the spread of that information even though more than half of them will not have read it." (Burkhardt, 2017).

Since the election, Russian bots continue to influence politics at the highest levels. Clint Watts, an expert on cybersecurity at the FBI told the NPR that this is happening:

They might broadcast stories and then follow up with another tweet that tries to gain the president's attention, or they'll try and answer the tweets that the president puts out...It's a circular system. Sometimes the propaganda outlets themselves will put out false or manipulated stories. Other times, the president will go with a conspiracy (O'Connor & Schneider, 2017).

One successful example is a conspiracy theory that the Obama administration wiretapped Trump during the campaign. Once the conspiracy gained traction, bots and trolls amplified the message and added further conspiracies to the ecosystem.

FACTORS IN FAKE NEWS

In today's social media age, individuals see themselves as empowered participants in the construction of the information stream. In illustration of this, consider Cameron Harris, a recent college graduate in Maryland. In Fall 2016, Harris purchased an expired domain name, ChristianTimesNewspaper.com, for $5. When candidate Donald Trump was down in the polls, making comments about election integrity and hinting at voter fraud, Harris posted the following headline:

BREAKING: "Tens of thousands" of fraudulent Clinton votes found in Ohio warehouse https://t.co/yU1AyAVRHp via @FoxNews @ @CBSNews @ABC -- TRUMP TV (@SJavner) October 2, 2016.

The headline and accompanying story - completely fabricated by Mr. Harris - was eventually shared with six million people (Scott, 2017). The lies did come to light, and if Harris had sold ChristainTimesNewspaper before that happened, he may have netted much more than $20,000. Mr. Harris did lose his job once the details of his role in the proliferation of fake news was revealed (Scott, 2017). The ruse succeeded in part because of the typical Trump supporters' distrust in the mainstream media and their faith in their own candidate. In other words, motivated reasoning, emotional contagion and social validation all appear to play a role in susceptibility to fake news. Of particular concern today is their role in behavior, how social media engagement prompts individuals to take action in the real world, sometimes with dire consequences.

Motivated Reasoning

The construct of motivated reasoning suggests that "people are more likely to arrive at those conclusions that they want to arrive at." (Kunda, 1990) A person may desire to be rational, and search memories and other sources for evidence, but studies of motivated reasoning find that the search itself, the reasoning involved, is directionally biased toward evidence that will confirm one's own beliefs. It is reasonable to assume then that where there is ideological polarization, there is motivated reasoning. A small percentage of the American population's political beliefs fall into the ideological extremes of "consistently liberal" or "consistently conservative." But their views have outsized influence compared to others with mixed ideological views. They are more civically engaged and therefore more likely to vote, to donate, and to participate directly (Habits, 2014). It is possible that these individuals are also more likely to spread rumor, knowingly or unknowingly. Indeed, it is difficult to discern the degree to which the average person who spreads a rumor actually believes it to be true. As Thomas Jefferson observed in the early days of American politics, "defamation is becoming a necessary of life .... [E]ven those who do not believe these abominations, still read them with complacence [and] betray a secret pleasure in the possibility that some may believe them, tho they do not themselves." Thomas Jefferson (letter to John Norvell June 11, 1807, cited in Hundley, 2017).

Emotional Contagion

Arousal, or emotional response, fuels motivated reasoning. As Richard Herrmann explains, "Attachment produces more intense positive and negative emotions that in turn shape the interpretation of unfolding events and lead norms to be applied in an inconsistent fashion." (Herrmann, 2017).

Emotional responses are also correlated with the proclivity to share with others in a phenomenon of emotional contagion. Research on the spread of urban legends and videos online (Heath, Bell, & Sternberg, 2001) has shown that people were more likely to spread urban legends that evoked interest, surprise, or disgust. Guadagno and colleagues found a similar pattern of results with online videos. Furthermore, their results also revealed that the likelihood of sharing the videos was also affected by the source of the videos (Guadagno, Rempala, Murphy, & Okdie, 2013). Specifically, videos that made people angry and were distributed by members of other groups (the outgroup) were more likely to be spread by individuals who viewed the video than were similar videos coming from ingroup members. Regardless of the emotion evoked by the video, they further revealed that interest in the content mediated the relationship between affect and intentions to spread the videos.

In a study of more than 126,000 stories on Twitter between 2006-2017, researchers found that true stories were associated more with anticipation, sadness or joy. False claims, by contrast, were more likely to be met with emotions of surprise or disgust (Lohr, 2018). More recent evidence also indicates that fake news spreads faster and farther than factual news. Specifically, Vosoughi, Roy, and Aral (2018) examined the spread of verifiably false and genuine news stories on Twitter over an 11-year period. Their results revealed that over 125,000 stories were spread by approximately 3 million people with the fake news stories spreading more than the factual news. This finding was even more pronounced when the stories covered politics. They further examined whether bots were responsible for this difference but found that bots spread an equal amount of genuine and false news stories. Thus, the faster and broader spread of fake news is attributable to human behavior.

Social Influence Processes

Social influence refers to a change in attitude, belief, or behavior as a result of real or imagined external pressure (Cialdini, 2009). Generally, the literature indicates that there are two types of social influence processes: persuasion -- a change in attitude or belief, and compliance -- a change in behavior. While it may seem logical that people's attitudes and behavior are related, the extant literature suggests that this is not always the case (cf. Fazio & Zanna, 1981). Instead, the extent to which attitudes and behavior are related varies by how much a person knows about a topic, how personally relevant it is to them, and the ease with which people can access their attitude on the topic. The more a person knows about a topic, the more relevant it is to them, and/or the more easily they can access their attitude on the topic, the greater the concordance between people's attitudes and behavior.

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM; Petty & Cacioppo, 1984; Petty & Brinol, 2012) is a dual process model of persuasion that establishes how people vary in the amount of cognitive effort they put into processing persuasive appeals. This theory indicates that people tend to process persuasive appeals *centrally* or *peripherally*. When centrally processing such messages, people focus on the content of a message, such as the quality of the arguments and are influenced by these factors. This typically only occurs under conditions in which people are motivated (i.e., the topic is important to them) and have the available cognitive resources to think carefully when evaluating persuasive content. When people process persuasive appeals peripherally, they use decision cues or cognitive heuristics to evaluate the merits of the persuasive appeal. As a result, people processing via the peripheral route may be more influenced by the quantity rather than quality of arguments or be swayed by the perceived credibility associated with the persuasive appeal rather than the veracity of its claims. People are most likely to engage in this type of message processing when the message's topic is relevant to them, they are experiencing information overload, and they know very little about the topic.

While pre-Internet scholarship on the ELM had demonstrated that people are more likely to centrally process written persuasion communications (e.g., Chaiken & Eagly, 1983), the evidence regarding online persuasion has been more mixed and generally suggests that people using text-based communication over the internet suffer from information overload and are therefore more likely to peripherally process information online (Guadagno, Muscanell, Sundie, Hardison, & Cialdini, 2013; Lee, Lindsey, & Kim, 2017; Rodriguez, Gummadi, & Schoelkopf, 2014).

Cialdini (2009) proposed that social influence and persuasion results from a series of universal heuristic cues or decision heuristics that underlie many key aspects of human social behavior and largely influence people through the peripheral route of the ELM. These principles are authority, social valida-

tion, scarcity, commitment and consistency, liking, and reciprocity. These heuristics are often utilized in information warfare campaigns to influence people's attitudes and beliefs (Guadagno, 2019).

As an illustration of the authority heuristic, consider that more frequently than most living Americans can recall, public authorities make demonstrably false claims without skipping a beat. On January 21, 2017, the first full work day of the Trump administration, the White House press secretary Sean Spicer entered a press conference clearly angry with the news media. "This was the largest audience to ever witness an inauguration — period —" said Spicer, "both in person and around the globe." Later that day, the new president said - at all places, the Central Intelligence Agency - "I looked out, the field was — it looked like a million, million and a half people." (Kessler, 2017) These statements are demonstrably false. Crowd scientists estimate that there were about 160,000 people in the crowd on the Mall in the hour before Trump's speech (compared to 1.8 million for Obama's 2009 inaugural). The Women's March the day after Trump's inauguration included about 470,000 at its peak. Not only did Trump and Spicer spread misinformation, they pulled into question the veracity of the media accounts and expert analysis.

Commitment and consistency (Cialdini, 2009; Festinger, 1957) is also a key aspect in understanding the role of false information in shaping people's attitudes and behavior. For instance, research indicates that people generally find inconsistencies between their attitudes and behavior uncomfortable and as a result, they will adjust their attitudes to match their behavior or vice versa. Classic research in this area demonstrated that when people made the choice to write an essay advocating a position opposite to their actual beliefs, they adjusted their beliefs to be more consistent with the position taken in the essay. This was not the case when participants were instructed to write a counter-attitudinal essay (Cotton & Hieser, 1980). Similarly, Festinger and Carlsmith (1959) found that people given insufficient justification to tell a lie altered their beliefs to accept the lie as truthful. Applied to the overwhelming and often inconsistent information available on the internet, this suggests that people will both seek out and choose to believe information that is consistent with their pre-existing opinions even when confronted with the knowledge that this information is false. This process has also been referred to as the confirmation bias (Nickerson, 1998).

Other factors that contributed to the spread of this false information in the months leading up to the 2016 US Presidential election were Russian trolls and bots who used social validation, which is effective because people perceive that similar others are engaging in a particular behavior and therefore change their behavior too (Cialdini, 2009). For instance, Guadagno, Muscanell, Rice, and Roberts (2013) examined whether factors found to be influential in online social influence -- namely likeability and social validation affected individuals' willingness to comply with a request via social media. To examine this, participants read a fictitious blog post in which a student asked other students to volunteer to help the needy. Depending on condition, participants saw other students' fictitious responses that all indicated a willingness (positive social validation) or unwillingness to help (negative social validation). Participants in the control condition reported their willingness to volunteer sans normative input. Results revealed that social validation affected compliance, but requestor likeability did not. Specifically, compared to the control, participants volunteered significantly more hours when the social validation information indicated that most people helped, and they volunteered significantly fewer hours when the social validation information indicated that most people did not help. Thus, these results support the notion that one factor that affects the extent to which people are influenced on social media is their perception that others -- particularly similar others -- are doing the same thing.

Related to fake news and information warfare, this suggests that when people see many others appearing to believe, like, and share a news story, they will follow suit. Bots can be programmed to work together to

push a specific message creating a false consensus effect, effectively hijacking people's inclination to draw inferences about appropriate behaviors and beliefs by observing the behavioral patterns of groups. Similarly, as evidenced by a recent interview with a former Russian Troll, many of the Russian tactics also aimed to create false consensus by working together to impersonate three Americans, one who holds less-extreme views and is influenced to adopt more extreme views by two others purporting to hold similar extreme political views (Troianovski, 2018). Other evidence also suggests that people, especially non-experts perceive information viewed on a device as more credible (Guadagno et al., 2013).

Finally, the theory of planned behavior (Azjen, 1991) has relevance to understanding how people's belief in fake news and misinformation can affect their subsequent behaviors. Specially, this theory predicts that people's behavior can be understood as a combination of their attitudes, perceptions of social norms, and their perceived control in acting out said behavior. These three concepts predict people's behavioral intentions which in turn are the best predictors people people's actual behavior. In the below section on the real world consequences of fake news and misinformation, we will address how this theory can help understand how people may act on this information.

Real World Consequences of Fake News

Russian propaganda often sought to translate views and likes from the online world into real-world action. Jenna Abram's Twitter account had 70,000 followers. She was a strong Trump supporter. As an "Influencer" she was featured in articles in the Washington Post, USA Today, BBC, and many other news outlets. Her hashtag campaigns included #wordsthatdontdescribeHillary and a false rumor of CNN accidentally broadcasting pornography. Only hers was one of over 2500 fake Twitter accounts (see Figure 6 below). Totally fake, but her campaigns caught fire.

Although numerous campaigns made it into the public discourse, even more notable are those instances in which the campaigns succeeded in influencing actual behavior. Facebook campaigns promoted rallies (Parlapiano & Lee, 2018). According to Special Investigator Robert Mueller's indictment of Russian propagandists, the following rallies were promoted in 2016 alone:

- June 25: March for Trump New York
- July 9: Support Hillary. Save American Muslims Washington, D.C.
- July 23: Down with Hillary New York
- Aug. 20: Florida Goes Trump several Florida cities
- Oct. 2: Miners for Trump several Pennsylvania cities
- Nov. 12: Show your support for President-Elect Donald Trump New York
- Nov. 12: Trump is NOT my President New York
- Nov. 19: Charlotte Against Trump Charlotte, N.C.

Other striking cases of real-world consequences of fake news are found in the cases of Estonia and in Washington, DC with the Pizzagate incident.

Case Study 1: Estonia

The First documented Cyberwar occurred in April 2007 (Guadagno, Cialdini, & Evron, 2010) when Estonia -- one of the most technologically advanced countries in the world -- was cyberattacked by angry

Figure 6. Images of women used by Russian trolls who masqueraded as them on Twitter
Source: Tornoe, 2017

Two popular conservative Twitter personalities were just outed as Russian trolls

Jenna Abrams and Pamela Moore wrote tweets that were widely shared by mainstream media outlets during the 2016 election. Turns out they were really…

PHILLY.COM

Internet denizens of Russian descent. Their anger was evoked by a decision of the Estonian Government to relocate a statue commemorating a World War II era Soviet soldier from a prime position in the capital city to a more remote location in a graveyard. Estonians viewed this war memorial as symbolic of their Russian-oppressors, while Russians viewed this war memorial as commemorating Estonian liberation from Nazi Germany by the Soviet Army. This difference of perspective resulted in violent, angry protests in the streets of Tallinn, Estonia's capital city and spread online as members of the Russian language Internet proceeded to engage in a series of coordinated online month-long Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks on Estonia's Internet Infrastructure that completely disabled it for four days. During this time, members the Estonian government were unable to communicate to coordinate an attack as the DDoS attacks targeted government cyber-infrastructure. Estonians in country and abroad experienced disruption in their lives as these attacks also disabled online banking and news websites.

Guadagno and colleagues examined the social psychological dynamics involved in the success of this cyberattack arguing that social validation, emotional contagion, the relative anonymity of online communication, group identification, emotional contagion, and loss aversion all contributed to its effectiveness. These tactics have been repeatedly refined and employed by the IRA to attack Georgia in 2008 and more recently to interfere in the 2016 US Presidential election.

Case Study 2: Pizzagate

We already know that fake news has had real world consequences in the United States. On December 4, 2016 28-year-old Edgar Maddison Welch acted on news he heard on InfoWars: according to Alex Jones, the show's host, Hillary Clinton was running a child sex-trafficking ring with Satanic rituals in the basement of a pizza parlor in Washington DC. Welch drove six hours from North Carolina to DC and walked into Comet Ping Pong pizzeria with an AR-15 assault rifle a .38 revolver and a folding knife. Children were playing ping pong. He pointed a weapon at a worker, and fired more than once, including at a lock. Needless to say, he found no children held captive nor even a basement.

It was clear this seemingly normal dad had been manipulated, but by whom? In order to understand what led to this incident, a two year investigation by reporters for Rolling Stone discovered a wild collection of influencers: "ordinary people, online activists, bots, foreign agents and domestic political operatives" (Robb, 2017) According to Rolling Stone, the controversy began just before the US election, on October 29, 2016. The timing coincided with FBI Director James Comey's announcement that he was re-opening an investigation into Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server. There was some revelation that Anthony Weiner, married to a Clinton aide, had sent lewd texts to a 15-year old. "Carmen Katz" posted on Facebook,

My NYPD source said its much more vile and serious than classified material on Weiner's device. The email DETAIL the trips made by Weiner, Bill and Hillary on their pedophile billionaire friend's plane, the Lolita Express. Yup, Hillary has a well documented predilection for underage girls…. We're talking an international child enslavement and sex ring. (as cited in KANG, GOLDMAN, Otterbourg, & Harris, 2016).

Snopes notes a posting by a Reddit user on November 4, just four days before the presidential election, to r/The_Donald, a subreddit community of Donald Trump supporters. InfoWars, the alt-right media outlet, and others picked up the story (see below). It went viral on social media. Some alleged that "cheese pizza" was a code for "child pornography," and the restaurant encouragement to "play, eat and drink" was a code for "p.e.d." or pedophelia. Graphics circulated with extensive montages decoding imagery or mapping an extensive underground tunnel for access to children human trafficked for sexual exploitation. In 2018, InfoWars continued to feature a 2016 Pizza Gate story on its site (See Figure 7).

Snopes, The Washington Post, and The New York Times debunked the story, as early as November 1, 2016 (Kang, 2016), but that only seemed to fuel the fire. According to the New York Times, "On YouTube, a step-by-step takedown of the Times article was viewed nearly 250,000 times and passed around on Twitter and Facebook." (Kang & Goldman, 2016) Late on the evening of Dec 4, 2016, Michael G. Flynn, Chief of Staff to his father, Retired Lieutenant General Michael Flynn, then Trump's choice for National Security Advisor, posted on Twitter: "Until #Pizzagate is proven to be false, it'll remain a story. The left seems to forget the Podesta Emails and the many "coincidences" tied to it." (Robb, 2017).

From a social psychological perspective, there is a lot going on here. First, we know that turbulent times (such as the 2016 election) are a breeding ground for rumor and conspiracy theories (Guttieri and Caglayan, 2009; Allport and Postman, 1947). Pizzagate is among the most infamous conspiracy theories of this time. Second, as Jim Kline observes (drawing upon the works of Carl Jung and Norman Cohn) child sex trafficking, ritual murder, and cannibalism-- elements of the Pizzagate story -- are "archetypal elements" representing "hard-wired taboos shared by all of humanity." If true, contempt for Clinton

Figure 7. A screen shot from the primary source pushing the debunked "pizzagate" conspiracy theory (Source: Infowars screenshot 2018)
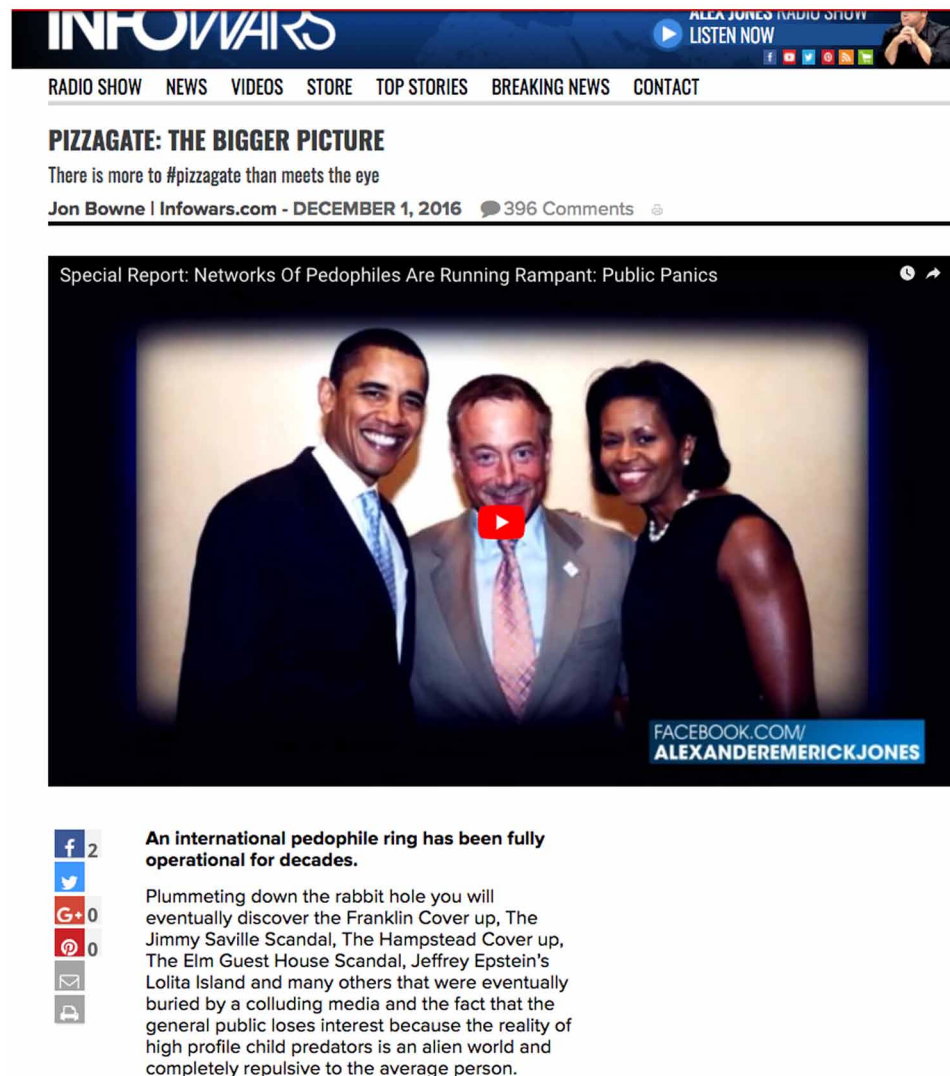
would be justifiable, an example of motivated reasoning to confirm bias. The repulsiveness of the story activates emotional responses that prompt people to share, validating the correctness of one another in shared outrage and emotional contagion. Finally, to understand how an individual could move from believing misinformation to actually acting on that misinformation, Figure 8 presents a theoretical accounting of the process utilizing the framework of Theory of planned behavior.

Truth Bombs, Targeted Ads and Reality TV

It is worth noting that not all manipulation during the US Presidential campaign necessarily came in the form of fake news. As alarming as it seems, fake news makes up only a fraction of the total news that the average voter consumed in the 2016 election (Lohr, 2018). First, several "truth bombs" – malinformation

Figure 8. Theory of planned behavior explanation of Welch's potential thought processes
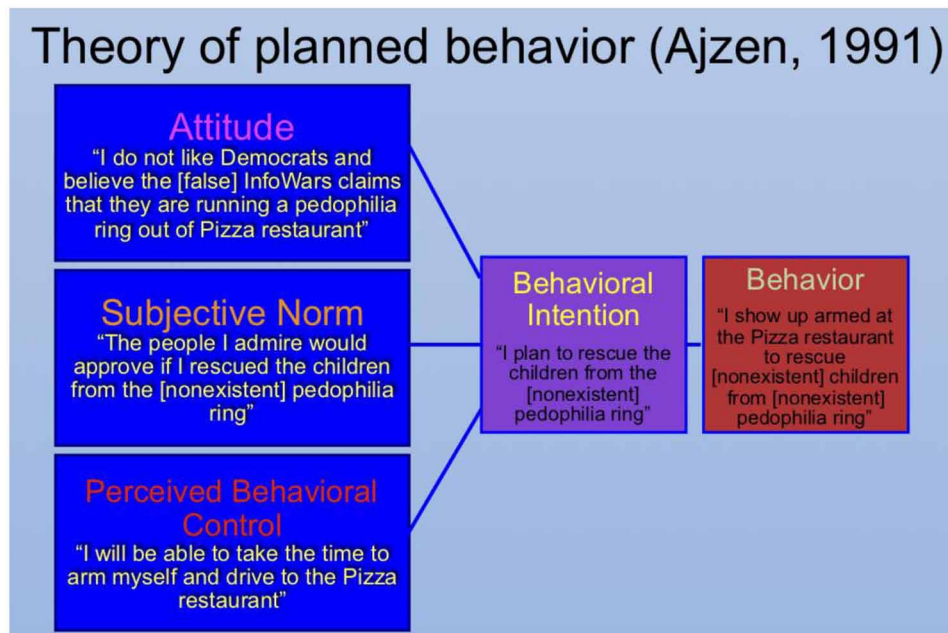
Figure 9. False claims about Hillary Clinton publicized by a tabloid known for promoting false stories favorable to Trump and his interests
(Source: author photo Publix, 2018)

– exploded on both sides, including the release of the Access Hollywood tape and emails from members of the Hillary Clinton campaign. Russian hackers broke into the Democratic National Committee correspondence. According to news reports, they drew attention to any messages showing or suggesting that

the DNC was favoring Clinton (Martin & Haberman, 2018, February 18). This drove a greater wedge between Democrats supporting Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton when Clinton needed to bring them together. They were released in drops to maximize this effect. And of course, James Comey's announcement - based on those hacked emails - that the FBI was reopening an investigation into Clinton's use of email was seriously damaging to Clinton, even if it was inconclusive. Jennifer Palmieri, communications director for the Clinton campaign, has argued "Russia succeeded in weakening her enough so that the Comey letter could knock her off." (Martin & Haberman, 2018, February 18).

Futhermore, if one is going to discuss a blurred line between what is real and not, one might begin with the observation that one of the candidates had been for many years a character on reality television. Trump's appearances on The Apprentice surely offered some voters an impression of him as a savvy businessman and commanding boss (Douthat, 2018). Certainly, Trump had help from Sinclair Broadcasting and its thousands of outlets, and The National Enquirer which featured sensationalistic anti-Clinton stories such as the one featured in Figure 9.

Many will also remember the long periods of mainstream television broadcasts of empty podiums with the Trump slogan in anticipation of Trump speaking while Bernie Sanders or Hillary Clinton actually were speaking and not covered by the mainstream media (Grim, 2016).

SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While the amount of influence Fake News had in determining the outcome of the 2016 US presidential election is not yet fully understood, one thing is clear: Fake News affects people's emotions, behavior, and beliefs and spreads rapidly on social media. This has had tangible, real world consequences (e.g., the Pizzagate shooter was sentenced to 4 years in prison) and raises ethical issues pertaining to the use of people's personal data collected by social media companies and the ways in which social media can be used to spread false information. While many of these issues are not new, the social media component is. Owing to the way that social media facilitates the viral spread of information to a vast number of people at an alarming rapid pace, the best way to stop this type of information warfare may very well be to develop ways to identify and disable it before it is ever posted on social media.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

In future research, the authors intend to examine affective responses to fake news and motivations behind contagion. An initial unanswered question is whether labeling news as fake will impact people's belief in the narrative presented in a fake news story. Previous research shows that forewarning an individual can decrease his or her susceptibility to a real or fraudulent influence attempt (e.g., Scheibe et al., 2014). Conversely, other research indicates that once a person has formed a belief, s/he will not easily erase the belief if it turns out that the information was false (Gilbert, Tafarodi, & Malone, 1993). Indeed, a person may engage in motivated reasoning or confirmation bias that works to deepen prior false beliefs when presented with information they find threatening (Cohen et al., 2000; Nyhan & Reifler, 2008). To date, these issues have not been thoroughly addressed in the context of fake news. It may be that labeling a news story as "fake" will reduce its effectiveness. However, the label may backfire if participants feel

threatened by its implications – that what they are reading and believe is wrong – or through processes of confirmation bias ignore it all together.

Other relevant research indicates that people's perception of media bias is affected by their own political beliefs (Vallone, Ross, & Lepper, 1995). Thus, the source of a new story as well as participants' own beliefs may also affect their perception of a new story and its validity.

The literature review here has practical implications for people's news consumption and social media use. First, we urge caution when reading news headlines online -- particularly those with an unknown or low credibility source. Second, we suggest that social media companies devote more towards the prevention of the viral spread of misinformation. Third, we suggest that, to protect people from being targeted in future information warfare campaign, legislation is called for to regulate the ethical and secure use of people's social media data. Fourth, we suggest that public policy should develop guidelines for societal-level media literacy education so that people have a thorough and clear understanding of the risks involved in social media use.

Finally, the authors would like to acknowledge that, while the focus of present chapter pertained solely to one state actor -- the Russian Government -- they are not the only group of individuals who engage in psywar. Future research should examine the ways in which other sources of fake news and misinformation do so using similar tactics and for similar reasons.

CONCLUSION

This paper began by asking the following questions: "Who spreads Fake News? Who falls for Fake News? What makes Fake News effective?" As the literature above indicates, there are many personal, political, and psychological factors related to answering to these questions. Some of these factors are historical (e.g., fake news has existed for a long time, Russia has been engaging in psywar for a long time). Some of these factors are related to the situation (e.g., the ease with which fake news spreads through social media, the roles of delusion, conspiracy theories, motivated belief, and emotional contagion in the spread of fake news). And, some of these factors are individual (e.g., politically conservative people are more susceptible to fake news (Hamilton, 2017), and watch different news stations than politically liberal people). As a result, the answer to these questions are complex and also in need of more thorough investigation.

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ENDNOTE

[1]   The views expressed in this academic research paper are those of the authors and do not reflect official policy or positions of any part of the US government. The authors thank panelists for comments on a previous version of the chapter during the 2018 Annual Convention of the International Studies Association.

Chapter 12
New Mythologies of Fake News:
WhatsApp and Misrepresented Scientific Achievements of Ancient India

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ABSTRACT

An ideological state project of assigning science achievements to that of Hindu mythologies is indirectly undermining democratic structures. Emergence of the fake news phenomenon within the current post-truth era has threatened India's state harmony. From its dominant role in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections to the 2016 U.S. presidential elections, fake news has become a political tool which was misused in both events. One of the major concerns with fake content creation appeared in its use by the central government to disregard science. Political leaders are achieving this by propagating fictional accounts of material inventions from mythological epics like the Mahabharata as the origin for modern scientific inventions like airplanes. Such fake content is part of Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) larger project directed towards creating a Hindu nation. These content are provided virality with the help of social media and online chat platforms like WhatsApp. The chapter tries to locate the role of the instant messaging application WhatsApp in establishing Hindu mythological achievements as the predecessor of modern science in India.

INTRODUCTION

Even though the discourse around fake news became relevant with President Donald Trump's win in the 2016 presidential elections in USA, fake news penetrated into politics in India as well. Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) landslide win in the 2014 general elections in India saw the emergence of new media as a potential medium to establish a voting base. This was the first time social media and online chatting applications were seen as crucial campaigning tools in Indian politics (Bhattacharya, 2018). Sigerist (1938) explains that the origin of democracy collided with the development in science. He further claims that science has thrived only in the democratic period of history (Sigerist, 1938).

To counter a codified system like science which only accepts material proof, the state uses mythologies as an apparatus which can be controlled and cannot be easily verified. Feyerabend (1975/2000) is of the opinion that science and myth have a linkage that is not accepted by the scientific community. He explains that both share humans as their creator and embody an imperfection in their form (Feyerbend, 1975/2000). A basic difference that separates science and myth is their place in reality. Soni and Thapar (2014) highlight that myths are old legends and science is part of the history that has happened. They further elaborate that to replace science's history with myth is incorrect (Soni & Thapar, 2014), which is what the current political leadership in India is doing. As mythologies constitute religious and group beliefs, the effects of such replacement are severe. For instance, Uttar Pradesh's Deputy Chief Minister Dinesh Sharma claimed that the female protagonist of Ramayana, Sita, was born out of in vitro fertilization (IVF) ("Sita was a test-tube baby, says UP deputy CM," 2018). In an attempt to place the machineries of modern science in mythology, the minister's speech resulted in protests in Nepal and Bihar. The indulgence of mass population with an unscientific claim is one of the categories of fake news in India.

For Alcott and Gentzkow (2017), fake news comprises of all news content that is intentionally and verifiably false and hence misleads the readers. According to Flynn, Nyhan and Reifler (2017), misinformation is often created keeping people's political ideas and ideological inclinations in mind. The polarization of masses on the basis of information happens primarily because of stringent political ideologies. The ideological slant that people harbor is a natural tendency towards creation and reception of like-minded content, which included political news as well, even with the option of exercising choice (Iyenger & Hahn, 2009). This selective exposure to information (Flynn, Nyhan & Reifler, 2017) is where the functions of online chat platforms like WhatsApp becomes important. As per Bakshy, Messing and Adamic (2015), people willingly share fake content online because of its resonance with their consistent attitude towards news content. This makes it easier for online platforms to filter news according to a user's ideology and hence makes people prone to a linear narrative of newsworthy events. Further, people become participants in spreading the fake content through WhatsApp chat groups to people harbouring similar ideologies.

In India, there is an increased participation on WhatsApp as compared to other online platforms. According to Bradshaw (as cited in Bhattacharya, 2018; Rajan & Sarkar, 2017), Whastapp resonates with the Indian culture of a constant connection with family, friends and a broader community. This is ensured through WhatsApp groups which are personally created by the user. Adapting this idea of personal, political parties in India direct their efforts towards reaching electorates personally by creating a virtual community/family of party sympathizers A fitting example is the setting up of numerous WhatsApp groups by BJP for the upcoming 2019 general elections in India (Bhattacharya, 2018). Fake content circulated on these chat groups is often channeled into society, causing everyday disruption. Facebook had to take out a frontpage advertisement listing ways of identifying fake news after India witnessed mob lynching of more than 20 people due to false rumors of child abduction ("WhatsApp offers tips to spot fake news after India murders," 2018). The scale of distribution covered by the fake news was about 11 states with a recent case of mob lynching in Maharashtra ("India slams WhatsApp over deadly rumors," 2018). Due to the general unawareness of the intentionality of such forwarded messages for political and ideological development, the need to discuss fake news as a potential threat to societal harmony has become vital.

This chapter is structured in a way to question the determinants of 'fake' content and to explore how the advent of new media technology has played a partner in providing it a sense of legitimacy. The question will be looked within the realm of fake news claims around Hindu mythological references as

the origins to modern scientific achievements as a part of a larger ideological project. To understand the participation of online platforms in facilitating this spread of fake news, WhatsApp has been chosen as the online chatting platform to study the impact of fake news in the working of a democratic nation state

LITERATURE REVIEW

Notions of Truth and Falsity

The idea of what constitutes truth has been part of the larger argument around what elements make a news 'fake'. To determine these elements, there is a need to start with the universal dilemma of differentiating between parts that are true and false in any subject matter. For Bok (1978), lying can be justified in situation if the content of the lie is categorized as 'noble' and 'harmless'. Here the question arises of which body of authority then judges the moral high ground of the content and the assumption of the affirmative result of that lie. Bok (1978) resolves this issue by encouraging people to probe into the intentionality of data dissemination. If a person/organization misinforms the audience without the intention of misleading them, then the act of sharing is devoid of any ulterior motive. On the contrary, if an information, news report, video, etc., is manipulated and then shared with the intention of deception, this is where the problem lies. Fake news as a phenomenon has its roots in this very exercise of intentionally manipulating information with the ultimate goal of deceiving people of the true nature of the same. Alcott and Gentzkow (2017) place this characteristic of intentional and verifiable manipulation of information to mislead the audience as the basis of constructing fake news.

The larger question, hence, is how a piece of information or news report is turned into what constitutes fake news. The answer can be found in Bok's (1978) work, where he highlights that the transformation of an intentionally distorted message into a statement is when a lie is formed. Fake news circulated through mobile applications like WhatsApp also follows a similar system of structuring a fake claim in the form of a matter-of-fact text message forward to ensure the text content's authenticity. According to Brennen (2017), the real problem of sharing deceptive information lies in the way this process upholds unequal existing power structure. She further explains that the lie adds to the power of the liar and reduces the power of the population that has been deceived as the pool of information to choose from gets limited (Brennen, 2017). This ultimately effects the judgment of the deceived in recognizing a trivial lie and leads to the loss of confidence in any alternate piece of information (Bok, 1978). These arguments can be used to form a basic understanding how a certain piece of misinformation can be understood to be real by a mass population.

News in the Post-Truth Era

According to Laybats and Tredinnick (2016), international politics has entered a phase where truth is no longer based on rationality. The truth disseminated by the leaders need to appeal to a population at a more basic level, i.e., emotional. The truth now originates from an ignorance of any evidence, mistrust in formal media and a need for emotionally charged discourse. The dissemination of and emotionally charged idea of truth becomes a more popular political choice as the decision of what constitutes as truth now shifts from the one constituted by liberal intellectuals to the hands of the general population,

which is still run by a fear-based belief system. This is precisely how truth in the post-truth era is being given a form.

If the judgment of what constitutes as true has transformed from a rational to an emotional under-standing, fake content as a post-truth element becomes the replacement to the 'real'. In terms of 'fake' news, Rochlin (2017) explains that it basically originated to attack established beliefs of the people. As a result, the audience is either lured into contesting or sympathizing with the fake news content. In this way, fake news content lures the audience into either contesting or becoming a sympathizer of that content. Hence, opinionated statements rather than objective news become the news content in the post-truth era.

Post truth received recognition as a possible explanation to the present world politics after the U.S. presidential elections in 2016. According to Sismondo (2017), Donald Trump's presidential campaign strayed from the general political practice of altering the truth to make it a part of personal defense. Instead, Trump's campaign started manufacturing his personal belief of what constituted as news and the truth about world affairs. Sismondo (2017) asserts that Trump's earlier business endeavor, reality television, can be directly linked to the creation of a scripted reality which is then projected as truth to an audience already anticipating 'reality'. The point where fake news transformed from a mere post-truth element to a serious concern was when it became a dominant influencer of the voting pattern during the elections. This is primarily because a lot of commentators, according to Alcott and Gentzkow (2017), inferred that Donald Trump's election was connected to majority of fake news articles being published in his candidacy's favor. One of the commentators, Reed (2016), highlights the theoretical base for the popularization of fake content. He explains that even though fake and exaggerated content has been part of political campaigns, the coming of social media instilled the negative effect in this system (Reed, 2016). Reed (2016) elaborates that an online platform like Facebook helps in confirming personal be-liefs and, in addition, provides an environment where this belief is likely to be challenged. This is also because personal relationships on online platforms are solely dependent on unanimity. Hence, Reed (2016) credited Donald Trump's victory in the elections entirely to Facebook. Online chat platforms becoming one of the determinants in electoral voting during the U.S. 2016 elections is an expansion of its impact during the 2014 general elections in India. Hence, the concept of post truth becomes a phase where ideas of truth are attacked, and it provides space to alternative ideas of truth, which also includes fake news as one option.

Use of WhatsApp in Fake News Dissemination in India

In February 2017, Jan Kuom, CEO and co-founder of the instant messaging mobile application, What-sApp had announced on Twitter that the company had touched the 200 million monthly users milestone in India ("WhatsApp Now has 200 Million Users," 2017). Howard and Bradshaw (2017) highlighted that WhatsApp has become one of the key platforms in the creation and spread of fake news content in India. The maximum utilization of WhatsApp and similar social media sites for the dissemination of fake news has been majorly used to ensure increase in party loyalists and promoting beliefs and agendas by political parties in India.

Social media sites like Twitter and Facebook were acknowledged as a potential campaigning tool when the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) was accused of sending fake photo forwards (Dixit, 2017) and creating internet trolls (Chaturvedi, 2016) during the 2014 elections. Before social media, material mediums like electronic tapes and discs were used for the creation and circulation of fake content. According to Dixit (2017), in the early 1990s, a group of individuals in northern India would play mix tapes on car

stereos of chants of 'Allah o Akbar' combined with gunfire sounds in residential colonies as an attempt to incite communal violence. The period proved significant in informing early signs of BJP's effort of making Hindutva an overt political agenda by creating an evil 'other' in Muslims through the Babri Masjid demolition event. The dominant and active presence of BJP on social media and online messaging platforms in 2014 nevertheless garnered a one-sided win.

After the introduction of internet in the Indian landscape, fake content generation started affecting the country on a corporate level. For instance, in 2008, Pepsi Co. had to release a public statement denouncing a viral video that alleged the use of plastic in its snack brand, Kurkure (Dixit, 2017). The scale of effect expanded from industries to creating tension and fear in the society. One of the earlier incidences of WhatsApp's use for spreading fake news was in Mumbai. In 2015, the Mumbai Police Commissioner had to set up a hotline to instruct parents to ignore Fake WhatsApp forwards claiming that a group of women were kidnapping school children (Dixit, 2017). The creation and spread of such malicious content through online chat platforms directed the need for obtaining statistical data to understand the effect and status of fake news in the world.

Howard and Bradshaw (2017), in their 2018 report on computational propaganda, found that India was one of the 48 countries where one political party is using social media to manipulate public opinions. Here, computational propaganda means the use of algorithms, automation processes and human-behavior-based big data which is used to control societal life (Howard & Woolley, 2016). Further, the medium for this manipulation over messaging applications like WhatsApp, WeChat, etc., is prominent mainly in the Global South or the developing countries (Howard & Bradshaw, 2017). The business of fake news operates the best in situations like elections, military crises and humanitarian disasters. Fake news generation transformed into a business when the media industry and political parties made it into a mutually beneficial partnership to maintain their respective position of dominance in the hierarchy of democratic institutions.

The use of fake content to maintain power relations can be traced back to the ancient period where fake news campaigns were used by leaders to overturn regimes in power. Carson (2018) claims that it was the Roman emperor Augustus who had first used a campaign of misinformation in 27 BC to defeat Marc Anthony in the concluding war of the Roman Republic. It can be inferred from Howard and Bradshaw's (2017) report that the governments of all the 48 countries invest more than 10 million dollars in social media and online platforms to spread fake content. Further, the report informs that in India, government organizations and political parties use automated bots—programs created to imitate human behavior online—to spread fake news on social media platforms (Howard & Bradshaw, 2017).

Constituting Fake News: India and the Global

The 2018 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) handbook for journalism education disregards the categorization of fake news content as 'news' itself. With the aim of creating a model for verifying fake news, the handbook instead states that fake news is an oxymoron. As per the UNESCO handbook, news is a piece of information which is inherently open to verification in public interest. Fake news does not rely upon public verification of information to justify its credibility, unlike real news. The process of verification posits the threat of revealing the mythical or inaccurate element in the misinformation passed as news. To avoid such obstacles, fake news instead tries to discredit the authenticity of information obtained in public interest, i.e., real news. Other means of defining fake news comes from Brennen (2017) who defines fake news by using of parameters like propaganda, gain

or intention that the group or the individual might have in spreading misinformation to separate fake news from misinformation.

To understand the faith that is garnered by fake news among certain groups, it is important to understand how this is made possible by certain sources, especially social media. The speed and access provided by the internet has helped in turning fake news into a phenomenon. The rapidity of internet meant that there was a loss of third-party editorial judgment and filtering the news on the basis of its authenticity (Alcott & Gentzknow, 2017). The idea of an editorial body which is integral to the news media industry is undermined by easily created and navigable web pages (Alcott & Gentzknow, 2017). This reduces the need for a formal body like media channels, and it shifts the focus on social media being used as a substitute for news creation and circulation.

The rise of the fake content generation, along with discrediting the process of news gathering and filtering, has socio-political ramifications. Alcott and Gentzkow (2017) trace that fake news creation has resulted in increased political polarizations and a distrust in mass media.

According to Moore (2016), this idea of spreading fake news for financial and political purposes is an age-old process. The difference lies in its use for satire and drama rather than its current aim of creation for the purpose of financial and political gain (Moore, 2016). Political outfits and other collectives use the partisan need to engage in the process of information distribution for varied reasons (UNESCO, 2018). One of the reasons proposed was that social messaging makes access to 'fake news' free (UNESCO, 2018). People who are unable to afford quality journalism and are technologically unequipped to reach alternate media channels perceive 'fake news' on online messaging platforms as authentic (UNESCO, 2018). This vulnerability to both misinformation and disinformation is used by political outfits and other collectives to manipulate people into becoming participants of the news distribution process (UNESCO, 2018). The sense of belonging that is provided by a group identity is the basis of right-wing groups like Rashtriya Seva Sangh (RSS) and its political counterpart, Bharatiya Janata Party in India. After successfully creating employment and a new collective identity for the then unemployed youth as part of the riot around the Babri Masjid/ Ram Mandir space in 1992, the right-wing groups turned to information distribution channels to further their mission of a Hindu dominated nation. The right-wing groups in India proposed that information and publicity are the tools for defending the mission of a *Hindu Rashtra* (Hindu polity) (Meyers and Moors, 2005). The repositioning of mythical accounts of medical events from Indian epics like the Ramayana as predecessors of modern scientific discoveries has proved to be instrumental in the development of fake news as a phenomenon in India.

Mythical Moulding Of Science

According to Howard and Bradshaw (2017), political parties and governments around the world are using online platforms to undermine public belief in science, media and other institutions. The crisis that scientific knowledge is facing is part of the post-modernist project of debunking the idea of finding universally acceptable truths. The idea of shaping mythical stories around modern scientific inventions is not a new concept. In *The First Fossil Hunters: Paleontology in Greek and Roman Times*, Mayor (as cited in Wilfrod 2000) talks about the significance of Greco-Roman myths. As a response to her book's claims, Wilfrod (2000) critiques that Mayor attributed the yet unidentifiable or mysterious fossils found in Greece and Romes as evidence to support the existence of mythical creatures in epics through a limited study of classical Greco- Roman texts. Mayor (as cited in Wilfrod, 2000) further contests paleontology's scientific explanation for the fossils found in Greece and assigns the mythical creatures as the predecessors

of the animal kingdom. Mayor, a folklorist, directs her efforts in combining literary clues and cultural imagination to prove mythology's authenticity as a fact and not merely an illusion (Wilfrod, 2000). This is similar to the efforts of right-wing organizations in India to present fictional mythological accounts regarding medicine and automation in Hindu epics as the precursor of present-day scientific inventions.

The fact that such a discourse relating mythological events and figures to the evolution of science has come forward has made some researchers probe the existence of such a linkage. Soni and Thapar (2014) point towards the possibility that a required scientific knowledge may have existed in ancient human societies that lived in India. Due to the lack of efforts made in preserving this ancient knowledge and less scientific evidences to prove its existence, this knowledge has currently become open for contestation (Soni & Thapar, 2014). As the existence of a connection between science and myth cannot be discarded completely, Soni and Thapar (2014) provided an alternative explanation to understand the ease of perceiving mythical accounts as real by categorizing mythology under the genre of magic realism. This means that the mythical tales were written by combining human imagination with real life figures and objects (Soni & Thapar, 2014). Since mythologies possess elements of reality, the general public considers all objects with supernatural powers in mythologies as proof to the existence of past material inventions, which is where the problem lies (Soni & Thapar, 2014). Accordingly, it becomes easier for myths to perpetuate people's beliefs including religious ones (Soni & Thapar, 2014) and hence make mythical accounts of the existence of *Pushpaka Vimana* (flying chariots) from epics like the *Ramayana* believable.

According to Rajan (2002), magic realism tries to provide a surreal element to the everyday human experience. The combination is created in order to draw attention to societal injustices which may be political or historical in nature (Rajan, 2002). The acceptability that magic realism received in India is very similar to its rise in Latin American literature. Rajan (2002) infers that Latin American writers in the 1940s used magic realism in their writings to show a shift of power from one culture to another. This need to make a supernatural world is to symbolize the idea that a new world order has been established (Rajan, 2002) and in some ways assert the greatness of that world. Hence, colonial nations like India and Latin America need to create a new cultural narrative to eliminate their colonial past. Myths and folklores which were part of the primitive cultural structures were used to remind a fallen nation of a glorious world before the empire. This means that even though the setting of a mythical tale seems realistic, the mood assigned is of a supernatural world performing supernatural actions (Soni &Thapar, 2014). Hence, it becomes easier for online content creators to align mythical events with scientific inventions, as the realistic nature makes it believable for the common public to believe that present day inventions had been materially invented in the ancient times.

WHATSAPP FORWARDS THAT REPLACED SCIENCE WITH MYTHOLOGICAL ACHIEVEMENTS

Issue, Controversies and Problems

The main focus of the chapter is on the use of WhatsApp to propagate Hindu mythical events as the predecessor of modern scientific discoveries. This need to undermine science is part of the larger agenda of a homogenous Hindu nation of BJP and its parent organization, Rashtriya Seva Sangh (RSS). Fake content, which is generated with this agenda in mind, takes the form of news. Fake news is then spread

in the form of forwarded messages on WhatsApp with hyperbolic headlines and is structured as a hard news piece to make it seem authentic. A post-election survey conducted by Alcott and Gentzkow (2017) inferred that there was a recall value which fake news headlines provided to the audience, and hence it was able to impact the voting patterns in U.S.A. Unlike USA where Facebook became the preferred platform for fake news, in India it was WhatsApp that was used to disseminate fake news. To understand how WhatsApp has been used to discredit science, a few headlines which were circulated on all online platforms will be listed and discussed here:

1. 'Cow urine can cure cancer': An article bearing this headline first appeared in the popular Indian daily *The Times of India*. According to the article, a team of scientists at the Biotechnology Department of the Junagadh Agricultural University, Gujarat, had found the cure for cancer (Khakariya, 2018). It also stated the struggle of the team in working directly with cancer cells and their plans on manufacturing pills for treating different forms of cancer. The team of scientists at Junagarh themselves add to the effort of discrediting scientific intervention by alleging that cow urine affects the cancer cells only whereas chemotherapy kills the healthy cells along with the cancer cells. This indigenous technique of curing cancer can be linked to the label of purity that is assigned to cow urine (*Gowmuthra*) in Hindu culture. Venkatraman Radhakrishna (as cited in Mukherjee, 2018), an Associate Professor at an Oncology school, stated that cow urine is no different than human urine. The urine composition of both human and cow comprise of 95% of water, minerals like sodium potassium, phosphorous and creatinine, and epithelial cells. Radhakrishnan (as cited in Mukherjee, 2018) further explains that none of these elements have 'anti-cancer' effects on the body.

    The scientific benefits of cow urine was created and spread as a message and forwarded via Whatsapp to the population in and outside India. For instance, a picture showing a row of bottles labelled *Gowmuthra* kept in a shop went viral throughout Dubai (Mehta, 2018). Repercussions of fake news circulation became evident when the Food Security Department raided several supermarkets for selling cow urine which was deemed illegal in Dubai (Mehta, 2018). Further, this large-scale reach of highlighting the medicinal virtues of cow urine is part of reviving the writings in Hindu mythologies and traditional texts. According to Prabhala and Krishnaswamy (2016), the therapeutic benefits of cow urine are mentioned in Ayurveda, a foundational Hindu healing text. They further highlight that it was during the early 2000s that promotion of cow urine technology as a cure began (Prabhala & Krishnaswamy, 2016). In India, the BJP-led coalition at the Centre supported the Centre for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in its quest to provide cow urine as a solution for cancer, diabetes and DNA damage (Prabhala & Krishnaswamy, 2016). Such unscientific claims which have not been peer-reviewed further the cause of creating fake news which is made authentic through government endeavors made in this direction.

2. 'Teach IITians about *Pushpaka Vimana* from *Ramayana*': BJP Minister Satyapal Singh: In September 2017, while addressing engineering students at an award function, the Minister of State (Human Resources Department) Satyapal Singh emphasized on changing the curriculum for Engineering in India (Paracer, 2017). He mentioned that students in IITs (Indian Institute of Technology) need to be taught about the *Pushpak Vimana* (flying chariot) from the Ramayana (Paracer, 2017). As per Paracer's (2017) report, the minister reiterated the fact that engineering curriculums in IITs need to include Hindu mythologies and Vedic texts. The basic idea behind this appeal by Satyapal Singh was to stress on teaching ancient Hindu technology in mythologies and texts in higher education.

This idea was reiterated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the 102nd Indian Science Congress in 2015, where he praised the ancient 'space sciences' that India had. At the same conference, Anand J. Bodas and Ameya Jadhav presented a paper titled, 'Ancient Aviation Tehcnology' wherein they claimed that ancient airborne vehicles could be turned in all directions, unlike the linear path of modern airplanes (Deshpande, 2015). According to Deshpande (2015), the paper became a controversial subject after the organizers of the Science Congress refused to share the presentation with the public. The effort to illustrate Pushpak Vimana as the material past of airplanes lies in the understanding around the fictional object itself.

1. The *Pushpaka Vimana* or flying chariot is an aircraft-like figure which appears in the Hindu mythology the Ramayana. The need to pose this mythical aircraft model as the possible predecessor to the Wright brothers' airplane design became the new fake content. *Vimana* is a Sanskrit word which closely translates to 'traversing' or 'measuring out'. It is also used as an architectural term for the inner sanctum of a Hindu temple (*Garbagriha*). According to Normandin (2015), the architectural term and its vehicular structure might have a connotative meaning, unlike its singular understanding of an aircraft. He elaborates that when a Hindu mythical figure is made to sit on a *Vimana*, the parallel understanding of the chariot can be that of a tower in a Hindu temple. The space that the tower acquires is placed between the heaven and the earth. Hence, the space that the tower is placed in might be interpreted as the path providing a sense of aerial movement rather than some figure controlling the flight of the *Vimana* itself. It is through popular cultural representations that *Pushpaka Vimana* as a flying chariot has been normalized as an ancient flying vehicle. Comic book series like Grant Morrison's *Vimanarama* (2006) has characters based loosely on Hindu mythical figures. The book has the protagonist claiming that ancient technology and philosophy will be the source of all the inventions in the world (Normandin, 2015). The emphasis on a singular meaning of an object like the *Pushpaka Vimana* through mentions in popular fiction became a reference for fake content.

2. Amidst the controversies surrounding the Science Congress, the popular understanding of the flying chariot resurfaced on social media platforms wherein users started sharing animated pictures of a flying chariot represented as the *Pushpaka Vimana* from the Ramayana. A prominent message which was circulated on all online platforms was a screenshot of Google Maps which showed the distance between Ayodhya in India and Sri Lanka (Bhuyan, 2016). The photo shopped screenshot showing the distance and duration of the journey was circulated as the proof to support the argument that it would have taken 21 days for Lord Rama and his group to reach India, which is the same period mentioned in the Ramayana. One of the claims on online platforms was that it was not by walking but by using Ravana's *Pushpaka Vimana* that Lord Rama and his family reached India. However, the problem with such claims is that the exact location of the battle between Rama and Ravana has not yet been established in terms of a geographical location. The location of the 'Lanka' mentioned in the Ramayana has been at the centre of academic discussion and contestation. According to Govindacharya (as cited in Pinto, 2016), the distance that is mentioned in Valmiki's Ramayana is different from the present-day distance of the island nation from India. Such creation of fake news in the form of screenshots was successful in generating polarizing opinions to contest the legitimacy of a fictional entity.

3. 'Existence of Genetic Science in ancient times,' PM Modi: In 2014, during his address at a Mumbai-based hospital, Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasized the early instances of cosmetic surgery and in-vitro fertilization (IVF) that are found in the Mahabharata. To substantiate his claim, the prime minister gave the example of the elephant-headed Hindu God Ganesha and the warrior Karna from the mythology. He elaborated by saying that the story of Karna being born out of his mother's womb hints at the traces of early reproductive genetics in India. About Ganesha, the prime minister stressed that the concept of plastic surgery began with the person who attached the head of an elephant on the Hindu God's body. The speech first posted on rediff.com, was noticed by very few mainstream media channels like *Headlines Today* (Rahman, 2014). After the claim garnered media attention, the excerpts of the speech became the new content for fake news distribution on online platforms. The speech was then made a part of the prime minister's official website, <u>pmindia.gov.in</u>. On the social media site Twitter, hashtags like #SayitLikeModi, # Respectforlife, #BJP4India were attached with the claims about plastic surgery and genetic science.

According to Karnad (2018), Prime Minister Modi's attempt at popularizing mythical scientific achievement is an extension of his tenure as Chief Minister of Gujarat. He highlights that Narendra Modi had written a Foreword to a school book which claims the existence of stem cell technology in ancient India (Karnad, 2018). The problem with a country's leader endorsing mythological scientific claims is in its ability to demean the science community in India. Nobel Laureate V. Ramakrishna (as cited in Karnad, 2018), announced that he would never attend any future science congress in India. He further questioned the prime minister's trust in science and highlighted that he would soon become a figure of international ridicule if he doesn't stop linking myth with science (Karnad, 2018). Endorsement of mythical claims devoid of any scientific evidence in this case is aimed at questioning the authenticity of modern branches of science.

SOLUTIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Fake news content on social media and online platforms have becomes a global concern. The concern is regarding the effect of fake content in affecting human lives and the crisis of faith in a democratic institution like media houses. In India, since May 2018, WhatsApp forwards were found to be the instigator of mob lynching cases in semi-urban areas. Such adverse repercussions of WhatsApp, particularly in India, is due to the huge addition of inexperienced smartphone users every day, which makes the country one of the biggest consumer markets for the social media giant (Gowen, 2018). Hence, the gravity of the situation was understood by WhatsApp which had to provide solutions to deal with the effect of fake news in the Indian society.

One of the recent cases of disruption in India caused due to fake news happened in July 2018. A case of mob lynching in Maharashtra cost the lives of five men who were rumored to be child kidnappers after a fake message on WhatsApp went viral (Gowen, 2018). This called for state intervention as it was the newest addition in the numerous cases of mob lynching which were the result of WhatsApp forwards since May 2018. The Indian government blamed Facebook, the parent company of WhatsApp, for the surge in such cases. Following this, public calling of the social media giant, WhatsApp subsequently published a one-page advertisement in mainstream English and Hindi newspapers suggesting ways to combat the

distribution of fake news in India (Rahman, 2018). The advertisement was also aimed at providing the solutions to help users identify false content on the online chat platform. Further, the Indian Minister of Information and Technology Ravi Shankar Prasad along with WhatsApp CEO Chris Daniels agreed on a set of offline solutions (Gupta, 2018). The mutually worked-out solutions included a local grievance officer for India, setting up of a legal entity to comply with Indian laws and starting a public awareness campaign to prevent the misuse of the application (Gupta, 2018).

Apart from such offline measures, WhatsApp had to program automatic online checks to match the pace of instant messaging. This filtration meant that the application allowed a user to forward one message to only five users at a time, which was originally twenty people per user ("WhatsApp Menace: You can share WhatsApp messages with only up to 5 people," 2018). Further WhatsApp removed the 'quick forward option' and has instead added the 'forward' tag to inform the users of the nature of a message (Mclaughlin, 2018). To ensure user privacy, WhatsApp has an inbuilt feature of end-to-end encryption which prevents the company from reading any users chats. The Indian government announced that the spread of fake news can only be controlled by dismantling the encryption feature. In a bid to maintain its position in one of its biggest user markets, WhatsApp has been testing a feature which will be able to recognize whether or not a forwarded link is 'suspicious' ("WhatsApp Menace: You can share WhatsApp messages with only up to 5 people," 2018). Even though the breach in privacy might help in curbing the circulation of fake news to a limit, it does not ensure a holistic solution. According to Mclaughlin (2018), users can still forward a link to 1280 people at a time as 256 members can be added to a WhatsApp group chat. Mclaughlin (2018) elaborates that controlling private online activities is only going to threaten the privacy and welfare of Indian users on other online platforms. Instead there is a need to engineer a solution which is rooted in educating the Indian population to recognize fake content. This is where the project of media literacy can be applied. WhatsApp has already taken a step in providing guidelines to recognize fake content on the application. The Government of India has to take complimentary steps to ensure the application of these guidelines. For instance, Mclaughlin (2018) suggests that the Indian government can collaborate with news media groups to inculcate the habit of distinguishing between fake and real news. He cites the $14 million project undertaken by Facebook in U.S.A in 2017 (Mclaughlin, 2018) after the social media site was targeted for its role in spreading fake news during the 2016 presidential elections.

The reason there is an immediate need for tackling fake news is the transformation of its ability as harmless entertainment to threaten lives in India. With the fake news phenomenon disturbing social life, there is a need to apply legal actions to penalize people who participate in spreading fake news as well as disrupting social harmony on the basis of such content. Fake news was made a legal concern in countries like Malaysia by them passing an anti fake news bill in April 2018 (Liao, 2018). The policy states that any citizen or non-citizen found to be guilty of spreading fake news which harms the state in any way will be fined $123,000, and the punishment can include six years of imprisonment (Liao, 2018). According to Mandavia (2018), the introduction of a similar assignment of the illegal status on fake news in Singapore might probe other Asian countries like India to take legal actions towards curbing fake content circulation.

Along with the government, intellectuals in India also have to contribute at tackling the issue of fake news to arrive at efficient solutions. Research is required in the field of finding technological solutions to curb fake news while ensuring that a user's right to privacy is not compromised. Gowen (2018) reported that Whatsapp offered a $50,000 grant to social scientists who proposed ways of detecting suspicious behaviour within the application's encrypted system. Further, research has to be directed at finding recur-

ring themes of fake news content in India. This will help in penalizing fake news creators by placing the act within the sphere of constitutional laws which deal with larger sociological categories like religion, caste, gender, etc. The collaboration between academic research and governmental actions can provide a pragmatic solution to the trend of online fake news.

CONCLUSION

Fake news created to glorify mythical medical achievements has a larger nationalistic agenda. According to Vahia (2015), the government in post-Independence India had directed its effort in developing science and technology to position itself as a progressive nation in the world. With the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) rule since 2014, there has been a consistent effort to erase every policy that was supported by the previous governments. The anti-intellectual attitude towards science and research is part of this erasure process as well. Guha (as cited in Rawat, 2016) highlights that there have been attempts by BJP to denounce research-oriented universities along with scholars and scientists. Hence, the sudden use of references from the Mahabharata and the Ramayana to demean modern science can be seen as part of creating a new political history based on Hindu mythologies.

Clare (as cited in Macdonald, 2017) asserts that fake news is a new form of myth making. This means that both borrow elements from reality to create a fictional narrative, which makes it believable. Soni and Thapar (2017) further illustrate that the ancient Greeks, Chinese, Indians and other myth makers always included supernatural and divine figures in their stories. These fictional elements make it difficult to place mythologies amongst the factual data provided by history and science (Soni & Thapar, 2017). Through the use of online chat platforms like WhatsApp, the political agenda of replacing science with mythical accounts of medical achievements has become a trend in itself.

The issue primarily lies in the susceptibility of the Indian online users towards fake WhatsApp forwards which confirm their personal belief in religion and mythology. According to Soni and Thapar (2017), beliefs by nature are generally not questioned by people. Hence, it becomes an easy task for fake content to find an audience that shares similar understanding. Fox (2018) claims that the fake news phenomenon has resulted in a new trope in science. This trope basically highlights the post-truth phenomenon of questioning science's credibility and people's inclination towards alternative claims of truth. As per Fox, this claim should not discourage science from communicating its stand against fake news which disregards it. This suggestion can be substantiated by mapping the process of scientific and imaginary inventions. Science, as per Soni and Thapar (2017), has an evolutionary process, where an evidence goes through several stages of rigorous testing before it is accepted as proof. This is the same process that is followed when an idea is culminated into a final invention such as the airplane (Soni & Thapar, 2017). In contrast, inventions in mythologies do not go through any developmental process and therefore do not have any recorded evidence as such (Soni & Thapar, 2017).

As the binaries between fantastical and scientific records of an invention become clearer, curbing online fake news on these accounts has become a conscious effort. WhatsApp, on which the Indian government had shifted all the blame for fake news influenced lynching, has been consistently directing all its activities towards creating a safe online environment for its Indian market. Though online platforms are finding technological solutions, it is the resignation of support provided by political parties for fake news creation and distribution that is of urgent requirement. As Soni and Thapar (2017) highlight, it is the addition of mythology into science, religion and politics that the BJP-led government is attempting

which is problematic for India. In conclusion, there is scope for future discussion on how fake news is facilitating BJP's project of creating a homogenous Hindu nation through other visually oriented online platforms like Instagram.

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Chapter 13

The Rise of Professional Facebook Content Generators in Vietnam:
A Fake News Campaign Against the Betibuti Founder

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ABSTRACT

This case study is empirical research. It highlights the fact that the dynamic and complex Facebook content generators involve actively in the formulation and dissemination of fake news in Vietnam. Professional Facebook content generators include not only the paid online commentators, being hired by the government or business sector but also the professional journalists, who can earn for their living by promoting certain ideas and products on Facebook. As journalism functions as a tool for propaganda in Vietnam, even some governmental officers engage in the formulation of fake news, as long as the fake news serves the propaganda purposes. Through the analysis of the engagement of each group of Facebook content generators in fake news, this chapter contributes to the identification and elimination of fake news, and therefore, it is especially significant for journalists in reflexive truth-seeking practice.

INTRODUCTION

The media landscape in Vietnam during 2014-2019 has witnessed a rise of professional content generators on Facebook, including journalists and paid online commentators. The pre-mature legal system can be the reason for this phenomenon. Legal framework for social media management in Vietnam has not yet fully developed. In addition, Vietnamese does not have law for doing lobbying. As the consequences, using media, particularly the prominent social media platform, Facebook, to promote ideas and policies becomes a common practice. Doing propaganda is a norm for Vietnamese journalism. Thus, authorities can sometimes prioritise shaping the public viewpoints, rather than truth seeking and verification. This

chapter investigates the roles and characteristics of those who produce and deliver content on Facebook for professional purposes, and elaborates their performance in a case study of the fake news against Le Nhat Phuong Hong, the founder of Betibuti, the breastfeeding community in Vietnam.

The first section of this chapter analyses the media context in Vietnam, from the measles outbreak in April 2014 to the approval of the Cyber Security Law in June 2018. The measles outbreak stimulated an unprecedented wave of using Facebook to call for the resignation of the Minister of Health. Responding to this wave, the Minister of Health began to use Facebook for public communication and, as of October 2018, she was the first and only minister managing a ministerial Facebook account in Vietnam. The government and business sector started to establish so-called 'cyber troops' and paid online commentators to manipulate social-media contents. Professional journalists engage in Facebook across a spectrum of three categories: social-media refuters, hybrid-media producers, and social-media leaders. Notably, journalists have formed a system of professional content generators on Facebook, doing advocacy for the business sector. The intensive engagement of journalists on Facebook blurs the boundary between professional journalism and manipulated communication. In June 2018, the National Assembly of Vietnam passed the Cyber Security Law, which requests proof of identification from social-media users. Before that, social-media accounts could be unverified and unidentifiable. These developments in the context of Vietnamese media have caused the mushrooming of fake news on Facebook, as well as degradation of journalistic quality.

The latter section of this chapter analyses a case study of fake news used against the Betibuti breastfeeding advocacy group. As of early March 2018, the group had 250,000 followers. In mid-March 2018, starting from a rumour on Facebook that 'a mother and an infant died during home-based labour in Ho Chi Minh City', the Ministry of Health of Vietnam (MoH) organised a press conference to deliver the MoH's charges against the group. Some MoH officers confirmed that the rumour was true, which provoked public scrutiny of the group. Journalists and Facebook became platforms for character assassination and defamation of the group's founder. Facebook deleted the founder's account, resulting in the removal of the group from social media and cancellation of group events. MoH then confirmed that the story about a mother and an infant dying was not true. However, this fake news stopped the expansion of breast-milk promotion and advocacy. The reputation of the group founder was severely damaged and had not yet been restored by the end of October 2018. The positive media notice she had earned before was removed or blacked-out by mainstream journalism.

BACKGROUND CONTEXT FOR THE RISE OF PROFESSIONAL FACEBOOK CONTENT GENERATORS

This section explores the rise of professional Facebook content generators in Vietnam from 2014 to 2019. It identifies the measles outbreak in April 2014 as the beginning of using Facebook for public-opinion expression and manipulation. Following this change in the media landscape, a shift has occurred among state-controlled journalists from publishing on mainstream media to publishing on Facebook. Notably, journalists stopped working for the state-run media house and started earning by posting advertorial contents on Facebook, marking the formation of a new media system on Facebook parallel to that of the mainstream media system. Besides journalists, paid online commentators are joining the network generating Facebook contents. Although posting on Facebook was becoming a highly organised profes-

sion, the law associated with social media had not yet sufficiently reacted until the legislative enactment of the Cyber Security Law in June 2018.

Legal Framework

According to Article 14 of the Vietnamese Press Law (Government, 2016), only the entities belonging to the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) and the Government can establish journalism organisations. The private sector is not permitted to establish and run journalism organisations. The CPV and the Government control all aspects of journalism, including licensing, patrolling, staffing, training, material supplies, access to information, distribution of media products, and TV and radio frequency control (Palmos, 1995, pp. 7-37). Vietnamese professional journalists must apply for the government-issued press cards (Government, 2016). Violation of the press law results in press-card withdrawal and a ban from professional journalism practice. In this milieu, journalism organisations are the governmental units and journalists are the governmental information officials. Huu Tho (1997), a well-known Vietnamese journalism commentator, in his textbook for journalism education and training *Công việc của người viết báo* (The jobs of journalists), states, 'Since journalists are the spokespeople for the [Vietnamese Communist] Party, the first and foremost truth for journalists is the Party's truth' (p. 25). From this analysis, it could be asserted that journalism coverage is verified by the party-certified journalists and aligns with the guidance from that authority.

The regulations of social media in Vietnam have been elaborated in Decree number 72, the Penal Code and the newly introduced Cyber Security Law. First, Decree number 72 (72/2013/ND-CP, 2013) requires Vietnamese social-media providers to register their services under the governmental provision. However, the decree applies to Vietnamese social media and social networks, and is not applied to international counterparts, such as Facebook, YouTube and Google. Second, the sections numbered 79, 88 and 258 of the Vietnamese Penal Code 1999 (which were renumbered accordingly as 109, 117 and 343 in the new 2015 Penal Code) were often applied to violation of the state's interests, anti-state propaganda and actions aimed at overthrowing the government. However, privately owned businesses, nongovernmental organisations and individuals who do not work for the government are marginalised by the protective boundary of these code sections. Third, in June 2018, the Cyber Security Law was approved. Item 2a of Article 26 in this law requires the information of Vietnamese Internet users to be identifiable and physically accessible on Vietnamese territory. Item 1đ of Article 27 in this law announces that the Government can invest in research and development to trace online sources. Before the Cyber Security Law, there had been a legislative hollow in source identification and traceability. This created the favourable conditions for the rise of fake news on social media.

Measles Outbreak Marks the Rise of Facebook

There is evidence of Facebook blockage in Vietnam during 2009-2012 (Gallup, 2015; ITC News, 2012). However, since October 2012, Facebook has one million new accounts from Vietnam per month, and in March 2013, the number of Vietnamese Facebook users was 12 million (BBC, 2013). As of January 2018, Facebook was the top social-media platform in Vietnam. Sixty-one percent of Vietnamese Internet users were active on Facebook. With 55 million Facebook accounts, Vietnam ranked seventh globally in terms of the number of Facebook users (We-are-social, 2018).

In April 2014, a measles outbreak occurred in Hanoi, an extraordinary milestone in Vietnam media history. With this event, Facebook entered the realm of agenda setting, resulting in the unprecedented social-media embedded strategy among governmental officials.

Facebook Goes Mainstream

For the first time, Vietnamese journalism reported that Facebook had become the source for the top CPV leader. At the start of the measles outbreak, the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Vu Duc Dam, confirmed that he got the news from a doctor's Facebook page, and not from state-run journalism. On April 16, 2014, Tuoi Tre newspaper published:

During the hospital inspection in the afternoon of April 15, the Deputy Prime Minister Vu Duc Dam said he would like to thank a doctor working in the National Paediatric Hospital who posted on Facebook about the fact that many children died of measles. After the post, the Deputy Prime Minister knew the fact and paid the hospital inspection visit. (Lan-Anh, 2014)

In this news article, Tuoi Tre newspaper covers both the Deputy Prime Minister and the source on Facebook. Stuart Hall discussed this practice: 'The media do not only simply "create" the news . . . [by reproducing the definitions of those who have privileged access] the media stand in a position of structured subordination to the primary definers' (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke, & Roberts, 1979, p. 59). This opens up the ideological role of the media. Hall et al. (1979) cited Marx's basic proposition that 'the ruling ideas of any age are the ideas of its ruling class' (p. 59). He asserts:

Because this class owns and control the means of material production, the class also owns and controls the means of 'mental production'. In producing their definition of social reality, and the place of 'ordinary people' within it, they construct a particular image of society which represents particular class interests as the interests of all members of society. (Hall et al., 1979, p. 59)

In this example, by reporting that the top national leader used Facebook, the media produces a 'way-of-life' perception that Facebook is an accredited source for the ruling class, and as such, the society could also trust the source on Facebook.

Facebook for Online Mass Protest

The measles outbreak marked the first time the public used Facebook to protest the national leaders. A Facebook Page titled *Bộ trưởng Y tế hãy từ chức* (Call for the resignation of the Minister of Health https://www.facebook.com/botruongytetuchuc/) was established in October 2013. However, not until the measles outbreak in April 2014 did the page get public notice. On April 18, 2014, 24 hours after Tuoi Tre newspaper published the news article about the hospital inspection by the Deputy Prime Minister, over 2,000 people joined this page. The number of likes dropped sharply on May 3, 2014, because on that day, public attention shifted to the Chinese oil rig Hai Yang Shi You 981, which entered the disputed sea of Vietnam. Between 2013 and 2018, this period of two weeks from April 16 to May 3, 2014 attracted the most significant number of likes and followers to the page (The data was provided by the admin(s) of the Facebook Page call for the resignation of Minister of Health, in April 2015).

It is noteworthy that, according to the administrator(s) of the page, these are the organic likes, not the paid likes. An organic interaction on social media is defined as interacting with certain content shared through unpaid distribution (Chandler & Munday, 2016). From this definition, social media users who make organic like must be interested in the topic of the page. They may do some online searching around the issue before being navigated to the page. Interestingly, from observation of the author, many people used real names with real profiles to join this protesting Facebook page, an unprecedented protest on social media in the one-party state of Vietnam.

Facebook for Public Mobilisation

From April 17 to April 20, 2014, a fundraising campaign arose on Facebook and reached 500 million Vietnamese dongs (USD 25,000). This charity was for the purchase of new respiration aid equipment for the measles patients in children's hospitals. ZingNews described the campaign:

The donation was sent to a bank account. The senders transfer money to the bank account, and then leave comments under a post to notify Minh Do [the campaign leader] of the amount and contact details. After the calculation at the end of each day, the total amount and the spending plan will be publicly posted on the personal page [of Minh Do]. (ZingNews, 2014)

Facebook Embedded in Governmental Communication Strategy

In response to the anti-fan page, Minister of Health Madam Nguyen Thi Kim Tien launched her official Facebook account in October 2014: one personal account (https://www.facebook.com/kimtien1102) and one professional account, managed by the Ministry of Health (https://www.facebook.com/botruongboyte.vn/). As of October 2018, the former has over 45,000 followers, while the latter has over 350,000 followers. The Ministry of Health is the pioneer among Vietnamese governmental organisations for embracing social media in the communication strategy.

Journalists' Engagement on Facebook

A survey conducted in 2017 indicates 96.89% of Vietnamese journalists are using Facebook (Mach, 2017). The journalists are fragmented according to the intensity of their engagement on Facebook for professional practice. There are three categories of journalists, differentiating to each other by journalists' engagement on Facebook. They are social-media influencers, hybrid-media producers, and social-media refuters. The data for this spectrum of categories is acquired from observation of Facebook of the well-known former journalists from 2014 to 2017, and from the survey conducted with 227 journalists to examine how they use Facebook (Mach, 2017).

Social-Media Influencers

They have the high commitment to Facebook, and the low commitment to journalism. These journalists do not identify themselves as working for any media house although previously they were working as journalists of mainstream media houses. They are no longer having the press-cards or governmental professionally certified licenses. They construct real profiles on Facebook to brand themselves as

influential non-affiliated journalists. Truong Huy San (Facebook Osin Huy Duc), Le Nguyen Huong Tra (Facebook Co Gai Do Long), Bach Hoan, Truong Duy Nhat, and Tran Dang Tuan, are some of the typical social-media leading journalists. Osin Huy Duc was a journalist of Tuoi Tre newspaper before being a Facebook-influencers journalist. During a period in 2016-2017, Osin Huy Duc was considered an alarm bell ringing to notify of corruption, because he often posted on his Facebook page the stories of corruption investigations before the policemen and the court released the reports. The formulation of the group of social-media influencers-journalists highlights the fact that there exists a system of highly organised journalistic professional practice on Facebook. This system is independent from the state in term of governance and finance; however, it depends on the inter-personal relationship between journalists and their sources of confidential information that they post on Faebook.

Hybrid-Media Producers

Journalists in the group of hybrid-media producers practice intensive engagement with both social media and journalism. These journalists identify themselves as permanent members of mainstream media organisations. They use social media to share links to their media organisations' websites. Besides sharing professional notes, their posts also cover personal perspectives, such as their families and friends, travelling and hobbies. Although using social media, they tend to set priorities for mainstream media and publish on mainstream media first. Abiding by regulations of their media organisations, they can reduce the level of engagement with social media if there are potential conflicts with their professional practice in mainstream media houses. The author has copies of some contracts, in which journalists were paid by business to promote certain products and services on their Facebook. According to a PR Manager who provided the author such copies of contracts in 2018, it was a common practice for Vietnamese journalists to earn money by posting advertorial content on Facebook.

One of the typical examples for the hybrid-media producers is *Tổ ngàn lai* (One thousand like) group. It is an unofficial name for a group of journalists who are still working at state-run newspapers. Their Facebook posts often attract thousands of interactions (like, share, comments), and as such they identify themselves as a KOL (key opinion leaders) group. The term *Tổ ngàn lai* was coined by NHS, a founding member of the group, in a post on his Facebook in 2015, in which he promised to write a book about profiles of journalists who get a lot of interaction on Facebook. According to NHS (2017), on their Facebook posts, these journalists do not associate themselves with any media house, although they are working as senior managers of media houses. The content of *Tổ ngàn lai*'s posts is often advertorial. They are considered as inappropriate for publication on mainstream media because they lack concrete evidence and use slang and lewd language for many instances, which is unsuitable for the mainstream media.

Social-Media Refuters

These journalists engage in state-run journalism only and keep a very low profile or no profile on social media. Although they demonstrate key attributes of performing well on social media, such as technically savvy and skilful creative writing, these journalists deny using social media for professional purposes. They establish strong bonds with their media organisations and adhere to Press Law and regulations.

A journalist can be listed in different category, depending on his/her engagement on social media from time to time. For example, Do Doan Hoang, a well-known journalist of Lao Dong Newspaper was a social-media refuter in 2015 (DDH, 2015), but he became a hybrid-media producer from late 2018. Dinh Duc Hoang, a well-known journalist of VnExpress Newspaper was one of the members of *One thousand like* group, and was a hybrid-media producer before 2016, but deactivated (closed down) his Facebook and became a social-media refuter from 2016 to late 2018.

Paid Commentators

The media landscape of Vietnam recorded the emergence of paid commentators, of which there are two major types: government-based and business-based.

Government-Based Commentators

Since 2012, the government-based online commentators have been increasing in quantity. The chairman of Hanoi Propaganda and Training Committee, Mr Ho Quang Loi, revealed in an annual media meeting on December 9, 2012:

There are 900 online commentators in Hanoi, working as propagandists in sensitive circumstances. Hanoi also runs a 'fast click and react' journalists club. The authority even establishes an 'expert group' to direct fight in debates and writing wars. The group constructs 19 online websites and over 400 social media accounts. (Dao-Tuan, 2013)

Nationwide, members of national and CPV-based associations, such as the Elder People Association, Youth Union, Women Association and Veterans' Association, are also trained to use social media to protect the government and CPV (Truong-Son, 2015). In December 2017, in a conference of Central Propaganda and Training Commission in Ho Chi Minh City, Lieutenant General Nguyen Trong Nghia, Deputy Head of the Military's Political Department, confirmed that the Ministry of Defence had been using a military-based cyber troop called the '47th force'. It took this name after decision number 47-QD/TW in 2011, which required the army to protect the CPV and the State in cyberspace. As of late 2017, the 47th force was confirmed to have over 10,000 people. These government-based commentators receive instruction from their organisations to use social-media accounts to leave comments that 'correct the wrong views' on the Internet (Mai-Hoa, 2017).

Business-Based Commentators

A director of a social-media marketing company in Hanoi said in July 2018 that online marketing had evolved to a new branch of corporate communication (Cuong, 2018). The social-media service companies generate hundreds of thousands of fake Facebook accounts to meet the quantification ends of the online marketing campaigns. As consequences, interactions such as like, share, views, report and especially comments can be sold and bought as Facebook commodities. Many online groups exist for Facebook interaction exchange, allowing Facebook users to call for likes and shares. Many applications have been developed to create and maintain fake social-media accounts automatically. Astroturf became a prevalent

practice when large numbers of fake social-media accounts could like and comment on Facebook, so that the opinions on Facebook are easy to manipulate. Dissident contents are quickly reported by the mass of fake accounts and quickly removed from the Facebook space. The industry adheres to the regulations of Facebook and Google and takes full advantage of the social-media algorithms to increase the reach of Facebook contents to the target audience.

THE FAKE NEWS AGAINST THE FOUNDER OF THE BREASTFEEDING COMMUNITY

The Rising Momentum of Breastfeeding Tendency

Betibuti is a breastfeeding community founded by Mrs. Le Nhat Phuong Hong in September 2013. According to Mrs. Hong (LNPH, 2018) initially, the community opened a Facebook group (https://www.facebook.com/groups/betibuti/), on which new mothers shared experiences of how to breast feed their new-born babies. The community then expanded its charters to different cities and provinces in Vietnam and the Vietnamese oversea communities, as well as its clubs for new dads and new grandmothers, who supported their wives and daughters in labour and baby care. These grassroots charters and clubs also established their own Facebook pages and groups. The main Facebook group, opened and administered by the founder, grew at the rate of over a thousand new members a week. As of March 2018, the Facebook group had 250,000 members helping each other in various online and offline programs, including breastfeeding, complement feeding, tandem nursing and a small-scale human-milk bank. Le Nhat Phuong Hong and the Betibuti community took part in the breastfeeding policy-making process and policy implementation in Vietnam. According to Mrs. Hong (LNPH, 2018), Betibuti was invited as a representative for community participants to the inauguration of the first breast milk bank in Da Nang city in 2017. While there is insufficient data to confirm the correlation between the development of the breastfeeding movement and the shrinking of the market for dairy products in Vietnam, there is an apparent decline in the sale of dairy products. Market research by Nielsen in six cities in Vietnam indicates the decrease in the retail unit value and volume of milk-based products (Nielsen, 2015). As the consequences, the growth of Betibuti could pose a shrink in the market share of milk companies.

In February 2018, the founder of the breastfeeding community, Mrs. Le Nhat Phuong Hong, advertised for a course on prenatal motions, described as helping pregnant women to practice dancing and squat so that it would be easier to deliver the baby. On its Facebook page, the breastfeeding community discussed that such motions help the pregnant women to avoid the risk of caesarean sections, with the result that the mother and baby would not be separated after the surgery, and the babies could be breast-fed within the first hours of life. The course was scheduled to take place in four days in June and July 2018, and cost 15 million dongs. This was expected to be the first training for the trainers, with the participation of one Australian birth-motion expert and 30 Vietnamese trainers. According to Mrs. Hong, the course was considered as the first in series of Bebibuti community initiatives to reduce the formal medical treatment on mothers and babies, helping them less dependent on doctors and hospitals. From this point, Betibute started to have conflicts with the viewpoints of the MoH, who always advice the public to visit doctors and hospitals for medical treatment. At the time of February 2018, the breastfeeding community led by Mrs. Hong had conflicts of interests to both business of milk products and the governmental public health sector.

FAKE NEWS CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE FOUNDER OF BETIBUTI

The Story on Facebook Goes Mainstream

On March 14, 2018, a story started from a Facebook account named Minh Phuong and went viral. The story was about a woman and her new born baby, died in labour at home in Ho Chi Minh City. The woman in the story studied a course on 'obeying the nature in birth' which costed 15 million VND (equivalent to 640 USD in March 2018). Many photos of a screen-shot capturing the story were shared on Facebook and picked up by journalism. The following section is the text translated from the photo of some screenshots, published on 2Sao, a website of the *VietnamNet* newspaper (Moc, 2018).

● Text in the Facebook status:

Ho Chi Minh City, 1 hour ago
Hi everyone, let me share a story.
15 million [Vietnam]dongs, 2 people died, after studying the course "Obeying the nature in birth". Can she [Mrs. Hong – the founder of Betibuti] compensate? Will she accuse people of not doing what she teaches? Will she deny the dead woman studied her course?

● Text in the first screenshot:

My friend died because of her [Mrs. Hong], she died at home, not enough energy to push [the baby out] and exhausted to death. The new born baby died of being stuffed up. I don't know my friend follows her [Mrs. Hong's course]. Just got to know about this story 20 minutes ago. I'm crying for my friend and her baby.
Oh my God. Poor her. The old woman [Mrs. Hong] should be in jail because of unintentionally manslaughter.
You should write the story in full. We will share it. Poor the kids.

● Text in the second screenshot:

My friend died. She paid 15 million [Vietnam Dong] to study the course "Obeying the nature in birth", and she wanted to give birth at home like the westerners do. But in the west people have home doctor. We in Vietnam don't [have home doctors]. The mother died of exhausting. The baby died of being stuffed up. The husband got mad. People have to tie him up at home.
Oh my God. Why no one stayed beside her during the labour…
Her husband was at work. She didn't phone him. He found her after she died.

● Text in the third screenshot:

Her husband is still screaming and doesn't believe she died. He swears to find the house of LNPH. He urged his wife to stay in hospital, but the wife insisted to have home labour. And she squatted to push to baby out. Her husband called me just right now. They are too young and too stupid. How can she breathe if she squats and puts pressure on her heart?

This story had two items of correct information. First, the course fee 15 million VND. Second, the squatting motions dancing course was for pregnant women. However, it mixed up with two items of incorrect information. First, the course was scheduled in June 2018 and had not yet taken place by the time of the story in March 2018. Second, the course was for the trainers, not for pregnant women.

MoH Confirmed the Unverified Story

By the end of business hours on the day, March 14, 2018, before the evening news, Mr. Nguyen Duc Vinh, the Head of the Department of Mothers' and Children's Health, a unit of MoH, confirmed that the authority had found the dead mother and child. The mother's name was T.V.M., living in Thao Dien Ward, District 2, Ho Chi Minh City. About 10:30 pm on March 14, 2018, MoH sent an official letter to the Department of Health of Ho Chi Minh City and to Tu Du Hospital of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, assigning these two organisations to further investigate the case. Mr. Vinh promised the details about the story would be revealed at a MoH press conference in on March 15, 2018. These developments of the story were reported in the news articles "Controversy around the pregnant woman obeying the nature in birth", published on Tuoi Tre newspaper website at night on March 14, 2018. Thus, by the end of the day March 14, 2018, the news was confirmed by an accredited source and the source promise further details in the following morning.

Facebook Became the Platform for Character Assassination

There was a gap of 12 hours from the confirmation by the MoH manager on the evening of March 14, 2018, to the press conference on the morning of March 15, 2018. The night became the prime time for the story to go viral on Facebook. The character assassination on Facebook against Mrs. Hong was conducted using the following approaches.

First, the naming and shaming approach: On the Facebook discussion, the name of the founder was no longer associated with the name of the breastfeeding group Betibuti. Instead, she was featured as the religious leader of a new group titled 'Obeying the nature'. This group was accused of practising extreme self-reliance in birth delivery, refusing doctors and medical aids, anti-vaccine, anti-medicine, and over-worshipping the benefits of human milk (LNPH, 2018).

Second, the use of memes: Some pieces of text that Mrs. Hong posted on Betibuti group were copied, cut out of context, and spread rapidly on Facebook with cynical comments. The most-spread memes were the screen-shot photos in which the following text was highlighted: 'breastfeeding can help the new knuckle grows again on a cut finger of a baby', 'sore-eyes on babies can be healed by dropping mothers' milk', 'like animals, human beings can deliver the babies without medical interference'. Another type of meme is the photo of Mrs. Hong placed together with the photo of a new-born baby whose umbilical cord was uncut, and placenta was attached to the baby (LNPH, 2018). The creation of these memes required professional skills and it was time consuming, which might be produced long before the news.

Third, defamation by highlighting asymmetric knowledge: According to Mrs. Hong (LNPH, 2018) several doctors posted on their Facebook criticising the "Obeying the nature" life-style, creating contrast between the knowledge provided by qualified doctors and the experience shared by the breastfeeding community. Her resume was retrieved, provoking another topic for criticism. She had postgraduate qualification in IT, working experience in the banking sector, and the certifications for the short courses on breastfeeding. It was discussed that she was underqualified and ineligible to share knowledge of maternity.

Fourth, the massive report: Pursuant to Facebook policy and algorithms, an account is deleted if many other accounts submit a report to Facebook. Many Facebook accounts reported that Le Nhat Phuong Hong was using someone else's name for her Facebook account. As a result, Facebook deleted Le Nhat Phuong Hong's account on the night of March 14, 2018. Le Nhat Phuong Hong then sent to Facebook her proof of identification and eventually recovered the Facebook account on March 28, 2018. During two weeks of waiting for verification, she was unable to use Facebook to respond to the attack (LNPH, 2018).

The Fake News as an Excuse for Propaganda

According to Le Nhat Phuong Hong, she was travelling to Australia in March 2018. Thus, she could not physically attend the press conference. In the early morning of March 15, 2018, before the press conference, Le Nhat Phuong Hong sent an email to one of the leaders of MoH. In the email, she explained the prenatal motion course had not yet taken place. Therefore, it would be unreasonable to claim that the mother and the baby died because of practising what the mother learnt from the course. The email was replied by the leader's assistant about one hour before the press conference (the author was allowed to access to these emails for the purpose of doing research).

The press conference was broadcast live and livestreamed on Facebook. At the beginning of the press conference, Mr. Nguyen Duc Vinh corrected his announcement made on March 14, 2018. He said the story of a mother and a baby dying in birth delivery was not yet verified. He promised MoH would further survey in Ho Chi Minh City and neighbourhood provinces to find the mother and the baby. The address of the dead mother and baby he mentioned the day before, which was in Thao Dien Ward, District 2, Ho Chi Minh City, was actually the home address of Le Nhat Phuong Hong.

The rest of the press conference turned out to be propaganda against developments in the 'Obeying the nature in birth' lifestyle. The press conference was hosted by the Head of the Legal Compliance Department of MoH, the Head of the Professional Committee of the Ho Chi Minh City Department of Health, and the Vice Director of Tu Du Hospital of Obstetrics and Gynaecology. The main message delivered during the conference was recommending professional medical treatment and warning against the risk of practising the community-based maternity initiatives.

On March 19, 2018, MoH sent an official request to the Ministry of Policemen for an investigation on the identification of the Facebook account Minh Phuong, who started the fake story. The Facebook account named Minh Phuong was deleted, and no longer found after March 15, 2018. As of March 2019, there had been no further media report or police report about the identification of Facebook account of Minh Phuong.

Consequences of Fake News

The Betibuti breastfeeding community has not grown since the fake news. Nine thousand members abandoned the Facebook group from March to October 2018, on which 2,000 members abandoned in the first week after the fake news. The course on prenatal dancing, which was scheduled in June and July 2018, was cancelled. This fake news is the starting point for a campaign 'correcting' the view point of the breastfeeding community toward 'Obeying the nature in birth'. With expertise in communication management in public health, the Deputy Minister of Health, Doctor Nguyen Thanh Long, was appointed to become the Deputy Chairman of the Central Propaganda and Training Commission starting in October 2018.

State-run journalism removed the name of Le Nhat Phuong Hong from the previously published news article. An example for the practice of removal can be observed in the news article 'Caution when using bio salty water for babies'. Data from the Content Management System of the *Health and Life* newspaper website indicated that the article was published twice—the first time at 1:27pm, February 23, 2016, and the second time at 11:05am, June 30, 2018. The first version was deleted from the website of *Health and Life* and is no longer accessible. However, it was picked up and republished on Baomoi and Zing News. The first version was published before the fake news. It used Le Nhat Phuong Hong as the source with indirect quotation. The second version of this news article was published after the fake news, in which the name of Le Nhat Phuong Hong and the indirect quotation were deleted. In this way, positive journalism coverage she had earned before the fake news was removed from the Internet. Le Nhat Phuong Hong was not quoted in any news article on mainstream media from the fake news to the end of October 2018.

SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To help journalists and audience in fake news identification in Vietnamese media landscape, it is necessary to figure out the elements composing the fake news in the country. This section discusses six typical elements involved in the generation of the fake news, particularly in the context of the rise of using Facebook for professional communication in Vietnam. The elements are presented in the sequence of their appearance in the fake-news process.

Unverified Sources

The fake news starts from an unverified Facebook account whose identification is unclear. The account neither posts any personal photos nor 'friends' verified persons. The person(s) behind the Facebook account tell(s) the story in a Facebook group where members may not know each other. Conversations about the story are made up between unverified accounts. Then the made-up story is captured and shared as screen-shot photos. After the screen-shot photos spread on the Internet, the source Facebook account is permanently deleted and untraceable. In the example of the fake news against Le Nhat Phuong Hong, the Facebook account 'Minh Phuong' was unverifiable, nor could the group in which Minh Phuong posted the story be identified. Only the photos capturing the screen-shot story were shared on Facebook and published by newspapers.

Half-Truth

The story shared on Facebook is made up from some correct information, such as the course fee of 15 million dongs, and the address in District 2 of Ho Chi Minh City, which is also the home address of the Betibuti founder. The story on Facebook is often a mixture of truth and falsehood, which requires much effort to be fact-checked.

Confirmation by Authority

The information shared on Facebook is just the story. When the story is confirmed by the authority, and published by the mainstream media, it becomes fake news. In this case, the MoH official confirmed the information about the dead mother and baby and promised to provide a detailed investigation the next day. The 12-hour gap between the confirmation and detailed investigation was long enough for the fake news to go viral and exaggerated by mainstream media. In this case, the authority confirmed the fake news because it might help the MoH to criticise the Betibuti community initiatives of being self-helped and dependent from hospitals and doctors. The authority can alter their answer later, but it was long enough for the fake news to be widespread.

Paid Commentators

As discussed previously, paid commentators can be the anonymous business-paid, or the government-based commentators. The online troop uses hundreds of anonymous Facebook accounts to make a massive report, so that the Facebook account of the victim is blocked or removed from the Internet. The paid commentators also post misleading and hate-speech contents. The government-based commentators (in this case, they are doctors) generate seeding comments against the victim of the fake news.

Removal From Journalism

The worst consequence of the fake news occurred when it created a new meaning for the previous events. Reputation was ruined, and the presence of the fake news victim was removed from the state-run journalism. It is very common in Vietnam journalism to rewrite and repost articles published years before. In the new version of articles, the names, the citations and the photos relating to the fake-news victims are deleted. Since the fake news can lead to a new version of history, fake news sometimes is employed as an excuse for erasing the old conception and making the new meaning.

From Fake News to New Policy

In some cases, the new sense made of the fake news becomes the foundation for the proposal of new policies and procedures. In these cases, the fake news is the good news. MoH made it a chance to correct the viewpoints around home-birth, that are considered wrong or opposite to the mainstream.

The Journalists

This element was not involved in the fake news against Betibuti founder. However, social-media influencers, and hybrid-media producers sometimes involve in fake news generating. For example, in the protest of the Cybersecurity Law in Binh Thuan province in June 2018, Mai Thanh Hai, a journalist of Thanh Nien newspaper, posted on his Facebook that two policemen died in the protest because of nail and gas bombs. Because Mai Thanh Hai was a professional press-carded journalist working in Binh Thuan province, his story on Facebook was considered verified news. Before it was detected as the fake news, it had been used as an excuse for the mobilization of heavily armed forces to Binh Thuan to stop the

protesters (Journalist's Mai Thanh Hai and the fake news around the developments of the protest in Binh Thuan was analysed in the post "Revisit the story in Binh Thuan" on BoxitVN blogs on June 15, 2018).

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The chapter investigate just one case study of the fake news on Facebook environment. It is necessary to study more cases, to identify the models of fake news and the involvement of the professional Facebook content generators. More case studies would help to consolidate the validity of the formula of the elements of fake news, improving the possibility of fake news detection. One of the extensions for this case study is to investigate the impacts of the fake news on its victims. How the viewpoints created by the fake news affect the fake news victim? What are their re-actions? And what is the optimal re-actions against the fake news that is intentionally and professionally created?

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the fake news against the founder of the breastfeeding community is typical show case for the involvement of the professional Facebook content generators in fake news. It reflects the complexity of the fake news actors in the Vietnamese media landscape during 2014-2019 in general, and in public-health areas in particular. Journalists and audience are recommended to use seven above-mentioned elements to judge whether the news is genuine or made up. The Cybersecurity Law, legislated in June 2018 and becoming effective in January 2019, is believed to enable identifying, verifying and improving the traceability of a story on Facebook. However, when the law sets the priority as protecting the Party and State in Vietnam, it would create a legal gap and the mushrooming of the defamation against entities and individuals in the private sector. For the ultimate fake news prevention in Vietnam, the function of propaganda should be eliminated from journalism, which is problematic in the one-party country.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Business-Based Commentator: A person who gets paid from social-media marketing service company to generate content on social media as requested by the clients of the company.

Government-Based Commentator: A person who works for governmental organisation, maybe a doctor, a student, a scientist, etc., and generates content on social media as requested by government to protect governmental interests.

Half-Truth: The truth elements marking parts of the news and often be used to deceive the audience that whole of the news is the truth.

Hybrid-Media Producer Journalist: A journalist who is working full-time for mainstream media and at the same time earns money for publishing on social media.

Paid Commentator: A person who gets paid to generate contents and interaction on social media.

Social-Media Influencer Journalist: A journalist who used to work for mainstream media before but no longer had a license to work in mainstream media anymore, but still earn great public attraction by publishing on social media.

Social-Media Refuter Journalist: A journalist works for mainstream media and intentionally avoid using social media for professional purposes.

Chapter 14
Social Media and the Challenges of Curtailing the Spread of Fake News in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The rising trend of fake news on social media in Nigeria has raised serious concern about the survival of the country's fledgling democracy especially as the country prepares for the 2019 polls which is expected to usher in a new set of leaders. The federal government had in response to the menace which has reached an alarming proportion launched a campaign against fake news in July 2018 to raise awareness about the dangers fake news portends for the polity. While some applaud the government for the initiative, others lampoon the government for chasing shadows instead of addressing the root cause. This chapter therefore examines the issues, controversies and problems associated with the deadly scourge and proffer solutions to halt the growing menace of fake news in the country.

INTRODUCTION

In today's contemporary society, social media has become a common and important factor as it touches every facet of our daily life. It has affected business; politics and the way people communicate and socialize on the web positively. The popularity of the internet has enabled individuals use social media tools to connect with each other online. Many businesses effectively use social media tools to market their products and connect with existing and potential customers (Smith, n.d.; Petersen, 2018).

Social media has gained attention as the most viable communication choice for bloggers, article writers, content creators and other users. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) describe social media as a group of internet-based application that build the ideological and technological foundation of web 2.0 and that allow creation and exchange of user-generated content. Social media includes all forms of electronic communication, such as social networking sites and microblogs, through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (images, videos).

Over the years, social media has grown rapidly because it serves various social needs. It has grown because of the increasing importance of networking. Social networking sites (Facebook), microblogging services (Twitter), content sharing sites (YouTube, Flicker) have introduced the opportunity for large scale online social participation.

The positive effects notwithstanding, social media has its flipside. Its negative aspects could be seen in cyber bullying, invasion of privacy, cyber stalking, fake news, among others. Fake news is a global phenomenon (Elebeke, 2018, p. 18) that modern societies had to contend with in this digital age. Fake news means different thing to different people. To most people, fake news means fabricated new stories presented without any credible evidence and for the apparent purpose to misinform or to persuade through misinformation. Others use the term to simply describe a news story from a traditional source that contains a mistake or news that seems to contradict their own point of view. However, Rini (2017, p. 45) defines a fake news story as one that "purports to describe events in the real world, typically by mimicking the conventions of traditional media reportage, yet is known by its creators to be significantly false and is transmitted with the two goals of being re-transmitted and of deceiving at least some of its audience"

The spread of fake news could either be politically motivated or economically driven (Angus, 2018, Hunt, 2016, POLITICO, 2017). Creators of fake news post articles on their websites and share them on Facebook and other platforms to generate a lot of web traffic, which earns them money. Audience consumes fake news from a variety of sources and young and old people are susceptible (Marzilli, n.d.). But particularly susceptible are young people. Fake news comes in different forms that include distorted truth, outright lies, and exaggerated facts and so on.

There is no doubt that the advent of social media as a veritable means of information dissemination has made communication easier. It has also made the world a global village. But the obvious problems being observed on the social media platforms these days are the prevalence of fake news, distorted facts, hate speeches, blackmail and others, capable of plunging the society into undue crisis (Ezea, 2018). Some social media users have latched on the non-regulation and confidentiality of the platforms to abuse it, using it to spread fake news, hate speeches and distort facts to suit their selfish desires.

From WhatsApp to Facebook, people often spread fabricated messages of news information, which their sources and motives cannot be verified or determined. The trend has been on the increase in Nigeria to the extent that, at the peak of President MuhammaduBuhari's sick leave at the United Kingdom, some social media users capitalizing on non-disclosure of their identities cloned the website of London-based newspaper Metro Uk to announce Buhari's demise. Expectedly, the fake news which, gone viral on social media platforms created panic, fear and confusion in the country. Not even the consistent denials and explanations by the presidential spokesmen (Femi Adesina and Garba Shehu) could calm the frayed nerves. Many had believed the fake news because of the reputation of the London-based newspaper, without knowing that the story did not emanate from it.

Many bloggers in Nigeria without fixed addresses are busy spreading fake news on their blogs, using it to blackmail and extort money from people. On several occasions, some of them have been arrested, while many are still operating undisturbed. It is because of the prevalence of fake news on the social media and its capacity to undermine the security of a country that some national governments have legislate against the use of social media in their countries. Attempts by the Nigerian government to streamline the use of social media were greeted by opposition and criticisms. The National Assembly is currently working on a bill to criminalize hate speech spewing especially from social media. But whether this proposed law will be able to curtail the growing trend of fake news, disinformation and hate speech on social media in the country is a matter of conjecture.

This chapter therefore examines social media and the challenges of curtailing the spread of fake news in Nigeria. The objectives of the chapter are:

1. To show why fake news on social media is thriving in Nigeria
2. To highlight the dangers fake news on social media poses to the country.
3. To find out the challenges confronting Nigeria in the effort to curtail the spread of fake news
4. To proffer solutions that would help to address the menace of fake news in Nigeria and beyond.

The next discussion will feature the following sections: background, main focus of the chapter (issues, controversies, and problems), solutions and recommendations, future research directions, conclusion, additional reading and key terms and definitions.

BACKGROUND

Overview of Fake News

Fake news is not new in journalism. It has been in existence since news began to circulate widely after the invention of the printing press in 1439. There was the 'yellow journalism' with its overtly concerned and sensational stories several decades ago. However, the explosion in social media platforms and the way technological companies operate has made the problem pervasive.

Several definitions of fake news exist in the literature, but none is universally accepted because of the nature of the phenomenon and the dimension it has assumed lately. Uja (2018, p. 18) defines fake news as "falsehood, conjectures, pernicious propaganda or half-truth which is intentionally passed on as truth and authentic information or stories intended to mislead and achieve sinister objectives or financial gain" Rouse (2017) describes it as an inaccurate sometimes sensationalistic report that is created to gain attention, mislead, deceive or damage a reputation. According to Rouse, unlike misinformation, which is inaccurate because a reporter has confused facts, fake news is created with the intent to manipulate someone or something. Fake news can spread quickly when it provides disinformation that is aligned with the audience's point of view because such content is not likely to be questioned or discounted.

Similarly, Shu et al. (2017) describe fake news as news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false and could mislead readers. While defining fake news, Webopedia.com (n.d.) said: fake news, or hoax news, refers to false information or propaganda published under the guise of being authentic news. Fake news websites and channels push their fake news content in an attempt to mislead consumers of the content and spread misinformation via social network and word of mouth.

One of the most colourful definition of fake news comes from PolitiFact: "Fake news is made-up stuff, masterfully manipulated to look like credible journalistic report that are easily spread online to large audience willing to believe the fictions and spread the word" (Webopedia.com, n.d.). New York Times also defines it as 'a made-up story with an intention to deceive. A common thread that runs through all the definitions is that fake news is untrue and is intended to mislead.

Fake news is a type of yellow journalism or propaganda that consists of deliberate disinformation or hoaxes spread via traditional print and broadcast media or online social media (Tufekci, 2018; Leonhardt & Thompson, 2017). The term is also at times used to cast doubt upon legitimate news from an opposing political standpoint, a tactic known as the lying press (Mihailidis &Viotty, 2017). The false informa-

tion is then often reverberated as misinformation in social media, but occasionally finds its way to the mainstream media as well (Himma-Kadakas, 2017). Fake news is written and publish with the intent to mislead in order to damage an agency, entity, or person, and/ or gain financially or politically (Hunt, 2016; Schlesinger, 2017), often using sensationalist, dishonest, or outright fabricated headlines to increase readership, online sharing, and internet click revenue. In the latter case, it is similar to sensational online "clickbait" headlines and relies on advertising revenue generated from this activity, regardless of the veracity of the published stories (Hunt, 2016). Intentionally misleading and deceptive fake news differs from obvious satire or parody, which is intended to amuse rather than mislead its audience.

The relevance of fake news has increased in post-truth politics. For media outlets, the ability to attract viewers to their websites is necessary to generate online advertising revenue. If publishing a story with false content attracts users, this benefits advertisers and improve ratings. Easy access to online advertisement revenue, increased political polarization, and the popularity of social media, primarily the Facebook news feed (Tufekci, 2018), have all been implicated in the spread of fake news (Hunt, 2016; Woolf, 2016), which competes with legitimate news stories. Hostile government actors have also been implicated in generating and propagating fake news, particularly during elections (Politico, 2017).

Fake news undermines serious media coverage and makes it more difficult for journalists to cover significant news stories. An analysis by Buzzfeed found that the top 20 fake news stories about the 2016 U.S Presidential election received more engagement on Facebook than the top 20 election stories from 19 major media outlets (Chang et al., 2016). Anonymously-hosted fake news websites (Tufekci, 2018) lacking known publishers have also been criticized because they make it difficult to persecute sources of fake news for libel (Callan, 2016).

During and after his presidential campaign and election, Donald Trump popularized the term "fake news" when he used it to describe the negative press coverage of himself (Lind, 2018; Murphy 2018). In part as a result of Trump's use of the term, the term has come under increasing criticism and in October 2018 the British government decided that it will no longer use the term because it is a poorly-defined and misleading term that conflates a variety of false information, from genuine error through to foreign interference in democratic processes (Murphy, 2018).

The intent and purpose of fake news is important. In some cases, what appears to be fake news may be news satire, which users exaggerate and introduces non-factual elements that are intended to amuse or make a point, rather than to deceive? Propaganda can also be fake news according to Hunt (2016). Some researchers have highlighted that "fake news" may be distinguished not just by the falsity of its content, but also the "character of (its) online circulation and reception" (Bounegru et al., 2018).

Fake news cannot be avoided. Because of its nature, it is highly unlikely that people will avoid it. Anyone who uses social media, also called social networking services, will receive fake news. The more frequently one uses social media, the more fake news one receives. The challenge is to identify and ultimately avoid spreading fake news as the personal and social impact can be damaging. In fact, it may also have legal implications. The growth of technology, media technology in particular, in combination with the ease of creating one's information through cheap mobile telephony, has democratized "news" both for good and bad uses. An active user of social media receives information many times each day from friends, families, casual acquaintances, and unknown people. It has become easier than ever to generate and spread information. It can be about anything. In several formats, including text, video, photo and voice, anyone can use just a smart telephone to express views, ideas wishes and news that can reach numerous people across the world in rapid time

Such shared information may be fake news which contains mis-information and inaccuracies. The information may be designed purposefully to deceive or mislead the receiver. Or it may be used to inform, or promote a view-point, sale, generate interest in an issue, or perhaps to entertain. Most people re-post information quickly and hardly spend time to verify its authenticity. Fake news varies in appearance and implications. As Nigeria's 2019 elections for president, governors, and other offices draw nearer, fake news will increase in frequency and sophistication. The relevance of newspapers, radio and television notwithstanding, social network services are very effective means of communication. Their impact of political discourse and communication is significant in Nigeria.

According to available statistics, Nigeria's active users of social media increased from only 52 million in 2013 to about 90 million users in 2017. With a huge population of young, people, the country will most likely surpass its hitherto growth rate of about three percent for active users. Especially if the costs of mobile telephony decreases, and the economy picks up in the near future, more young people will use the internet with social media as primary means of communication. The mobile telephone subscription in the country rose from 1.6 million in 2002, to 87.4 million in 2010, and it is now at about 154 million (Makinwa, 2019, p. 18). Statistics from the Nigerian Communications Commission show that the total number of Internet users in the country increased by 14,599,973 from 97,032,543 in December 2015, to 111,632,516, as of December 2018 (Okere, 2019, p. 14) Some fake news can be sighted from a mile off, especially by astute communication and media professionals. A casual observation will show if the name of the purported media organization is wrongly portrayed, or if there are wrong spellings, unusual language or style of presentation. In some cases, the hyperlink used as source of the news or information does not exist. Or the statements made are simply doubtful.

Yet, fake news can be cleverly done. It is possible to use modern innovations to modify photos, voices, images and scenes and combine them to look credible. In such cases, it is difficult to spot the manipulations. More advanced analysis or technology is required.

Recently, Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka spoke of a fake website that had his identity all over it. He succeeded to trace the originator, but the person has not taken the website down. Many wealthy people, celebrities, well-known persons leading brands and organizations have fake information about them and attributed to them on the social media. Facebook, Twitters, websites and blogs, WhatsApp and Instagram are popular in Nigeria, and they contain a lot of fake news despite deliberate efforts by the platforms to identify and eliminate such fake news and their creators.

Types of Fake News

Wardle (2017) identifies the following as types of fake news:

1. Satire or parody ("no intention to cause harm but has potential to fool").
2. False connection ("when headlines, visuals or captions don't support the content").
3. Misleading content ("misleading use of information to frame an issue or an individual").
4. False context ("when genuine content is shared with false contextual information").
5. Impostor content ("when genuine sources are impersonated" with false made-up sources).
6. Manipulated content ("when genuine information or imagery is manipulated to deceive", as with a "doctored" photo).
7. Fabricated content ("news content is 100% false, designed to deceive and do harm").

Watts (2018) identifies five categories collectively referred to as fake news. They are:

1. Satire or parody – sites such as the Onion or Daily Mash publish fake news stories as humorous attempts to satirize the media, but have the potential to fool when shared.
2. Misleading news that is sort of true but used in the wrong context-selectively chosen real facts that are reported to gain headlines, but tend to be a misinterpretation of scientific research.
3. Slopping reporting that fits an agenda-news that contains some grains of truth that are not fully verified, which are used to support a certain position or view.
4. Misleading news that is not based on facts, but supports an on-going narrative –news where there is no established baseline for truth, often where ideologies or opinions clash and unconscious biases come into play. Conspiracy theories tend to fall here!
5. Intentionally deceptive-news that has been fabricated deliberately to either makes money through number of clicks, or cause confusion or discontent or as sensationalist propaganda. These stories tend to be distributed through imposter news sites designed to look like 'real' news brand, or through fake news sites. They often employ videos and graphic images that have been manipulated in some way.

Some of the identified categories are actually fake (disinformation), others due to human error or biases (misinformation). But whichever way one looks at it, they all have a loose connection with the truth and basically sit on a continuum of intent to deceive.

Identifying Fake News

In order to identify fake news, Facione (2017) cited in Ogunyombo and Onwubere (2018, p. 7) proposed ten questions that must be answered.

1. Is the source an expert on the topic?
2. Is the source relying on firsthand experience?
3. Is the source speaking on the right topic?
4. Is the source's knowledge up-to-date?
5. Can the source explain the basis for their claim?
6. Is the source truthful?
7. Is the source unbiased?
8. Is the source free of conflicts of interest?
9. Is the source speaking freely?
10. Is the source mentally stable?

Facione (2017) notes that one theme running through these ten guidelines is to be skeptical. He advised news consumers to apply critical thinking skills to test the credibility of the sources of the news they hear or see. Instead of gulping fake news, listeners, readers and viewers should demand full explanations of messages that come to them from people with the intent to deceive them.

One of the social media news companies, Facebook, that has been severely criticized for aiding the spread of fake news has provided some tips to stop the spread of false news on Facebook. The tips were developed in partnership with First Draft, a non-profit organization dedicated to improving skills and standards in the reporting and sharing of information online. The tips are:

1. Be skeptical of headlines. False news stories often have catchy headlines in all caps with exclamation points. If shocking claims in the headline sound unbelievable, they probably are.
2. Look loosely at the URL. A phony or look-alike URL may be a warning sign of false news. Many false news sites mimic authentic news sources by making small changes to the URL. You can go to the site and compare the URL to established sources.
3. Investigate the source. Ensure that the story is written by a source that you trust with a reputation for accuracy. If the story comes from an unfamiliar organization, check their "About'' section to learn more.
4. Watch for unusual formatting. Many false news sites have misspellings or awkward layouts. Read carefully if you see these signs.
5. Consider the photos. False news stories often contain manipulated images or videos. Sometimes the photo may be authentic, but taken out of context. You can search for the photo or image to verify where it came from.
6. Inspect the dates. False news stories may contain timelines that make no sense, or event dates that have been altered.
7. Check the evidence. Check the author's sources to confirm that they are accurate. Lack of evidence or reliance on unnamed experts may indicate a false news story.
8. Look at other reports. If no other news source is reporting the same story, it may indicate that the story is false. If the story is reported by multiple sources you trust, it is more likely to be true.
9. Is the story a joke? Sometimes false news stories can be hard to distinguish from humour or satire. Check whether the source is known for parody, and whether the story's details and tone suggest it may be just for fun.
10. Some stories are intentionally false. Think critically about the stories you read, and only share news that you know to be credible (rappier.com 2017).

The International Federation of Library Association and Institutions (IFLA) published a summary to assist people in recognizing fake news (IFLA, 2017). Its main points are:

1. Consider the source (to understand its mission and purpose)
2. Read beyond the headline (to understand the whole story)
3. Check the authors (to see if they are real and credible)
4. Asses the supporting sources (to ensure they support the claims)
5. Check the date of publication (to see if the story is relevant and up to date)
6. Ask if it is a joke (to determine if it is meant to be satire)
7. Review your own biases (to see if they are affecting your judgment)
8. Ask experts (to get confirmation from independent people with knowledge)

Social Media and Fake News

Social media are internet-based communication platform that provide users opportunities to generate, share, receive, and comment on issues among multi users through multisensory communication. Social media enable users to not just be consumers of information but to be producers and this in turn enable users to influence and persuade people. Social media provide rich and dynamic platforms for interaction, information sharing and connectedness. Their interactivity, speed of information sharing, ease of use and currency of information have made them become increasingly dominant tools for information acquisition and sharing among youths and adults. Popular social media platforms include Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter and YouTube. People rely on social media platforms for news and information distribution and consumption.

Jin et al. (2011, p. 2) describe social media as digital tools and applications that facilitate interactive communication and content exchange among and between publics and organizations. Today, there exists a vast ecosystem of social media sites, in terms of their scope and functionality. Some sites are for the general public like Friendster, Hi5, and Facebook. Other sites, like LinkedIn, are more focused professional networks. Media sharing sites, such as Myspace, YouTube, Instagram and Flickr deal more with sharing of videos and photos. Weblogs, popularly referred to as blogs since the 1990s, are now very common because they are easy to use with their authors including both professionals and non-professional writers. The resulting 'blogsphere' of more than 100million blogs and their interconnections has become an important source of public opinion (Kietzmann et al., 2011), more so as any information posted on these sites could easily go viral.

Fake news is more rampant in the internet because of the way social media and some news platforms operate. Facebook for example have always denied being a news platform claiming that it is only a technology company. Consequently, the platform is not bound by ethical and professional conduct of the traditional media outlets or organizations. It was only recently after much outcry by the public and industry players that it reluctantly decided to take down or block lots of fake news and dubious materials.

Following the outcry, Aidan White admonished Facebook thus: "Facebook would do well to stop denying it is a publisher and face up to its responsibility as a news provider. It needs to recognize and apply the principle and standards of journalism and free expression that have guided the work of journalism, editors and publishers". It is this lack of accountability that has made fake news flood the social media and other websites. Today, millions of people get their news through these platforms. Integrity, authority, humanity and evidence: Are there better words in the lexicon of journalism? This was the question Lyse Doucer, BBC chief international correspondent asked in her acceptance speech as she received the 2017 British Journalism Review Charles Wheeler Award for outstanding contribution to Broadcast Journalism. Sadly, fake news is just an off shoot of post-truth era where there exists not just "Truth' and 'lie' but the third 'Ambiguity' where people grope and pick which information they relate to.

Studies have shown that individuals get fake news and information more from social media than from traditional media (Kumar & Shan, 2018; Shu, Silva, Wang, Tang & Liu 2017). The basic danger in fake news is that it makes people doubt almost every news or information and this can be very destabilizing to any society. Think of a situation where people no longer believe in any information coming from the authorities or politicians – it is the beginning of social breakdown. This is a threat to democracy, modern society and reality (Uja, 2018, p. 18). Fake news poses risk to evidence-based decision mak-

ing (Roozenbeck & Van der Linden, 2018), in that people rely on information to make decisions from information obtained and only for such information to be fake. It thus undermines the functioning of individuals and communities.

Fake News Legislations in Selected Countries

Austria

Politicians in Austria dealt with the impact of fake news and its spread on social media after the 2016 presidential campaign in the country. In December 2016, a court in Austria issued an injunction on Facebook Europe, mandating it block negative postings related to Eva Glawischnig-Piesczek, Austrian Green Party Chairwoman. According to The Washington Post the postings to Facebook about her "appeared to have been spread via a fake profile" and directed derogatory epithets towards the Austrian politician. (Kirchner, 2016). The derogatory postings were likely created by the identical fake profile that had previously been utilized to attack Alexander van der Bellen, who won the election for President of Austria (Kirchner, 2016).

Brazil

Brazil faced increasing influence from fake news after the 2014 re-election of President DilmaRousseff and Rousseff's subsequent impeachment in August 2016. BBC Brazil reported in April 2016 that in the week surrounding one of the impeachment votes, three out of the five most-shared articles on Facebook in Brazil were fake. In 2015, reporter Tai Nalon resigned from her position at Brazilian newspaper Folha de S Paulo in order to start the first fact-checking website in Brazil, called AosFatos (To The Facts). Nalon told The Guardian there was a great deal of fake news, and hesitated to compare the problem to that experienced in the U.S. (Hunt, 2016). In fact, Brazil also have problems with fake news and according to a survey a greater number of people believe that fake news influenced the outcome of their elections (69%) than the United States (47%) (Reuters, 2018).

Czech Republic

Czech Republic has become home to numerous fake news outlets, many redistributing news in Czech and English originally produced by Russian sources. Czech president MilošZeman has been supporting media outlets accused of spreading fake news (Euobserver.com, 2017).

The Centre Against Terrorism and Hybrid Threats (CTHH) is unit of the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic primarily aimed at countering disinformation, fake news, hoaxes and foreign propaganda. The CTHH started operations on January 1, 2017. The CTHH has been criticized by Czech President MilošZeman, who said: "We don't need censorship. We don't need thought police. We don't need a new agency for press and information as long as we want to live in a free and democratic society." (SkyNews, 2017).

In 2017 media activists started a website Konspiratori.cz maintaining a list of conspiracy and fake news outlets in Czech. (Konspiratori.sk, 2017).

China

Fake news during the 2016 U.S. election spread to China. Articles popularized within the United States were translated into Chinese and spread within China. (Hunt,2016). The government of China used the growing problem of fake news as a rationale for increasing Internet censorship in China in November 2016. (Orlowski, 2016). China took the opportunity to publish an editorial in its Communist Party newspaper The Global Times called: "Western Media's Crusade Against Facebook", and criticized "unpredictable" political problems posed by freedoms enjoyed by users of Twitter, Google, and Facebook. China government leaders meeting in Wuzhen at the third World Internet Conference in November 2016 said fake news in the U.S. election justified adding more curbs to free and open use of the Internet. China Deputy Minister RenXianliang, official at the Cyberspace Administration of China, said increasing online participation led to "harmful information" and fraud (Pascaline, 2016). Kam Chow Wong, a former Hong Kong law enforcement official and criminal justice professor at Xavier University, praised attempts in the U.S. to patrol social media (The Washington Post, 2016). The Wall Street Journal noted China's themes of Internet censorship became more relevant at the World Internet Conference due to the outgrowth of fake news (Dou, 2016).

The issue of fake news in the 2016 United States election has given the Chinese Government a reason to further criticize Western democracy and press freedom. The Chinese government has also accused Western media organizations of bias, in a move apparently inspired by President Trump (Hernandez, 2017).

In March 2017, the People's Daily, a newspaper run by the ruling Communist Party of China denounced news coverage of the torture of Chinese lawyer and human rights advocate Xie Yang, claiming it to be fake news (Hernandez, 2017). The newspaper published a Twitter post declaring that "Foreign media reports that police tortured a detained lawyer is FAKE NEWS, fabricated to tarnish China's image". The state-owned Xinhua News Agency claimed that "the stories were essentially fake news". The Chinese government has often accused Western news organizations of being biased and dishonest (Hernandez, 2017).

The Chinese government also claimed that there are people who pose as journalists that spread negative information on social media in order to extort payment from their victims to stop doing so. David Bandurski of University of Hong Kong's China Media Project has said that this issue has continued to worsen (The Wall Street Journal, 2014).

Finland

Officials from 11 countries met in Helsinki in November 2016 to plan the formation of a center to combat disinformation cyber-warfare, which includes the spread of fake news on social media. The center is planned to be located in Helsinki and combine efforts from 10 countries, including Sweden, Germany, Finland, and the U.S. Prime Minister of Finland Juha Sipilä planned to address the topic of the center in Spring 2017 with a motion before Parliament.

Deputy Secretary of State for EU Affairs Jori Arvonen said cyber-warfare, such as hybrid cyber-warfare intrusions into Finland from Russia and the Islamic State, became an increased problem in 2016. Arvonen cited examples including online fake news, disinformation, and the little green men troops of the Ukrainian crisis (Yle, 2016).

Germany

German Chancellor Angela Merkel lamented the problem of fraudulent news reports in a November 2016 speech, days after announcing her campaign for a fourth term as leader of her country. In a speech to the German parliament, Merkel was critical of such fake sites, saying they harmed political discussion. Merkel called attention to the need of government to deal with Internet trolls, bots, and fake news websites. She warned that such fraudulent news websites were a force increasing the power of populist extremism. Merkel called fraudulent news a growing phenomenon that might need to be regulated in the future. Germany's foreign intelligence agency Federal Intelligence Service Chief, Bruno Kahl, warned of the potential for cyberattacks by Russia in the 2017 German election. He said the cyberattacks would take the form of the intentional spread of disinformation. Kahl said the goal is to increase chaos in political debates. Germany's domestic intelligence agency Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution Chief, Hans-Georg Maassen, said sabotage by Russian intelligence was a present threat to German information security (Murdock, 2016). The German term Lügenpresse, or lying press, has been used since the 19th century as a strategy to attack news spread by political opponents from the 19th century.

India

Fake news in India has led to episodes of violence between castes and religions and interfered with public policies. It often spreads through the Smartphone instant messenger Whatsapp (Doshi, 2017) which had 200 million monthly active users in the country as of February 2017 (Singh, 2017).

On November 8, 2016, India established a 2,000-rupee currency bill on the same day as the Indian 500 and 1,000 rupee note demonetisation. Fake news went viral over WhatsApp that the note came equipped with spying technology that tracked bills 120 meters below the earth. Finance Minister Arun Jaitley refuted the falsities, but not before they had spread to the country's mainstream news outlets. (Zee News, 2016). Later, in May 2017, seven people were lynched as rumor of child abductions spread through WhatsApp in a village (Doshi, 2017).

Prabhakar Kumar of the Indian media research agency CMS, told The Guardian India was harder hit by fake news because the country lacked media policy for verification. Law enforcement officers in India arrested individuals with charges of creating fictitious articles, predominantly if there was likelihood the articles inflamed societal conflict.

In April 2018, the Information and Broadcasting Ministry said the government would cancel the accreditation of journalists found to be sharing fake news, but this was quickly retracted after criticism that this was an attack on freedom of the press (Kumar, 2018).

In June 2018 mobs murdered a governmental employee, Sukanta Chakraborty, who was fighting against false news and rumours, and two other unrelated people. More people were severely injured. The local government temporarily shut down mobile Internet and texting services (Outlookindia.com, 2018).

In Kashmir, to tackle the menace of fake news, Amir Ali Shah, a youth from south Kashmir' Anantnag district has developed a website "Stop Fake in Kashmir", on which news can be verified and facts can be checked. The website is the first of its kind developed in the Kashmir valley.

Indonesia

Recently, Indonesia has seen an increase in the amount of fake news circulating on social media. The problem first arose during their 2014 presidential election, where candidate Jokowi became a target of a smear campaign which falsely claimed he was the child of Indonesian Communist Party members, of Chinese descent, and a Christian (Kwok, 2017). Unlike the 2016 U.S. presidential election, where the sharing of fake news resulted in increased social-media engagement than real news, inflaming ethnic and political tensions could be potentially deadly in Indonesia, with its recent incidences of domestic terrorism, and its long and bloody history of anticommunist, anti-Christian and anti-Chinese pogroms (Kwok, 2017). The government, watchdog groups, and even religious organizations have taken steps to prevent its spreading, such as blocking certain websites and creating fact-check apps. The largest Islamic mass organization in Indonesia, Nahdlatul Ulama, has created an anti-fake news campaign called #TurnBack-Hoax, while other Islamic groups have defined such propagation as tantamount to a sin (Kwok, 2017). While the government currently views criminal punishment as its last resort, officials are working hard to ensure law enforcement will respect the freedom of expression.

Malaysia

In April 2018, Malaysia implemented the Anti-Fake News Bill 2018, a controversial law that deemed publishing and circulating misleading information as a crime punishable by up to six years in prison and/or fines of up to 500,000 ringit (nytimes.com, 2018). At implementation the country's prime minister was NajibRazak, whose associates were connected to the mishandling of at least $3.5 billion by a United States Department of Justice report (The New York Times, 2016). Of that sum of money, $731 million was deposited into bank accounts controlled by Razak (The New York Times, 2018; The New York Times, 2016) The convergence between the fake news law and Razak's connection to scandal was made clear by the Malaysian minister of communications and multimedia, Salleh Said Keruak, who said that tying Razak to a specific dollar amount could be a prosecutable offense (The New York Times, 2018). In the 2018 Malaysian general election, NajibRazak lost his seat as prime minister to Mahatir Mohammad, who vowed to abolish the fake news law in his campaign, as the law was used to target him (BBC News, 2018, CNET, 2018). After winning the election, the newly elected prime minister Mohammad has said, "Even though we support freedom of press and freedom of speech, there are limits." (BBC News, 2018, CNET, 2018). As of May 2018, Mohammad has supported amending the law, rather than a full abolition (CNET, 2018).

Paul Bernal, a lecturer in information and technology, fears that the fake news epidemic is a "Trojan horse" for countries like Malaysia to "control uncomfortable stories." (Priday, 2018). The vagueness of this law means that satirists, opinion writers, and journalists who make errors could face persecution. The law also makes it illegal to share fake news stories; a Danish man and Malaysian citizen were arrested for posting false news stories online and were sentenced to serve a month in jail (Domonoske, 2018).

Myanmar

In 2015, BBC News reported on fake stories, using unrelated photographs and fraudulent captions, shared online in support of the Rohingya (BBC News, 2015). Fake news negatively affected individuals in Myanmar, leading to a rise in violence against Muslims in the country. Online participation surged

from one percent to 20 percent of Myanmar's total populace from 2014 to 2016. Fake stories from Facebook were reprinted in paper periodicals called Facebook and The Internet. False reporting related to practitioners of Islam in the country was directly correlated with increased attacks on Muslims in Myanmar. BuzzFeed journalist Sheera Frenkel reported fake news fictitiously stated believers in Islam acted out in violence at Buddhist locations. She documented a direct relationship between the fake news and violence against Muslim people. Frenkel noted countries that were relatively newer to Internet exposure were more vulnerable to the problems of fake news and fraud.

Philippines

Fake news has been problematic in the Philippines where social media has outsized political influence. Following the 2016 Philippine election, Senator Francis Pangilinan filed that there be an inquiry of conduct of social media platforms that allowed for the spreading of fake news (Javier, 2017). Pangilinan called for penalties for social media platforms that provided the public with false information about his ideas. The news that came out was meant to discredit the opposing party and used social media as an outlet to bring propaganda into the mainstream media (Javier, 2017). According to media analysts, developing countries such as the Philippines, with the generally new access to social media and democracy, feel the problem of fake news to a larger extent (Mozur, 2016). Facebook is one of the largest platforms being an open website, that works as a booster to sway the opinion of the public due to manufactured stories. While Facebook provides free media sources, it does not provide its users with the access to fact checking websites (Mozur, 2016). Because of this, government authorities call for a tool that will filter out "fake news" to secure the integrity of cyberspace in the Philippines (Javier, 2017). Rappler, a social news network in the Philippines, investigated online networks of Rodrigo Duterte supporters and discovered that they include fake news, fake accounts, bots and trolls, which Rappler thinks are being used to silence dissent. The creation of fake news, and fake news accounts on social media has been a danger to the political health of the country. According to Kate Lamble and Megha Mohan of BBC news, "What we're seeing on social media again is manufactured reality… They also create a very real chilling effect against normal people, against journalists (who) are the first targets, and they attack in very personal ways with death threats and rape threats." Journalists are often risking their lives in publishing articles that contest fake news in the Philippines (BBC, 2017).

The 2016 Filipino election was influenced, in large part, by false information propagated by fake news outlets. By New York Times contributor Miguel Syjuco's account, President Rodrigo Duterte benefited from a disproportionate amount of complimentary fake news compared to his opponents. The pro-Duterte propaganda spread across Filipino social media include fake endorsements from prominent public figures like Pope Francis and Angela Merkel (Syjuco, 2017). Duterte's own campaign was responsible for a portion of the misinformation spread during the election; according to a study from Oxford University's Computational Propaganda Research Program, Duterte's campaign paid an estimated $200,000 for dedicated trolls to undermine dissenters and disseminate misinformation in 2016 (Bradshaw & Howard, 2017).

An incident was the accusation made by Justice Secretary Vitaliano Aguirre II regarding 2017 Marawi Crisis in which he tagged various opposition senators and other people as masterminds of the attack based on a photo shared through social media and other blog sites which produces fake news (Ranos, 2017). Another government official, Communications Assistant Secretary Margaux "Mocha" Uson has been accused of spreading fake news (ABS-CBN, 2018, rappler.com, 2018).

The prevalence of fake news in the Philippines have pushed lawmakers to file laws to combat it, like criminalizing its dissemination (Santos, 2017; Elemia, 2017). The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines strongly opposes the spread of fake news as a sin, and published a list of fake news websites (Bajo, 2017; Bondoc, 2017).

Poland

Polish historian Jerzy Targalski [pl] noted fake news websites had infiltrated Poland through anti-establishment and right-wing sources that copied content from Russia Today. Targalski observed there existed about 20 specific fake news websites in Poland that spread Russian disinformation in the form of fake news. One example cited was fake news that Ukraine announced the Polish city of Przemyśl as occupied Polish land (Radio Poland, 2016).

Poland's anti-EU Law and Justice (PiS) government has been accused of spreading "illiberal disinformation" to undermine public confidence in the European Union (Foreign Policy, 2017). Maria Snegovaya of Columbia University said: "The true origins of this phenomenon are local. The policies of Fidesz and Law and Justice have a lot in common with Putin's own policies." (Foreign Policy, 2017).

Some mainstream outlets were long accused of fabricating half-true or outright false information. One of popular TV stations, TVN, in 2010 attributed to JarosławKaczyński (then an opposition leader) words that "there will be times, when true Poles will come to the power". (Wiadomosci.dziennik.pl, 2018). However, Kaczyński has never uttered those words in the commented speech.

Singapore

Singapore criminalizes the propagation of fake news. Under existing law, "Any person who transmits or causes to be transmitted a message which he knows to be false or fabricated shall be guilty of an offence". (Telecommunications Act, 2017).

On 18 March 2015, a doctored screenshot of Prime Minister's Office website claiming the demise of the Lee Kuan Yew went viral, and several international news agencies such as CNN and China Central Television initially reported it as news, until corrected by the Prime Minister's Office. The image was created by a student to demonstrate to his classmates how fake news could be easily created and propagated (The Strait Times, 2017). In 2017, Singaporean news website Mothership.sg was criticised by the Ministry of Education (MOE) for propagating remarks falsely attributed to a MOE official (Sg. news, 2018). In addition, Minister of Law K Shanmugam also singled out online news website The States Times Review as an example of a source of fake news, as it once claimed a near-zero turnout at the state funeral of President S. R. Nathan (Coconuts, 2017).

Following these incidents, Shanmugam stated that the existing legalisation is limited and ineffective (Au-Yong, 2017), and indicated that the government intends to introduce legislation to combat fake news in 2018 (ChannelNewsAsia, 2017). In 2017, the Ministry of Communications and Information set up Factually, a website intended to debunk false rumours regarding issues of public interest such as the environment, housing and transport, (Hermes, 2017) while in 2018, the Parliament of Singapore formed a Select Committee to consider new legislation to tackle fake news (ChannelNewsAsia, 2018).

Activist platform The Online Citizen regarded legislation against fake news as an attempt by the government to curb the free flow of information so that only information approved by the government is disseminated to the public (The onlinecitizen.com, 2017). In an online essay, activist and historian

Thum Ping Tjin denied that fake news was a problem in Singapore, and accused the People's Action Party government as the only major source of fake news, claiming that detentions made without trial during Operation Coldstore and Operation Spectrum were based on fake news for party political gain (Theonlinecitizen.com, 2018).

Facebook and Google have opposed the introduction of new laws to combat fake news, claiming that existing legislation is adequate to address the problem and that an effective way of combating misinformation is through educating citizens on how to distinguish reliable from unreliable information (News.yahoo.com, 2018).

Spain

Fake news in Spain has become much more prevalent in the past year, but has been a major factor in Spain's history. The United States government published a fake article in regard to the purchase of the Philippines from Spain, which they had already purchased (Cabreza, 2017). Despite this, the topic of fake news has traditionally not been given much attention to in Spain, until the newspaper El País launched the new blog dedicated strictly to truthful news entitled "Hechos"; which literally translates to "fact" in Spanish. David Alandete, the managing editor of El País, stated how many people misinterpret fake news as real because the sites "have similar names, typography, layouts and are deliberately confusing" (Southern) (digiday.com, 2017). Alandete made it the new mission of El País "to respond to fake news" (Scott & Eddy 2017). María Ramírez of Univision Communications has stated that much of the political fake news circulating in Spain is due to the lack of investigative journalism on the topics. Most recently El País has created a fact-checking position for five employees, to try and debunk the fake news released (digiday.com, 2017).

United Kingdom

On December 8, 2016, Chief of the Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) Alex Younger delivered a speech to journalists at the MI6 headquarters where he called fake news and propaganda damaging to democracy. Younger said the mission of MI6 was to combat propaganda and fake news in order to deliver to his government a strategic advantage in the information warfare arena, and assist other nations including Europe. He called such methods of fake news propaganda online a "fundamental threat to our sovereignty". Younger said all nations that hold democratic values should feel the same worry over fake news (Waterson, 2016).

However, definitions of "fake news" have been controversial in the UK, with political satire being seen as a key element of British humour (O'Grady, 2017). Members of Parliament in the UK have been advised against using the term "when describing the complexity of information disorder", as the term "fake news" is "woefully inadequate":

Neither the words 'fake' nor 'news' effectively capture this polluted information ecosystem. Much of the content used as examples in debates on this topic are not fake, they are genuine but used out of context or manipulated. Similarly, to understand the entire ecosystem of polluted information, we need to consider far more than content that mimics 'news' (Hern, 2018).

United States

Fake news became a global subject and was widely introduced to billions as a subject mainly due to the 2016 U.S. presidential election (Kaminska, 2017; Qui, 2017; Kessler, 2017; Drinkard, 2017; JSTOR Daily, 2016; BBC News, 2016; The Somerville Times, 2017). Numerous political commentators and journalists wrote and stated in media that 2016 was the year of fake news and as a result nothing will ever be the same in politics and cyber security (vox.com,2017). Due to the fair amount of fake news in 2016, it became hard to tell what was real in 2017. Donald Trump tweeted or retweeted posts about "fake news" or "fake media" 176 times as of Dec. 20, 2017, according to an online archive of all of Trump's tweets (Galvin, 2017). Governmental bodies in the U.S. and Europe started looking at contingencies and regulations to combat fake news specially when as part of a coordinated intelligence campaign by hostile foreign governments. Online tech giants Facebook and Google started putting in place means to combat fake news in 2016 as a result of the phenomenon becoming globally known. Google Trends shows that the term "fake news" gained traction in online searches in October 2016 (Leetaru, 2017).

Professor Philip N. Howard of the Oxford Internet Institute at the University of Oxford studied web traffic in the United States prior to the election. He found that about one half of all news on Twitter directed at Michigan was junk or fake, and the other half came from actual professional news sources.

According to BuzzFeed, during the last three months of the presidential campaign, of the top twenty fake election-related articles on Facebook, seventeen were anti-Clinton or pro-Trump. Facebook users interacted with them more often than with stories from genuine news outlets (Orlowski, 2016).

Debate over the impact of fake news in the election, and whether or not it significantly impacted the election of the Republican candidate Donald Trump, whom the most shared fake stories favored, (Crowe, 2017; Morris, 2017) led researchers from Stanford to study the impact of fake news shared on social media, where 62% of U.S. adults get their news from. They assessed that 8% of readers of fake news recalled and believed in the content they were reading, though the same share of readers also recalled and believed in "placebos" — stories they did not actually read, but that were produced by the authors of the study. In comparison, over 50% of the participants recalled reading and believed in true news stories. The authors do not assess the final impact of these numbers on the election, but seek to "offer theoretical and empirical background" for the debate (Office of the Historian, n.d.).

In the United States in the run-up to the 2016 presidential election, fake news was particularly prevalent and spread rapidly over social media "bots", according to researchers at the Oxford Internet Institute (Markoff, 2016; Resnick, 2016). In a speech shortly after the election, former Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton warned of the "real-world consequences" of fake news. Shortly thereafter, in the early weeks of his presidency, U.S. President Donald Trump frequently used the term "fake news" to refer to traditional news media, singling out CNN (Fox News, 2017). Linguist George Lakoff says this creates confusion about the phrase's meaning (NPR, 2017). According to CBS 60 Minutes, President Trump may use the term fake news to describe any news, however legitimate or responsible, with which he may disagree (Tribuneindia.com, 2018).

After Republican Colorado State Senator Ray Scott used the term as a reference to a column in the Grand Junction Daily Sentinel, the newspaper's publisher threatened a defamation lawsuit.

In December 2016, an armed North Carolina man, Edgar Maddison Welch, traveled to Washington, D.C., and opened fire at the Comet Ping Pong pizzeria, driven by a fake online news story known as the Pizzagate conspiracy theory, which accused the pizzeria of hosting a pedophile ring run by Democratic Party leaders (PolitiFact.com, 2016). These stories tend to go viral quickly. Social media systems, such

as Facebook, play a large role in the broadcasting of fake news. These systems show users content that reflects their interests and history, leading to fake and misleading news. Following a plea agreement with prosecutors, Welch pleaded guilty to the federal charge of interstate transport of firearms and a District of Columbia charge of assault with a dangerous weapon. Welch was sentenced to four years in prison on June 22, 2017 and agreed to pay $5,744.33 for damages to the restaurant (NPR.org, 2017).

A situation study by The New York Times shows how a tweet by a person with no more than 40 followers went viral and was shared 16,000 times on Twitter (The New York Times, 2016). The tweet concluded that protesters were paid to be bussed to Trump demonstrations and protest. A Twitter user then posted a photograph of two buses outside a building, claiming that those were the Anti-Trump protesters. The tweet immediately went viral on both Twitter and Facebook. Fake news can easily spread due to the speed and accessibility of modern communications technology.

A CNN investigation examined exactly how fake news can start to trend (Fox News, 2017). There are "bots" used by fake news publishers that make their articles appear more popular than they are. This makes it more likely for people to discover them. "Bots are fake social media accounts that are programmed to automatically 'like' or retweet a particular message." (Markoff, 2016).

Fraudulent stories during the 2016 U.S. presidential election included a viral post popularized on Facebook that Pope Francis had endorsed Trump, and another that actor Denzel Washington "backs Trump in the most epic way possible" (Newcomb, 2016; Schaede, 2016). Trump's son and campaign surrogate Eric Trump, top national security adviser Michael Flynn, and then-campaign managers Kellyanne Conway and Corey Lewandowski shared fake news stories during the campaign.

Starting in July 2017, President Trump's 2020 presidential campaign launched Real News Update, an online news program posted on Facebook. The series reports on Trump's accomplishments as president of the United States and claims to highlight "real news" as opposed to alleged "fake news". Lara Trump introduced one video by saying "If you are tired of all the fake news out there...we are going to bring you nothing but the facts" and "I bet you haven't heard about all the accomplishments the president had this week, because there's so much fake news out there" (Tesfaye, 2017). The show has been labelled as "propaganda" (Blake, 2018).

In January 2018, it was reported that a Gallup-Knight Foundation survey found that 17% of Democrats and 42% of Republicans "consider accurate news stories that cast a politician or political group in a negative light to always be 'fake news'" (Wemple, 2018). A June 2018 poll by Axios and Survey Monkey found that 72% of Americans believe "traditional news outlets knowingly report false or misleading stories at least sometimes," with 92% of Republican and Republican-leaning independents and 53% of Democrats believing this (Axios, 2018).

International Response to Fake News

Countries in Europe as well as the United States of America are already finding ways to block the spread of fake news even though progress has been limited. Apart from the legislations on fake news by various countries, the social media news companies are taking concrete steps to limit the spread of fake news.

In July 2018, Twitter announced it would commence the deletion of millions of fake news and suspicious accounts. This was part of efforts to battle a pervasive form of social media fraud. Many people have bought fake followers just to position themselves as so called 'influencers,' WhatsApp has also commenced measures aimed at giving a measure of sanity to the platform by automatically inserting 'forwarded' above any piece of information its users rebroadcast. Similarly, Facebook announced a major

move to limit the appearance of news articles on timelines to focus on activities of users' friends which was the initial trend before the page advertisement craze which raked in a lot of money for the company.

Facebook also launched a third-party fact checking initiative in Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa with the strong desire to commit more African countries in its bid to combat fake news. In Nairobi, Facebook representatives explained how the third-party fact check would work with partners such as Africa Check, AFP and PesaCheck. Facebook is in the process of partnering factcheck services provider; Dubawa in Nigeria and more organizations through the pointer programme which focuses on skills and certification for factcheckers. According to the social network's initiative, stories that are offensive to the public (such as child pornography) would be instantly removed. However, stories that do not contravene the rules of Facebook, but are deemed to feature 'unfavorable information' would be downgraded. This includes post that offer monetary rewards or incentivizes users to take an action like share or comment. ''This is the best way to improve speed and promote the authenticity of our platform,'' said Jocelyn Muhuntu-Remy, Strategic Partner Manager for Sub-Saharan Africa at Facebook.

Once news is flagged as 'fake' and confirmed as such by third-party checkers, its virility is reduced to 80%. Muhutu-Remy said Facebook is working to increase the percentage and would be adding additional percentage for repeat offenders. "Currently no personal posts. Indigenous African languages can be covered by the third-party partners, but Facebook would work to include popular languages in the future", she added. The global fake news phenomenon has not spared Africa. According to the Africa Cyber Security Report 2017 fake news has emerged as a critical influence within cyber security. ''In 2017, our media platforms were overwhelmed by rogue politics and misinformation and dubious claims'', the report said. It added that the audiences might not be equipped to separate quality information from false information.

Apparently worried by the rising cases of fake news and misinformation from WhatsApp, the social media App instituted $1million research grants to academics from around the world for the purpose of studying misinformation and its impact on society. Fake news, calls for violence, election-related proposals for which the grants will be given. The goal of the research award is to facilitate high quality, external research on a wide range of topics by academics and experts who are in the countries where Whatsapp is frequently used and where there is limited research on the topic.

In November 2018, the social media messenger App, WhatsApp announced the recipients of the grants. Tagged 'WhatsApp Misinformation' and Social Science Research Awards' approximately 600 proposals were submitted and reviewed with the awardees representing the highest quality projects across several relevant research areas. WhatsApp awarded 20 grants up to $50,000 each to researchers in several countries including Nigeria, Brazil, India, Indonesia, Israel, Mexico, Netherlands, Singapore, Spain, United Kingdom, and United States.

Among the winning projects is the African election: Nigeria 2019, an international collaboration put together by Jonathan Fisher (University of Birmingham), Idayatt Hassan (Center for Democracy and Development, Abuja), Jamie Hitchen (AREA Consulting) as well as Nic Cheeseman (University of Birmingham). The study employs multi-method social science research instruments including in-country interviews, focus groups and surveys to explore how WhatsApp is used (Umeh, 2018, p. 24).

The decision to delete fake news and suspicious accounts came against the backdrop of the pressure mounted on Google, Twitter and Facebook to tackle fake news in the wake of the alleged Russian meddling in the 2016 presidential election in the United States of America. The New York Times had earlier this year (2018) published a report that about 48 million Twitter accounts are fake, while Face-

book reported to investors that it hosted up to 60 million fake accounts. These fake accounts are very influential in shaping reputations, spreading fake news, amplifying messages while also defrauding businesses and damaging reputations.

Challenges of Curtailing the Spread of Fake News in Nigeria

One of the major challenges confronting the nation in the effort to curtail the spread of fake news whether on social media or in the mainstream media is the absence of a law criminalizing it. Consequently, the phenomenon has continued to flourish while at the same constituting a nuisance to the Nigerian society. The amount of misinformation that is spread online through websites, social networks, and email is overwhelming. The hot topics for such misinformation include politics, government policies, religion and various scams and hoaxes. Njoku et al. (2018) observe that a lot of these fake and misleading stories are shared on social media platforms

Another major challenge is that most of the social media users are young people who tend to believe anything they read. Because they lack in-depth knowledge of what is happening in society, they are quick to circulate unverified information with other users. Available statistics show that of the 2.4 billion Facebook users, for instance, 26million are from Nigeria. It is therefore not surprising that this group of people, because of the excitement to receive and share what is trending on social media, will continue to pay deaf ears to the campaign against fake news in the country

We live in a digital age in which social media is considered a vital tool for the dissemination of content and information. Most of the countries, including Nigeria where fake news is endemic, do not have control over content originators and distributors. Unlike in some countries where what comes in is filtered, Nigeria does not have such a mechanism in place. The country is therefore at the mercy of this group of people who care less about the negative effects of fake news on the larger society.

Mr. Jamie Angus, director of British Broadcasting Corporation World Service Group said fake news and disinformation had constituted a huge burden globally, particularly in Africa and Nigeria, because of people's trust and belief in the social media.

The problem is more serious in parts of the world that are less covered by international news organizations. Because the BBC has a global reach, we broadcast in 42 languages, we can see the stories and we are able to spot the patterns all round the world, we can see clearly the types of fake news that are becoming common where there is – whether it is photography, sharing fake news on chat apps, WhatsApp platform, for example. We know it is a problem in Nigeria, West Africa, India and some other countries. We kind of see similar problems around the world that are potentially very serious.

Angus, who featured on Channels TV programme, "Sunrise Daily" on July 2, 2018 stated that there were instances when people faked the stories of BBC and other credible media organizations.

For instance, during the Kenyan elections, people put in some fake version of BBC news report and shared them on Facebook and WhatsApp for political gains. What we can do is to educate the people and appeal to them not to share news until they are sure of the source and confirm it is the truth.

To tackle the problem of fake news, Angus encouraged people to fall back on the most trusted news brands they could rely on for their news sources. He also advocated increased standard of education and media literacy, and enjoined government to find ways to support its core traditional media for acceptability over the social media.

A lot of countries have taken several approaches to legislate around fake news. I think every country can take their decisions about what is the right regulation, because at the country level you understand your own market very well and better than we do. But I think there has to be both the penalty for sharing fake news and rewards for efforts in original journalism.

Examples of fake news on social media in Nigeria.

EFCC DISOWNS TWEET ON FAYOSE, SAYS HE HAS CASE TO ANSWER AFTER TENURE

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has disowned a recent tweet that announced the imminent revival of a criminal case against outgoing governor of Ekiti State, Ayo Fayose. In a statement on Monday night, spokesman of the commission, Mr. Wilson Uwujaren, said the "purported tweet does not represent the views of the EFCC". The tweet which appeared on the EFCC's verified Twitter handle, @official EFCC Sunday afternoon said the commission had dusted a N1.3 billion fraud case file against Fayose. According to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), it came few hours after the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) announced the results of Saturday's governorship election in Ekiti. Fayose protégé, Professor Kolapo Olushola Eleka of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), lost the election to Mr. Kayode Fayemi of the All Progressive Congress (APC). The tweet reads: "The parri (party) is over, the cloak of immunity torn apart, and the staff broken. Ekiti Integrated Poultry Project/ Biologival Concepts Limited N1.3 billion fraud case file dusted off the shelves. See you soon". The post, accompanied with the photograph of what look like a dilapidated poultry structure, was deleted about three hours later. But before then, it had gone viral online, eliciting criticisms from many Nigerians who interpreted it as a reflection of the commission's partisanship. Uwujaren said: "In the opinion of most commentators, the tweet betrayed the partisanship of the EFCC in the political contest in Ekiti State. Against the background, the commission is constrained to state that the purported tweet does not represent the views of the EFCC. As a law enforcement organization, the commission is apolitical and was not involved in the recent Ekiti election. It, therefore has no reason to gloat over political misfortune of any candidate or political godfather". He said although there is a subsisting criminal charge against Fayose, the fate of the charge would be determined by the Federal High Court, Ado Ekiti, at the expiration of his tenure, not the EFCC.

Source: Nigerian Tribune, Wednesday, 18 July, 2018.

VIDEOS OF CASH RECOVERY, ITEMS IN DAURA'S HOME FAKE SAYS DSS

The Department of State Service (DSS) yesterday, denied that cash, weapons and electoral items were recovered from the home of the agency's former Director-General Lawal Daura. A trending video indi-

cating that N21 billion cash, weapons and permanent voter card (PVC) were found in Daura's Abuja and Katsina homes were being circulated yesterday. But, in a statement in Abuja, the DSS said the various biased and conflicting interpretations of last week's incident at the National Assembly were being disseminated by various interest groups. The statement reads: "The attention of the Department of State Services (DSS) has been drawn to the circulation of fake information and videos in which several items were said to have been recovered from the Katsina and Abuja homes of its immediate past Director-General, Lawal Daura. These non-existent items include: twenty one billion naira cash, 400 assorted and sophisticated small arms and light weapons/ rifles and thousands of permanent voters cards (PVCs) belonging to Niger Republic immigrants. In another video also in circulation, some persons believed to be personnel of a security outfit were seen forcing open safes stocked with money. The security operatives were described as executing a recovery operation at the Katsina home of the former DG of DSS. Consequently, the service wishes to inform the public that those videos are false and should be disregarded. So far, no such recovery operations have been undertaken by the EFCC or any other security agency at DSS office or residences of the former director-general". According to the DSS, instead of further spreading such fake news, Nigerians should await the official outcome of the presidential investigation of last week's incident at the National Assembly, which various antagonists have misinterpreted to suit their interests. It said: "There is no doubt that different interests have continued to give varied accounts of the incident of last week at the National Assembly. It may, however, be recalled that the presidency had pledged to carry out a detailed investigation regarding the alleged National Assembly siege. The public is, therefore, advised to exercise restraint in their narration of events and as such, desist from spreading fake news or engaging in activities that may mislead or further cause a breach of the peace as well as preempt the outcome of investigations.

Source: The Nation, Tuesday, August 14, 2018.

ATIKU VS BUHARI: OKONJO – IWEALA REVEALS HER POSITION

Former Minister of Finance, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala has said that fake newspapers articles, quotations and audios were being circulated in her name and the public should disregard them. The former Minister stated, "In spite of several rebuttals and clarifications that we have issue over the past months, some groups and individuals are still misusing the name of the former Minister of Finance, Dr. Ngozi Okonji-Iweala, to further partisan political objectives. We would like to alert Nigerians that this unfortunate practice has increased significantly in this political season.

This misuse of the Ministers name comes in many forms. There are fake newspapers articles published under her name, fake quotations canvassing certain views which are falsely attributed to her. Even fake audios in which someone pretends to be the former Finance Minister have been going round. Most of these are typically disseminated on WhatsApp and other forms of social media. In one recent example, a video of the minister was cleverly edited, leaving out critical information and context to give a totally false impression. These shenanigans are designed to give the impression. These shenanigans are designed to give the impression that she supports one particular political interest or position or the other. We urge Nigerians to ignore these mischievous antics by political peddlers of fiction. Dr. Okonjo- Iweala is very capable of speaking for herself if and when she wants to and does not need the help of anyone to do that.

In this political season of forged and fake news, we urge the media and the public to crosscheck the authenticity of any quotation, articles, audios and videos attributed to Dr. Okonjo-Iweala before giving them audience or going public with them. If it does not come directly from Dr. Okonjo-Iweala's twitter account, then kindly discount it

Source: Dailypost.ng

NIGERIAN PRESIDENT BUHARI DENIES DEATH AND BODY DOUBLE RUMOURS: BBC NEWS

Nigeria`s President Muhanmadu Buhari has denied rumours that he has died and been replaced by a lookalike. Some people thought he had been "cloned" but "it`s (the) real me, I assure you," Mr. Buhari said. Rumour that he had been replaced with a body double called "Jubril" from Sudan had been widely shared online. The 75-year –old Mr. Buhari, who is seeking re-election in February 2019, has been on "medical leave" in the UK for three months in 2017. He revealed after his return to Nigeria that "I have never been so sick," but did not disclosed what he was suffering from. He insists he is now in good health.

According to an AFP Fact check investigation the rumours began late last year and have appeared on Facebook, twitter and YouTube. Posts promoting the rumour have been viewed more than 500, times. A former aide to Mr. Buhari`s predecessor, Goodluck Jonathan, is among the high profile individuals who have promoted the rumours.

`Ignorant and Irreligious`

Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of secessionist group Indigenous People of Biafra (Ipob), has also been fuelling the rumours AFP found. In one instance, Mr. Kanu shared two images of Mr. Buhari, one reversed, was to allege that the Nigerian leader, who is right handed, was using his left hand- "proving" that meant he was a body double.

Here we have a supposed old man between 76 – 85yrs that suddenly switched his writing hand from left to right.

Could the @AsoRock hanldlers of Jubril clarify this mix up?

We are patiently waiting for answers And I believe millions of people deserve an explanation. @ NGRPresident pic.twintter.com/yo63ApY51

-Mazi Nnamdi Kanu @ MaziNnamdiKanu November 25, 2018

A scene from the 1997 film"Face/off" has also been used by those promoting the numerous to show how a dead Buhari's face could have been transplanted to a body double. Mr Buhari, who is in Poland attending a UN climate change conference, was asked about the rumours during a meeting on Sunday with Nigerians in the country. His personal assistant shared a video of his answer:

Video: President@MBuhari's responds to the rumours (by ignorant and irreligious people) of him being cloned.

"...Somebody just thought i am cloned,... it is real me i assure you." Pic.twintter.com/TCU6BzziW4 - -BashirAhmad (@BashirAhmaad) December 2, 2018

Mr. Buhari who will celebrate his 76th birthday on 17 December, said those spreading the rumours about his health and identity were "ignorant and irreligious". A lot of people hoped that i died during my ill health. Some even reached out to the vice-president to consider them to be his deputy because

they assumed I was dead. That embarrassed him a lot and of course, he visited me when i was in London convalescing.... it's (the) real me; I assure you, Mr. Buhari added.

A former vice-president, Atiku Abubakar, 72, has emerged as Mr. Buhari's main challenger in next year's election. The opposition is expected to make the president's health a major campaign issue, but Mr. Buhari said: "I'm still going strong"

Source: https://www.bbc.com

NIGERIAN ARMY THREATENS LEGAL ACTION OVER FAKE VIDEOS OF BOKO HARAM ATTACKS

The Nigerian Army has threatened to sue individuals and groups that disseminate fake videos, stories and photos of purported Boko Haram attacks against the military.

In a statement on its social media pages, the army said it was dismayed at the indiscriminate publication of and distribution of videos purported of the attack on soldiers in Metele Village, Borno State. It warned that such actions were capable of undermining national security and could not be allowed to continue unchecked. "The NA would hence forth report those infractions and file cases against individuals or groups who deliberately spread fake news that aims to undermine national security, in courts of competent jurisdictions", the army said .

According to the army, its decision to pursue legal action against those spreading fake news about its activities is also based on "the fact that spreading of fake news is an offense and violates the provisions of section 24 (1) (a), (b) and (2) (a), (b), (c) (i) (ii) of the cyber crimes (prohibition and prevention, etc.) Act, 2015."

The army had on Friday cautioned against the dissemination of purported videos of attacks, warning that Boko Haram was turning to propaganda and such activities could aid the terrorist to achieve their objectives. It, however, lamented that many people on social media have continued to redistribute such video clips and photos.

It said, "The NA has continued to observe with great dismay the myriads of photos and video clips being recklessly distributed on various social media plat forms by different calibre of persons. It is indeed shocking to see how these well-doctored propaganda materials from enemies of the State have succeeded in creating fear and unrest in the polity. These doctored materials are obvious serving the purposes intended by the terrorists to misinform the populace, spread panic, hatred religious intolerance and above all to undermine national security"

IS – backed Boko Haram faction Islamic West Africa Province (ISWA) had reportedly released a video and claimed responsibility for Sunday's attack, leading to a spike in search for the video. The army, however, insists the video making the wounds are fake.

It said, "The NA wants to categorically state that the videos and images making rounds as the purported attack on Metele Base are false and do not in any way portray the reality of the situation on the ground. Unfortunately, many do not know that in-discretional posts and comments from a citizen that is supposed to be solidly behind its military in these trying times could have a way of dampening the morale of the troops. However, the NA's resolve in protecting the territorial integrity and sanctity of the detractors or tacit supporters of the enemies of our beloved country"

Source: https://www.channels.com

FAKE NEWS: POLICE DEBUNKS ATTACKS ON KADUNA-ABUJA HIGHWAY

The Police Command in Kaduna State on Thursday January 31, 2019 dismissed as fake, news circulated on social media advising commuters not to travel through Kaduna-Abuja highway because of alleged attacks on motorist.

The Command's Public Relations officer, DSP Yakubu Sabo, in a press Statement issued in Kaduna, said there has been no security issues along the highway for long. The story being circulated was purportedly issued by the Security and Safety Division of the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) on January 20, 2019.

The command is categorically stating that the story in its entirely is a fake news, not credible, and should be disregarded and discountenanced by the public. The security of Kaduna- Abuja road has been well reviewed and enhanced on the directive of the Commissioner of Police Ahmad Abdurraham. Additional personnel have been deployed to beef up security along the road especially at all the known flash points around the axis

Sabo said those that issued the news were only being mischievous and would be tracked and prosecuted for disseminating fake information with the intent to mislead the general public. He added that the FIRS had since denied issuing such travel advisory

It is crime under the penal and criminal code laws to tell falsehood with intent to mislead the public. The command, therefore, implores the public to be aware that the story is ill motivated and intentionally orchestrated to cause unnecessary panic and undermine the giant strides of the present leadership of the command, and this should be condemned by all.

He warned that the command would no longer tolerate or condole deliberate mischief and reckless publications aimed at defaming and derogating the integrity of the Force from any individual or group

The full weight of the law will be aggressively applied to protect the good image of the command. The command is assuring the Media of continuous cooperation in guaranteeing public safety and security across the state

Source: https://www.pmnewsnigeria.com

MAIN FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER

Issues

The narrative of fake news spewing from the media in Nigeria has assumed a worrisome dimension. False information in Nigeria spreads through various channels, but social media provides the cheapest and quickest ways to access millions. Through WhatsApp and Facebook, people share propaganda videos, made –up quotes, and fabricated articles to look like they are from the likes of the BBC or Al-Jazeera and other reputable international media outlets.

At the centre of the fake news syndrome is a growing population of young people who believe whatever they read online, and use the Smartphone to spread unverified information to other users, thus fuelling misinformation in society. This pathetic situation has caught the attention of concerned stakeholders who now clamour for an urgent solution to put an end to the ugly trend that appears to be threatening the nation's security.

With fake news gradually creeping into the Nigerian media, there have been several attempts by the federal government and some international organizations to help curb the spread. In November 2018, the British Broadcasting Corporation published a research report that showed that Nigerians usually fall prey to fake news because they are concerned about "not falling behind on the news" and being informed, among other reasons.

Prior to that period, the federal government launched a campaign against fake news where the information minister, Lai Mohammed, likened the effects of fake news to a time bomb waiting to explode. He said the decision of the government to launch a campaign against fake news was linked to the possible effects of rumours that could cause crisis across the country. Despite the efforts made to completely eradicate fake news from the media, the menace still persists.

Controversies

Ever since the launch of the national campaign against the deadly scourge which has become a dominant feature of Nigeria's information ecosystem, controversies have continued to trail the action of the federal government. While some applaud the government for the action taken to curtail the growing epidemic of fake news in the country, others berate the government for approaching the issue wrongly.

Critics of government contend that without a national policy framework to address the problem of fake news, the campaign would merely amount to chasing shadows. According to them, what the ministry of information is doing with the current campaign is akin to putting the cart before the horse or tackling the symptoms while ignoring the main cause of the problem. Part of the strategy to tackle the menace of fake news in Nigeria includes the deployment of all information and communication machineries of government. The private media are also expected to key into the campaign which many have described as dead on arrival.

Problems

The national campaign against fake news on social media notwithstanding, there seems to be no end to the amount of false information coming from the online media ecosystem. Hence, the Nigerian government has consistently raised the alarm over the dangers fake news pose to the country especially as the 2019 general elections approach.

The spread of fake news has been exacerbated by a converged media environment, which is associated with the growing technological innovation across the world. It is occasioned by high speed internet and the emergence of Smartphone. With the Smartphone, most communication linked activities have been made easier. Thus, hundreds of thousands of applications that enabled communication have come to exist such as Facebook, Google, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, Pinterest, Badoo, YouTube and a host of other technologies.

The implication is that the Smartphone has become one of the most powerful tool ever placed in the hands of man. Research has shown that about 80% of fake news and hate speech happens on social media and the main device that aid the transmission of fake news is the Smartphone (Maho, 2018, p.48). With a Smartphone, and an internet connection, the savvy user can spread unverified information across the internet at dizzying speed. Therefore, the need to control the smartphone cannot be over emphasized. But the task may appear daunting and complicated given the existence of several Federal Agencies with overlapping roles and no clear distinction on who controls the device.

SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Solutions

In view of the devastating effect of fake news on human society, the following solutions are hereby proposed to check its spread in Nigeria.

1. Users of social media should be constantly sensitized on the need to verify the source of every information before sharing it with others. This should be part of the campaign to create awareness about the dangers of fake news currently being run on all national networks in the country.
2. To discourage fake news which thrives on rumour mill, government should endeavour to be open in her dealings with the people. Lack of transparency in government activities has contributed to the yawning gap between the government and the citizens. The mismanagement of the collective patrimony evokes suspicion and strengthens the rumour mill, with the latter becoming an alternative source of information to the less perceptive in the society.
3. The fundamental problem underlying the fake news menace is the increasing fad in official quarters of throwing up patent falsehood on crucial national matters, even against unimpeachable evidences to the contrary. Purveyors of fake news often capitalize on such anomalies without considering the far-reaching implications for societal harmony and concord. Therefore, desirable as the campaign against fake news is, the government must rise above the mere declaration by the minister that the fight would be active collaboration with digital as well traditional media and the National Orientation Agency (NOA). Government must walk the talk, particularly because of the pervasive fear that the campaign could be a subterranean move to muzzle the press and curtail the freedom of Nigerians as a whole.
4. For the fight against fake news to succeed, government must seriously tackle the gradual loss of public confidence in the institutions of government. Years of failure to meet the basic needs of the citizens despite the government's endless promises and regardless of the abundant resources at the disposal of the authorities have led to schism. The repugnant and flamboyant lifestyles of the elites, especially the political class, elicit bottled-up emotions and anger in the citizenry, some of which a bad few can latch onto to create utter chaos.
5. Journalists should continue to counter the fake news narratives spewing from the social media so as to instill public confidence in the journalism profession.

Recommendations

Based on the issues and problems canvassed in this chapter, the following recommendations have become necessary.

1. Government should evolve a national policy framework to address the problems associated with fake news on social media.
2. An agency to control the use or misuse of the Smartphone, the device through which fake news spew out on social media should be set up by government. The agency should also be strengthened to perform its duties effectively without interference from government.
3. A law criminalizing fake news is urgently needed in Nigeria to curtail its spread. Such a law would make Nigeria join the League of Nations that has taken steps to tackle the monster online.
4. Institutions charged with controlling technology related issues should be strengthened by government to ensure maximum performance.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Fake news is a complex problem requiring a pragmatic approach. It undermines the stability of a nation if not properly tamed. Fake news is a product of technology. Therefore, the technology determinism theory will be the most appropriate to explain this chapter. Technology determinism posits that media technology shapes how we as individuals in a society think, feel, act and how society operates as we move from one technological age to another.

Most interpretations of technological determinism share two general ideas namely: that the development of technology itself follows a predictable, traceable path largely beyond cultural and political influence, and that technology in turn has effects on societies that are inherent, rather than socially conditional or that the society organize itself in such a way to support and further develop once it has been introduced.

Croteau and Hoynes (2003p.305) described technological determinism as the approach that identifies technology, or technological advances, as the central causal element in processes of social change. They further asserted that as a technology is stabilized, its design tends to dictate users' behaviours, consequently diminishing human agency. Fischer (1992) cited in Croteau and Hoynes (2003, p. 306) characterized the most prominent forms of technological determinism "billiard ball" approaches, in which technology is seen as external force introduced into a social situation, producing a series of ricochet effects. Postman (1992, p.4) while elucidating on this, noted that the "uses made of technology are largely determined by the structure of the technology itself, that is, that its functions followed from its form." These statements are indeed true of the social media as a technology that promotes digital inclusion, and being used wrongly to promote fake news.

The development of strategy to combat fake news online is an ongoing effort. At the time of writing this chapter, the new Digital Rights and Freedom Bill expected to criminalize fake news and misinformation online has not been passed into law by the National Assembly in Nigeria. Future studies can examine the impact of the new legislation on the war against fake news in the country or compare the new legislation with others in countries around the world.

CONCLUSION

Fake news is a global phenomenon that requires a worldwide collaboration to halt its menace. Everywhere, fake news is considered a threat to human society. Because of its destructive nature, many national governments around the world are beginning to put in place stringent measures to check the spread of the deadly scourge. In line with this direction, anything done to uproot this vice should be seen as a welcome development and supported by all. The Nigerian society is already feeling the effect of fake news which breeds misinformation online.

The national campaign against fake news launched by the federal government is therefore an attempt to checkmate the rising level of fake news emanating from the social media. The responsibility to put an end to fake news in Nigeria especially on social media does not lie with the government alone. It requires the collective efforts of everyone. All stakeholders (citizens, media professionals, civil society organizations, ICT professionals, government agencies, etc.) owe it a duty to ensure that falsehood or half truth does not pervade the country's information ecosystem, and pitch us against one another or against the government.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Disinformation: Is false information spread deliberately to deceive.

Fact-Checking: It is the process of attempting to verify or disprove assertions made in speech, print media or online content.

Falsehood: A falsehood is a statement that distorts or suppresses the truth, in order to deceive.

Hoax: A hoax is a falsehood deliberately fabricated to masquerade as the truth.

Menace: Is something that is likely to cause harm.

National Policy: A broad course of action or statements of guidance adopted by the government at the national level in pursuit of national objectives.

Rumour Mill: Used to refer to the process by which rumours and gossip are originated and circulated among a group of people.

Smartphone: A mobile telephone with computer features that may enable it to interact with computerized systems, send e-mails, and access the web.

Social Networking Sites: Is an online platform that allows users to create a public profile and interact with other users on the website.

Transparency: Is government's obligation to share information with citizens that is needed to make informed decisions and hold officials accountable for the conduct of the people's business.

Section 3

Misinformation and Deception
in Business

Chapter 15

On the Alert for Share Price Manipulation and Inadvertent Disclosure in Social Media Channels:
An Exploratory Investigation of Nordic Companies

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ABSTRACT

Social media networks offer a tremendous opportunity for the dissemination of financial and other information globally to companies. It can be immensely useful for stakeholders and investors too. So far its permitted use as a primary disclosure channel is restricted. Some risks also exist through inadvertent disclosure of information, as well as potential share price manipulation, yet are companies necessarily aware and armed to handle the risks? This research conducts exploratory research into the attitudes of Nordic companies, in a region where social media primary disclosure is not permitted, to analyze the status quo and consider any risks that may prevail. Possible action changes and future research opportunities are also examined.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter seeks to use exploratory quantitative research to consider a hypothesis held by the author concerning the perceptions, opinions and attitudes of companies (through their investor relations representatives), particularly in the Nordic countries, about the risks of online and social media activity and information distribution. This study views both involuntary disclosure, as mandated by law or regulation, and voluntary disclosure together, as the observations and implications remain broadly comparable.

While social media is not presently a permitted primary disclosure distribution channel for companies listed on local stock exchanges, it has a place as a secondary or additional distribution channel.

Social media can offer great distributive reach and engagement potential for companies, which within an investment scenario may lead to increased investment activity and interest. There is also the potential for increased brand awareness and possible business through this additional media exposure. There are risks, of course, by inadvertent disclosure of information by the company or its employees, as well as malicious disclosure by various actors, which may have a similarly opposite effect on both the company's financial performance and general business activities-at-large.

Even though this chapter focusses on the disclosure of financially sensitive information over or through social media, itself a more-regulated, legally sanctioned and prescribed activity within a broader field, it is important to note that other non-sanctioned disclosures, whether by innocent means or with a more deceptive intention-at-heart, may have an impact on a company in many ways. Sentiments and analysis gathered by this research may equally apply to the 'broader problem', with many of the same potential solutions being applicable for the monitoring, protection and even exploitation of a company's trade secrets, brand and other assets. Some activities need not have a specific deceptive intention to potentially create economic harm to a company, such as the identification of plans, internal data, or a piece of information taken out of context (for whatever reason or motive). Others may be more insidious and deceptive to impact on the company's share price and provide a market advantage for some. Once 'out there' on social media, erroneous or harmful information cannot be necessarily removed, even if legal action is taken and held valid by competent judicial authorities.

The issues are by no means possibly exclusively related to the Nordic countries, but even elements of social and cultural evaluation may have an influencing factor as to underlying attitudes and thus this broadly comparable group of countries makes for an interesting research group.

This work should be viewed as a gateway to additional research within a sector that undergoes continuous development and change. The objective is to highlight the status quo and encourage debate and, if necessary, possible behavioural modification. The revelations, conclusions and recommendations of this work may be beneficial in the future too, should change be instituted by regulatory or exchange authorities to permit social media as an accepted additional primary channel for involuntary disclosure.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION DISCLOSURE

Coequal or across-the-board shareholder disclosure concerning pertinent influential investment information is a fundamental expectation. Buyers and sellers of shares should have simultaneous access to the same knowledge, removing possible insider or favoured trading situations.

History shows that practice has not always followed theory, while problems exist even in current times. Therefore, a multitude of legislation, standards and requirements have been introduced concerning information disclosure (and other issues), streamlined over time by governments, stock exchanges and even professional associations.

Even inadvertent or manipulated disclosure of information can affect a share price and corporate confidence in many ways, leading to additional challenges for the company to consider and seek to negate. Social media and other online activities, viewed collectively, provide both advantages and disadvantages to companies, but is there sufficient awareness, balance and consideration to present-day and future issues?

DISCLOSURE

Transparency and equal access are two fundamental principles crucial to financial information and its disclosure -- covering both existing companies whose shares are publicly traded as well as those seeking a market listing (Guimard, 2013).

Ensuring compliance can be difficult, particularly for small and medium-sized companies, and requirements change and are not the same in different jurisdictions around the world, with stiff potential penalties, exposure to litigation, and reputational risk facing those who get it wrong, especially when it is an advertent transgression.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has an extensive corporate guidance framework, stating the need that 'timely and accurate disclosure is made on all material matters regarding the corporation, including the financial situation, performance, ownership, and governance of the company' (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2015), with broad and simultaneous dissemination being key.

Disclosure is, according to Finland's Financial Supervisory Authority, '…[obligatory] to ensure that all investors have equal, equitable and simultaneous access to information [that is] reliable, comprehensive, timely and comparable [so that] investors have access to adequate information for an informed assessment of the issuers and their securities' (Finanssivalvonta, 2017). The firm benefits of high disclosure quality which can lead to enhanced market exposure, analyst coverage and following, can be corroborated (Chang, D'Anna, Watson, & Wee, 2008) – and thus on the converse one may speculate the wrong, or unauthorised, disclosure may be problematic on many levels, especially with enhanced market interest.

Some disclosures are periodic and must be published at specific dates, such as financial reporting and annual general meetings, while others are ongoing, based around whether exposure could have a material impact on share prices or investor decisions. Companies can also make a voluntary disclosure that goes beyond minimum disclosure requirements. Voluntary disclosure can have 'a significant positive effect on stock liquidity, consistent with disclosure reducing information asymmetry' (Lardon & Deloof, 2014), and it seems to be part of a broader openness, perhaps due to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)-related matters (Burke & Logsdon, 1996; Giorgino, Supino, & Barnabè, 2017).

Have things become too regulated, or in the guise of rigidity have some stakeholders been forgotten? Research has questioned whether current rigid disclosure requirements are beneficial for smaller investors, stating that 'the assumption that the protection of ordinary investors compels the dissemination of such valuable information to all at once is not supported by the reality of interactions in the stock market today' (Haeberie & Henderson, 2016, p. 1439). While there is already an arms-race with some securities trading and automation/artificial intelligence, it may be speculated (but outside the scope of this chapter) whether smaller investors and their interests could be inadvertently discriminated against when they are 'out-gunned' on a technical level.

An Evolving Disclosure Landscape and Situation

Disclosure is part of an 'evolving landscape' and changes in technology, the media, and capital markets can affect (Miller & Skinner, 2015). Companies are more communicative, often engaging on social media and discussing issues that may have or could lead to a disclosure requirement inadvertently. Research shows that it can be beneficial for companies participating in, rather than abstaining from, conversations about their company on social media (Cade, 2018). This can require care not to give an advantage to

one investor by even innocent disclosure, such as dismissing a rumour, partially confirming a rumour or letting the cat out of the proverbial bag about a future intention. Autorité des Marchés Financiers (2016, p. 11) gives careful guidance about how to respond to rumours and correct wrongful information which, in some circumstances, may require a full disclosure release in its own right.

Issues potentially exist too with employees' use of social media, possibly in their private right, if they discuss something about their work, as even jigsaw identification can be used through open-source research. It could be as innocuous as changing a job title on LinkedIn (senior engineer for a yet-to-be-announced product at Apple) or Facebook postings that indicates regular travel to a particular location that suggests a merger or acquisition may occur. Employee leakage is a problem, whether intentional or not (Abdul Molok, Ahmad, & Chang, 2018).

As it is, even companies may inadvertently be 'signalling the market' at times with their behaviour with their discretionary disclosure on Twitter of information ahead of clear disclosable events (Crowley, Huang, & Lu, 2018). Other issues can be perceived as innocuous, such as issuing releasing investor news via one's channels but not through a disclosure route. For example, Finnish company Soprano Oyj was censured for breaching disclosure rules when it wrote 'the beginning of the year has started well for Soprano', and the Disciplinary Committee of Nasdaq Helsinki ruled that it was a disclosable event because the comment 'contained inside information on the development of the operating result and the forward-looking statement of the company' (NASDAQ, 2017).

Even when the company may have all of its regulatory matters under control, there is still the potential that a senior executive or founder may make comments that clearly should, if accurate, fall under disclosure requirements. In 2018 Elon Musk, then-chairman of Tesla reached a settlement with the SEC over securities fraud charges (Securities and Exchange Commission, 2018a) emanating from a Tweet suggesting that funding had been secured for a company buyout (Goldstein, 2018; Securities and Exchange Commission, 2018b). Some press reports afterwards suggest that Musk felt that the Tweet, irrespective of fine and action, was 'worth it' (Li, 2018).

Until the internet revolution started to took hold, and access to information began to be broken away from traditional gatekeepers such as the media and specialist financial institution information services, financial disclosure was handled by simultaneous release to (at least) a specific list of defined institutions. In turn, these institutions would cascade the information onwards, primarily through news articles/broadcasts based on this core information. The 'old ways' continue today, with minor modification for technological developments, but perhaps there is scope for some renewal, especially in many regulatory jurisdictions.

With the greater development of telecommunications and information networks, especially the internet and mobile communications, the 'financial world' became smaller and greater demands came for timely and direct access to information, whether from a large institutional investor, active day-trader, or private individual. The market today for financial information is extensive, split between vendor type and revenue models, such as proprietary data (e.g. Moody's, MSCI, S&P GMI) and aggregated data/trading (e.g. Thomson-Reuters, Bloomberg, Morningstar). Worldwide revenues in 2017 were estimated to be around USD 40,000m (DataCompliance, 2018).

Aids to Disclosure and Communications-at-Large

Financial disclosure affairs can be complicated, being at least an administrative burden with risks for inadvertent non-compliance. Each exchange can have its interpretation of disclosure minimum require-

ments, built around various national, supranational or international regulations, guidelines and norms. Equally some companies may be dual-listed or cross-listed, creating additional issues and regulatory overhead. Exchange requirements usually mandate that a company has an internal process for the assessment and disclosure of disclosable information, amongst other regulatory obligations.

Disclosure can be aided by specialist disclosure and press release distribution companies such as Business Wire and PR Newswire, who built up networks and partnerships to expeditiously deliver time-sensitive news to media recipients that could meet simultaneous disclosure requirements. These companies have also embraced the internet and technology-in-general to distribute and make available financial information. These companies may have operations around the world and have formed local partnerships in many situations to aid their distribution. In some jurisdictions, this can even include filing directly to the regulatory body as well as making required disclosure distribution.

There are many other press release distribution networks, but less who are specifically geared up for specialist financial disclosure distribution. While there is no requirement to outsource filing and dissemination, many companies prefer to do so for many reasons, especially when it frees them from many non-core activities through the use of a service that specialises in such undertakings.

As an example, Business Wire, formed in 1961 to 'enable the electronic dissemination of time-sensitive corporate press releases to local news media, has significantly expanded its service nationally and internationally over time (Business Wire, n.d.). The company notes that 'the most stringent of [U.S.] stock exchange disclosure rules calls for material news dissemination to Associated Press, United Press International, Bloomberg, Dow Jones, Reuters, two New York City-based newspapers and two daily newspapers in the company's headquarters state.' (Business Wire, n.d.). Within the European Union, core regulations are more harmonised, with national regulatory bodies being responsible for regulatory matters and key national media outlets fulfilling the disclosure criteria. In Finland, to take an EU country at random, Business Wire claims that its service fulfils disclosure as outlined by the OMX Nordic Exchange Helsinki and the Financial Supervisory Authority, reaching 'financial media, databases and newsrooms including the OMX Company News Service, Bloomberg, Digital Look, Dow Jones, Factiva, Factset and Thomson Reuters [along with] Yleisradio Oy (YLE), MTV3, STT-Lehtikuva and major Finnish media' (Business Wire, n.d.).

For a long time, access to such information was for the average investor only available through traditional media sources, with the inevitable delay or through a financial intermediary such as a broker or bank. Selected financial information may be carried, but invariably live, on telephone information services, and where available teletext and viewdata services. In the early 1980s, some financial information was available online through services such as CompuServe, but it took for the (gradual) internet revolution to start seeing information provided online, still often with delays, through financial portals such as Yahoo! Finance in 1997.

Moves by regulators around the world have helped too, such as in 1992 the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) trialled its EDGAR database as a means to centrally record public company filings and provide public access, with phased-in mandatory filing from 1994. However, such filings can be quite bureaucratic and pose interpretative challenges for many, plus they lack the immediacy and simplicity of a press release that may state the core facts for a media (and public/industry) audience, something which would not be stored on EDGAR or its equivalents in any case. For many, specialist information service providers and financial website portals provide sufficient access. There is a plurality of services matching an individual's or company's need for information covering all possible budgets

from free-of-charge upwards. However, they are all dependent on the fundamental clear and simultaneous disclosure of information.

Companies invariably have their own website(s) too, often featuring a special section orientated for investors. One regulator, Autorité des Marchés Financiers (AMF) in France, has been particularly explicit in stating how provided information should be 'complete, balanced in its presentation, easily accessible, up to date, and archived for an adequate length of time'(Autorité des Marchés Financiers, 2016).

It is worth remembering that information should be distributed *properly* in any case, and not to just satisfy any regulatory obligations, and disclosure itself is not necessary forcing the company's communications into narrowly defined, formulaic text (Koskela, 2018). Disclosure and disclosure-inspired messaging can form part of a much-wider corporate communications strategy, benefitting share prices, the company and its stakeholders – it is a double-edged sword though – but it is essential that the basic needs of transparency are met.

Some companies are quite open with detailing how they intend to communicate through the use of 'disclosure statements', such as Finnish office services company Technopolis Oyj and healthcare company Terveystalo Oyj. Here the companies differentiate the different types of communications it may make and under what circumstances they are used. This openness, in excess of regulatory requirements, may be applauded, but it does not prevent unauthorised or inadvertent communication, despite it indicating that it is not an authorised or anticipated channel for the company.

Social Media and Online: A Blessing, Curse or Something In-Between?

Today it is easy for a company to prepare website and/or social media postings of its news, especially those subject to disclosure regulations, and schedule distribution at the same time disclosure is made. If such posts are made through an automated means, it is beholden on the company to ensure that no premature disclosure is made. Hacking or poor system security are also issues to consider, having already hit news release distributors (Monroe, 2017; Stempel, 2018).

In the United States the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has permitted the use of social media as a disclosure channel since 2013 (Alexander & Gentry, 2014) as long as investors have been alerted ahead of time that this is a possibility, and there has been a growing take-up. Other jurisdictions have not followed suit with such a dispensation, and there are appears to be no moves afoot to consider this thus far. Nothing precludes social media being used as an additional dissemination outlet, but it cannot be used in place of other disclosure routes.

Social media can have its place, or perhaps it is a means to an end. The news media uses social media to monitor a company's activities and 'user feedback' (e.g. possible complaints) as part of its news production activities. Others can gather the same information for reuse, such as in the case of Twitter feeds being directly integrated into financial news and trading systems by Bloomberg, making it important to consider social media as an important additional channel for trusted news delivery.

Automation of trading already has its risks when social media and other online data is considered, as was observed following a hack of the Associated Press's Twitter account that led to a false message being sent which significantly moved the markets for a brief time (Moore & Roberts, 2013). This is one-step removed from the now-traditional 'Twitterstorms' that break out, whether merited or not, following a company's alleged actions, which can have a great and long-lasting impact (Vasterman, 2018).

Artificial intelligence and robot journalism are expanding activities currently, often making news articles, albeit formulaic, such as financial reporting and sports stories based on machine-provided pa-

rameters. Significant advances are being made, even if many limits presently exist (Dörr, 2016), yielding a different future for journalism, both with challenges and opportunities. Journalists already accept that this is the future and that things will continue to improve (Thurman, Dörr, & Kunert, 2017). Ethical issues will need to be addressed going forward (Duvendack et al., 2011), especially when algorithms can do the sorting of news (for presentation), the writing of news (as journalism) and even the analysis of (perhaps already AI-inspired) data. A lot of power can be concentrated in very few minds. Issues surrounding fake news and purposely misleading data can be even more acute, making it essential for an organization to control its messaging and image as effectively as possible, while reacting to any issues promptly to give a (correcting) counter-narrative.

It is undeniable that social media has already transformed how companies and investors communicate and interact. Research is ongoing into improving the understanding of factors that affect investor trading response, and more in-depth analysis of how investors' expectations of communication are affected by context-specific factors (Blankespoor, 2018), so this can underline how important it is to ensure tight control over disclosable information, whether or not the company chooses to authorise and action its release or not.

There are many other areas where a company's activities can be affected by, or aided through, social media activity, including cross-over relevancy to this chapter's discussion, yet they cannot be examined within this chapter.

HYPOTHESIS

Based on an exposure to hundreds if not thousands of Nordic companies over many decades through many means (direct contact, monitoring, research, etcetera) the author has formed an opinion that many display a somewhat naïve or reserved tendency towards risk, despite growing international exposure by both company and its executives alike. Some of this may be admirable, based upon past behaviours and elements of their specific societal form and culture.

In this case, since disclosure via social media is not allowed on Nordic exchanges, this may be considered a non-problem within the mindset of many. Even though other forms of undesirable disclosure may still take place, along with other social media behaviours that may have a detrimental effect on the company and its operations. Greater planning may be necessary to reinforce internal procedures to reduce this risk from internal sources while addressing what could be done to mitigate any risks where malevolent external actors become involved.

A hypothesis is formed that many companies, particularly in the Nordic region, where social media is not a permitted financial disclosure route, may have a greater unawareness (or interest) of the risks that social media can have, with unauthorised or inadvertent disclosures having a significant, potential threat to many elements of their operation, from which the research for this chapter was derived to explore.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND MODIFICATION

To take an exploratory look at the stated hypothesis and related issues several research elements were planned to feature a quantitative survey and selected interviews.

Outreach was made through messaging the author's extensive LinkedIn social media profile to around 300 investor relations (IR) and related public relations (PR) personnel within the Nordic countries, as well as cross-posting on a couple of specialist IR and financial PR groups with additional reach. For exploratory research, this felt to be an acceptable profile. Potential respondents were given approximately six weeks to submit to an anonymous, multi-question survey, with two reminders closer to its closing date. Analysis of responses suggests that responses were dominated by Swedish and Finnish respondents (40% each) with other countries being less-represented.

It is fair to describe the response as challenging. This can be a problem that many researchers face when potential respondents can have 'research overload' as well as being busy with their duties. However, many polite messages declining participation suggest that this is a more nuanced case. Many comments suggested it was an interesting research area, a potential problem or something less familiar to them, but as it was nothing they had experienced they felt they could not comment, both concerning issues surrounding financial disclosure and corporate information disclosure (!). Some stated they were not a listed company or were not in the phase of anything 'sensitive' (?) and thus it could not reply – even though the issues being potentially applicable for a much broader audience. One charming and well-respected communicator answered that 'such things are not permitted, and therefore the existing rules provide protection." Some messages of positivity were received when stating that they would undertake the research, suggesting that the subject and the questions raised were very pertinent and potentially thought-provoking. Of the respondents, those working within investor-relations activities for a company were the dominant group (60%) and agency/freelance workers were the remainder (40%).

Accordingly, it was necessary to modify the original research intention. The response rate to the quantitative research was disappointing on the one hand (n=15) but not surprising equally. Tentatively one may view even these meagre results as indicative at best. Correlation does not imply causation, of course, but it is maintained that this is an area of research that deserves further attention. The field remains fluid, and it may take several more scandals and issues to be extant before greater attention is paid to it, just as seen in the earlier days of the internet and security breaches the general public or user attention was not so great.

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE RESEARCH

Within this section, the key questions will be repeated along with, where relevant, contextual notes as to its relevance, before data (rounded slightly if necessary) is stated.

As to the 'importance of social media for IR' for the respondent's client or company, on a scale from one to five was an even split of responses that led to an average of three. This did not suggest it was being viewed as strategically important, something in 2018 may appear to be a surprise. Despite this, respondents claimed in another question that social media for IR appears to have been given 'greater importance of activity' for the vast majority of companies (60%) since 2016, yet still, 40% are less certain and non-committal. There was a universal agreement to the statement that social media will be 'more important' for IR going forward (in the future).

The social media network(s) used for communicating IR were revealed to be LinkedIn (100%), Twitter (80%), Facebook (60%), YouTube and Instagram (20%). Pinterest, Reddit, Snapchat, Weibo and others were not scored. When it came to be receiving and responding to IR responses were slightly different

with Twitter gaining less usage, Facebook gaining usage, and specialist forums appearing – LinkedIn (100%), Facebook (80%), Twitter (60%), Instagram, YouTube, and specialist forums (20%).

When asked to rank a specific social media network in order of importance or criticality for a given company, LinkedIn and Instagram tied for first place, followed by Facebook. In second place LinkedIn proved to be three times more popular than Facebook. In third place, Facebook led, with Instagram and YouTube sharing the lead. Interestingly in neither position had Twitter even ranked, which seems to confound.

Alternative forms of distributing IR materials were prevalent, showing the benefit of diversity at least in some quarters. All respondents' companies used website and opt-in e-mail messaging lists for distributing their IR material (and no doubt other PR material). Third-party distribution services were popular, being used by 80% of respondents, which may be expected considering the utility they can provide for exchange notifications and general disclosure compliance. Some positive takeaways may be made from the use of additional technologies, with 60% noting the usage of RSS subscriptions, audio recordings/podcasts, and video recording, streaming or online broadcasting. SMS alerts seem to have fallen out of favour with zero usage.

It seems that there is a concern, stemming from the poor research response rate that these indicatory figures could be representative of a broader picture with delusion, denial and ignorance of potential issues being rampant. When it came to considering the possible consequences of fake news and other activities conducted over social media that may affect the company's share price, or reputation responses were more mixed. Using a standard zero (no) to five (high) scale, 20% of respondents rated one, 40% rated three, and 20% rated both four and five. Concerning the 'potential for attempted share price manipulation affecting your company (client) through social media' evaluated on the same scale used previously, it saw greater attention, with 40% being very concerned with a five-rating, followed by 20% rating a four and 40% rating a three.

What about social media being used as an unauthorised channel to leak possible trade secrets and possibly disclosable information? This caught the attention of the respondents, with 60% rating it a four on the common scale, and a three and five rating getting a 20% rating each. The potential for reputational or brand damage to the business, its products or share price by 'unauthorised employee interaction' was also noted, with 40% rating it a three, 40% rating it a four and 20% rating it a five.

Do actions speak louder than words though? Only 40% of respondents said that a specific social media usage policy with direct reference to IR exists within their companies, with free-text justifications focussing around common disclosure issues of price-sensitive information and simultaneous release. Can this be contrasted to all respondents saying that their company had a policy to guide 'the use of social media by employees where they may be identified as related to the company/commenting on issues related to their employment'. Free-text justifications suggested that restrictions focussed on only 'authorised persons' being permitted to comment on company matters, and freedom to otherwise write about the company in general, but only a stated group being allowed to write about business matters. General guidance was also given about behaviour, activities and use of corporate information.

There does not appear to be any specific, common method that companies have followed to analyse the risks of social media within IR, other than following guidance from regulators and 'thinking what to do and following social media [generally].' Some planning has been done, it is claimed, about what to do in case of 'inadvertent material disclosure on social media', with 40% of respondents stating that plans do exist. Possibly worryingly, however, is that 40% do not know and answer 'maybe', and the remainder have no plans at all.

Plans are all well and good, but they need to be tested, evaluated and if necessary refreshed from time-to-time. However, 60% of respondents said that their companies do not test any action plans for inadvertent social media disclosure as part of broader contingency or crisis management planning (20% maybe, 20% no). It is not possible to connect respondent companies, but potentially this 60% of testing could be conducted within the 40% group of companies that even have some rudimentary untested action plan of unknown quality or even utility! Can these responses be because 'lightning has yet to strike'? When asked 'has your company (client) ever had an incident whereby a material disclosure was made in error over social media, either by the company or its employee' 80% responded with a definitive no; 20% of responses were a 'cautious' maybe, but this can be understood if it was not caught by the regulator or subject to other external action.

A later free-text question discussing share prices and possible manipulation or change because of social media activity revealed that no company had observed (or admits to) an issue occurring. However, reputational damage has been caused by 'the actions of an employee being identified as working for the company, but commenting on matters in their own life' for at least one respondent company, and although greater details were not provided, it was said to have been related to 'comments about politics and immigrants'.

Authorised communications of IR material by companies was more regulated, based around fairly-established disclosure activities, free-text responses revealed. There was no special treatment for social media postings per se insofar that they had to undergo the same evaluator and approval process. In some cases, there was a referral oversight to the head of IR by marketing and PR teams to ensure material disclosure was not created by accident, perhaps with a more anodyne announcement, which suggests a responsible level of counsel and concern. Considerable use of outsourced scheduling services have been made, it is reported, to reduce the risks of 'premature disclosure'. While many providers may exist, all responses were naming a specific service focussed on Cision, suggesting it has a strong presence in the Nordic region at least.

Respondent companies, however, seem less likely to outsource the monitoring of IR-related content online, mainly through social media, with it being primarily an in-house activity according to free-text comments. This can, on the one hand, be applauded as it intimates a certain closeness, using one's social networks and knowledge to monitor matters, although of course, this presupposes that a meticulous, active job is undertaken. No mention was made of assistance being rendered by an external agency, which may have been a reasonable expectation as a back-stop and perhaps alerting mechanism if 'something major' develops at 2 am.

Where does the future lie, at least in the minds of the respondents? Advances with automatic processing and artificial intelligence and their potential to gather social media information and manipulate it into articles, evaluations and even decisions met with overall concern, particularly with the possibility to scoop up and incorporate unreleased or inaccurate information without possible recourse to the company for confirmation. Using the zero-to-six scale of importance, while 40% rated these risks as a two, 60% could be viewed as being quite-to-very concerned with evaluations split between the remaining three values. Interestingly, the same assessments were given to the future benefits of (presumably accurate) information being used to generate journalistic and media articles.

An arms-race to ensure that only accurate news and information is available, versus fake news, unauthorised or incorrect information, with a view to the potential for even-greater automated financial trading decisions. Surprisingly, perhaps, 60% of respondents gave it the highest (five) rating as being

advantageous, and 40% rated it a three. Maybe the truth will out. But is excessive information counter-productive? Maybe.

As social media and other online activity is increasingly being archived, both with 'correct' and 'incorrect' information, 80% saw a major problem (rated four) with 'corporate memory and information being saved for eternity that may be capable of wrongful interpretation or usage' and the remainder thought it worthy of significant note in any case.

What else could change? While there were no significant calls for a change in disclosure requirements for market-listed companies, with the general view being that the existing situation is broadly sufficient, there was a suggestion by 60% of respondents that there could be a 'more relaxed or simplified' disclosure environment for smaller companies, with the remainder split between a 'possible' or 'no' view.

CONCLUSION

The exploratory research gave some surprises while reinforcing the hypothesis that many companies may have a greater unawareness or interest of the risks that social media can have, with unauthorised or inadvertent disclosures having a significant, potential threat to many elements of their operation. Greater study into this area would be beneficial, even if social media itself does not become approved as a de facto disclosure channel for the foreseeable future on European exchanges. Other risks, in any case, remain pertinent and deserving of attention. The perceived problems are not going to be lessened, and potentially matters could become more acute, especially with the take-up of artificial intelligence-aided processing of information and the risks of algorithms and human-machine information exchange ('garbage in, garbage out') being present.

A mixed response to the importance of social media can be understandable on the one hand, especially in jurisdictions where it is not an accepted primary disclosure channel, and in light of perceived social media and information overload in general (Tredinnick & Laybats, 2018; Whelan, Islam, & Brooks, 2017). There is a dichotomy between current attitudes and recent attitude changes, especially when compared to the future belief that social media will become 'more important', although this may be explained by a difference in industry segments or even country attitudes that were not part of the research. Closer national and sector-specific research in the future could be informative.

The venue of social media communication by companies was not a surprise, and no doubt things can change in the future as new services are launched, public interests change, and existing facilities possibly become eclipsed. Technology may also contribute to this change with greater automation, artificial intelligent curation of information and improved semantic learning of desired information. Until then, the established networks of LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Instagram are valued as communication-first channels, and a slight shift of preference for engagement channels from the foregoing with the addition of specialist forums adding to the mix It seems that there is no urgency to reduce the plurality of available disclosure channels, both as demanded by regulation and those selected voluntarily. However, the prioritisation of a given social media channel over another was interesting, perhaps indicating a conscious segmental split between business/professional and consumer, with LinkedIn and Instagram reigning supreme. Of note, the apparent lack of interest in Facebook and Twitter deserves further research to see whether it is due to more recent news events surrounding these networks or a statistical anomaly due to the exploratory study.

The study suggested the potential consequences of fake news, inadvertent disclosure and information leakage were not fully appreciated or realised. The reasons for this could not be identified, although one may expect there to be several underlying reasons, possibly including a lack of actual notable real-world examples to observe, social trust, sectoral differences and even faith in the underlying regulatory framework. Of all perils disclosed, the potential for attempted share price manipulation by external information seemed to be the greatest concern to respondents, perhaps as there is an associable monetary value and effect.

Leaking of trade secrets and otherwise disclosable information was a concern, along with activities that may cause potential brand or reputational damage it was found, and this avenue of inquiry deserves additional and more in-depth research. There is an interesting disconnect between private opinion and specific action, with most companies seemingly not having social media usage policies for employees that directly reference IR and related matters. Even though respondents stated that existing policies did guide social media usage whereby employees 'may be identified as related to the company/commenting on issues related to their employment'? Perhaps with greater awareness and consideration of the risks internal processes may be strengthened, training given and proactive monitoring be implemented, especially as it seems that most companies follow regulatory advice/laws and adopt generic social media advice. Evaluation of any (existing) plans or activities seems to be perceivably uncommon. Greater structure and policy exist for formal disclosure, in line with exchange and regulatory requirements, but these would be restricted to that area and not concerning non-permitted disclosure outlets.

Some respondents admitted that material disclosures 'may have' affected their company, but this uncertainty can be expected, even within an anonymous survey, when regulatory risks can be great. No respondent had knowledge of any share prices being changed or possibly manipulated by bad actions, but unless any issue was major and brought to wider attention it is not necessary an indication of inactivity either. Undesirable commentary on social media, where a connection can be made to the company, about unrelated issues such as politics and migration, were noted as stronger concerns. Concerns also existed about the future and the role automatic processing of data and artificial intelligence may play in several areas, especially with automated trading or decision making, and this could be an area for closer attention, particularly as technologies and derived services develop. Corporate memory and information being saved that may be 'capable of wrongful interpretation or usage' was viewed as an important concern, perhaps in particular due to the foregoing other concerns.

This chapter can only be closed by reinforcing that this research was exploratory, looking at a just a small segment of the world-at-large, while operating in an ever-changing and evolving argument. The subject, however, is beholden to further research on many levels as there is great potential and risk alike, both requiring active, ongoing management, research and refinement.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Disclosure: The release of information (by a company) that may influence an investment decision. This is often regulated by law and/or stock exchange rules to ensure harmonized compliance.

Disclosure – Inadvertent Disclosure: The disclosure of information, possibly by accident by an employee or the company in question that may be viewed as sufficiently relevant to otherwise require disclosure through formal disclosure channels.

Disclosure – Manipulated Disclosure: The disclosure of information by malicious means, whether by the disclosing party or aided by external events such as hacking, where the intention may be viewed as malicious or knowingly aimed against the company's interests and intentions.

Distribution – Information Distribution: The process of delivering disclosure information to recipients. This is often mandated to a certain minimum audience, with the intention that all outlets get access to the information simultaneously and on comparable terms. This process may also stipulate certain language, style of presentation and usage of commonly accepted terminology to avoid misunderstanding.

Investor Relations: A term relating to the strategic management action that coordinates and processes financial and communications-related activities to regulators, stakeholders, shareholders and other interested parties. The same term can be applied to employees, a specific department, or third-party organizations that communicate and handle related inquiries.

Jigsaw Identification: A method for identifying a piece of information from two or more different (often unrelated) sources where the information's release was not intentional.

Open Source Research: Activity of using publicly available information from multiple sources that, when combined, may give a deeper insight than intended by the subject.

Transparency: A principle or state whereby investors and other interested parties have equal access to financial information about a company, often complying to standard forms of presentation. One key value is the ability to base investment decisions on the same data as other participants.

Chapter 16

Understanding and Countering Misinformation About Climate Change

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ABSTRACT

While there is overwhelming scientific agreement on climate change, the public has become polarized over fundamental questions such as human-caused global warming. Communication strategies to reduce polarization rarely address the underlying cause: ideologically-driven misinformation. In order to effectively counter misinformation campaigns, scientists, communicators, and educators need to understand the arguments and techniques in climate science denial, as well as adopt evidence-based approaches to neutralizing misinforming content. This chapter reviews analyses of climate misinformation, outlining a range of denialist arguments and fallacies. Identifying and deconstructing these different types of arguments is necessary to design appropriate interventions that effectively neutralize the misinformation. This chapter also reviews research into how to counter misinformation using communication interventions such as inoculation, educational approaches such as misconception-based learning, and the interdisciplinary combination of technology and psychology known as technocognition.

INTRODUCTION

Every six to seven years, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) issue a summary of the state of scientific research into climate change. Over the last few decades, their statements on the human contribution to recent global warming have grown increasingly definitive, from "a discernible human influence on the global climate" in the Second Assessment Report (Houghton et al. 1996) to "human influence has been the dominant cause of the observed warming since the mid-20th century" in the Fifth Assessment report (pp17, Qin et al 2014). Parallel to the strengthening scientific consensus in the IPCC reports, a number of other studies have sought to quantify the level of agreement on human-caused global warming among climate scientists. A synthesis of this research concluded that between

90 to 100% of scientists who publish climate research have concluded that humans are the predominant cause of global warming, with multiple studies converge on 97% consensus (Cook et al., 2016).

Despite strong expert agreement, much of the public remain confused about the reality of human-induced global warming. Only 12% of the American public are aware that the scientific consensus is higher than 90% (Leiserowitz et al., 2017), a misconception referred to as the "consensus gap" to represent the chasm between public perception of consensus and the 97% consensus. The consensus gap is also found among science teachers (Plutzer et al., 2016) and journalists Wilson (2000). The U.S. public are also deeply polarized on the issue of climate change, with political liberals much more accepting of the reality of global warming relative to political conservatives (Cook and Lewandowsky, 2016; Leiserowitz et al. 2017). This polarization has been increasing over time (Dunlap, McCright, & Yarosh, 2016).

Addressing the issue of public polarization over climate change requires acknowledging and addressing the cause. In this case, a major contributor to polarization over climate change is decades of ideologically-driven misinformation campaigns (McCright & Dunlap, 2010). Misinformation about climate change is found in a variety of outlets including mainstream media (Painter and Gavin, 2015) and social media (Harvey et al., 2017). In order to adequately respond to online misinformation about climate change, theoretical frameworks are required to better understand the impact of climate misinformation, the types of arguments employed, and effective interventions. This chapter will explore the research into the psychological impacts of climate misinformation, the techniques employed in denialist arguments, and the efficacy of various interventions in response.

A growing body of research has explored the negative impacts of misinformation. A relatively small amount of climate misinformation, such as a few misleading statistics, is effective in lowering people's acceptance of climate change (Ranney & Clark, 2016). Misinformation targeting the scientific consensus significantly decreases perceived consensus, which subsequently lowers other climate attitudes including policy support (Cook, Lewandowsky, & Ecker, 2017; van der Linden, Leiserowitz, Rosenthal, & Maibach, 2017). Misinformation about climate change also has a polarizing effect, disproportionately influencing political conservatives while having little to no effect on political liberals (Cook, Lewandowsky, & Ecker, 2017; van der Linden, Leiserowitz, Feinberg, & Maibach, 2015). This means that climate misinformation serves to exacerbate what is already a politically polarized public debate.

An arguably more pernicious element of misinformation is its ability to cancel out the positive effects of accurate information. Denialist frames have been shown to reduce the positive effect of a number of different climate frames (McCright, Charters, Dentzman, & Dietz, 2016; van der Linden, Leiserowitz, Rosenthal, & Maibach, 2017). This dynamic has significant consequences for mainstream media coverage of climate change. The journalistic norm of providing balanced coverage to both sides of a debate means that contrarian voices are often given equal weight with climate scientists (Painter and Gavin, 2015). However, false-balance media coverage has been shown to decrease public perception of scientific consensus (Cook, Lewandowsky, & Ecker, 2017).

Finally, another overlooked negative impact of misinformation is its potential silencing effect. While most of the U.S. public are concerned or alarmed about climate change, less than half of segment of the population talk about the issue with friends or family (Leiserowitz et al., 2017). The main driver of this self-silencing is the misconception of pluralistic ignorance—the majority of Americans who are concerned about climate change are ignorant of the fact that they're a plurality (Geiger and Swim, 2016). This misconception is self-reinforcing, resulting in a "spiral of silence" (Maibach et al., 2016).

This chapter will explore two elements required in order to effectively counter misinformation. First, we require a stronger theoretical understanding of misinformation arguments and techniques. Second, experimental exploration of different refutation approaches are needed in order to develop evidence-based interventions. This chapter reviews research into both areas—understanding and responding to misinformation—and speculates on future lines of research.

UNDERSTANDING CLIMATE SCIENCE DENIAL

Climate change was a bipartisan issue in the 1980s, with Republican leader George H. W. Bush pledging to "fight the greenhouse effect with the White House effect" (Peterson, 1989, p. A1). However, in the early 1990s, conservative think-tanks began the process of gradually polarizing the public through misinformation campaigns (McCright and Dunlap, 2000). While contrarians rejecting the scientific consensus on climate change have branded themselves as "skeptic", this is a misleading label as genuine skepticism adopts an evidence-approach (Björnberg et al., 2017; Lewandowsky, Ballard, Oberauer, Benestad, 2016; Odenbaugh, 2016). Consequently, this chapter adopts the more accurate and scientifically-grounded term climate science denial, or abbreviated derivations, in reference to misinformation that rejects mainstream climate science.

Conservative think-tanks (CTTs) employed a variety of strategies to disseminate their misinformation campaigns. Book publications were a key plank of early strategies, with over 90% of climate denialist books published from 1972 to 2005 produced by CTTs (Jacques, Dunlap, & Freeman, 2008). They have also exploited the journalistic norm of balanced media coverage so that denialist voices received similar amounts of media coverage to mainstream climate scientists (Painter & Ashe, 2012). They recruited a small group of contrarian scientists—the "charismatic megafauna" of climate denial (Boykoff & Olson, 2013)—to challenge the science on issues such as climate change, tobacco smoking, and acid rain (Oreskes and Conway, 2011). While contrarian scientists have published a handful of papers that rejected anthropogenic global warming (Cook et al., 2013), these papers have been shown to contain numerous methodological flaws (Abraham et al., 2014; Benestad et al., 2015).

Instead of influencing the scientific community through published research, contrarian scientists have been most impactful by promoting their viewpoints through public engagement. The normative journalist practice of giving both sides of an issue equal weight has allowed the minority of contrarians to obtain disproportionate coverage, thus amplifying their views (Boykoff & Boykoff, 2004). While the situation has improved in the U.S. prestige press (Schmid-Petri, Adam, Schmucki, & Haussler, 2015), false-balance media coverage of climate change is still problematic in U.S. network television coverage of climate change (Boykoff 2008) and the UK tabloid press (Painter and Gavin, 2015).

CTT publications in the 1990s featured three major themes—emphasizing uncertainty, extolling the benefits of global warming, and warning against the economic risks of mitigation policies (McCright and Dunlap, 2000). One of the more prolific sources of climate misinformation among CTTs has been the Heartland Institute (Boussalis and Coan, 2016), whose output is focused on delegitimizing climate science (Cann, 2015). CTT misinformation campaigns have been enabled and amplified by corporate funding (Jacques, Dunlap, and Freeman, 2008). Organizations that disseminate climate misinformation received over $900 million of corporate funding per year from 2003 to 2010 (Brulle, 2014). Conservative organizations that received corporate funding (e.g., from fossil fuel companies) escalated their output of climate misinformation compared to non-corporate funded organizations (Farrell, 2016a, 2016b).

Industry funding of climate misinformation in the 1990s occurred despite the fact that the warming effects of CO2 emissions were known within the industry. (Franta, 2018). 80% of ExxonMobil's internal documents from 1977 to 1995 acknowledged that climate change was real and human-caused, while 80% of their public-facing statements from 1989 to 2004 expressed doubt (Supran and Oreskes, 2017).

Fossil fuel-funded misinformation has had an effect on public perceptions of climate change. Higher levels of CO2 emissions per capita are positively associated with lower levels of acceptance of climate change (Tranter & Booth, 2015). The association between societies dependent on fossil fuel energy and public polarization on climate change has led researchers to conclude that fossil fuel-funded misinformation has contributed to the current state of public polarization (Hornsey, Harris, & Fielding, 2018). After several decades of steady, incremental increase in polarization, the strongest drivers of attitudes about climate change are now political affiliation and political ideology (Hornsey, Harris, Bain, & Fielding, 2016). The link between climate denial and ideology varies across countries, with the strongest link found in the United States (Hornsey, Harris, & Fielding, 2018). However, climate denial is not ubiquitous among Republicans and is strongest among Tea Party members, with moderate Republicans being closer in their climate attitudes to independents (Hamilton & Saito, 2014).

The strong influence of political affiliation on climate attitudes explains why political elite cues are highly influential on public opinion. Analysis of survey data from 2002 to 2010 found that the primary driver of changes in climate attitudes were elite cues—statements from leaders of the Republican party (Brulle, Carmichael, & Jenkins, 2012). Similarly, the drop in public acceptance of climate change in the late 2000s was found to be driven by changes in political elite cues (Mildenberger & Leiserowitz, 2017). The strong influence of political leaders on public attitudes about climate change means that cues from Republican leaders, such as the unanimous vote by Republican senators that humans aren't causing global warming (Kollipara, 2015), are likely to have a significant effect on Republican views on climate change. When Republicans hold the Congressional majority, testimonies are more likely to challenge climate science and highlight potential negative impacts of climate policy (Park, Liu, & Vedlitz, 2010).

Arguments and Techniques in Climate Misinformation

There are a variety of arguments and rhetorical strategies employed in climate misinformation, some of which are mutually contradictory (Lewandowsky, Cook, and Lloyd, 2016). Identifying and analyzing these arguments yields insights into the psychology driving climate science denial, and provides foundational frameworks that inform refutational strategies. A number of studies have attempted to categorize the various denialist arguments, examining specific aspects of the issue.

Looking at scientific themes, Rahmstorf (2004) identified three main categories of misinformation: trend (global warming isn't happening), attribution (humans aren't causing global warming), and impact (climate impacts aren't serious). Misconceptions along these three themes tend to cluster together with people holding one of the three misconceptions being more likely to hold all three (Poortinga et al., 2011). Further, skepticism about human contribution has been found to be a common source of impact and mitigation skepticism (Akter, Bennett, & Ward, 2012).

Bonds (2016) broadens the range of contrarian arguments, arguing that as well as science denialism, attitudes about policy are also important. Similarly, Capstick and Pidgeon (2013) categorized two overarching categories of climate misinformation: epistemic (related to climate science) and response (climate solutions). Mazo (2013) and Odenbaugh (2016) explored four types of climate doubt, categorising them as trend, attribution, impact, and regulation doubters.

A fifth category not included in these previous analyses includes attacks on the integrity of climate science or scientists. Arguments in this category can take various forms, including emphasis on uncertainty, attacks on scientists or scientific data/processes, casting doubt on scientific consensus, and conspiracy theories. The earliest misinformation campaigns conducted by CTTs included counter-claims questioning the scientific evidence for global warming (McCright & Dunlap, 2000). The strategy of manufacturing uncertainty has long been used by industry to cast doubt on scientific evidence regarding the harmful effects of industrial products (Dunlap & McCright, 2015; Michaels, 2008; Oreskes & Conway, 2010). Topic analysis of CTT articles identified that a major theme was scientific integrity (Boussalis and Coan, 2016). This form of implicit (uncertainty-based) misinformation has been found to be harder to correct than explicit misinformation (Rich & Zaragoza, 2015).

To synthesize these disparate content analyses, we see that climate misinformation can be summarized with five overarching categories: it's not real, it's not us, it's not bad, the experts are unreliable, and climate solutions won't work. These five denialist categories mirror the five key climate beliefs identified by psychology researchers: global warming is real, human activity is the primary cause, the impacts are bad, the experts agree on these first three points, and there's hope that we can avoid the worst impacts of climate change (Ding, Maibach, Zhao, Roser-Renouf, and Leiserowitz, 2011).

There are a variety of rhetorical techniques and logical fallacies that are employed in climate misinformation—understanding these techniques are key to countering misinformation. Ceccarelli (2011) found that the same rhetorical strategies appear in science denial across a range of topics. Similarly, Hoofnagle (2007) and Diethelm & McKee (2009) described five techniques of science denial employed across a range of topics, including climate change, creationism, and vaccination. These five techniques are fake experts, logical fallacies, impossible expectations, cherry picking, and conspiracy theories, summarized with the acronym FLICC (Cook et al., 2015). These techniques can be deployed as deliberate deceptive strategies, or manifest as the result of psychological biases. Consequently, it is extremely difficult to distinguish between deliberate deception and genuinely held misconceptions.

Fake experts are spokespeople conveying the impression of expertise on a topic while possessing little to no relevant expertise. The most shared social media story in 2016 about climate change featured a petition of tens of thousands of science graduates, designed to cast doubt on the scientific consensus (Readfearn, 2016). This particular climate myth, originating from the Global Warming Petition Project website, is one of the most effective denialist arguments in lowering acceptance of climate change (van der Linden et al., 2017). This is despite the fact that the website employs the technique of fake experts, with only a small minority of the signatories being active researchers in climate science (Anderson, 2011).

The purpose of the fake expert strategy is to cast doubt on the high level of expert agreement on human-caused global warming—one of the most common arguments employed by opponents of climate action (Elsasser & Dunlap, 2012). This strategy dates back to 1991 when a fossil fuel group conducted a marketing campaign to "reposition global warming as theory (not fact)" (Oreskes 2010). The reasoning underlying the focus on consensus is best articulated in a political strategy memo that advised Republicans to cast doubt on consensus in order to decrease public support for climate action (Luntz, 2002). Over a decade after the Luntz memo, social scientists began publishing research identifying the powerful role that public perceptions of scientific consensus played in influencing attitudes about climate change (Cook & Lewandowsky, 2016; Ding et al., 2011; Lewandowsky et al., 2012; McCright & Dunlap, 2013; van der Linden, Leiserowitz, Feinberg, & Maibach, 2015). In light of this growing body of research, communication experts recommend that scientists communicate the consensus in order to close the consensus gap (Cook, 2016).

The fake expert strategy is not employed only as a form of deception but can also arise from motivated reasoning. People attribute greater expertise to spokespeople who articulate positions consistent with their existing beliefs and values (Kahan, Jenkins-Smith, & Braman, 2011). Consequently, contrarian scientists are more salient to people who are dismissive of climate science, leading to a distorted view of the level of scientific consensus.

Logical fallacies feature in logically flawed arguments that lead to false conclusions. Arguments can be logically flawed by committing fallacies of relevance (the premises are not relevant to the conclusion), scope (not all evidence is considered), or presumption (the argument contains false premises). Common logical fallacies are red herrings (distracting arguments that are irrelevant to the conclusion), non sequiturs (arguments where the conclusion does not follow from the premise), and false dichotomies (imposing a choice between two options, when other options or both options are viable choices). An analysis of the most common arguments against climate change found that all of the arguments contained fatal logical flaws (Cook, Ellerton, & Kinkead, 2018).

Logical fallacies can be the result of motivational biases, causing people to unintentionally present invalid arguments in support of a strongly held viewpoint (Correia, 2011). For example, the strawman fallacy is a debating strategy where an opponent's position is misrepresented in weaker form, in order to be more easily refuted. However, this can also arise because of a psychological tendency to focus on an opponent's weaker arguments while ignoring their stronger arguments (Talisse and Aikin 2006).

Impossible expectations involve a demand for unrealistic or unattainable levels of proof. The scientific method is vulnerable to this avenue of attack, as science is probabilistic by nature. The demand for absolute scientific certainty, a technique known as the "Scientific Certainty Argumentation Method" (Freudenberg et al., 2008) is equivalent to asking for the impossible. This misleading technique can be persuasive, even in cases where there is a clear scientific consensus based on robust evidence.

The psychological bias of disconfirmation bias can lead to a demand for impossible expectations. This is the case where people vigorously oppose evidence that is perceived to threaten their pre-existing beliefs, worldview, or identity. For example, when Republicans who believed Saddam Hussein was connected to 9/11 were shown conclusive evidence that this wasn't the case, a significant proportion responded with counter-arguing and strengthened their false beliefs (Prasad, 2009).

Cherry picking involves selectively choosing data that leads to a conclusion different from the conclusion arising from all available data (Cook, Ellerton, & Kinkead, 2018). This technique is a form of paltering—rhetorical claims that are literally true but lead to false conclusions (Schauer & Zeckhauser, 2009). For example, using short-term fluctuations as evidence against a long-term trend (e.g., arguing that a few years of cooling proves global warming isn't happening) can affect attitudes about climate change (Hardy & Jamieson, 2016). However, the negative impact of paltering can be undone when the full context is provided (Lewandowsky, Ballard, Oberauer, & Benestad, 2016).

The most prominent example of this technique is the denialist argument referred to as the "pause" or "hiatus" (Boykoff, 2014). This features the argument that because of a slow-down in the warming trend around the start of the 21st Century, the long-term global warming trend had paused. However, the variations in the short-term trends were within the expected range of short-term variability—statistically, there was no evidence for a pause in global warming (Rahmstorf, Foster, & Cahill, 2017). Nevertheless, the persistent denialist talking point was internalized by the scientific community, resulting in undue focus on a non-remarkable internal fluctuation (Lewandowsky, Risbey, & Oreskes, 2016).

Conspiracy theories about climate change are common, with around 20% of the U.S. public believing that climate change is a scientific hoax (Lewandowsky et al., 2013), and a significant association between climate denial and conspiratorial thinking (Lewandowsky, Gignac, & Oberauer, 2013). When climate "naysayers" were prompted for an affective response to climate change, the most common themes were conspiratorial in nature (Smith & Leiserowitz, 2012). The dissemination of conspiracy theories result in a number of negative effects, even when people are not convinced by them. They can lower support for climate action (van der Linden, 2015), decrease one's intent to reduce one's carbon footprint (Jolley & Douglas, 2014), and decrease trust in government (Einstein & Glick, 2014). Conspiratorial thinking is self-sealing, meaning that is immune to refutation: when evidence is provided disproving a conspiracy theory, the theorist responds by broadening their conspiracy to include the source of the evidence (Lewandowsky et al., 2015).

The most prominent example of a climate conspiracy theory is "climategate", an incident in 2009 when scientists' emails were stolen and published online. Quote-mined excerpts were proposed as evidence that scientists were conspiring to falsify data and deceive the public. Nine investigations in the United States and England were conducted, with all finding no evidence of wrongdoing among scientists (Cook, 2014). There is suggestion that climategate may have contributed to a decrease in public conviction about climate change (Brisman, 2012). Nevertheless, public interest in the conspiracy waned quickly and the incident had no long-term effect on public interest (Anderegg & Goldsmith; 2014). In contrast, climate denialist blogs have intensified their interest in climategate over time (Lewandowsky, 2014).

To summate, this section provides an overview of the arguments and rhetorical techniques found in climate misinformation. Identifying these arguments and techniques are necessary in order to design appropriate interventions that neutralize the misinformation.

COUNTERING CLIMATE MISINFORMATION

Once people internalize misinformation, it is notoriously difficult to dislodge (Lewandowsky, Ecker, Seifert, Schwarz, & Cook, 2012). Even people who remember a refutation continue to be influenced by the refuted misinformation (Thorson, 2016). In more extreme situations, when a refutation is perceived to threaten a person's worldview, it can backfire and reinforce false beliefs (Hart & Nisbet, 2012). Similarly, refutations that place too much emphasis on the refuted myth increase the risk that the myth is later recalled as true (Peter & Koch, 2016).

In order to effectively refute misinformation, researchers have assembled a collection of recommended best-practices (Cook & Lewandowsky, 2011; Swire & Ecker, 2018). For example, an effective refutation requires a factual replacement that meets the causal explanations initially supplied by the refuted misinformation (Ecker et al., 2015). A refutation that mentions the myth being debunked should also warn recipients before mentioning the myth to ensure they are cognitively on guard and less likely to be influenced by the mention of the myth (Ecker et al., 2010). Refutations perceived to threaten a person's worldview are likely to be ineffective or counterproductive (Nyhan & Reifler, 2010; Prasad et al., 2009), so communication strategies are likely to be more effective if targeting audiences without ideological filters. Lastly, graphical information is more effective than text in reducing misperceptions (Nyhan & Reifler, 2018).

One approach showing a great deal of potential in countering misinformation comes from inoculation theory: a branch of psychological research that adopts the vaccination metaphor—just as biological vaccination neutralizes viruses by exposing people to a weak form of the virus, misinformation can be neutralized by exposing people to a weak form of misinformation (McGuire & Papageorgis, 1961). Inoculation is effective in neutralizing persuasive arguments across a range of issues such as health (Compton, Jackson, & Dimmock, 2016), politics (Compton & Ivanov, 2013), and climate change (Cook, Lewandowsky, & Ecker, 2017; van der Linden, Leiserowitz, Rosenthal, & Maibach, 2017).

As well as neutralizing the influence of misinformation, another benefit of inoculation is that inoculated recipients are more likely to discuss the issue—a phenomenon referred to as post-inoculation talk (Ivanov et al., 2015). This is a desired outcome with the issue of climate change which is hampered by the conundrum of "climate silence". While most Americans are alarmed or concerned about climate change, they fail to talk about the issue with family or friends (Maibach et al., 2016). One of the mechanisms driving self-censoring about climate change is the fear of looking incompetent (Geiger and Swim, 2016). Inoculation may mitigate climate silence by providing people with explanations of denialist arguments.

Structurally, inoculations consist of two elements—warning of the threat of misinformation (Banas & Richards, 2017) and counter-arguments refuting the myth. Inoculating messages can take a variety of forms while adhering to this structure. For example, fact-based inoculations neutralize misinformation by presenting recipients with facts that contradict misinforming arguments. For example, van der Linden et al. (2017) presented a number of facts about the scientific consensus and specific flaws in the Global Warming Petition Project in order to refute its argument that there is no scientific consensus.

Alternatively, logic-based inoculations explain the techniques of denial in order to boost resistance to those fallacies in general. This is an ancient approach proposed by Aristotle who argued that understanding logical fallacies was the key to a universal safeguard against misinformation (Compton, 2005). In an experiment, Cook, Lewandowsky, & Ecker (2017) explained the technique of fake experts in order to neutralize the influence of the Global Warming Petition Project, without mentioning the petition specifically. This confirms other research finding that inoculation provides an "umbrella of protection", conveying resistance to other arguments besides those mentioned in the inoculation message (Parker et al., 2012). Critical thinking analysis offers a methodology for identifying fallacies in misinforming arguments (Cook, Ellerton, & Kinkead, 2018).

While inoculating interventions focus in large part on the recipients of misinformation, it is also possible to inoculate the sources of misinformation from disseminating misinformation in the first place. State legislators who received letters warning about the reputational risk from being fact-checked were subsequently less likely to disseminate misinformation compared to legislators who didn't receive the warning (Nyhan & Reifler, 2015).

While passive inoculation involves one-way communication of messages to an audience, active inoculation involves interactively teaching recipients to reproduce the misleading techniques of denial. For example, Roozenbeek & van der Linden (2018) employed a "fake news game" in which participants were tasked with using misleading tactics to create fake news about a strongly politicized issue, which resulted in participants being better able to identify fake news articles.

Misconception-Based Learning

Agnotology is the study of manufactured ignorance and misinformation (Proctor, 2008). Bedford (2010) operationalized this field of study in an educational context in coining the term agnotology-based learn-

ing. This involves teaching scientific concepts by examining misconceptions and how they distort the science, or by critiquing misinformation and the techniques employed to mislead. This is also known as refutational teaching (Tippett, 2010) or misconception-based learning (McCuin, Hayhoe, and Hayhoe, 2014). This teaching approach offers a powerful and practical way to apply inoculation in an educational setting.

In misconception-based lessons, misconceptions are first activated then immediately countered with accurate information or inoculating refutations. In contrast, standard lessons teach accurate information without any reference to the misconceptions. Misconception-based learning has been found to be one of the most powerful ways of teaching science, and offer a number of benefits over standard lessons. It has been found to be more effective than standard lessons, producing stronger and longer lasting learning gains (McCuin et al., 2014). Students find this type of lesson more engaging (Mason et al., 2008), emerging with improved argumentative and critical thinking skills (Kuhn & Crowell, 2011; Todd & O'Brien, 2016).

Based on this research, researchers encourage teachers to incorporate curriculum that address pedagogical gaps and student misconceptions about climate change (Frankie, 2014). Until recent times, there has been a dearth of educational resources that explicitly address misconceptions and misinformation (Tippett, 2010). However, this oversight is beginning to be addressed, and teachers are now applying misconception-based lessons in their classrooms (Bedford, 2010; Cook, Bedford, & Mandia, 2014; Lambert & Bleicher, 2017; Lovitt & Shuyler, 2016). A textbook on climate change explicitly adopts a misconception-based learning approach, with each chapter adhering to a fact-myth-fallacy structure (Bedford & Cook, 2016). Similarly, a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on climate science denial, which refutes 50 of the most common myths about climate change using a misconception-based learning approach, has reached over 40,000 students from 185 countries (Cook et al., 2015).

One important element of misconception-based learning is that it extends beyond the typical skills taught to convey information literacy such as assessing source credibility. Yang (2017) argues that misinforming sources have hijacked the standard cues for credibility, making it more difficult for students to evaluate sources. Consequently, the risk in teaching information literacy is that people may become more cynical and distrustful of media in general (Mihailidis & Viotty, 2017). Consequently, more rigorous critical thinking and the ability to assess weak arguments are essential skills as students navigate the current media environment.

Technocognition

Social media outlets such as Twitter and Facebook have exacerbated the problem of misinformation (Shao et al., 2018), facilitating the spread of misinformation on science topics (Bessi et al., 2015; del Vicario et al., 2017). Low quality information is just as or more likely to go viral as high quality information (Qiu, Oliveira, Shirazi, Flammini, & Menczer, 2017; Weng, Flammini, Vespignani, & Menczer, 2012). The structural and social features of social media have facilitated the development of echo chambers, where users are mostly exposed to viewpoints they already agree with (Jasny, Waggle, & Fisher, 2015). This dynamic accelerates public polarization, and causes people to be more resistant to changing their beliefs (Leviston et al., 2013).

Blogs have also been a prolific source of misinformation about climate change, employing a range of arguments (such as downplaying polar bear vulnerability) in order to cast doubt on the broader impacts of climate change (Harvey et al., 2017). Comment threads on blogs are commonly political in nature,

arguing that climate science is illegitimate, politicized, unreliable, and corrupted by conspiracy (Matthews, 2015). Twitter has also been a fertile ground for denialist themes—in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy in 2012, a major theme in Twitter threads was that climate science was a conspiracy designed to increase the size of government (Jacques & Knox, 2016).

However, social media also offers opportunities to correct the negative influence of misinformation. It is possible for heterogeneous relationships to form on social media platforms, allowing people to encounter contrary views (Kim, Chen, & gil de Zuniga, 2013; Kim & Chen, 2016). This allows the opportunity to counter misinformation with corrections through social networks (Bode & Vraga, 2015; Margolin et al., 2018; Vraga & Bode, 2017). Technology can also be harnessed to deploy timely corrections through social networks. However, there are potential pitfalls to employing technological solutions in a refutational context.

There have been attempts to implement fact-checking interventions on social media platforms that have backfired. When Facebook began labelling misinformation as "fake news", the result was an increase in shares of the misinformation (Levin, 2017). When refutations are posted in response to Facebook posts, conspiratorial users increase their engagement with conspiratorial posts (Zollo et al., 2017). There is also a risk that providing general warnings about fake news will increase cynicism, leading to a decrease in belief in news articles in general (Pennycook and Rand, 2017; van Duyn and Collier, 2017).

These unintended backfire effects underscore the importance of incorporating into technological solutions the best-practices informed by psychological research. This interdisciplinary approach is known as technocognition (Lewandowsky, Ecker, & Cook, 2017)—the combination of psychology, critical thinking, communication, and behavioural economics in the design of scalable, technological solutions.

Potentially the most impactful application of technocognition is the "holy grail of fact-checking"—computer-assisted detection and assessment of the veracity of misinformation (Hassan et al., 2015). There have been a number of attempts to automatically detect misinformation using a variety of algorithms with varying degrees of success. Browser extensions tag the veracity of Facebook links based on their credibility (Itkowitz, 2016; Oremus, 2016). Ciampaglia et al. (2015) used data from Wikipedia to assess the truth value of declarative statements. By scanning for cognitive, psychological, and emotional linguistic patterns, machines can detect deceptive content more reliably than most human judges (Ott, Choi, Cardie, & Hancock, 2011).

Researchers have already applied automatic machine learning (i.e., not employing any human training) to conduct topic analysis of climate misinformation, identifying the major themes in thousands of conservative think-tank articles (Boussalis and Coan, 2016). Further, the static nature of climate science denial, with the same arguments from the 1990s recurring to this day (McCright and Dunlap, 2000), presents a unique opportunity for researchers seeking methods to automatically detect specific claims in climate misinformation. This means a vast corpus of data exists that can be used to train a machine to detect consistent textual patterns. This would enable researchers to construct a detailed history of denialist claims appearing in a variety of outlets such as mainstream media, social media, fossil fuel industry publications, and Congressional statements, as well as identification and refutation of misinformation in real-time.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Cultural values, individual cognition, societal trends, developing technology, and a changing media landscape all contribute to the multi-faceted problem of misinformation. Countering misinformation requires a multi-disciplinary approach, involving the synthesis of the findings of social, political, information, computer, and psychological science in integrated, holistic solutions.

Existing research has deconstructed deductive misinformation—arguments with definitive conclusions (Cook, Ellerton, & Kinkead, 2018). However, further research is required in exploring other forms of misinformation. First, inductive misinformation with probabilistic conclusions is understudied—which is problematic given the long history of emphasis on uncertainty in climate misinformation campaigns and the difficulty in countering this form of misinformation (Rich & Zaragoza, 2015). Second, while there is much research into character attacks designed to reduce the credibility of individuals or groups (Shiraev, 2008), this research discipline has not yet turned its attention to climate misinformation. Potentially, the existing literature on image repair strategies may provide remedial interventions to restore public trust in climate scientists (Benoit, 1995). Third, paltering is a misinformation technique that uses literally true but misleading claims (Schauer & Zeckhauser, 2009). Computer-assisted detection of these more subtle forms of misinformation are likely to be challenging tasks, and thus countering them will likely require human-sourced refutation and critical thinking education.

Ideology is a powerful force in preventing refutations from taking effect. However, there are suggestions that counter-attitudinal retractions can be effective under certain conditions (Ecker, Lewandowsky, Fenton, & Martin, 2013; Hyman & Jalbert, 2017). Inoculations that emphasise how the recipient has been misled have been observed to be effective across the political spectrum (Cook, Lewandowsky, & Ecker, 2017). Reframing climate messages using moral values that are valued by conservatives (e.g., purity) has been shown to neutralize ideological influence (Feinberg & Willer, 2013). Other possible framings include the public health impacts of climate change (Maibach, Nisbet, Baldwin, Akerlof, & Diao, 2010) and the relative costs of mitigation vs. future impacts (Hurlstone, Lewandowsky, Newell, & Sewell, 2014). There is also conflicting findings on how worldview interacts with misinformation, with some studies finding conservatives are more susceptible to misinformation than liberals (Lewandowsky & Oberauer, 2016; Pfattheicher and Schindler, 2016) and other research finding the opposite (Bakshy, Messing, & Adamic, 2015). Future studies should seek to develop better understanding how ideology interacts with misinformation and refutations, and whether this influence can be reduced through different framings.

Further research is required on exploring the relative efficacy of different refutation approaches. Factors such as platform (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, and mainstream media fact-check), timing (pre-emptive inoculation vs reactive refutation), format (text-only vs visual), type of misinformation (e.g., deductive, inductive, character attacks, and paltering), focus of refutation (factual, logic-based, source-credibility), and issue (e.g., climate change, vaccination, other science issues) can all be experimentally manipulated in order to develop best-practices recommendations for communicators and educators.

From a technocognition perspective, exploring refutational interventions in a social media context is of vital importance. Identifying the conditions under which flagging of fake news is beneficial versus counterproductive will provide much-needed guidance for practitioners, given the potential for inter-

ventions to backfire (Garrett & Weeks, 2013; Levin, 2017). Research advancements on refutational approaches (Paynter et al., 2019) could be combined with computer science research into detection of misinformation to develop more sophisticated and accurate tools, implemented across a range of different social media outlets. These might take the form of browser extensions (Oremus, 2016), interactive websites, Twitter-scripts, or annotated search results. Subsequent research should measure the effectiveness of these tools across different audiences, issues, and platforms. In particular, keeping up with the proliferation of ever-evolving social media channels will be challenging for manual and automated fact-checkers (Babaker & Moy, 2016).

More generally, interdisciplinary integration of psychology with computer science is an exciting new area of research with potential practical application in the area of climate misinformation. Social network analysis simulates how misinformation spreads through a social network in the same way that disease spreads through a population. This allows researchers to explore possible interventions to prevent dissemination. For example, by computing the most influential nodes in a network, researchers can identify the most effective ways to block negative influences (Nguyen et al., 2012). By considering the cultural values of nodes in a social network, social network analysis can simulate how culturally relevant information (or misinformation) disseminates through a network (Yeaman, Schick, & Lehmann, 2012). By implementing inoculating interventions at sufficient scale, it may be possible to achieve herd immunity in a network, thus eradicating specific strains of misinformation (Tambuscio et al., 2015).

Underscoring this research into public opinions and misinformation is the grim reality that there is little relationship between U.S. public opinion on issues and subsequent policy outcomes (Gilens & Page, 2014). Instead, there is a much stronger relationship between economic elite opinion and policy outcomes. One plausible disconnect is misconceptions about public opinion held by Congressional staffers, whose perceptions are driven more by their contact with business and ideologically conservative groups (Hertel-Fernandez, Mildenberger, & Stokes, 2017). Further research is needed to tease out the causes of the disconnect between public opinion and policy outcomes in democratic societies, and explore ways to close these disconnects.

CONCLUSION

Misinformation as an issue has become especially salient in recent years. However, climate misinformation is not a new phenomenon (Krugman, 2018), with decades of research shedding light onto how to understand and counter misinformation. The finding that misinformation cancels out accurate information implies that science communication is a necessary but insufficient condition for communicators and educators seeking to raise public levels of climate literacy. While it is imperative that we address the influence of misinformation, research also finds that poorly designed interventions can be ineffective or counterproductive. Therefore, it is recommended that educators and communicators adopt refutational practices informed by psychological research findings.

Inoculation has been identified as an effective method of neutralizing misinformation. This approach can be implemented through educational efforts, public communication campaigns, and technological applications on social media. By combining scientific content with inoculating refutations, we can increase science literacy levels and foster critical thinking skills. Inoculating campaigns, if implemented widely enough in classrooms, on social media, and in mainstream media outlets, could potentially eradicate climate science denial.

292

To conclude, misinformation is a vast and complicated societal problem, that requires robust, holistic solutions. Technological solutions deployed through social media and educational curriculum that explicitly address misinformation are two interventions with the potential to inoculate the public against misinformation. It is only through multi-disciplinary collaborations, uniting psychology, computer science, and critical thinking researchers, that ambitious, innovative solutions can be developed at scales commensurate with the scale of misinformation efforts.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Agnotology: The study of culturally induced ignorance or doubt, particularly the publication of inaccurate or misleading scientific data.

Deductive Misinformation: Misleading arguments with definitive conclusions. Logically valid arguments with true premises and definitive conclusions are indefeasible (unfalsifiable)—no new claim can undermine the conclusion. An example of a deductive myth is "the sun is causing global warming."

Inductive Misinformation: Misleading arguments with provisionally true conclusions (e.g., probabilistic). Provisionally true claims can be falsified by new information. An example of an inductive myth is "there's too much uncertainty to know if humans are causing global warming."

Inoculation: A communication approach applying the metaphor of vaccination: by exposing people to a weakened (refuted) form of misinformation, they can be made resistant to subsequent exposure to persuasive misinformation.

Misconception-Based Learning: A teaching approach that directly addresses and refutes misconceptions as well as explain factual information, in contrast to standard lessons that teach the facts without explicitly addressing misconceptions. Also referred to as refutational texts or agnotology-based learning.

Misinformation: Information that is initially presented as true but later found to be false. To be distinguished from disinformation, which refers to false information disseminated with deceptive intent. In contrast, the term misinformation is agnostic as to the motive of the source.

Paltering: Acting insincerely or misleadingly while still falling short of a full-bore lie. This can be achieved by fudging, twisting, shading, bending, stretching, slanting, exaggerating, distorting, whitewashing, and selective reporting.

Technocognition: The interdisciplinary approach of incorporating the findings from psychology, critical thinking, communication, computer science, and behavioral economics to inform the design of information architectures that encourage the dissemination of high-quality information and that discourage the spread of misinformation.

Section 4

Propaganda, Defamation, and Political Deception

Chapter 17
The Pragmatics of Political Deception on Facebook

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ABSTRACT

Facebook, an intrinsic part of 21st century social realities where cognitive-participatory activities are largely captured, is consistently explored for political deception. This chapter investigates how participants utilize language to deceive politically the Nigerian electorate on Facebook. For data, 250 Facebook posts on Nigerian politics were sampled, out of which 50 were purposefully selected for being highly rich in deceptive content in order to unpack online deception through multimodal critical discourse analysis. Four deceptive forms—equivocation of identity, exaggeration of performance, falsification of corruption cases, and concealment of offences—within two socio-political contexts—election and opposition—constituted the posts. These prompt an evocation of a messianic figure, blunt condemnation, and evocation of sympathy and retrospection to achieve the political intentions of criticism, self-presentation, silent opposition, and galvanizing public support. The chapter concludes that political propaganda taps into Facebook users to appeal to their political biases and sway their opinions.

INTRODUCTION

Facebook, an intrinsic part of twenty-first century social realities where actively cognitive participatory activities are largely captured, is consistently explored for deceptive engagements, especially in the political enterprise in Nigeria. The effect of technological advancement in communication and information sharing is significantly cognitive. This is noticeable in the political discourse through social networks. Hence, the high rate of political deception on this social media platform creates suspicion in the Nigerian political space, given the number of *Facebook* users in the country. Therefore, the strategic use of language and other semiotic resources in the new media such as *Facebook*, where anonymity and quick widest public coverage of communication are guaranteed by politicians, have moved politicking to another level. It is a level where the masses, who are mostly Facebook users, are largely engaged, and are carried away by emotions and unalloyed loyalty for their political parties; thereby making online deception by politicians

much harder to detect in most cases. Technically, this form of deception is usually done technologically using multimodal features and other fabricated means to exploit the cognitive system of the *Facebook* users for deceptive purpose. Another importance of *Facebook* as it relates to politics is that it facilitates the political messages to reach the target audience in the fastest way possible (ALsamydai and Rudaina, 2010) given the number of citizens who dominate the voting population that are on the social media. Therefore, understanding how political deceptive campaign is practised in Nigerian social-cyber space and future technologies remains a significant challenge worthy of scholarly investigation. Hence, the aim of this study is to investigate political deceptive contents and pragmatic strategies in the sampled political *Facebook* posts.

Politics in Nigeria

Nigeria practices a democratic system of government which allows great involvement of citizens in politics. Politics in Nigeria is highly expensive and competitive with 'winner takes all' attitude which is why it is characterised by undemocratic tendencies such as violence, manipulation, bitterness, intimidation, vote-buying, ethnicity, coercion, deception, hatred, godfatherism, just to mention a few. Falade (2014) claims that "right from the First Republic, the Nigerian politics is characterised by greed, love of power, violence, assassination, thuggery and election rigging." It operates on a four-year regime in the three tiers of government: local, state and federal. Nigerians are usually involved in political process and decision making by joining political parties, participating in electioneering campaign, voting during elections and other political activities. Recently, Nigerian politics has been greatly influenced by the social media like other nations (Araba and Braimah 2015 and Sule, Sani and Mat, 2018). This has enhanced more political participation of citizens where they are freely allowed to express their opinions about governance, political office holders, opposition and political campaigns. As a result, political opposition is massively done via the social media where deceptive information is spread to destabilise an existing government, which can either lead to an eventual overthrow of that government or force it to perform.

Facebook and Political Discourse

Social media is an internet informed network means of communication that reflect the social relations among people with common interests. Wang, Angarita and Renna (2018) view social media as the scene of three types of abuses: excessive use, malicious use of power, and unexpected consequences. This implies that the social media allows for the deception of information. In the same vein, Park, Choi and Park, (2011) claim that 'social media is a new paradigm for communications that is making surprising changes to the political and social landscape of the world. Immediate feedbacks prompt review of public attitudes, and expression of opinions of citizens on political communication (Emruli, Zejneli and Agai, 2011) are some of the surprising changes noticeable on social media when compared with other traditional media. A relationship between social media and politics has been established in the literature (Yousif and ALsamydai, 2012; Ineji, Bassey-Duke and Brown, 2014; Matei, 2016). Political discourse increases exponentially through the social media as political gladiators discover new manners in which this valuable tool can sway opinions, trends, options and, most importantly votes (Matei, 2016). The easy way of getting account on the social media makes it easier for individuals to deceive others in the political arena.

Facebook, one of the most popular social networks, enables its users to exchange views and transfer information relating to pictures, personal interests and affiliations amongst many others. According to Techpoint Africa (May 23, 2018), there are 26 million Nigerian active *Facebook* users. This informs why Nigerian political gladiators take advantage of this for radical political marketing during electioneering campaigns; in order to access the large target audience with political promotional messages and engage them to harvest their critical opinions. Specifically, *Facebook* was deployed to monitor election results in 2015 presidential elections in Nigeria even before the official announcement of the results.

While some studies divulged how *Facebook* has been used for aggressive political campaigns in presidential elections in USA, Turkey, Macedonia and other countries (Matei, 2016, Yousif and ALsamydai, 2012, Emruli, Zejneli and Agai, 2011);other related studies divulged how *Facebook* has been used in North African countries and other Arab countries to enhance political change. Scott, Ravi and Richard (2010) establish that both candidates and voters have increased their use of the internet for radical political campaigns to influence voters' opinions. In sum, politicians play politics in social media to create political awareness programmes, build a good reputation and political orientation, invent positive attitudes and improve public image to convince their electoral masses.

Political Propaganda and Deception

Propaganda is an arguably ambivalent term with natural and negative connotations. Denotatively, it explains any form of communication that is one-sidedly spread to influence people's opinions. Relatedly, Nelson (1996:20) affirms that "propaganda is neutrally defined as a systemic form of purposeful persuasion that attempts to influence the emotions, attitudes, opinions and actions of specified target audience for ideological, political or commercial purposes through the control transmission of one-sided messages."On the other hand, Walton (1997:384) claims that it "implies intentional deception and manipulation of a mass audience… the argumentation used not based on good evidence of the kind appropriate for a rational discussion, and instead is of an emotional and crowd-pleasing sort." The crux of Walton's claim is that propaganda describes messages intentionally manipulative and deceptive in nature. He identifies ten characteristics of propaganda thus: dialogue structure, message content, goal-directed structure, involvement of social groups, indifference to logical reasoning, one-sided argumentation, and involvement of persuasion dialogue, justified by results, emotive language and eristic aspect.

Today, the negative sense seems to gain acceptance in the public domain, especially in politics, where it connotes lying, deception duplicity, pretence, untrustworthy and convenient fictions. It is safe to submit that in politics, propaganda deals with psychological influence to spur allegiance and action. Correspondingly, Ineji, Bassey-Duke and Brown (2014) define political propaganda as "essentially to communicate activities employed by political actions with the intention to further the interest of the political office holders or government in general." Thus, it is pertinent that political propaganda is related to political promotion and politicking and shares a thin line with deception with regards to the way it is practised in social media.

Likewise, Masip, Garrido and Herrero (2004:148) observe that "deception can be understood as the deliberate attempt, whether successful or not, to conceal, fabricate, and/or manipulate in any other factual and/or emotional information, by verbal and/or nonverbal means, in order to create or maintain in another or in others a belief that the communicator himself or herself considers false." This orienta-

tion foregrounds the present study's analysis in its attempt to track and categorise political deceptive posts on *Facebook*. Given that deception in political discourse is a mechanism to gain a strategic political advantage; besides, Tsikerdekis and Zeadally (2014:1) describe deception as "a deliberate act with the intent to mislead others while the recipients are not made aware or expect that such an act is taking place and that the goal of the deceiver is to transfer that false belief to the deceived ones."Political deceptive campaigns attempt to misdirect target voters regarding the voting process in public elections. Such campaigns usually reflect the will of political gladiators to manipulate the minds of the public in order to gain their support and sympathy, given the fact that politics is a game of number. Politicians exploit the virtual space of *Facebook* to manipulate the psychology of the electorates in electioneering periods by the contents of their posts. This is so because the *Facebook* context allows for manipulation of multimedia files greatly through fabrications and large-scale hoaxes (Wang, Angarita and Rinna, 2018).

This psychological manipulation involves a great deal of expertise like appealing pictures, strategic use of language, and other interactive communicative engagements. Deception on *Facebook* and other social media platforms, given the number of users, is an asset and at the same time a difficult challenge considering content packaging because it is easier to deceive an individual than the entire voting population. Corroborating this, Tsikerdekis and Zeadally (2014:6) opine that "there are various techniques reported in the literature that can be used to deceive others in social media environments and they include: bluffs, mimicry (e.g., mimicking a website), fakery (e.g., forging a fake website), white lies, evasions, exaggerations, web page redirections (e.g., misleading someone to a false profile page) and concealments (e.g., hiding information from one's profile)." They went on to emphasis that manipulating content is presumably the most common way of deceiving others. Thereby, deceptive actions are configured by expectations, goals, where expectation is a factor that determines the likelihood of the success of deception.

Three deception types identified by these scholars are goal-oriented deception, involving lying on one's achievements on social media; relational deception, which explains the manipulative way of keeping one's social media relations or followers; and identity deception, which describes preservation of one's reputation from shameful events on social media through deceptive means. These obviously masquerade in the political *Facebook* posts sampled for this study.

Theoretical Orientations

This study benefits from multimodal critical discourse analysis. The theory is an extension of critical discourse analysis, hence, making it a viable branch of discourse analysis which extends the study of language in combination with other resources, such as images, colours, scientific symbolism, gestures, actions, music and sound' (Blommaert and Bulcaen, 2000; Halloran, 2011). In the same vein, Kress (1993) and van Leeuwen (1993) observe that its application is to include, and at times even to prioritise non-linguistic semiotic elements. The implication of the foregoing is that the theory has the capacity to examine a much wider range of linguistic and non-linguistic semiotic components, including photographs and other graphic elements used by social actors to construct and contest dominant social meanings.

Going forward, multimodality evinces analysis of the rules and principles that allows for potential of relative placement of elements, framing, salience, proximity, colour saturations, styles of typeface in knowledge construction accommodating several semiotic modes within a socio-cultural context (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006; Machin, 2007).The theory provides concepts, methods and a framework for the collection and analysis of visual, aural, embodied and spatial aspects of interaction and environ-

ments (Jewitt, 2013; Kress, 2010). It investigates the interaction between communicational means and challenges the prior prevalence of spoken and written language in research (Scollon and Scollon, 2009).

Multimodality emphasises situated action, that is, the importance of the social context and the resources available for meaning making, with attention on people's situated choice of resources, rather than emphasising the system of available resources. Hence, it opens up possibilities for recognising, analysing and theorising the different ways in which people make meaning and how those meanings are interrelated. Multimodality foregrounds the modal choices people make and the social effect of these choices on meaning. Expectedly, context is significant to the understanding of social semiotic multimodal analysis. The context shapes the resources available for meaning making and how these are selected and designed. Signs, modes and meaning making are treated as relatively fluid, dynamic and open systems, intimately connected to the social context of use (Jewitt, 2009).

Considering medium as a tool for understanding context, multimodality is relevant in the analysis of data extracted from the new media because it creates a shift from the isolated text being relied on as the primary source of communication to the image being utilised more frequently in the digital age. In the context of the ongoing study, the political posts on *Facebook* contain both linguistic and non-linguistic semiotic elements, and therefore, should be approached from multimodal perspective.

Significantly, the theory helps in analysing how several or all of the different semiotic modes intertwine to produce a unified text or communicative event. The premise of multimodal discourse analysis is that in many domains of contemporary writing, textual structure is realised, not by linguistic means, but visually, through layout, colour, and typography both at the level of the clause and at the level of discourse. There are many ways to do multimodal discourse analysis, and they are: content analysis; conversation analysis; social semiotic analysis, just to mention a few (van Leeuwen andJewitt, 2001).

The analytical operation of the theory involves making sense of the interrelationships among various visual elements and understanding the meanings associated with them in a certain culture. This is essential to the interpretation of multimodal texts. Readers of multimodal texts need to understand how the various elements in visual images interplay and coordinate to make meaning if they are going to move beyond the literal perception of images and multimodal texts.

In a way, socio-cultural meanings of the selected political *Facebook* posts as data for this study are significant in tracking the deceptive intentions inherent in the posts given the social, cultural, scientific, ecological and political background of the posts. The socio-cultural strategy is an indispensable aspect of the interpretation process, which focuses on the social, cultural, historical, and political contexts of the production and transmission of visual images in multimodal texts.

Methodology

Data constitute 250 political *Facebook* posts which reflect exclusively Nigerian political space were sampled and screenshot from the *Facebook* account of the researcher and from the accounts of some of his associates between July and September 2018. The sampled period was an electioneering time when politicians indicated their interests to vie for various political offices. It was also the period when various political parties conducted their primary elections to nominate and determine candidates for various positions in preparation for the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. For objectivity and unbiased sampling, the politicians' *Facebook* accounts were not particularly explored but their political promotional messages circulated on the social media, especially *Facebook* within the sampled period. It is noteworthy to stress that those sampled posts were not exclusively posted on the *Facebook,* some of them were also

posted on other social media platforms. However, *Facebook* is chosen because it is one of the social media platforms that are more public. Therefore, fifty posts were purposively selected out of 250, for containing largely political contents intended to manipulate voters' opinions and to influence their decisions in their favour because politics is a game of number. Basically, the sampled posts, which reflect relatively similar discourse patterns widespread in Nigerian politics, involve the ruling political party and opposition parties. Some of the posts indicate missing information, which when further opened in some instances, run into pages; thereby deliberately left as they appear in the news feed for reasons of space. These were however, fully captured by the researcher as necessary background information. The study adopted descriptive research design viable to track deceptive contents. Also, Masip, Garrido and Herrero (2004)'s deceptive forms are deployed in the classification of the deceptive contents of the data. Particularly, the linguistic and pictorial texts of the sampled posts were considered by subjecting the data to pragmatic view in determining their deceptive contents and the attendant pragmatic strategies. The analyses were based on content and social semiotic approach of the multimodal critical discourse analysis (cf van Leeuwen and Jewitt, 2001).

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The analysis bifurcates into deceptive forms and pragmatic strategies. The sampled data manifest four deceptive forms, namely: equivocation of identity (EoI), exaggeration of performance (EoP), falsification of corruption cases (FoCC), and concealment of offence (CoO) within two socio-political contexts of election, and opposition. As noted earlier, the sampled posts reflect relatively similar patterns in every political *Facebook* post, the frequency of the identified deceptive forms appears as: EoI 20 times (40%), EoP 15 times (30%), FoCC 9 times (18%) and CoO 6 times (12%).These elicit four pragmatic strategies: evocation of messianic figure, blunt condemnation, evocation of sympathy and retrospection to achieve different political intentions of criticism, self-presentation, silent opposition and galvanised public support. These are discussed in turns.

Equivocation of Identity

This explains a strategic use of linguistic and extra-linguistic resources in a vague or ambiguous manner to intentionally create false impression against one's belief about an individual's or group's attitude. It entails prevarication to achieve political promotion or marketing or demeaning of a political figure. In the context of this study, this form of deception was deployed by the opposition party to criticise the incumbent government and the party in power via *Facebook* and other social media platforms. This is captured in Figure 1.

Three offensive multimodal resources are evident in the above post, namely text, picture and colour, manifesting in the two segments of the post. The first segment is purely textual as it is framed "CHRONICLES OF CORRUPTION!!!". The strategic use of capitalisation and exclamation foregrounds the significance of the post which is to give false impression and discredit PMB's (President Muhammadu Buhari, the Nigerian President) anti-corruption crusade through disclosing selective true information. The highlighted corruption cases which were still under investigations also give credence to this. Linguistically, the adverbial phrase "under PMB" reveals the identities of two individuals, Abba Kyari (Chief of Staff to the President) and Babachir Lawal (Former secretary to the Federal Government),

Figure 1.
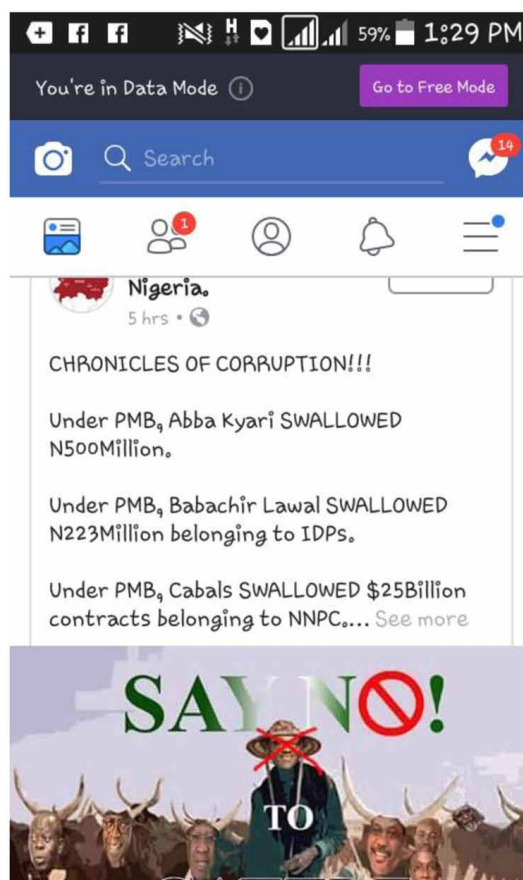
important members of Buhari's cabinet alleged to have "swallowed" public funds of ₦500 million and ₦223 million respectively, to denigrate the integrity or anti-corruption identity of PMB for political reasons. In Nigerian parlance, the word "swallow" as it is used in the post connotes extreme involvement in financial fraud. Therefore, underlining the use of this word, carefully foregrounded, is to ridicule PMB led government whose administration has been entirely framed as anti-corruption.

The second segment shows the picture of PMB as a herdsman along with members of the ruling political party (All Progressive Congress, APC) with horns in their heads. It tries to portray the ethnic identity of PMB and APC party. Within the political space of Nigeria, the post aims to denigrate the identities of PMB and his political party and relate them with herdsmen terrorist group (a militia group responsible for the killings of the innocent citizens in Nigeria). Linking PMB and his APC to this militia, by implicature, is ascribing to them killer's identity. The second code in the segment is the textual caption "SAY NO! TO". It is a phrase with compelling illocutionary force of rejecting PMB and APC because of their killer's identity. The picture provides the complementing interpretation of the text. Colour is the third semiotic code which features four colours: black, green, red and white. There is an associative link between colours and emotions. According to Zammitto (2005:4), "Not only emotional response is obtained while looking at colours, physical reaction is also possible." Semantically in the African context, the colour black connotes evil, mourning, criminality, depression, hopelessness but

also authority. Depicting PMB as a herdsman with colour black leading a group of people with horns in their heads definitely will conjure negative reactions against him; given the masses' understanding of what black colour connotes.

Similarly, the green colour has strong emotional correspondence with nature, fertility, youth and strength. By implicature, the text, "SAY NO! TO" is an imperative force giving order to the youth, the strength and vitality of the country to reject what black and red colours represent. Having elucidated on black colour earlier, red colour is an emotionally intense one, highly associated with danger and aggressiveness. This implies that the administration of PMB has been dangerously endangering the lives of Nigerian citizens. On the other hand, white colour here signifies light and direction (Gage, 2006), pointing to who the citizens have to reject as indicated in the post. It is politically deceptive to present members of the ruling party as human beings with horns; thereby cognitively equivocating negative identity to them so as to be rejected by the voters in the next elections.

The post is foregrounded within the context of opposition which relates to the configuration of perpetual strong disagreement with activities and performance of the party in power. Put in perspective, context of opposition in politics is characterised by antagonistic expressions and behaviours or attitudes against the ruling party to checkmate them and act as their watchdog by constantly criticising perceived wrong actions. Highlighting chronicles of corrupt cases under PMB and presenting members of his cabinet as cattle, by intention, show criticism heaped up by the opposition party and by encouraging members of the public to say no to the present administration. This form of criticism within the context of opposition necessitated the use of blunt condemnation as a strategy.

Blunt Condemnation

This captures a direct manner of severe reproof against a socially unacceptable behaviour of a political figure or party. In this case, the opposition party in this post reproves PMB's administration and the APC-led government for hypocrisy about fighting corruption in the country. This follows from the chronicles of corrupt cases associated with members of its cabinet. Similarly, the expression "SAY NO TO" connotes condemnation of the party in power hence allegedly criticising it for soft action against killers' herdsmen.

Exaggeration of Performance

Exaggeration of performance captures the pretentiously boastful and self-inflating information that is fairly true in principle regarding one's impressive periodic achievement for deceptive intentions. This is done relatively to frame the electorates' hearts towards a political figure or party.

The two posts above defensively capture high level of exaggeration of PMB's administration. The first showcases the Minister of Labour, Dr Chris Ngige, who claims that PMB has done a lot that merit Nigerians' daily clap for him and his cabinet. The post also features three multimodal elements: linguistic, picture and colour. The linguistic element contains three sentences: two above the picture and one beneath it. First, is a compound-complex sentence, containing two independent clauses and one dependent clause. "Nigerians should be clapping for us on daily basis," is an independent clause that shows that Ngige is addressing all Nigerians, which implicates they have all benefited immensely from PMB's administration. The objective personal deixis "us" refers to everybody working with PMB. The dependent clause, "and after thanking God," shows that he is orienting to the religious life of Nigerians

Figure 2.

and their relationship with God whom they should always thank for His benevolent acts. Comparing the magnificent acts of God to what PMB's administration has done for Nigerians, hence, he says, "they should thank us".

Again, in the second sentence, Ngige claims that God has used Buhari; by placing Buhari in the position of a messiah who has rescued and effected positive turnaround in Nigeria political space. The third sentence beneath the picture is a complex sentence with "I'm surprised" as the independent clause, showing the Mental process. "I" is the Senser, "surprised" is the Mental process, while the phenomenon is that "Nigerians are not clapping for Buhari". This further justifies the claim that the language use in political discourse is partly psychological. The second element contains two semiotic resources, the minister's picture to validate or authenticate the source of the information posted on *Facebook*. The Nigerian flag (green, white, green patterned cloth) at the background in the picture symbolises the authority of the government who the speaker represents.

Figure 3 reveals a statement credited to the Nigeria Vice President who claims that "we", APC as a party, and PMB and his cabinet, have performed far better than PDP, the main opposition party that they succeeded. The adverbial phrase "within 3 years" shows how the APC-led government has performed relatively better compared with the sixteen years of PDP rule. This again is exaggeration of performance

Figure 3.

to show self-marketisation and glorification. Few questions to be asked are: who did the rating and by what standard?

This is situated in the context of election which involves the activities that politicians and their supporters carry out in order to persuade people to vote for their political parties in an election. Obviously, figures are pro-government in electioneering period, intended to persuade Nigerians to continue to support the APC-led government in a politically competitive nation like Nigeria. The posts contents are entirely framed as political marketisation which is a significant business in the context of election.

Evocation of Messianic Figure and the Use of Comparative Evaluation

The strategy that is employed to achieve exaggeration of performance is evocation of messianic figure. It describes an act of over estimating the ability of a political figure to have possessed an aggressive reforming zeal to cause a political change in a country comparatively than others.

The expressions, "God has used Buhari" and "God has sent Buhari", imply that PMB has been under the influence of celestial power to cause political transformation in the country. Again, the word "save" shows that Buhari is on a messianic assignment in Nigeria. This also explains why the Vice President deploys comparative evaluation in his claim that Buhari's administration within three years has performed

Figure 4.

better when compared to the sixteen years of PDP's governance. Per se, the Vice President's enunciation shows that it is apparent that politicians deploy this strategy to deceptively achieve their political goals of self-presentation and enhance public support.

Falsification of Corruption Cases

This conceptualises the act of fabricating statements as though they were completely true to discredit others' performance. It evinces how allegations are politically gasconaded through social media with the intention of criticising the government of the day or the opposition.

Like other posts, this presents two multimodal resources, linguistics and semiotic (picture). The linguistic element is made up of two sentences. The first, is a declarative simple sentence that is informing, while the second is a complex sentence that is alleging. The declarative simple sentence shows how the women in Osun State, as the subject of the sentence receive cups of 'garri' made available to them by the gubernatorial candidate to have their support for the purpose of election. Complementing the first sentence, the second sentence generalises that Buhari and APC deliberately used hunger as a weapon against Nigerians. Within the context of opposition, it is understood as the handiwork of the opposition

Figure 5.
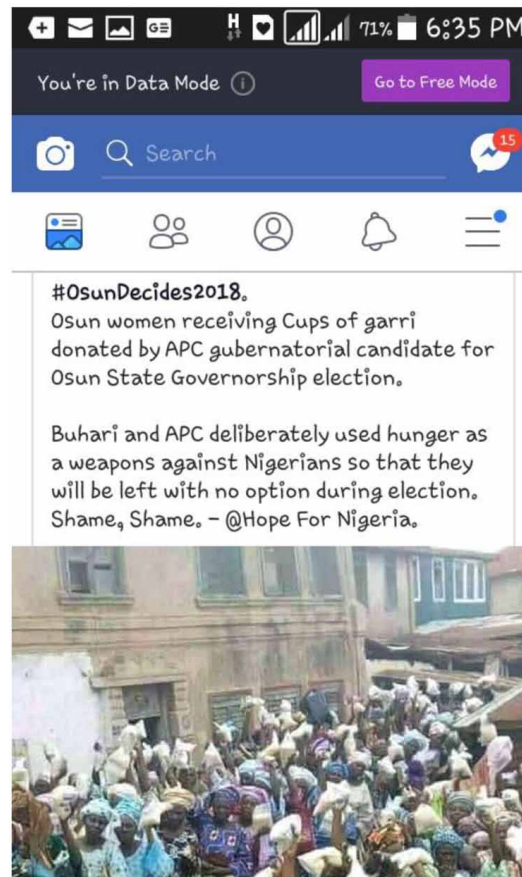
party to discredit the party in power. In Nigerian politics, abuse is not uncommon. This is evident in this post thus: "shame, shame.", conjuring bad feelings.

Although the picture reveals women with food stuff package in their hands within low income residential houses, it is not certain whether the act is to buy the conscience of the women for the purpose of the election or welfare package given to the less privileged in the society. Put in perspective, the second sentence above the picture is a fabricating statement as though it was true that Buhari and APC have deliberately used hunger as a weapon to achieve their political intentions as being insinuated by the picture. Obviously, members of APC party would see things differently from the way any member of the opposition party has deceptively presented it in this post.

Blunt Condemnation and Retrospection

As stated earlier, blunt condemnation captures a direct manner of severe reproof against a socially unacceptable behaviour of a political figure or party. This strategy is deployed to allegedly criticise and condemn APC party's activity for subjecting Nigerians to hunger in order to have control over them during election period because poverty has capacity to check people's rationality.

Another strategy in falsification as a deceptive form is retrospection. It is the act of recalling previous statement made by individuals against the present behaviour or performance in the political arena.

Specific statements credited to two members of the party in power, Babatunde Raji Fashola the Minister of Power, Works and Housing and Tony Momoh, when APC was still an opposition party and when the party was barely a year in power. Of what significance are these quotes to Nigerians? First, it is to criticise the Minister of Power, Works and Housing who claimed that "A serious government will fix power problem in six months." However, he as the minister in charge of the ministry and the APC government of which he is an official, have not been able to solve the power problem after over three years in office. Second, it is to condemn the APC-led government that claimed that they should be stoned if they do not perform after two years, and three years after, they have performed far below expectation. Significantly, these statements are deceptive because they were made to deceive Nigerians to vote APC into power and to retain their support while in office through vain promises and assurance.

Figure 6.
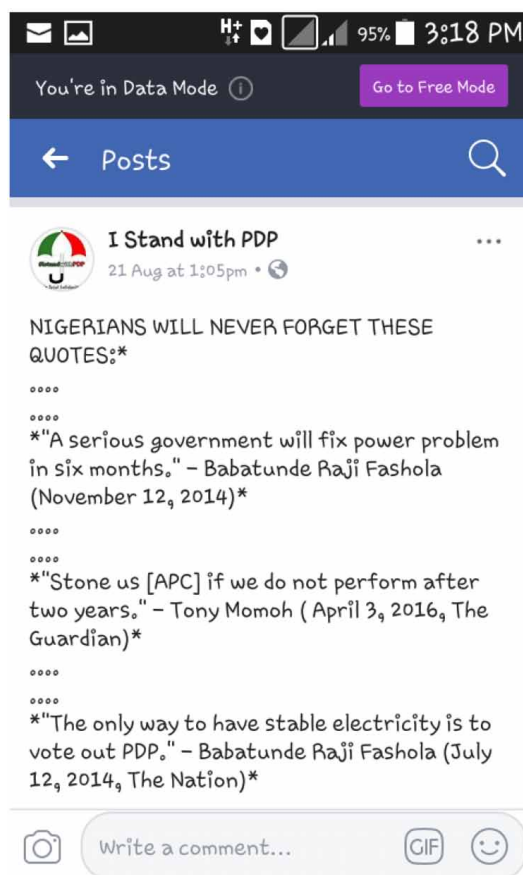
Concealment of Offences

Concealment of offences explains the act of intentionally keeping away from the public an individual's behaviour which perpetually causes people to be upset. This is usually done to deceitfully seek the public approval of a political figure.

Continuous packaging and marketisation of a political figure, is usually done by politicians for relational and identity deceptions. Such is exhibited by Festus Keyamo, Director of Media for the Buhari campaign Organisation, who admitted that PMB has committed some errors in the cause of discharging his constitutional duties. Like politicians who are usually economical with the truth, Keyamo conceal the offence PMB has committed to the Nigerians because he knows that mentioning such offences could upset the electorate and *demarket* his client, but begging Nigerians for forgiveness, with a view to enhancing positive public face for him.

The semiotic resource in the post reveals two pictures, one of Keyamo who is dressed in suit, being a legal practitioner, and his boss who is sitting comfortably in his executive chair and working. The PMB's picture shows him as a dutiful politician who is committed to his constitutional responsibilities for Nigerians. This is framed in the context of election for electioneering intention which is seeking the favour of the electorates.

Figure 7.
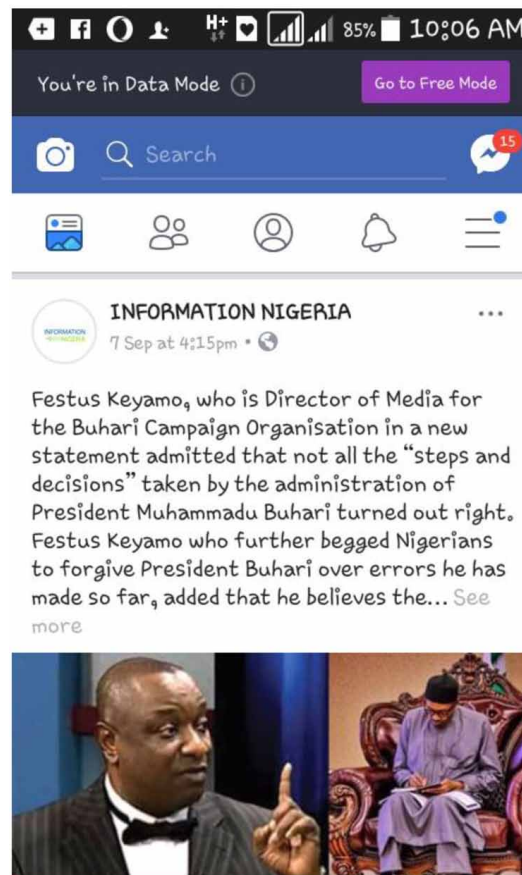
Evocation of Sympathy

The strategy deployed here is the evocation of sympathy, which is an act of cognitively appealing to the affiliative feelings of the people toward a political actor or party. Co-texts deploy by Keyamo relating to evocation of sympathy include "begged", "forgiveness" and "over errors". The word "beg" connotes anxiously entreating an individual for favour or something very crucial, while "forgiveness" relates to pardon. These words cognitively appeal to the affiliative feelings of Nigerians toward PMB to enhance his public image and relational affinity. When a politician begins to beg electorates for forgiveness, it is deceptive because it does not mean repentance, but just to achieve a political intention.

CONCLUSION

The strategic use of language and other semiotic resources by politicians in the new media, particularly on *Facebook*, has shown the extent of politicking in the Nigerian political space, where members of the public are largely engaged deceptively. To sum up, the four deceptive forms identified in this study, equivocation of identity, exaggeration of performance, falsification of corruption cases and concealment of offence, clearly show how the discourse on politics in Nigeria socio-cyber space embed deceptive forms with the intentions of criticism, self-presentation, silent opposition and galvanise public support within two sociopolitical contexts of election and opposition. These necessitated the use of pragmatic strategies of evocation of messianic figure, blunt condemnation, retrospection and evocation of sympathy by the politicians to further engage in political deception of the masses. The intervention of multimodal discourse analysis and pragmatic perspective in this study have unmasked the cognitive participatory resources like religion, emotion-captivating pictures, and colours, Nigerian politicians often deploy in the new media for the purpose of politicking. Relatedly, the study aligns with Scott, Ravi and Richard (2010)**'s submission that both politicians and voters have increased their use of the internet for radical political campaigns to influence voters. This chapter, therefore, concludes that by appealing to the religious sense of Nigerians, stra**tegic use of language and careful use of semiotic resources, Nigerian politicians through political propaganda tap into the cognitive system of the *Facebook* users to appeal to their political biases to manoeuver their opinions.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Corruption: A form of dishonest and illegal conducts by people in power potent enough to perverse their integrity.

Election: An organized process in which people vote to choose a person to represent them in the official position.

Facebook Post: It is a person's opinion posted on a Facebook user's personal page or wall.

Identity: A set of characteristics that define or distinguish a person, a group or a thing from others.

Messianic Figure: A person with extraordinary capacity to effect a radical change in the social order or political situation in a country.

Multimodal: A form of communication practice involving more than one code or mode, usually, textual, aural, linguistic and other semiotic resources.

Political Deception: The act of politicking involving lies, self-presentation, promises, fabrications and so on to distract and keep people waiting for solution in a political system.

Political Opposition: A group of people or political party in a multiparty political system that is opposed to or criticizes continuously the government or political party in power.

Chapter 18

False Information Narratives:
The IRA's 2016 Presidential Election Facebook Campaign

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ABSTRACT

The issue of Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. Presidential election has been widely debated by scholars and journalists. However, these works have not fully analyzed the ads that have been released by Facebook and the U.S. Congress. This project uses a case study to analyze the ads posted by the Russian-affiliated Internet Research Agency, considering the quantities of ads targeted to particular geographic locations, the frequency of targeting for unique keywords, and the reach and impressions of each of the ads. Further, these results are compared to results from best practices in traditional social media campaigns as a way to better understand the goals and potential impacts of the IRA ads. In conclusion, the project, by analyzing the full set of IRA ads, sheds new light on the way false information narratives were leveraged by the Russian-linked IRA.

INTRODUCTION

This project examines Russian ads that were distributed on Facebook and Instagram between 2015-2017 and were released to the public by the United States House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. These ads were often filled with false, misleading information that compelled users to act, setting them apart from other fake news sites and actors.

The chapter presents a qualitative analysis of a set of quantitative data and analyzes the impact of these ads on their target population, highlighting this impact through the engagement mechanisms of their social network. As the networks themselves underwent interface changes during the distribution period of these advertisements, the impact of these advertisements was potentially greater as the engagement options increased due to the new interface possibilities.

We introduce the concept of "false information narratives" to the discussion of fake news and fake news agents that has been popularized in the wake of the 2016 Presidential election in the United States. Since these advertisements do not fall under news and information per se, but did have a potential impact, it is important to denote them as potentially impactful actors. Aside from the introduction of this concept, the analysis does not set out to build new theory, but rather draws on established communication and media theory in order to better analyze the data contained in the Russian ads released by Congress. In order to more fully understand these ads, we draw on existing work related to memetics, media effects, and sociotechnical practices.

Based on this framework, our research question for the project is: Were the false information narratives on Facebook created by the Russian Internet Research Agency (IRA) successful in generating engagement? One important caveat for this research is that our question, based on the data available, is to assess the social engagement of these ads and *not* whether they were able to change the decisions of individual voters or impact the outcome of the 2016 U.S. Presidential election.

BACKGROUND

The term "fake news" became a popular talking point during the 2016 Presidential election cycle, but it has existed in academic networks as a catch-all descriptor for a variety of content, from satire such as *The New Yorker's* "Borowitz Report" to Photoshopped imagery, maliciously constructed false information, propaganda, and outreach pieces. Often this term is linked to the anxiety regarding the shift in distribution of news from newspaper and television stations to the online realm, where social media sites like Facebook and Twitter are used to circulate information.

Perhaps the best example to illustrate fake news comes from Dan Faltesek (2016), who describes the phenomenon as "social media news stories that feature sensational headlines referring to untrue information. These stories are produced by actors who are not mandated to do journalism and are remunerated by online ad networks." Indeed, this illustrates how fake news agents are not only distributed largely through social networks, but also places a focus on the monetary value of false information. While the attention of individuals is not a "zero-sum" game, there is limited bandwidth for information, which necessitates the use of tools such as sensationalistic writing to capture the attention of users. Faltesek's work suggests that users are more likely to be captivated by news that replicates traditional news writing, which makes these malicious actors invisible to the untrained eye (Faltesek, 2016).

While researchers have discussed the fact-checking apparatuses that have emerged to combat false information narratives – a term we introduce here to differentiate these advertisements from the more traditional fake news actors and artifacts typically discussed as rhetorical devices – only now are we able to better define how fake news and narratives operate in the online realm. These narratives often function as means of reinforcing narratives about race, class, and gender that help build and maintain collective identity, particularly for those users on the right of the political spectrum (Polletta & Callahan, 2017).

Narratives also emerge through framing of news articles, particularly by high-ranking political figures who describe information as "fake news." Frames themselves play a large role in forming political attitudes (see Berelson, Lazarsfeld, & McPhee, 1954), and have been a useful tool for highlighting the myriad ways that news has been placed amidst cultural shifts and social upheaval in political communication (Busby, Flynn, & Druckman, n.d.; Klar, Robison, & Druckman, 2013). Fake news may escape these specific frames due to the volume of misinformation that is transmitted through various social

media, which itself is linked to frames of legacy news outlets and political communication as being disseminators of false information narratives (Marwick & Lewis, 2017).

Alice Marwick's recent taxonomy of social roles of problematic information emphasized how fake news, partisan news coverage, and disinformation were linked to self-presentation and reinforcing group identity. By using a sociotechnical approach to determine how and why people share fake news, Marwick (2018) illustrated that users shared complex social motivations that would not necessarily be changed. Moreover, the internet as a communication medium has created a number of subcultures that are not necessarily benign in ideology or nature. Internet subcultures may take advantage of the existing, shifting media ecosystem to manipulate news frames, create and formulate agendas, set agendas, and disseminate ideas and ideology (Marwick & Lewis, 2017).

If this is the case, information may be used by malicious actors to cause users to harm persons, organizations, or nations (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). This type of information is called "malinformation," although its usage is questionable because information may also be subversive without being untrue. Moreover, the remixing of internet content to fit within emergent communication patterns and new users suggests a fluidity that divests information from original meaning.

Many internet users propagate online content through "memes," which are themselves linked to Richard Dawkins's original concept of "a packet of culture" (Dawkins, 1976, 1990). Memes have emerged to become defined beyond their format as image macros, and are now commonplace tools of communication for users across platforms. Often their impact is seen as limited, yet their relative simplicity means that user participation can impact political affiliation and argumentation (Tryon, 2012). Memetic culture itself has resulted as a use of tweets throughout political elections (Freelon & Karpf, 2014); indeed, now-American president Donald Trump often utilized his Twitter account as a more intrinsic form of communication for his campaign throughout the 2016 presidential election, and expanded its usage once he was elected president. These uses can reflect the organization of memes as related to political values (Seiffert-Brockmann, Diehl, & Dobusch, 2018), the integration of key information as related to cultural practices (Hristova, 2014; Milner, 2016), or how memes themselves become integrated with politics as a means of subverting and creating new meaning within political spheres (Milner, 2013).

The effects of memetic culture and their impact have not fully been explored, largely due to the massive shift that memetic culture reflects for the implementation of an increasingly globalized communications network upon daily life. Indeed, the classic structure of media effects research did not anticipate the participatory news culture that has emerged in the wake of the dramatic shift in the American news media landscape after the 1996 Federal Telecommunications Act was passed. More vulnerable groups, no longer linked to a centralized legacy publication system that acted as a more monocultural agent of organization of information, are exploited through online disinformation campaigns. This is largely due to a shift in news aggregation and publishing to the realms of social media; more specifically, the greater reliance on Facebook and Google for content dispersion. News media's increasing dependence on social media, metric-driven and analytically sound content, sensationalistic writing, prizing novelty rather than cultural importance, and modeling after clickbait content makes the industry vulnerable to such media manipulation (Marwick & Lewis, 2017).

The effects of memes reflect some of the concerns of media regulation within the United States and the global sphere, particularly when it comes to media literacy (Jang & Kim, 2018). Lasswell's (1948) classic model of media effects assumed that the medium would be the biggest driver of change among information from sender to receiver (Chandler, 1994). However, more recent scholarship by Henry Jenkins (2006) posits that user roles have shifted through more participatory culturally mediated forms

of communication, which rely on shifting convergent roles to drive the use of these platforms. This has distinct implications for fake news and false information narratives since the form of misinformation may matter less than who shared it (Marwick, 2018). Popular perception regarding the influence of fake news and false information is that individual susceptibility is low, when the opposite is likely true (Jang & Kim, 2018). When factoring in partisan identity, social undesirability of content, and external political efficacy, the third-person perception of susceptibility to fake news is greater (Jang & Kim, 2018). While it is imperative to determine the impact and media effects of memes and memetic culture, users are far less likely to believe that they are directly impacted by such content. Whether this leads to a greater focus on media literacy education or media regulation remains to be seen (Jang & Kim, 2018).

Whitney Phillips and Ryan Milner (2017) theorize that the interlinked nature of massively online communication and the ability to replicate and remix images, text, and video makes it impossible to determine where a particular idea, image, or meme originated, let alone pinpoint the intent of the author. This is especially important for memetic communication, as Milner (2016) points out that memetic content is linked to sociotechnical practices that transform information. These Russian ads are themselves transforming information and recirculating them to users, often identifying more vulnerable users who may be more likely to share remixed content such as this.

The sociotechnical practices of false information distribution by individuals is linked to their social status and identity, along with their technical ability with regards to digital discourse. This is also linked to a media-industrial position where social meanings of information are tied to the necessity for increased media consumption or expanding the reach of a political stance. Finally, the very nature of the connected online realm affects the meaning of the content and information present on the medium of the internet, different from televisual or newsprint content. These work practices are sociotechnical in that they are organized and developed differently from other media because they are located in different social systems and technical organizations (Trist, Murray, & Trist, 1993). Human agency and technical affordances are linked in shaping artifacts of practice through sociotechnical means, for any conceptual framework of this practice must integrate actor and structure together (Bijker, Carlson, & Pinch, 1997).

The emphasis on Russian ads thus places the audience for these ads as actors who have agency within their structured environment. Research into social media and online use shows that people gravitate towards content that reflects their own user interests (boyd, 2014). The production of culture perspective provides a strong lens to help navigate these systems. These systems are defined as "how the symbolic elements of culture are shaped by the systems within which they are created, distributed, evaluated, taught, and preserved" (Peterson & Anand, 2004), which means that the memetic cultural content created by users - including Russian propagandists - are symbolically shaped by the online realm of information distribution and remixed according to the user base.

The realm of false information narratives thus arrives in a complicated arena of online idiosyncrasies, where cultural content may be communally true while also maintaining a hint of falsehoods that deter the average user from engaging with the content. The systems of production have allowed for the dissemination of information similar to a propaganda campaign, but the very systems also allow for individual user agency to take over the integration and assimilation of content within said cultural systems. Thus, false information narratives are predicated upon the user or group of users disseminating content across a system to be fully effective. The Russian advertising on Facebook and Instagram prior to and after the 2016 U.S. Presidential election was predicated on allowing users to integrate their agencies into the false information narrative that was intentionally spread by malicious agents.

Though a robust exploration of the larger geopolitical climate in which these ads took place is well-worth exploring, only a brief sketch of this will be possible due to the confines of the book chapter format. The IRA effort was a massive undertaking that began long before the start of the U.S. Presidential election. Before shifting its attention to U.S. based politics, the Russian "troll factories" leveraged Russian social media sites in order spread false information narratives about Vladimir Putin, Ukraine, and the European Union (Alexander, 2015). Though these campaigns have been less well reported within the U.S. media, they likely offered an opportunity to test and refine strategies that were then transferred to the attempts to interfere in U.S. politics.

In addition to the expensive social media-based campaign, Russian interference also included efforts to hack voting machines and the email accounts of prominent politicians, most notably the 2016 Democratic Presidential nominee, Hillary Clinton (DiResta, Shaffer, Ruppel, Sullivan, Matney, Fox, Albright, & Johnson, 2018). Clinton's emails were not only obtained but also released through the WikiLeaks organization. The coordination of these three approaches were targeted toward tilting the election in favor of Republican Presidential nominee Donald Trump.

Finally, although the social media campaigns by the IRA through Facebook and Twitter were reported both the earliest and most thoroughly by U.S. media, later analysis has demonstrated that such campaigns spread to additional platforms (Howard, Ganesh, Liotsiou, Kelly, & François, 2018). This included intentional actions by the IRA such as creating content for YouTube and Google and creating new websites to host content and garner donations. In other cases, content was shared passively by U.S. citizens to additional social networking sites such as Pinterest (DiResta *et al., 2018*). The present study therefore offers an analysis of only one small, though nonetheless very important piece of the larger efforts by Russia to interfere in the 2016 U.S. Presidential election, highlighting the integration of memetic content into the social media campaign.

METHODS

The current project is the first stage of a larger research project analyzing the Facebook ads placed by the Russian Internet Research Agency surrounding the 2016 U.S. Presidential election. This project addresses our research question of how much engagement the Russian Internet Research Agency was able to generate through its false information narrative campaign via Facebook. A total of 3,511 ads were analyzed for this project. These were downloaded as PDFs from U.S. House of Representatives Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence website. The text in the PDF files were then individually entered into a Google Sheets spreadsheet that was connected to Tableau Public for further analysis. The images themselves were not copied into the database. Based on categories used in the original PDF, columns in the spreadsheet were created with the following headers: Ad ID, Ad Text, Ad Landing Page, Ad Targeting Custom Audience, Ad Targeting Location, Excluded Connections, Ad Targeting Age, Language, Ad Targeting Placement, People Who Like, Friends of, Interests, Behavior, Exclude, Ad Impressions, Ad Clicks, Ad Spending (in RUB), Ad Creation Date, Ad End Date, Photo ID #, Reactions, Comments, Shares, People Interested, People Going, and Currently Using OS.

Although this data transcription was straight-forward, there were several irregularities worth mentioning. First, some ads had redacted text and/or images. When the text was redacted, this was transcribed as [redacted] into the spreadsheet. The [redacted] formatting was used even in cases when the redacted material was clearly visible in subsequent similar versions of the ad.

Further, there appears to be some errors related to the reporting of the ads, likely by Facebook to the U.S. House of Representatives. Many of the ads that indicate that there were zero impressions of the ad have a start date for the ad that occurs *after* the end date. Ad ID 1477 offers an example of this, with a start date of 07/06/16 07:05:58 AM PDT and end date of 05/09/16 06:36:15 AM PDT. This reversal of dates may be emblematic of an error in data reporting and could therefore be related to an overall underreporting of both spending and public engagement of the ads.

At other points, the same ad seemed to be repeated multiple times. For example, ad IDs 728, 730, 732, 734, 736, 738, 740, 742, 744, 746, and 748 are identical, down to the second of the time stamp for the ad start date. It is not clear if these were truly different ads all created at the same time, or merely representative of a reporting error by Facebook. However, all ads such as these were entered separately into the database.

A further limitation of the data provided by Facebook is that the ads only show the total number of reactions and do not break down the reactions by the type of emotion or emoji selected for this reaction. Facebook launched the expanded forms of reactions in early 2016, in middle of the set of ads being analyzed.

It also seems likely that the cumulative totals for number of people interested in and attending events based on the ads will be artificially inflated. Many of the event ads share identical numbers for those who are interested and attending, even when spread out across multiple ads. This was not the case for reactions, comments, and shares for other types of ads, which changed even when ads were otherwise identical.

In addition to events, it appears that certain ads were targeted specifically toward accruing Likes for the Page being advertised rather than for reacting, commenting and sharing. In this case, data for these actions were not available, and instead the image for the ad displayed only the image for the Page with the total number of likes. This number remained consistent across multiple ads and was not easily captured in our data collection because multiple versions meant that these numbers weren't attributable to any particular ad.

Finally, while most aspects of the ads were easily ascribable to particular headers, there were a few items that were not easily linked. In several ads, the attributes "African American (US)" and "Asian American (US)" were denoted as a Behavior. Following this, we expanded the Behavior header to include other less common data that did not fit elsewhere, including: gender, field of study, employer, Facebook access by a particular browser, likely to engage with particular political content, political preferences, home composition, industry, interest expansion, job title, and multi-cultural affinity. Each of these was used rarely and was not easily categorizable to other headers.

RESULTS

While this analysis mirrors in many ways the analysis that would be completed for any social media campaign, there are other important factors and metrics which must be considered due to the nature of this campaign. In addition to metrics such as reach, engagement, and the cost of the campaign, factors such as the timing of the ads in relation to the election, the geographical locations targeted, and the interests targeted will be of importance for this analysis.

First are the overall metrics for the entire campaign. The cost to run all of the ads was 5,817,853.65 Rubles or approximately $86,000 USD. This ad spend garnered 40,220,722 ad impressions and 3,703,218 ad clicks. Additionally, there were 3,632,442 reactions to the ads, 185,730 comments on the ads, and

3,334,161 shares of the ads. In terms of advertisements that were related to events, 177,189 people indicated that they were interested in attending events, while 76,769 indicated that they would be attending events.

One major measure of social media campaign success is the number of shares an ad received. Detailed below are the top three most shared advertisements of the entire campaign, including the images and details about targeting for each ad.

The most shared ad was ID 2773, which features the cartoon character Yosemite Sam holding two pistols in front of the Southern Cross version of the Confederate battle flag. The text on the image reads: "I was banned from TV for being too violent. Like & share, if you grew up watching me on television, have a gun, and haven't shot or killed anyone!" This was an ad for the page South United and was shared 956,000 times. This single ad accounted for 28.67% of the shares of all of the ads. It ran from March 10, 2017 to March 17, 2017, targeting users in the United States who were over 18 years old, and matched the interest of Confederate States of America and also Flags of the Confederate States of America, Hart of Dixie, or Dixie.

The second most shared ad was ID 3099 (Figure 1) for the page Williams & Kalvin. This ad depicts George Crum on one side and potato chips on the other. The text on the image reads, "In July, 1853, George Crum invented the potato chips #BlackHistoryMonth." Additionally, the text appearing above the ad is, "#BlackHistoryMonth. Did you know that? Write in comment!" It was shared 156,000 times and targeted to people over 18 years of age in the United States who matched the interests of Martin Luther King, Jr., African-American Civil Rights Movement (1954-68), African-American history, or Malcom X. It ran from February 5, 2017 to February 10, 2017.

The third most shared ad was ID 2700 for the page Brown Power. This ad depicts a cartoon version of a man and a woman who are each holding some form of luggage. They are standing at what is presumably the border between the U.S. and Mexico while looking at two signs that read, "Land of the free," and "No trespassing." These signs are posted in front of barbed wire and there are cacti visible in the background. The text that is part of the image reads: "flawless mexicana: Guys. This picture fucked me up. We come for opportunity and a better life and all we get is hate and contempt. Sometimes I forget how lucky I am cause I can go back home whenever I want, but other people have to stay here and deal with racism and hate everyday. We didn't come to steal your jobs, we came to make a living. We're not here to murder. rape and steal; we're here to escape that. Please stop hating on *mi gente* we're trying our best," [sic]. This ad was targeted to people over 18 years of age living in the U.S. and matching interests Mexico, Latin hip hop, Chicano Movement, Hispanidad, Lowrider, Chicano rap or La Raza. It ran from January 27, 2017 to January 29, 2017 and was shared 95,000 times.

Another metric that can be used to assess the success of particular ads is the lowest cost per share of the ad. In other words, which ads produced the most shares for the least cost? There was a great deal of overlap in this category with the most shared ads above. Ad ID 2700 was the third lowest cost at 0.0001 Rubles per share. Ad ID 2773 had the second lowest cost at 0.00008 Rubles per share. The best performing ad according to this metric, however, was not one of the most widely shared ads. Ad ID 2733 features an image that has been redacted except for the text, "I will just leave it here." It was targeted to users over the age of 18 living in the U.S. with interests matching, "Hispanic and latino american culture, Mexico, Mexican american culture, Hispanic culture, Latino culture, Latin hip hop, Chicano, Chicano Movement, Hispanidad, Mexican Pride, Lowrider, Chicano rap or La Raza." This ad spent 0.14 Rubles to attract four impressions and 1 click, but managed to garner 9,500 shares, for a cost per share of 0.00001 Rubles. It ran from March 16, 2017 to March 17, 2017.

Figure 1. Second Most Shared Ad (U.S. House of Representatives Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Democrats, n.d.)
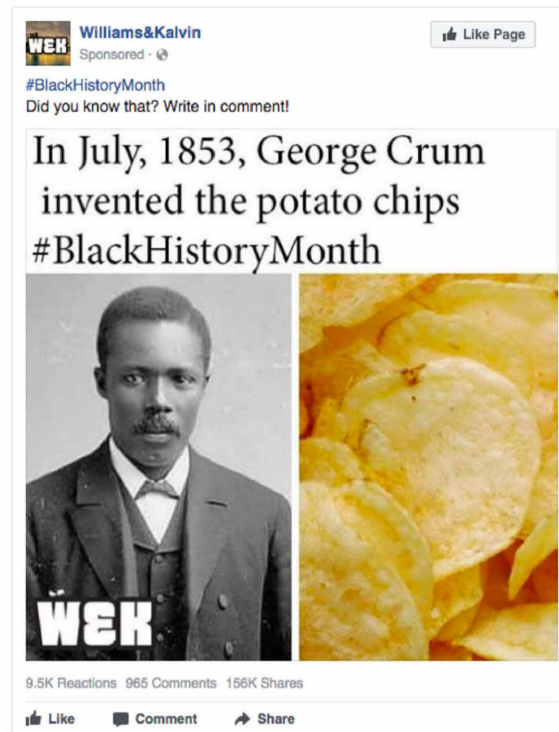
Because of the issue mentioned above in the methods section related to capturing data for ads aimed at Page Likes rather than interaction, one further metric remains important for assessing success. This is the total number of clicks each ad received. When assessed in this way, a completely different set of ads emerges at the top.

Ad ID 2751 (Figure 2) was the most clicked ad. It was an ad for the Facebook page Back the Badge that was targeted at users over 20 years of age in the U.S. whose interests matched State police, Law enforcement in the United States, Police, Sheriffs in the United States, Law enforcement or police officer and must also have matched Support Law Enforcement, The Thin Blue Line, Officer Down Memorial Page, Police Wives Unite, National Police Wives Association or Heroes Behind the Badge. The image featured a Back the Badge logo on top of a police shield on top of red police cruiser lights. The ad was created on October 19, 2016 and did not have a reported end date. It received 73,063 clicks.

The second most clicked ad was ID 450 (Figure 3). This was an ad for the Being Patriotic Facebook page with the customized Facebook URL containing the phrase *patriototus*. This ad was targeted to users over 18 in the United State who were interested in independence or patriotism. The image for this ad featured an artistically rendered bald eagle with two American flags on either side in the background. The text accompanying the ad reads, "United We Stand! Welcome every patriot we can reach. Flag and news!" This ad received 72,043 clicks and began running on June 23, 2015 with no end date reported.

Figure 2. Most Clicked Ad (U.S. House of Representatives Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Democrats, n.d.)

Figure 3. Second Most Clicked Ad (U.S. House of Representatives Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Democrats, n.d.)

The third most clicked ad is ID 2647 (Figure 4). It was targeted at users over 16 years of age in the United States, and, unlike the other ads, included those who speak Spanish in addition to English. Of note, however, is that the Spanish language referred specifically to Spain rather than Mexico. It was targeted to those whose interests matched Mexico, Latin hip hop, Chicano Movement, Hispanidad, Lowrider, or Chicano rap, and also must have matched La Raza. It was created on December 9, 2016 with no reported end date and received 56,405 clicks. The image features a prominent fist in the middle of the image, with what appears to be either henna or a tattoo on the wrist. The words, "Brown Power" are featured on either side of the fist. There are four stylized versions of the Mexican flag in the background. The accompanying text reads, "Brown power is a platform designed to educate, entertain and connect Chicanos in the US."

One important question for understanding the ads is where users were being directed when the ad was clicked. Figure 5 shows the top ten most frequent destination Facebook Pages or URLs for all ads. These are also color coded by the year that each ad began running.

The interests at which the ads were targeted are of particular value because they give the clearest insight into what type of audience was being targeted by the IRA. Figure 6 demonstrates which sets of interests had the largest number of ads targeted to them by the size of the rectangle. The darker blue the rectangle is, the larger the total ad spend on those interests. The numbers of ads and total ad spend are also depicted in that order under each set of interests. We can see from this visualization that the most frequently used set of interests was, "Martin Luther King, Jr., African-American Civil Rights Movement (1954-68), African-American history, or Malcolm X," while the interests that garnered the largest ad spend were, "Independence or Patriotism."

Figure 4. Third Most Clicked Ad (U.S. House of Representatives Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Democrats, n.d.)
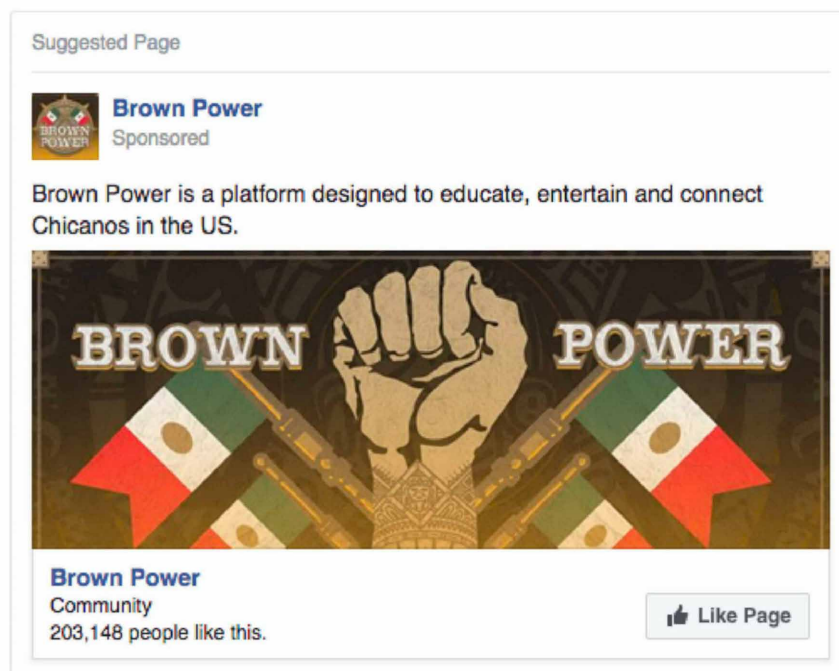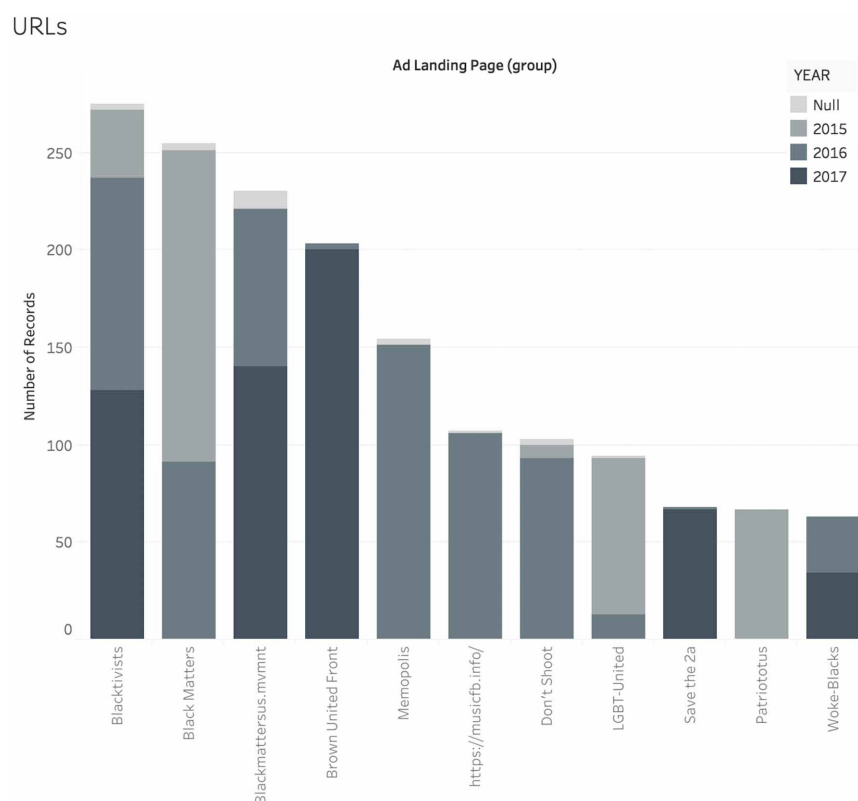
Figure 5. Top 10 Ad Landing Pages by Year (Image created in Tableau Public, 2018)

Six of the top ten most frequently targeted interests were related to African-American civil rights or news related themes. The other themes from these most targeted ads were for Cop Block, Patriotism, Chicano related interests, and humor. The Patriotism ads received the largest ad spend by a significant amount. These will be discussed more thoroughly in the Discussion section below.

Another important aspect of these ads is when they were run. Figure 7 illustrates both how many ads were run by month and year and is color coded to show how much was spent on advertisements in each month. The top three months for the number of ads run were October 2016, May 2016, and April 2017. The months with the highest ad spend were September 2015, June 2015, October 2016. October 2016, the month immediately preceding the U.S. Presidential election, is noteworthy as it was the only month at the top of the list both in terms of the number of ads run and the amount of money spent.

Some of the ads were targeted to specific geographic regions, which may be of interest because of the roll that the electoral college system plays in the U.S. Presidential election. The majority of ads were targeted broadly to anyone in the United States. However, Figure 8 visualizes the ten next most common geographic areas targeted, broken down by year. Fewer trends are noticeable here, but it is clear that Ferguson and St. Louis, MO and Cleveland, OH were frequent targets in 2015, but declined in subsequent years. Further, specific geographic targeting seems to have declined altogether in 2017.

Finally, Figure 9 visualizes the number of shares per group of interests at which ads were targeted, also broken down by year. These interests reflect the top shared ads examined above: Confederate States of America, African-American civil rights, and the Chicano Movement. One interesting trend

Figure 6. Top 10 Interests by Number of Ads and Ad Spend (Image created in Tableau Public, 2018)
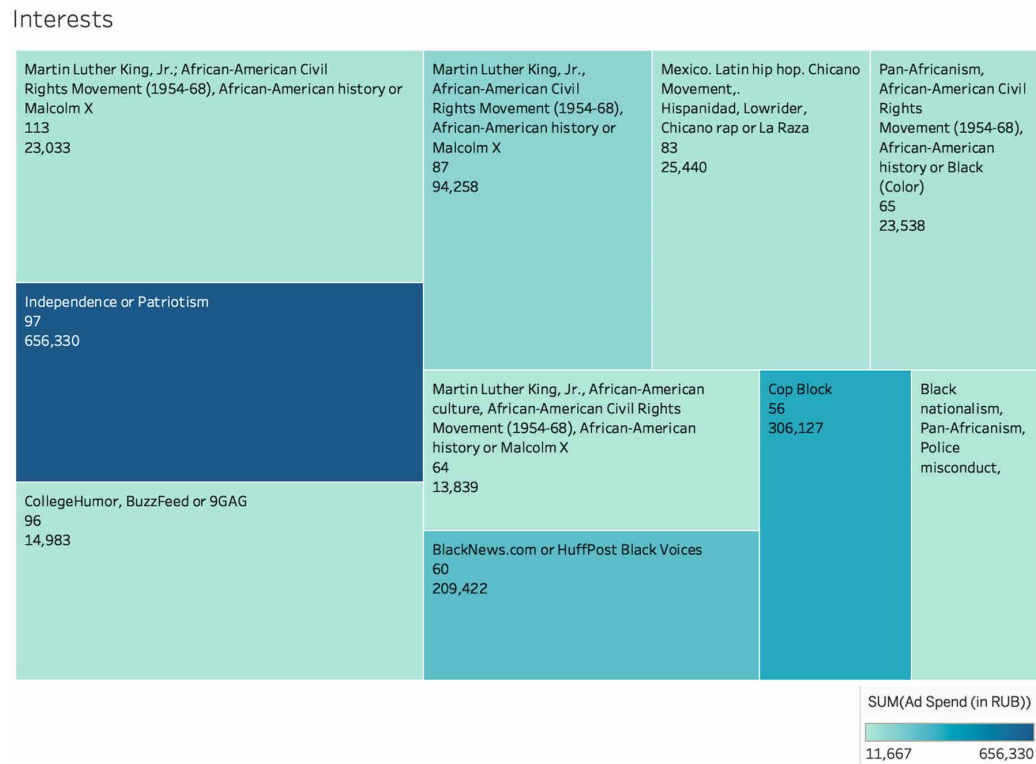

Figure 7. Advertisements Created by Date with Ad Spend (Image created in Tableau Public)
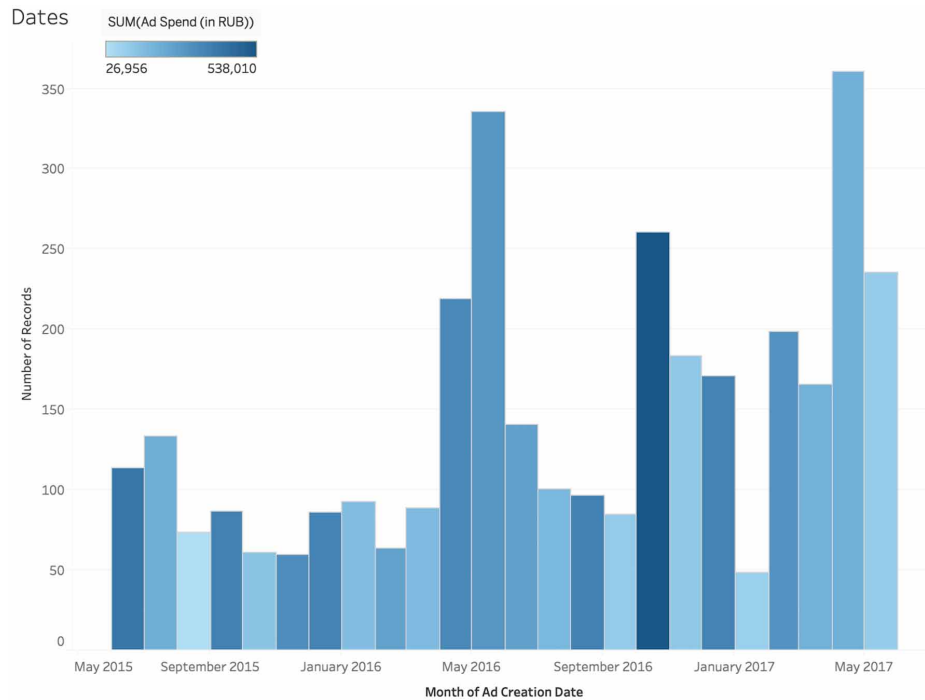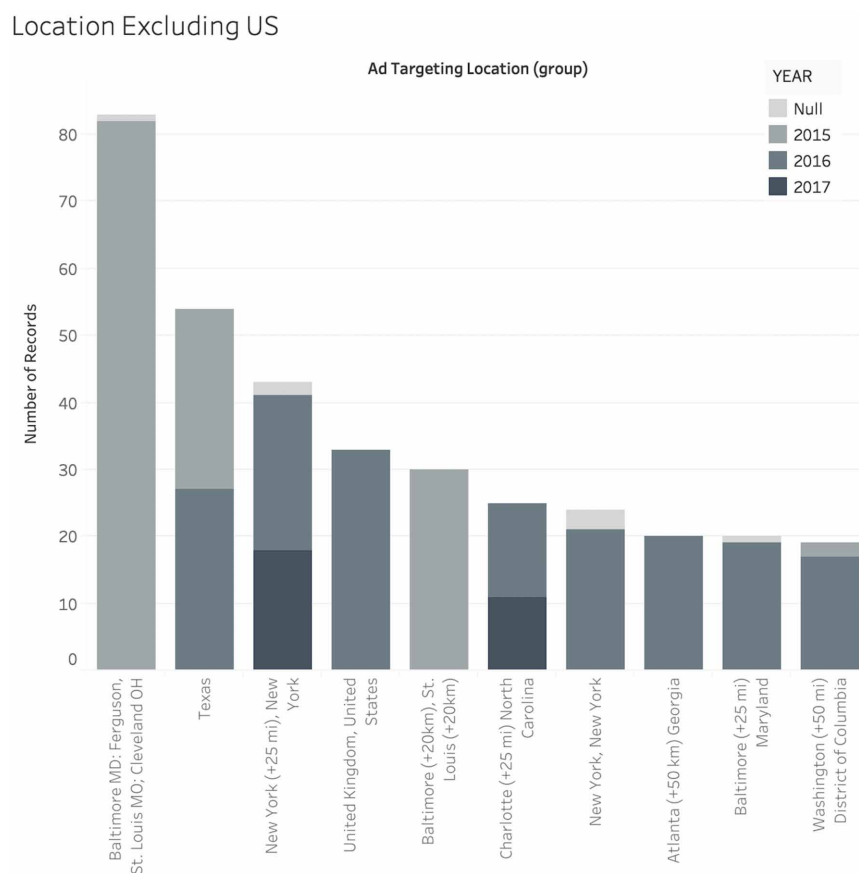
Figure 8. Advertisements Created by Location per Year, Excluding Entire U.S. (Image created in Tableau Public)

that becomes apparent in this visualization is that ads run in 2017 were by far the most frequently and widely shared ads.

These results offer a rich set of data that are considered and further contextualized below. The discussion section will explore several of the themes that have emerged around the role of Russia in the 2016 Presidential election in light of this analysis of the full set of ads.

DISCUSSION

One narrative surrounding the Russian advertisements is that they could not have had a large effect on the election when the campaigns themselves spent significantly more on ads than the Russians (Ruffini, 2017). However, it's worth exploring just how much more successful these ads were than those placed by either the Clinton or Trump campaigns, and even than the average Facebook ad. The average cost per click for the Russian ads was 1.57 Rubles, or approximately $0.02 USD. In comparison, the industry average is $0.27 USD (McHale, 2018). The CPM (cost per one thousand impressions) for the Russian ads was approximately $2.10 USD. While the industry average CPM is $7.19 USD, the average for the

Figure 9. Number of Shares by Interest per Year (Image created in Tableau Public)
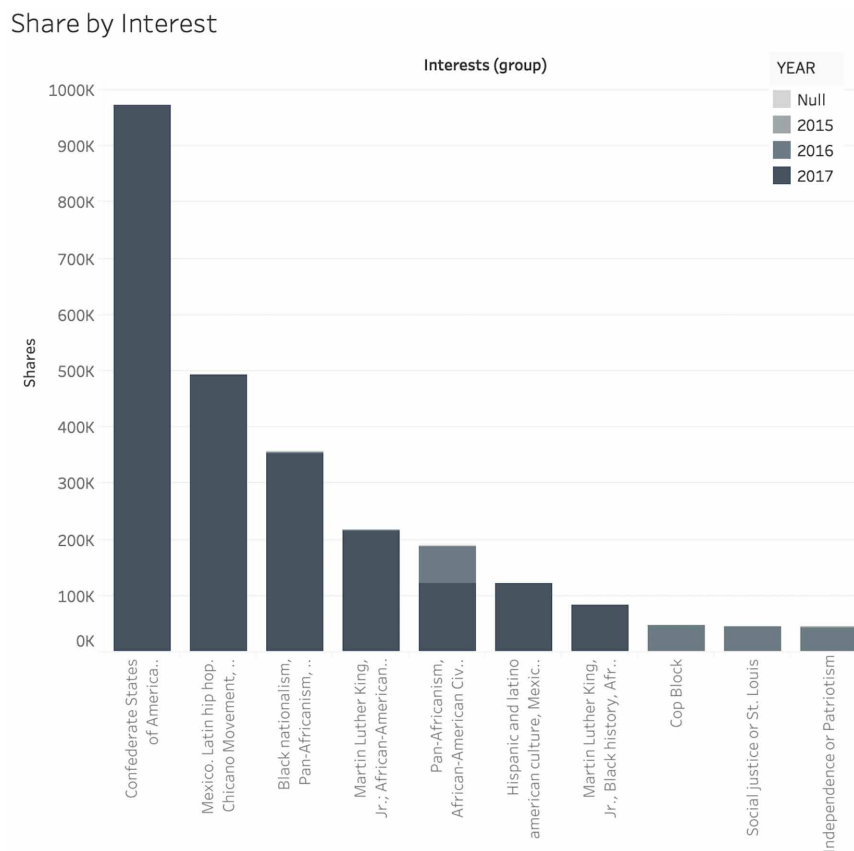
Clinton and Trump campaigns ranged between $10 USD and $40 USD (Gotter, 2018; Shinal, 2018). The average click-through rate of the Russian ads was 9.2%, compared to an industry average of 0.9% (McHale, 2018).

The above comparisons should make clear that from the standpoint of traditional Facebook social media campaigns, the Russian ads were a resounding success. However, impressions and clicks do not necessarily translate into changed minds or votes. In fact, many of the ads were of seemingly benign or even nonpolitical topics, such as funny memes or the inventor of potato chips. While these relatively harmless gateway ads are part of the larger online ecosystem, they portend a method of interacting with users in terms of their processes of subjectivation as they construct and reconstruct their identities through social communication practices. By serving as an initial hook to have users like a particular page, it also opens up the possibility of future interactions with those users of a more political nature. Many of the communities created by the IRA grew to hundreds of thousands of members who were then subject to the approximately 80,000 pieces of organic content created by such pages (Stretch, 2017).

The indictment of the IRA and its associated members that was filed in February of 2018 by Special Counsel Robert S. Mueller III also makes clear that dismissing this campaign as a small budget operation is severely misguided. According to this filing, the planning for the IRA campaign began as early as 2013 and created a multi-million-dollar organization tasked with global travel, cultural analysis, and the creation of entire communities meant to appear American in origin, which were supported by both paid

and organic posting. Employees of this organization studied already existing political organizations in the U.S. in order to guide their content creation and then carefully tracked and measured the performance of their own content (Mueller, 2018). In his 2017 testimony before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Facebook's General Counsel Colin Stretch explained and downplayed this reach: "Our best estimate is that approximately 126 million people may have been served content from a Page associated with the IRA at some point during the two-year period. This equals about four-thousandths of one percent (0.004%) of content in News Feed, or approximately 1 out of 23,000 pieces of content." However, this well-funded support network for the IRA facilitated much more than social media posts that were widely shared. These efforts are elaborated below, beginning with a closer look at guiding mission of the ads.

Due in part to the variety of interests at which these ads were targeted (see Figure 9) one of the narratives surrounding this effort by the IRA is that it equally targeted both sides in order sow division (Keating, Schaul & Shapiro, 2017; Shane, 2017). While division was one of the secondary goals of the campaign, the primary mission shared with specialists creating content was to "use any opportunity to criticize Hillary and the rest (except Sanders and Trump -- we support them)." (Mueller, 2018, p. 17). Further, pages that did not have enough content criticizing Clinton were reprimanded and instructed to increase this type of content in future posts. Thus, while *interests* on both sides of the political spectrum were targeted, the content itself was ultimately aimed at supporting candidates Sanders and Trump, and later, President Trump.

Even at only the most surface-level reading of post content, many of the themes touched upon by IRA posts have continued to play an outsized role in the U.S. political landscape. For example, a few days before the election, IRA accounts began alleging that, among other locations, voter fraud was occurring in Broward County, Florida associated with mail-in ballots supporting Clinton. This theme has been carried forward into the 2018 U.S. midterm elections, with Florida Senate candidate Rick Scott and President Trump sharing accusations of voter fraud in Broward County, calling this the "Broward Effect" and filing a variety of lawsuits related to this claim (Gregg 2018; Trump 2018). Additionally, in the days leading up to the 2016 Presidential election, IRA social media accounts associated with Woke Blacks, Blacktivist, and United Muslims of America pushed messages explicitly encouraging its members to either avoid voting as a form of protest or to vote for third-party candidate Jill Stein (Mueller, 2018). Unfortunately, it remains unclear how much impact, if any, these types of posts had on voters.

Yet, other impacts are far more tangible. Using these now well-established communities, the IRA was able to organize U.S. citizens into attending a variety of protests and rallies. They did this by promoting them in their own communities, partnering with other, legitimate U.S. grassroots activists, and by paying people to participate (Mueller, 2018). One prominent example of this influence is the Florida Goes Trump rallies that were held in August, 2016. These were organized by the Being Patriotic IRA group, but included collaboration with, among others, the local Team Trump Broward County Facebook page run by Florine Gruen Goldfarb (O'Sullivan, Griffin, & Bronstein, 2018). Additionally, the IRA contacted and paid local citizen Harry Miller between $500 and $1000 to build a replica jail cell in the back of a truck and attend the rally with someone inside the cage wearing a prison uniform and Hillary Clinton mask (Mueller, 2018; O'Sullivan, Griffin, & Bronstein, 2018).

The impact from these rallies extends beyond the events themselves. For example, at least one other person in Florida went on to build additional replicas of Clinton in a jail cell, such as the one built by Gary Howd in Cape Coral (Tinoco, 2016). Further reporting also suggests that those involved with these rallies simply do not believe there to be any Russian connection, even after being confronted by reporters with the evidence of the Mueller indictment. Goldfarb, the aforementioned facilitator of the Team

Trump Broward County Facebook page, refused to accept that the Being Patriotic group was associated with the Russians, instead arguing that the Mueller indictment itself was a false information narrative meant to distract from the failures of the FBI to handle tips related to the Parkland school shooting (O'Sullivan, Griffin, & Bronstein, 2018). The ad for this event (ID 525, Figure 10) was promoted with a spend of 27,402.97 Rubles, or approximately $400. It had a CTR of over 14% and generated 1,617 people interested in attending and 339 who marked that they would attend.

Other rallies organized in New York, Pennsylvania, and Charlotte, NC also attracted participants, with dueling rallies for and against President-Elect Trump attracting between 5,000 and 10,000 participants in New York City on November 12, 2016 (Breland, 2017). Although smaller, the Charlotte event offers a telling preview of the lasting effects of these events. The November 19, 2016 rally against Trump attracted less than 100 participants, but those who were duped by the event believe that there are much broader effects. Andrew Fede is a political organizer who collaborated with the IRA-created group BlackMattersUS to organize the event, and in light of the Mueller indictment linking this group to Russians, he argues that political organizers will be more wary of organizing future events, aggrieved communities will be less likely to attend events, and the media will be less likely to cover such events, all due to lingering concerns that such events could be part of a larger false information narrative (Gordon, 2018). The effects of these events go far beyond the sometimes-limited effects they had on the day of

Figure 10. Florida Goes Trump Event Ad (U.S. House of Representatives Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Democrats, n.d.)

the events themselves. The imagery, such as Clinton in a jail cell, has been picked up and extended by Trump supporters, and even those who acknowledge the Russian connection exists are wary of participating in future organized events out of concern they may not be legitimate. Because of national media coverage of these events and subsequently their connection to the IRA, these concerns extend far beyond the handful of people who were actually involved in the events.

In response to these challenges, Facebook has rolled out new initiatives that require political ads to be labeled and include a note about who has paid for the ad (Leathern, 2018). These changes will undoubtedly improve the issue in some ways, but the current set of ads under analysis already suggest some ways in which these changes will likely not solve all of the problems associated with foreign advertising. For example, it is not clear that ads such as those run by the IRA for Memopolis would fall under the scope of these new rules. It would then be possible for the page which has run non-political paid advertising to post unpaid organic political content to its new followers.

Perhaps more concerning than the overtly political ads is the potential for more sophisticated campaigns. The potential for these types of campaigns is suggested by the large number of IRA ads for a tool called FaceMusic (Figure 11). Although these ads were not successful in comparison to the more overtly political ads, these might be even more concerning. These ads were targeted at a younger audience (generally under 35, but often between 13 and 20) and attempted to get users to install a Chrome browser plugin for streaming music. The plugin requires permission to "read and change all your data on the websites you visit, display notifications, and modify data you copy and paste," as well as post to the Facebook timeline and message friends (Lapowski, 2018).

Although these types of permissions are not necessarily out of line with those required for the installation of other apps, the potential for abuse, particularly by organizations such as the IRA, is rife. The amount of data that could be collected through such an application could be put to nefarious use, as demonstrated by the Cambridge Analytica scandal (Granville, 2018). In other words, it is much harder to create rules that are able to identify and prevent the collection of data in one situation that is then later used in another context.

Jamieson (2018) explains how such Russian ads may have generated a variety of media effects. These include agenda setting around the issue of Clinton's untrustworthiness and her leaked emails, framing how voters should think about issues such as immigration and using negative emotions and memetics to help these ads spread. Additionally, a sociotechnical framework can help one understand how these ads leveraged memes to drive the cultural production of identity through approaches such as brown power, patriotism, and Southern heritage. This afforded the opportunity for social media users to both identify with the material and then transform it and share it in ways that both resonated with and transformed already established cultural and political identities. Though none of this definitively demonstrates that such ads swung the outcome of the election or even changed individual votes, it does make clearer one small portion of the much larger Russian efforts to impact the election.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Much work remains to be done, not only in terms of this particular set of Russian ads, but on the larger role of social media in false information narratives. In the immediate future, it will helpful to extend the current analysis of the Russian ads into a qualitative analysis that more fully considers the sentiment of the ad text as well as a visual content analysis of the ad images.

Figure 11. FaceMusic ad (U.S. House of Representatives Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Democrats, n.d.)
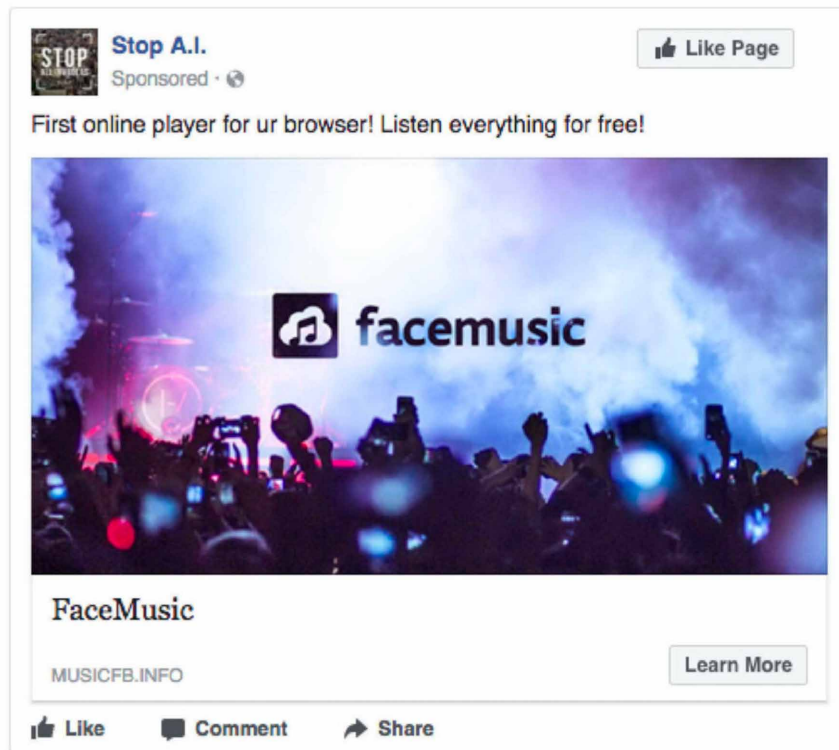
Such a qualitative analysis will also help drive one of the largest questions behind the Russian ads: just how effective were these ads? While the present analysis provides a good picture of how successful the ads were in garnering engagement and sharing in order to spread them more widely, it remains an open question as to whether those users who saw and engaged with these ads were actually impacted them. This impact might take the form of a hardening of divisive views, or, more concerningly, could have impacted whether and how some citizens voted. Though this is the hardest question to answer, it is nonetheless the most important.

Furthermore, it is imperative to examine this work in light of increasing news regarding meddling in U.S. elections by foreign agents. Given the production of culture perspective, it is impossible to disregard online engagement with users of social media content as having little to no impact on information consumption and potential voting patterns. The use of memes in particular by advertising agents speaks to a greater sophistication of usage of these online social media, and could expand knowledge of public propaganda usage and campaigns. As social networks change their policies regarding advertising and privacy, these campaigns are likely to grow in sophistication.

Understanding how these posts are linked to the culture of production within online systems is a necessary action to take. None of these posts are created within an information vacuum. Instead, the works created by these particular foreign agents are largely calculated for maximal impact within the online ecosystem. Qualitative studies regarding content found within said online advertisements will give a greater sense of how the content was crafted for engaging with users.

CONCLUSION

This analysis has identified the most successful ads that were created as part of the Russian IRA campaign to interfere in U.S. politics. We have answered our research question which asked if the ads created by the IRA were successful at generating social engagement by concluding that, by traditional social media campaign statistics such as click-through-rates and cost-per-thousand views, these ads were not only exceedingly successful, but became more successful over time. Moving beyond the straightforward metrics of the ads themselves, this analysis has highlighted some of the larger cultural impacts of this campaign, many of which still linger in the national political narrative. While Facebook has taken some corrective measures, it is clear that these measures do not prevent all possible malicious interference by foreign actors.

In *Cyber-War*, Kathleen Hall Jamieson (2018) thoroughly demonstrates how communication theories such as agenda-setting and framing can be used to explain the ways these ads could have influenced voters. This present analysis, in its sociotechnical theoretical approach, presents an even more complicated challenge. Because the IRA campaign was so closely linked to memetic culture and issues of identity construction, it becomes much more difficult for one to take a step back and recognize the possibly false portions of a false information narrative. This can clearly be seen in Florine Gruen Goldfarb's denial of Russian links to the Being Patriotic Facebook page, despite overwhelming evidence.

This highlights the current media practices that have been implicated in a shift from disagreements about what happens to be true or false, to a much deeper epistemological struggle over *how we determine* what counts as truth (boyd, 2018). This is the debate that will drive the emerging political and larger cultural struggles in the United States and, increasingly, around the globe. Our participation in online information narratives will remain an important part of that debate as it continues to help construct and reconstruct our identities.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Click-Through Rate: The rate at which users click an advertisement in comparison to how many times it was displayed.

CPM: Interpreted as cost per one thousand views, this is a common metric for understanding the cost of a social media campaign.

Epistemology: A branch of philosophy dealing with questions about knowledge and truth.

Fake News: A catch-all term for intentionally false information, widely popularized during the 2016 Presidential Campaign of Donald Trump.

False Information Narrative: Meant to denote contexts beyond that of news, this term covers a variety of media in which false information is intentionally used to support a particular narrative.

Memetic Communication: Derived from Richard Dawkins' book *The Selfish Gene*, memes represent units of cultural expression that spread between individuals, this form of communication traces the the how memes are spread and how they impact communication practices.

Sociotechnical Ensembles: A theoretical approach to knowledge creation and identity that blurs the line between social agents and the larger technical systems in which they exist.

Chapter 19

The Art of Deception in Political Advertising:
A Study of Nigeria's 2015 Presidential Election Campaigns

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ABSTRACT

Television advertising is a growing important aspect in presidential electoral campaigning. It accounts for a big part of the electioneering expenses. Presidential political advertisements are important sources of information to voters. Their messages may influence poll results. Using a content analytical method, this study examined 12 of the presidential campaign advertisements created for ex-president Goodluck Jonathan and his People's Democratic Party (PDP); and the opposition coalition flag bearer, Retired General Muhammadu Buhari and his All Progressives Congress during the 2015 Nigerian presidential election campaigns. The aim of this study was to identify the deceptions in these advertisements. This study found that both sides engaged in deceptive advertising. Buhari/APC engaged more in misinformation, lies, misrepresentation and spreading of unproven facts. Goodluck/PDP avoided misrepresentations and misinformation, but used lies, unproven assertions and pufferies. It is recommended that campaign advertisements be scrutinized before they are aired.

INTRODUCTION

Presidential election campaigns provide opportunities for contestants to deliver some pieces of information that may persuade some voters to their favour. However, Kalla and Broockman (2018, p.148) point out that the impact of political campaigns to persuade individuals may have limited effects. Therefore, some contestants take to television and the social media to advertise themselves. Presidential political contestants spend millions of naira giving out persuasive information to reinforce the decisions of those

loyal to them; change the perception of the ambivalent and hone the decisions of the apathetic. However, Opeibi (2006) points out that political advertisements were unpopular in Nigeria until the 1990s.

According to Alawode and Adesanya (2016, p. 237) "political advertising is a form of campaigning used by political candidates to reach and influence voters". This type of advertising is not new in Nigeria or in any country where elections are periodically held. What may be new are the exaggerated half-truths and outright lies that campaigners and their message creators engage in, in attempts to secure more votes, split votes or discourage voting. Aririguzoh (2019) writes that some candidates and their supporters use music to tell their own sides of the stories or draw negative attention to their opponents.

Deceptive political advertisements misrepresent, omit or repeat messages that may likely mislead reasonably thinking voters. Some of their presentations are incorrect or unproven information. They deal with three issues: the advertiser, the message of the advertisement, and the consequential voter acceptance of the advertised product. Here, the advertisers are the politicians, their political parties and sympathisers. The message is the demand that voters give them their votes or at least not to vote for the opposition. The consequential voter acceptance is to believe the message as the truth and vote accordingly or see them as lies and do as occasions serve them against the advertised product (the contestant, his party, his message, manifesto or whatever they are angling to sell to voters).

According to Williamson (2002) the advertising message is what the advert claims. Millstein (1964) writes that the falsity of an advertisement's claim must be examined against standard knowledge where such a standard exists to determine this truth. The claim must be a lie and invalid to be deceptive. In other words, the *truth* is a question of fact to be determined by evidence. Political video messages are deliberately created to deceive and misguide the electorate by presenting unclear or conspicuous disclosures to misinform voters about themselves or their opponents. This by itself is the art of deception. A deceptive audio-visual campaign message interferes with the abilities of voters to discern and make informed choices, especially, when these messages are critical in their making of decisions on who to vote for. It intentionally presents a false or misrepresents a fact so as to influence the voting decisions of the public. A false or misleading statement is literally false. Even if it is literally true, the statement may likely mislead, confuse, or has a tendency to deceive the public. A misrepresentation essentially deceives or has the tendency to do so to a considerable segment of the electorate and causes the opponent to lose goodwill and or votes from the members of the voting public. This takes deeper meaning when it is placed alongside Westen's (2008) observation that the public's decision to support political parties is based on emotions and not data or facts.

The Independent National Election Commission (INEC) is Nigeria's body in charge of conducting elections. It registered 26 political parties with only 11 of them submitting the names of contestants running in the presidential race. However, it became evident that the battle was between the then incumbent president Goodluck Jonathan of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the flag bearer of the opposition coalition, Retired General Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Congress (APC). Both sides released a blitz of campaign advertisements. Their deceptive advertisements are the audio-visual messages that do not have empirical evidence or facts backing in part or whole any of their claims of accomplishments or accusations/allegations of corruption, sleaze, maladministration, cronyism, nepotism and similar denunciations or pronouncements.

The problem for investigation is to identify the deceptions in the Nigerian 2015 presidential television campaign advertisements of the PDP presidential contestant and his political party; and the opposition, the APC presidential candidate and his own party. This paper examines some of these presidential advertisements that were aired on national television or placed on the social media platform of *YouTube*.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Campaigning and Political Messages

Ademilokun and Taiwo (2013, p. 435) write that crucial "to the idea of politics are such issues as power, legitimization, persuasion, struggles for dominance, and coercion". Presidential campaign messages carry the messages of the candidates, their political parties and their sympathisers. It is neither possible for the contestants and their sponsors to meet every voter on a one-to-one basis nor visit all the towns during their presidential campaigns. Even if they were to visit, Wood (2016) says they have unimportant and evanescent effect on voter intentions. Therefore, some candidates package their election campaign messages as videos that are aired on television. Aririguzoh (2012, 2014, 2015) comments that what is broadcast on television influence voters' participation in, choice of presidential candidates and even the parties they vote for. Amodu (2008) says that the internet can also be used as a channel. Hence, some of the messages are placed on social media platforms like *YouTube*. Audio-visual messages are impactful because they combine sound with pictures. Voters have the opportunities to see, hear and build their opinions on the candidates running for the presidency.

Nigerian Political Communication Culture and the Law

Political culture deals with the political orientation of the people: their attitudes, values, and beliefs about the political system. Swedlow (2013, p.624) writes that it tells who has the authority and power to decide; who gets what and what is possible in a group, organization, institution or other social units in a society. Outside the years of the military men in government, Nigeria's political culture has danced around ethnic cleavages. This supports Oso's (p.9) observation that the Nigerian mass media system has developed within the dynamics of the country's political economy. However, in 1993, the collapsing of all political parties into two configurations - National Republican Convention (NRC) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) - was the first attempt to expel ethnic politics. Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "elections must be periodic, genuine, organized according to universal suffrage, and by secret ballot". Nigerians go to the polls to elect leaders. However, the contestants' electioneering campaign messages sometimes appear combative, provocative and impervious. Issues may be avoided and the individual contestants attacked. Political communication formats include the use of songs, music, drama, dances, town hall meetings, mails and media advertising, especially on television.

The National Communication Commission defines an advertisement as "any message, the content of which is controlled directly or indirectly by the advertiser, expressed in any language and communicated in any medium with the intent to influence their choice, opinion or behaviour. Batta, Mboho and Batta (2016, p.1) say contestants place their messages before the public in order to increase their value and chances of being accepted, and possibly voted for. However, Nigeria's Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) articulates the rules on political advertising in its code. These are:

Article 71: *Political advertisements shall be issue-oriented and devoid of abusive statements and references. They shall not employ false, distorted and unsubstantiated claims or contain misrepresentations.*

Article 72: *Every political advertisement shall clearly identify the sponsoring organizations or individual, visually or orally. Political advertisements shall not explicitly nor implicitly exploit ethnicity, religion or any other sectional interest. (APCON, 2005)*

The National Communications Commission under the Nigerian Communications Act, 2003 and the Nigeria Communications (Enforcement Processes, etc.) Regulations 2005 respectively inter alia also provide that "advertisements must not unfairly discredit, disparage or attack other products, services, advertisements or companies, or exaggerate the nature or importance of competitive differences." The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 as amended, the Electoral Act 2010, as amended and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Rules and Regulations establish the legal framework which regulate the electoral processes. They offer Nigerians the right to associate, vote, form political parties, register as voters, follow Election Day procedures, and resolve issues/dispute. Section 99 (1, 2) of the Electoral Act makes it an electoral offence to campaign in public earlier than 90 days before polling day or ending it less than 24 hours to the election. Section 101 (1-3) forbids the broadcasting or publishing of any material for the purpose of promoting or opposing a particular political party or a candidate during the 24 hours immediately preceding or on polling day.

The Act of Deception

Misleading advertisement claims and the actual realities are never the same. There are always discrepancies. If these differences do not exist, nobody would be deceived, misguided or misled. According to Barnes (1962, p.601), a false and misleading advertising is based upon deceiving the buyer who is misled to purchase a product or service that he would not have purchased if he was fully informed with all the relevant facts. Advertising becomes false and misleading when it makes untrue statements. Even though every statement is literally true, it may still mislead if it leads towards false inferences; states half of the truth, or fails to disclose material facts. Boddewyn (1982) and Petty (1996) point out the effects of deceptive advertising: harming consumer interests, brewing cynicism and raising marketing costs.

A deceptive message must meet Chaouachi and Rached (2012) three descriptions: the act is intentional, the message communicator considers the information he is disseminating false; and he has a purpose for wanting to deceive. Buller and Burgoon (1996) write that deceptive messages are deliberately conveyed to a receiver to create a false belief or make him draw a wrong conclusion. Masip, Garrido and Herrero (2004) point out that this intention to deceive distinguishes *false information* provided because of memory loss or incompetence. Petty and Kopp (1995) say that misleading advertising usually deploys tactics like exaggerated significance, confusing presentation, promises of proof, omission, and ineffective qualifications. They (p.43) offer a six-step framework in adjudicating deceptive advertisements: initiation, interpretation, deception, verification, remediation, and intention. The initiation step tells who starts the action against deceptive advertising. The interpretation phase identifies the claims that are seen as deceptive. The interpreters can be the industry regulator, the experts or target consumers. The deception stage relates to the standards for condemning deception. The applicable standards are the likely-to-deceive versus proof-of actual-deception; gullible-consumer versus reasonable-consumer and low versus high percentage of consumers being misled. Verification states the party who bears the burden of proof: the challenger or the defendant. The remediation stage shows the appropriate penalty for publishing a deceptive advertisement. The intention is the impact of the advertisement. Section 43(a) of

the Lanham Act of the United States provides equitable remedies to a plaintiff which include injunctive relief, damages, corrective advertising, and attorneys' fees.

Deceiving the Public

Some political advertisements disinform and misinform. According to Ireton and Posetti (2018, p.7) "disinformation is generally used to refer to deliberate and usually co-ordinated attempts to confuse or manipulate people through delivering dishonest information to them". They (2018, p. 7) see misinformation as "misleading information created or disseminated without manipulative or malicious intent." Some politicians and their message creators employ the old tricks in politics: rumour mongering, misinforming or spreading fake stories about themselves or their competitors. While some of them may not tell the exact truth in their campaign advertisements; others give out misinformation to drag voters in the wrong direction. Yet others tell outright lies. Obviously, these are fake messages to mislead the members of the electorate and influence election results. Russo, Metcalf and Stephens (1981, p.119) say that advertisements that lie are unjust and carry three labels: fraud, falsity, and misleadingness. They explain that the *fraud* component (p.120) "focuses on the advertiser and assumes a deliberate intent to create false beliefs about the product." According to them, the advertiser's intention may not be to harm consumers. The *falsity element* refers to literal untruthfulness: a discrepancy between the claims in the advertisement and the actual realities. Falsity neither has to be sufficient nor necessary to prove that an advertisement is misleading. They explain that what matters is what the consumers believe. False claims do not harm consumers until they believe them and take actions in the directions pointed out by the advertiser. Some of the false claims are actually harmless, for example, colourful children cartoons. Misleadingness exclusively hinges on consumer beliefs or expectations after their exposure to the advertisement. There is a difference between the fact and what consumers believe. A misleading political advertisement creates a false belief about the expected performance of a contestant. The impropriety of deception lies in the fact that the receiver of the advertising message will behave in a totally different manner than if the advertisement contained no deception.

Ethics of Advertising

Advertising ethics refers to what is morally acceptable or not acceptable in the industry so that human dignity is not eroded unnecessarily or the community made to suffer harm. The basic ethics of advertising hinge on what is legal, decent, honest and truthful. Advertisers and advertising agencies agree to a common sense of responsibility to the public, colleagues and competitors by not creating and disseminating misleading, dishonest, unfair or offensive advertisements. Usually, these guiding principles are presented as *Codes of Ethics.* Hannon (1989) lists the three morally right things expected in advertising. The first is that it is expected to conform to the canons of truthfulness. Secondly, it must respect human freedom and rationality in its persuasion. Third, it must answer all ethical questions. Garrett (1961, p.4) adds that it must be the 'tutor in the good life' by transmitting explicit and implicit values that must stand critical scrutiny. Beauchamp, Hare and Biederman (1984, p.1) say that no single problem can be paraded as the moral problem with advertising. However, problems on advertising usually fall into two classes: liberty and non-maleficence. The first robs a person of the capacity to make a free choice in deciding whether to purchase a product, good, or service because the information presented to him are deceptive and misleading. The second is the violation of moral rules that cause harm from non-disclosure. Estrada (2006)

says that deception is widely practiced by advertisers to increase their sales volume. Masip, Garrido and Herrero (2004, p.148) define interpersonal deception as "the deliberate attempt, whether successful or not, to conceal, fabricate, and/or manipulate in any other way factual and/or emotional information, by verbal and/or nonverbal means, in order to create or maintain in another or in others a belief that the communicator considers false".

Social Media and Fake Messages

Different social media sites provide platforms for users to create, send and re-create and re-send messages to others at the click of buttons. Politicians, their supporters and even antagonists have effectively deployed different social media networks to circulate their campaign messages. Social media messages are created and uploaded by their makers. This created room for some lies and other misleading messages to be circulated to Nigerian voters during the 2015 presidential campaign season. The emergence of the social media has heightened the spread of fake and fictitious messages. Incidentally, most social media platforms have share buttons that allow users to further spread misleading information to their on-line friends. Ecker, Hogan and Lewandowsky (2017, p.185) point out that repeating fake stories on the social media may increase the likelihood of some people accepting them as true.

Aldwairi and Alwahedi (2018, p.215) report that the social media and news outlets publish fake news for two reasons: to increase readership and as part of psychological warfare. For example, just before the United States mid-term elections polls opened, President Trump set the alarm ringing with this tweet on November 5, 2018:

Law Enforcement has been strongly notified to watch closely for any ILLEGAL VOTING which may take place in Tuesday's Election (or Early Voting). Anyone caught will be subject to the Maximum Criminal Penalty allowed by law. Thank you! (Source: https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1059470847751131138)

May be there were no illegal voters. But Trump grabbed world-wide attention. This single tweet was re-tweeted 36,685 times and garnered 130,008 likes. Brewer, Young and Morreale (2013) observe that events leading to the United States 2016 presidential elections saw a proliferation of fake news disseminated through the social media. Abu-Nimeh, Chen and Alzubi (2011) remark that there were claims of celebrities endorsing political candidates. These messages were shared by social media users who later found out that they were lies. Silverman (2016) remarks that fake election news out ran real news on *Facebook*. The reach of fake news was highest during the critical months of the 2016 U.S. presidential election campaign, where the top twenty frequently discussed false election stories generated 8,711,000 shares, reactions, and comments on *Facebook*. But there were only 7,367,000 same results for the top twenty most-discussed election stories posted by 19 major news websites.

Aldwairi and Alwahedi (2018, p. 215) point out that readers are forsaking traditional media and flocking to online platforms because these are faster, more convenient and allow them access to a variety of publications in one sitting. Mustapha and Mustapha (2015) add that digital media are more preferred to traditional media. They say that the digital media technologies democratizing features has re-awakened citizens' civic interests while the traditional media reinforce democratic malaise and political apathy. Mogaji, Farinloye and Aririguzoh (2016) discover that some people use the social media to vent their opinions on issues of interest to them.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

The study of Chioma, Akinsiku, Ntiwunka and Ogu (2015) reveal that 60% of the voters in Agege, Lagos saw the 2015 Nigerian electoral advertisements as deceptive. Konkwo (2011) believes that political advertisements, especially in the broadcast media, are outright deceptions. Edegoh, Ezebuenyi and Asemah (2013) affirm that television political advertising positively influences voter preference for the advertised candidate. Obot and Batta's (2012) investigation of Nigeria's 2011 general election suggests that political advertisements in Nigeria are not issue based; and the few that are, focus on the national economy. Udende's (2011) observation of the presidential election show voters' poor awareness and knowledge of the entire political processes; and inabilities to make reasoned decisions on election matters. Because of their inadequacies, they voted along religious and ethnic lines rather than on critical issues.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The framing theory tells the audience how to think about a specific issue by slanting the story. McCombs (2005) writes that it examines the relative salience of attributes of interests. The creator of the message influences how readers look at a matter by drawing their attention to the object in the news and some of its qualities. Framing slants a story to give it a purposeful meaning. Slanting influences how readers will interpret and then make inferences on an issue. The media present news items in predefined frames to enhance their readers understanding. Goffman's (1974) framing analysis says that people interpret what is going on in the world through their primary frames: natural and social frameworks. The natural frames explain what happens in the physical world. The social frames see happenings in the world as the results of the whims and goals of people. Social frameworks spring from natural frameworks. Entman (1991) identifies five frames used in presenting stories as: conflict, human interest/personalisation, consequence, morality and responsibility for a cause or a solution.

Usaini (2009) remarks that the press plays the role of reporting national political activities. The mass media connect voters and politicians by carrying messages from politicians to the voters and vice versa. Presidential campaign advertisements are presented as messages to sell different products to the electorate. The products are the different contestants and their political parties. The messages of the advertisements are framed to persuade consumers to vote for or dissuade them from voting for a particular candidate and or his party. These consumers of political advertisements are the voters. Aririguzoh, Mogaji and Odiboh (2019) say that they may be in the urban, semi urban or rural locations.

Tuchman (1978, p.193) writes that a frame in a communication "organizes everyday reality". According to Gamson and Modigliani (1987, p. 143), this is achieved by providing "meaning to an unfolding strip of events". Shah, Watts, Domke, and Fan (2002, p.343) claim that frames promote "particular definitions and interpretations of political issues". Frames affect the behaviour and attitude of media consumers. Presidential campaign advertisements may frame contestants as noble citizens who are out to serve the people or as corrupt, irresponsible and inefficient.

METHOD OF STUDY

For this study, a content analytical method was adopted. This method allows a researcher to observe specific variables of interest that are already published. Sobowale (2008, p. 18) calls these specific variables the *manifest content* of communication. The published contents are the presidential campaign commercials broadcast on television or placed on *YouTube*. Each advertisement was broken down into various content groups of interest. These codes were fed into the coding sheet. From this coding sheet, the summary of all the variables can be seen at a glance. Each variable was assigned a numerical value (See Appendix 1).

Sample

The population of this study are all the presidential television advertisements. However, the number was too large for any meaningful study. Therefore, a purposive sampling was carried out. The advertisements sampled for this study were the official campaign:

1. Videos sponsored by the two political parties to support their presidential aspirants
2. Television advertisements sponsored by the two political parties in support of their candidates
3. Television advertisements sponsored by the political parties giving specific reasons why voters should support their particular cause
4. Television advertisements sponsored by the presidential candidates giving specific reasons why voters should support their particular cause
5. Videos sponsored by presidential candidates themselves to sell themselves to the Nigerian voters
6. Television commercials sponsored by presidential campaign teams in support of their presidential candidates

   Based on these, a total of 12 commercials advertisements were selected.
   The unit of analysis are the common elements in a deceptive advertisement:

- Outright lies: Coded 1
- Misrepresentation: Coded 2
- Misinformation: Coded 3
- Unproven information: Coded 5
- Puffery: Coded 6

   The messages in the identified advertisement presented to the voters can be:

- Outright lies are fabrications that do not even exist in reality
- Misrepresentations are improper details that distort or present wrong contexts to the voters
- Misinformation increases anxiety in the voters and skew their opinions in favour of the informant
- Unproven information are pieces of damaging facts with no credible sources spread to discourage action in a particular direction. In this study, it is to discourage voters from casting their votes in favour of the man the unproven information is been spread about.

- Pufferies are exaggerated claims that express personal rather than unprejudiced views which no "reasonable person" is expected to take literally. They are subjective.

DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

The adverts are clustered by the advertisers: the presidential contestants, the political parties presidential dream campaign teams. The data for each cluster is presented in Table 1. Directly below the table are the interpretations.

Buhari/Osinbajo Campaign Song

Against a single unmoving lapel picture of the APC, this advertisement presents the message that Buhari and Osinbajo are the change agents needed to make Nigeria a better country from what she is. The unmoving lapel may indicate stability. However, it misrepresents the then incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan and his government as agents of adversity that have inflicted undue hardships on Nigerians. The advertisement in the first chorus alludes that if APC is voted in, there will be:

Enjoyment for the people
Igbadun for the nation,
Every day jollification, na the change we they want,
Maximum security, too much electricity, job opportunity, na the change we dey want…

In the song's bridge, this advertisement also makes the unverifiable claims that APC is the best thing to happen to Nigeria and will bring refreshment to the country to all the workers and market women. Of course, it boasts with the unverifiable information that the country will experience no more sorrows and pains apparently caused by the *bad government* of Goodluck and PDP.

APC hmm hmm, na wire o, na elelele, everything go coole, elele
(APC is the best, everything will be cool)

Table 1. Data on APC presidential contestant, Muhammadu Buhari

ADVERT	DURATION (MINUTES)	MESSAGE	DECEPTION
Buhari/Osinbajo Campaign Song	3.06	Change to Buhari/ Osinbajo for Nigerians to live in enjoyment	Misrepresentation Misinformation Unproven information
Muhammadu Okechukwu Buhari's Campaign Song	4.12	Change now to Buhari and away from waste, corruption and terrorism	Outright lie Misrepresentation Misinformation Unproven information
Theme Song for Buhari	3.15	Buhari to change Nigeria for the better	Outright lies Misinformation Unproven information

Market woman go enjoy, elele hmm hmm o, all the workers go enjoy elele,
(Market women will enjoy, all the workers will enjoy)
My people nagode (gode) my people dalu (dalu) e rora ma gbese (ese)
(My people thank you, thank you, thank you)
No more sorrows and pain o for our nation o: (chakom)
(No more sorrows and pain for our nation)
We go shine after the rain our nation o chakom
(We shall shine after the rain, our nation will be great)

(See Appendix 2 for full song)

General Muhammadu Okechukwu Buhari's Campaign Song (Hip Hop Version)

This advertisement fell into the four categories of deception. The first is the outright lie of renaming Retired Muhammadu Buhari as Okechukwu. *Okechukwu* is a popular Igbo name for males. Buhari is not an Igbo man and makes no claims to any Igbo ancestry. In fact, he is of Fulani stock from Daura, Katsina State. This advertisement also misrepresented Buhari by subtly referring to his tenure as military head of state. He came into power through a coup d'état. This advertisement also gives poor misrepresentation of his achievements as a military head of state. This advertisement misinformed Nigerian voters with three things: picture of the blackened, burnt and dead bodies arranged in rows, the death of the poor and survival of the rich and the government that steals. Where these people killed because Jonathan and his PDP were in power? Or is this an allusion that more people will die if Buhari is not elected? The text on the picture of ex-president Jonathan Goodluck indirectly links him to stealing. Yet no court has convicted him of such an offence. This is another lie. Also this particular advertisement provided some pieces of information without any credible attribution. Examples are statements that Buhari came into power as military head of state, there were "extreme corruption, waste of resources and mismanagement of funds and religious intolerance" and he … "paid all our debts, inflation rate dropped from 22% to 5%., masterminded the construction of 20 oil depots". The advertiser cleverly forgot to tell the voters that these claims were probably relevant between December 31, 1983 - 27 August 1985 while Buhari was still military head of state. The election he was contesting took place in 2015: a clear 32-year time gap.

Theme Song for Buhari

This campaign advertisement contains four of the classes of deception: outright lies, misrepresentations, misinformation and unproven information. These are outright lies that:

Buhari will ban the corruption now now
Buhari will stop Boko Haram now now
Buhari will stop the pillow dancing now now
Buhari will provide the shelter now now …

They are big lies to claim that corruption and terrorism can be stopped right on the spot. It is also unbelievable that shelter can be provided immediately simply because some time is needed to implement the processes and even to build. Neither can the interesting *pillow dancing* be decreed to stop right away.

Table 2. Data on APC's presidential advertisements

ADVERT	DURATION (MINUTES)	MESSAGE	DECEPTION
Abduction APC Campaign Video	1.03	Insecurity Vote for change	Outright lies Misrepresentation
APC Presidential Advert for Buhari	0.59	Vote for change to boost the economy	Misrepresentations
APC/Buhari Campaign Song	1.52	Vote Buhari to change Nigeria	Misrepresentation Misinformation Unproven information Puffery

People use pillows in private places. How will Buhari stop people from dancing with their pillows in their private domains? The truth is that corruption cannot be banned. But corrupt officers can be jailed on conviction. However, steps can be taken to reduce or stop corruption. This advertisement also misinformed the voters by claiming that Nigeria is going "through exile in government. The bad government is ruling us". These are also unproven information.

Abduction APC Campaign Video

This campaign video lies by saying that Goodluck Jonathan was dancing at a political rally less than 24 hours after over 200 girls were abducted in Chibok. The video does not show Goodluck dancing. Neither were the people standing with him. Here were not even in a dance venue. In fact, a tweet from one Nasir El-Rufai on April 21, 2014 at 10.24 even contradicts the dancing theory with its message that Goodluck was in Kano barely 24 hours after 100 people were bombed in Nyanya and 200 young girls were abducted by *Boko Haram* terrorists (*pic.tweeter.com.UZiTMqeQB0; fb.me/3AVgJCdcy*). The campaign season was under the dark skies of *Boko Haramists* detonating bombs that killed and maimed hundreds of people. This advert misrepresents by telling voters that Buhari has "faced even bigger problems and fixed them immediately once, and for all". It also misleads voters by saying that "the kidnappers have threatened that their next target are your kids" just to make the voters more willing to vote in APC. It also puffs that Buhari can "protect you and your children!"

APC Presidential Advert for Buhari

This advert misrepresents because it gives details that distort present realities. The advert claims that Buhari's regime reduced inflation from 23% to 4% within two years; chased back Chadian soldiers who invaded 19 islands in Lake Chad in 1983; and impacted lives through development projects sponsored by the Petroleum Trust Fund. These were historical recounts of what happened more than three decades ago. For example, it was in 1983 that the Chadians were pursued back to their country when he was the General Officer Commanding of an Armoured Division. They do not reflect current realities. This same advert also misinforms the voters that he would uproot corruption and looting, provide national security and restore our reputation. The common man in the street is given the impression that Nigeria is a country under siege and inadmissible into the international fora.

APC/Buhari Campaign Song

Shey na dem, na we or who
No one wants to take the blame
For what we've become
See the land God gave us
A gift to us
How did we turn our blessing into a curse?
The world used to envy us … (See Appendix 3 for full song)

From the lines of this campaign song, some misrepresentations can be seen. Apparently referring to the then incumbent government the song asks who Nigerians should blame for the woes of their nation since no person wants to take the blame. The song alludes that what God gave Nigeria as a gift has now turned into a curse and Nigerians have turned from being envied to been ignored. This advertisement also misinforms by increasing anxiety among the voting public with the stanzas that

…. Back when we had a voice
But now we have failed
Now they ignore us
Our lives is like a circus
When we speak, they won't hear us …

It goes further to furnish more lines:

We all turn religious
Praying God to help us
Cos the system has failed us
Corruption surrounds us
And everybody is crying

It is not possible for everybody to cry. Equally, the advertisement describes Buhari as "a man with foresight". These are mere puffery and deceptive. The allegation of 'corruption surrounding' us is presented as unproven information. The courts have not yet convicted Jonathan or any member of his cabinet for corruption.

Goodluck Campaign Video

This advertisement does not tell the truth that all voters from the north, south, east and west of Nigeria are shouting with mighty voices for Goodluck to be re-elected. Neither is it the truth that everybody is crying that Goodluck is "the man that is right". This advertisement engages in puffing because its claims are over exaggerated.

From the North
To the South

Table 3. Data on Goodluck's presidential advertisements

ADVERT	DURATION (MINUTES)	MESSAGE	DECEPTION
Goodluck Campaign Video	1.00	Re-election of Goodluck	Outright lies Pufferies
Official Goodluck Jonathan Campaign Theme Song (*I believe in Goodluck Jonathan)*	3.39	Continuity of Goodluck	Puffery
Official Goodluck's Campaign Song	4.31	Continuity	Misrepresentation Puffery

From the East
To the West
There is a sound all around
A mighty voice to be heard
Everybody is crying
Goodluck
Can you hear the mighty shout?
Goodluck
It is a call from the fatherland
For the man that is right
Goodluck Jonathan

Official Goodluck Jonathan Campaign Theme Song (I Believe in Goodluck Jonathan)

The message of this colourful commercial to the voters is that Jonathan has what it takes to lead Nigeria to a place of pride. In fact, the idyllic words of the commercial paint him as servant-leader out for the best interests of Nigeria without saying exactly how:

I heed the call to defend our nation
I see the light at the end of the tunnel
I see the dreams of those people that have died and the hopeful which we survived
And the promise, we are grateful
I see the man with the will and the passion to serve and to lead our nation
I see a man who is willing to fight, who is determined to bring the light
Who has shown himself a leader
I believe in Goodluck Jonathan
I believe Nigeria has a chance to rise again and take its place of pride and glory
I believe in Goodluck Jonathan
I believe that he has what it takes to lead our nation to its place of pride and glory ….

All these are words of puffery. Any person can hide under them.

Goodluck's Campaign Song

This advertisement as presented by Kaptain makes unproven claims that Jonathan has the "winning formula" and can solve "all our problems" without any explanations. It alluded to the fact that voting Jonathan would lead to continuity, stability and prosperity in Nigeria. It also puffs that this contestant is fresh, tried and tested and therefore he is the man that voters want, and should therefore vote for.

Goodluck Sit Down (Official Campaign Music)

This particular advertisement is entertaining. Yet it has some deceptions. First are the outright lies that the presidential seat is Jonathan's own even though the election was yet to hold as at the time the campaigns were running and that Nigerians were begging him not to go away from the Presidential Office. Incidentally, he did not win this particular election. The pictures of the smiling *almajiri* children in clean school uniform look suspicious. Their facial features look more like school children from the southern part of Nigeria and not from the North where most of the *almajiris* live. It is an exaggeration to label him as the "perfect man" that has "the masterplan" for Nigeria. Hence, this is puffery and deceptive.

PDP/Goodluck Jonathan Campaign Commercial

The picture showing that the Goodluck Jonathan-led administration has improved access to tertiary education is an outright lie. The picture is that of graduands of Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee. They were in their graduation regalia, standing in front of their school's Cravath Hall. These are not Nigerians and Fisk University is not in Nigeria. Was Jonathan providing more access to Americans to study in Nigeria or for Nigerians to go and study in the United States?

PDP Advert (Jonathan Na You Win) (See Appendix 4)

This advertisement came out as a song. The first lie is that Goodluck was declared the winner for an election that was yet to hold. The second one is to claim that he is surely coming back to occupy the

Table 4. Data on PDP's presidential advertisements

ADVERT	DURATION (MINUTES)	MESSAGE	DECEPTION
Goodluck Sit Down (Official Campaign Music)	3.13	Continuity	Outright lies Misrepresentation
PDP/Goodluck Jonathan Campaign Commercial	1.36	Continuity for a better Nigeria	Outright lie
PDP Advert *(Jonathan Na You Win)*	2.26	Vote Goodluck back to the presidential office	Outright Lies Puffery

presidential office. The circle of deception is completed with three puffs: that he is the right candidate; he is the only man who can make this country better and that he will make Nigeria so flourishing that even her enemies will be prostrating for her. (See Appendix 4)

DISCUSSION

Both contestants, their parties and supporters created attention-grabbing advertisements to sell themselves to the Nigerian electorate. Most of them were presented as songs that people can easily sing along to or as music that can be danced to. It is necessary to point out that the Buhari/APC front produced more attack and negative advertisements when compared to the Goodluck/PDP group. Buhari/APC advertisements were issue driven. The issues revolved around corruption and security. They hammered on the deep insecurity pervading the country primarily because of *Boko Haram* terrorists. The messages of the advertisements were framed to activate voters' judgments that Goodluck did not deserve to be re-elected. Nevertheless, there were some deceptions artfully woven into the advertisements of either camps.

Most of the deceptions from the Buhari/APC group are misrepresentations, misinformation, unproven pieces of information and lies. Probably, the reason for misinforming the citizenry was to make the voters' worried enough and forcefully build their determination not to have Goodluck Jonathan and PDP return to power. Buhari and his strategists succeeded in drawing votes to themselves. He was declared the winner of the presidential election. Their advertisements presented the opposition's government as corrupt, inept and ineffective. However, they did not present evidence to support these claims. Misrepresentations pervert the truth because the receivers of the message do not have sufficient information to make either reasonable or rational decisions. They are left to draw their own conclusions, which usually are wrong. Of course, this is what the deceiver wanted in the first place! The achievements Buhari made during his military regime were highlighted as if they have just happened. Meanwhile, these where made more than thirty years ago and in the mid-1980s. It was his team that supplied all the information without any authentication from any other source. The suggestions that he will uproot corruption and make all Nigerians to enjoy are questionable. Although corruption might be a societal malaise, yet it starts in the minds of dishonest public officers who abuse the power entrusted on them for their own selfish gains. There is no way that Buhari can ban corruption simply because he cannot ban Nigerians.

The next line of deception are the lies and puffery. Lies are not truths. Their avowals cannot be verified because they do not exist. They are the imaginations of the senders of the deceptive advertisements. Pufferies are also not the plain truth. But no reasonable person is expected to make a serious decisions based on them. The APC/Buhari used pufferies the least. Expectedly, the receivers or voters who may never know the truth try to create a wrong meaning out of the words, pictures, colour or whatever is used in the advertisement to pass across the message.

Goodluck/PDP advertisements are colourful and entertaining. Popular Nollywood actors and actresses, comedians as well as musicians added star power. The message creators wanted to draw on their large fan bases to endorse Jonathan's candidacy. A closer look at the advertisements used by him and his political party show that they avoided the deception of misinformation and presenting unproven facts. However, some of the campaign advertisements contained lies, misrepresentation and pufferies. As the incumbent president running for a re-election, may be, he knew it was unwise to misinform or present

messages that have no concrete facts because such can be easily verified. This may be the reasons why his campaign advertisements were not issue based. The Jonathan/PDP advertisements were more on the defensive against the onslaught of the opposition. He also reeled out his own accomplishments in office. The pufferies painted him as the saviour that Nigeria needed. In political advertising, there is a very big difference between pushing the truth, making claims that have no proofs and telling lies.

The reasonable voters have a way of making liars pay: they damage their reputation as well as withhold their votes. Fake messages may enhance the campaign purposes of the contestants in the immediate. Rational citizens may question the politicians' integrity and the fidelity of their future messages when they find out that their messages are nothing but lies, very far from the truth and sent out to mislead and deceive.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Future research should examine

1. The Influence of fake news on political participation.
2. A comparison of the political advertisements of 2015 with that of the presidential elections coming up in 2019
3. A longitudinal evaluation of the television advertising campaigns in the past presidential election campaigns

CONCLUSION

Presidential contestants employ television advertisements to reach a wider number of voters. In the Nigerian 2015 presidential elections, the two prominent contestants and their parties vigorously employed these advertisements to lure voters: telling the electorate about their achievements and what they intended to do if they were to win in the election. However, some of these advertisements that were aired on television or placed on *YouTube* were found to be deceptive on different counts by telling lies, misrepresenting, misinforming, spreading undocumented facts and engaging in pufferies. However, it was found that the APC/Buhari advertisements misinformed, misrepresented and presented more unproven or unsubstantiated claims. The PDP/Goodluck advertisements told more lies and engaged in more pufferies or overstatements of what the regime has achieved that may be difficult to convince any sensible voter. Particularly, APC/Buhari campaign advertisements were framed to expose the alleged claims of corruption, waste and deep insecurities which the incumbent government appeared helpless to handle.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A new statutory body should be established to regulate political advertisements. This body must properly define standard or plain meaning of a political advertisement to remove any ambiguity that may confuse the intelligent, the informed, the ignorant, unthinking and credulous fellow. It must provide a set of guidelines defining what is acceptable or unacceptable. This new body must

enforce the Truth-in-Political advertising. Its National Vigilance Department should prosecute fakers

2. INEC should disqualify any candidate or party that tells lies in its campaign messages, whether it is to be carried on television or placed on the social media

3. The Code of Fair Practice should be enacted by the Advertising Council of Nigeria (APCON). This Council should sanction and de-register any of its member that produces fake advertisements for presidential political contestants and or their parties

4. The Nigerian government should enact legislations addressing the public dissemination of fake messages during presidential electoral campaigns and make public the prosecution of those who willfully flout them. All candidates must submit their campaign advertisements for scrutiny before they are disseminated

5. National Broadcasting Commission should withdraw the operating license of any television station that broadcast presidential election advertisements without the appropriate clearance.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

All Progressives Congress (APC): The major opposition party that forwarded Buhari as their presidential candidate.

Boko Haram: The terrorist sect in North Eastern Nigeria seeking to establish an Islamic caliphate. They have been in operation since 2009.

Goodluck Ebele Jonathan: Nigeria then incumbent president that sought re-election in 2015 but lost.

Igbadun: A Yoruba word meaning *great enjoyment.*

Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC): The body in charge of conducting general elections in Nigeria.

Nollywood: The Nigerian film industry.

People's Democratic Party (PDP): Was the government in power that presented President Goodluck Jonathan fore-election in 2015.

Retired General Muhammadu Buhari: He was a former military head of state and the flag bearer for the opposition, APC.

APPENDIX 1

- Outright lies: Coded 1
- Misrepresentation: Coded 2
- Misinformation: Coded 3
- Unproven information: Coded 5
- Puffery: Coded 6

APPENDIX 2: BUHARI-OSIBANJO CAMPAIGN SONG BY OLAMIDE 'BADOO'

Slogan- APC!!!!! CHANGE!!
Chorus 1:
Enjoyment for the people
Igbadun for the nation,
Every day jollification, na the change we they want,
Maximum security, too much electricity, job opportunity, na the change we dey want.
Chorus 2:
APC ehn ehn APC ehn ehn APC ehn ehn (x4)
Buhari and Osibanjo na the change we dey want
APC ehn ehn APC ehn ehn APC ehn ehn (x4)
Buhari and Osibanjo na the change we dey want
Verse 1
E don tey we dey wait, na today, we go take the change (na the change we dey want)
As we they talk, them they feel, we dey do them they see, action is louder than voice o!
(na the change we dey want)
People for road o don know the thing e o, no need to scope o, chololo cholio, jalala jalii o,
Choboooo chobiooo, wetin you talk ooo, I say my people no para,
my people no vex, my people no stress,
We go give you the best oo…
(REPEAT CHORUS ONE AND TWO)
Bridge; APC hmm hmm, na wire o, na elelele, everything go coole, elele
Market woman go enjoy, elele hmm hmm o, all the workers go enjoy elele,
My people nagode (gode) my people dalu (dalu) e rora ma gbese (ese)
No more sorrows and pain o for our nation o: (chakom)
We go shine after the rain our nation o (chakom)
REPEAT CHORUS ONE AND TWO
(Instrumentals)
APC ehn ehn APC ehn ehn APC ehn ehn (x4)
Buhari and Osibanjo na the change we dey want
APC ehn ehn APC ehn ehn APC ehn ehn (x4)
Buhari and Osibanjo na the change we dey want
APC!!!! CHANGE!!!!

APPENDIX 3

Shey na dem, na we or who
No one wants to take the blame
For what we've become
See the land God gave us
A gift to us
How did we turn our blessing into a curse?
The world used to envy us
Back when we had a voice
But now we have failed
Now they ignore us
Our lives is like a circus
When we speak, they won't hear us
We all turn religious
Praying God to help us
Cos the system has failed us
Corruption surrounds us
And everybody is crying
Who can save us
All we need is one man,
One man
All we need is one man
Who's ready to fight
And fight for what's right
A man with foresight
All we need is one man
Who's ready to lead us
Lead us to the promise land
Who is that man?
It will take you and me
And we can do
All it takes to raise us from this dust
No matter the cost
We'll save the land God gave us
Save her from destruction
Everyone who hears my voice
Make a choice
We'll walk with our heads high
The world will be watching
We'll make a stand
And they won't ignore us
We all must remember

The strength in our number, eh
If we all reach out
We can reach out for that
One man eh, one man eh eh
All we need is one man
Who's ready to lead us
Who's ready to
Lead us to the promise land
All we need is one man
Who's not afraid to say Yes
Who's not afraid to dream
And paint a picture for the future
One man who's not afraid eh eh
To lead us, just like Moses did
One man, eh eh eh eh eh, One man oh oh
We calling out for 'One man'
Who's not afraid
Who's not afraid
One man
To lead again
All we need is One man
Shebi shebi shebi shebi shebi na, One man
All we need is one man
Shebi shebi shebi shebi shebi na, One man
All we need is one man
Shebi shebi shebi shebi shebi na, One man

APPENDIX 4

Goodluck Na You Win [Goodluck, you are a winner]
Listen up everybody, everybody [Listen up everybody, everybody]
It's Goodluck again o [It's Goodluck again]
Goodluck for 2015 o o [Goodluck for 2015]
Jona, Jona eh Jonathan na you win [Jona, Jona, Jonathan, you are a winner]
Jonathan, Jonathan na you win [Jonathan you are a winner]
From 2015 to 2019 [From 2015 to 2019]
Jona eh, Jonathan na you win [Jona eh, Jonathan you are winner]
Oya make we dey celebrate o [Let's celebrate]
Because Goodluck Jonathan [Because Goodluck Jonathan]
na the right candidate o [Is the right candidate]
With Goodluck Jonathan [With Goodluck Jonathan]
Nigeria go dey elevate o [Nigeria will rise and rise o]

And all our enemies all of them [And all of our enemies, all of them]
go dey prostrate o [Will prostrate before us]
Common everybody sing [Come on, everyone sing]
Goodluck is coming back o [Goodluck is coming back]
He is coming back [He is coming back]
Ebele Jonathan is coming back e e e [Ebele Jonathan is coming back]
He is coming back [He is coming back……..]
Jonathan is coming back o [Jonathan is coming back]
Jonathan is coming back [Jonathan is coming back]
Jonathan is coming back again [Jonathan is coming back again]
Eh eh eh
(Hausa, Urhobo, Yoruba languages Interlude)
The only man wey go make this country better [The only man who can make this country better]
You say, na Jona [You say: He is Jona]
Make we vote am again o [Let's vote for him once more]
Na Jona [He is Jona]
Eeye, Jonathan carry lamp agade Nigeria [Jonathan is our flagbearer]
Jona eh, Jonathan na you win [Jonathan you are a winner]
Goodluck Jona [Goodluck Jona]
Goodluck Jona [Goodluck Jona]
Goodluck Jona na you we want [Goodluck Jona, you are the person we want]
Goodluck Jona [Goodluck Jona]
Jona eh, Jonathan na you win [Jonathan you are a winner]
Everybody sing Goodluck is coming back oo [Everybody sing Jonathan is coming back]
Oh yes he is coming back oo [Oh yes he is coming back]
(Hausa, Urhobo, Yoruba, Igbo languages Interlude)
For agriculture, Jonathan work!
And education, Jonathan work!
Road and entertainment, Jonathan work!
The Sure P project, Jonathan work!
You Win project, Jonathan work!
Oil and gas
Women empowerment
Our train sure de work, Jonathan work oo
Oya, everybody say Jona
Shoki shoki for Jona
Wellu wellu for Jona
Limpopo for Jona
Etigi for Jona
Well rere for Jona
Alanta for Jona
Who we go vote for
Jona!

APPENDIX 5: SOURCES OF SONGS/MUSIC

APC Campaign Video

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FrhZWQdewFY

APC Advert

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gOr5a1md80g

Buhari's Campaign Song by PITA

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LIpyt9-1Q5s
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FKGGHeklu-c

APC Presidential Advert for Buhari

www.youtube.com/watch?v=s4WJGSNh9bY

Buhari - Osinbajo Campaign Song by Olamide 'Badoo

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D57li8wyvMQ

PDP Campaign Video

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4E9HDFipJ0Y

PDP Advert

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w5JJA9a4V8Q

Goodluck's Campaign Song

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=idd_pKip5cw
Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=44P8lKXZdg0

PDP Presidential Advert

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EuC-s02oY-Q

Chapter 20

Profiting From the "Trump Bump":
The Effects of Selling Negativity in the Media

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ABSTRACT

This chapter contributes to scholarship in the fields of media ecology and political communication by investigating the effects of the Trump bump in media-driven democracy. Specifically, it explains how the media's obsession with Donald Trump allowed them to capitalize on his political brand, which in turn contributed to changing the tone of political discourse in the United States. The effects of mediatization, including click-bait framing, increased negativity, and person-centered media coverage, had a distinct impact on the behavior of political actors and the political system as a whole. The dominance of marketing logic in contemporary media democracies provides a compelling argument for critical investigation of brand appropriation in political communication and its impact on the state of democracy. This chapter advocates for the further investigation of the current media ecosystem in order to move toward a public deliberation model that would support enhanced media literacy and citizen engagement in public policy debates.

INTRODUCTION

In a perfect world, a free press would support democracy by delivering fair and balanced news that represents both sides of the story and allows readers to draw their own conclusions. Ideally, news makers would always be mindful of a personal responsibility to provide their audiences "with proper historical context, diverse perspectives, and explicit linkages to the officials responsible for policy outcome[s]"

(Entman, 1989, p. 21). In practice, however, news stories frequently support selective constructions of reality.

In 2017, the Mason CARP lab released a report stating that the media ecosystem has significantly transformed in recent years, becoming extremely prone to negativity and conducive to incivility and character assassination practices (Icks et al, 2017). According to the report, the decline in journalistic standards (e.g., independent interpretation of events) and frequent media bias have also become more evident in recent years. A primary concern is the increasing mediatization of society, resulting from the pervasive integration of media logic into the operation of other social institutions (Esser & Matthes, 2013). One critical impact of mediatization on politics is that the production of news content is ever more dictated by commercial imperatives and consumers' expectations rather than by substantive policy issues.

In line with this logic, some political brands have steady commodity value. In the context of a "culture war" between progressives and conservatives, materials supporting emotion-driven politics prove especially lucrative to media producers. Since the 2016 U.S. primaries, any content related to Donald Trump has become a hot commodity on the media market, contributing to the economic revival of many traditional media outlets. This has trapped media and audience alike in a Trump filter bubble, with a significant impact on American society.

This chapter sets out to accomplish several objectives. First, it discusses the effects of mediatization on the political system by focusing on framing practices, personalization, and negativity as drivers of commercial logic. Next, it explains how the media's appropriation of Donald Trump's political brand saw the economic revival of many mainstream mass media outlets (a phenomenon known as "the Trump bump"). The chapter concludes by explaining the effects of the Trump bump on today's democracy.

THE EFFECTS OF MEDIATIZATION ON WESTERN SOCIETIES

In many Western democracies, the role of mass media has grown disproportionately compared to that of other democratic institutions (Esser & Matthes, 2013). Contemporary media scholars refer to Western societies as *media democracies* (Donges, 2016) in which democratic functions increasingly rely on mass communication infrastructure. The media are no longer a neutral mediator between citizens and government institutions, but an active player that transform politics by acting in accordance with their own judgments and rules (Mazzoleni & Schultz, 1999).

In this sense, "the mediated reality becomes more important than the actual reality, in the sense that it is mediated reality that people have access to and react to" (Strömbäck, 2008, p. 238). In negative use, the term "media democracy" refers to conditions in which news production becomes driven by media logic rather than society's needs. The increased intrusion of media logic into the operations of other social institutions as an institutional rule has become known as *mediatization.* In some cases, the adoption of media logic may lead to the substitution of political and judicial functions by the rules of mass media. For example, in his analysis of the famous O. J. Simpson case, Thaler (1997) argues that the media did not just report the case; instead, they were instrumental in creating a spectacle that hijacked American culture.

The development of the Internet and mobile technologies has contributed significantly to the integration of social media marketing into traditional media practices, which in turn has resulted in fragmented media, audience segmentation, and growing ideological polarization (Bonfadelli, 2002; Lee, 2009). Social media have transformed formerly passive readers into highly active contributors and agents of persuasion

within their personal networks, making peer-influenced media "two of the top three most-used sources of news and information" (Edelman, 2016). The traditional media began to reproduce user-generated content they found newsworthy, thus unintentionally giving speculative opinions and hearsay more exposure. For example, in their analysis of the rise in far-right online activity, Marwick and Lewis (2017) note that its impact would be less significant if the mainstream media had not amplified its messaging.

Importantly, the 24/7 news cycle has done away with deadlines in favor of a "Twitter cycle" that requires a constant supply of news fodder. The sheer volume of content needed to fill the news space twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week has led to the "tyranny of speed over accuracy:" additional fact-checking is now sacrificed on the altar of the drive to publish sensational content ahead of competitors (Icks et al, 2017). A common critique of mediatization and its impact on today's society is that media technologies have altered the very understanding of truth, moving the needle toward "truthiness" (Manjoo, 2008). This word represents a general attitude toward media reality in the American society, which is divided between two camps of people—those who "think with their head" and those who "know with their heart" (Mooney et al, 2012). Next, we will address several effects of mediatization on the political system, which have produced an interplay between media and political logic.

THE ISSUES OF MEDIATIZED POLITICS

The adoption of media logic by a political system produces a hybrid of *mediatized politics* or "politics that has lost its autonomy […] and is continuously shaped by interactions with mass media" (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999, p. 250). Different democracies are affected by mediatization in different ways due to professional, commercial, and technological differences (Bühlmann & Kriesi, 2013).

The rise of media-driven democracies also correlates with the decline of political parties, as the latter's function of mediating between the people and the government has become less relevant. In the United States, the weakening of traditional affective ties between voters and parties (Mair, 2005) has resulted in the rise of *candidate-centered politics*. This process has been reinforced by the growing role of television and the Internet in political communication (Mazzoleni, 2000; Stromer-Galley, 2014). However, the media system cannot exist independently of political institutions. As such, the media are unavoidably impacted by political logic and ideological struggles in the political field.

Framing Issues

By favoring certain political agendas, the news media inevitably engage in the process of framing. Framing contributes to promoting perceptions and interpretations that benefit one side "while obscuring other elements, which might lead audiences to have different reactions" (Entman, 1993, p. 55). Although framing can be a helpful tool for communicating complex ideas to the masses, it also leads to superficial coverage and oversimplification. Several studies (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999) address various effects of media market logic on political news content, such as: promoting sensational features of political events; focusing on conflict rather than compromise; relying on emotions, polarization, and stereotyping for storytelling; presenting political news from "soft news" angles and "episodic framing"; and favoring fragments of the political discourse in catchy phrases and compelling visuals.

The limits of the news frame categorize what is "in" the frame and what is "out" (Hertog & McLeod, 2001). Audience members are likely to form their opinions about political issues when information is

framed in terms of specific cherished values: "when new information is translated into old formulas, there is no challenge for people to replace their prejudices with new insights" (Bennett, 2005, p. 244). Thus, journalists often cover events through frames that are part of conventional myths, values, or shared beliefs.

The reality created by media results in lasting images and stereotypes about groups, religions, and peoples (Maslog, 1971). Indeed, although the Internet has given more people the ability to produce their own frames about complex issues, gatekeepers such as politicians and corporations still play a pivotal role by legitimizing some frames over others. Media companies profit from publishing materials featuring sensations and scandals in which political actors become convenient targets of public praise or condemnation.

Personalization Focus

The rise of "candidate-centered politics" (Wattenberg, 1991) has instigated the growing involvement of political candidates in news management of current affairs. The decline of political parties has shifted the media spotlight to individual candidates as the sole representatives of political agendas (van Aelst, Sheafer, & Stanyer, 2011). Since the media format is limited to presenting selected fragments of political life, media professionals tend to prioritize the personal traits of political actors (Gilens, Vavreck, & Cohen, 2007). The media logic obliges politicians to adapt to the "soft news" format and constantly participate in shaping news coverage of daily events.

The culture of mediatized politics supports candidates who fully embrace the media logic, as well as "politicians with telegenic image, popular rhetoric and marketable messages" (Esser, 2013, p. 172). Media competence and impression management skills have become crucial for political actors—there is constant pressure to perform. Naturally, this environment creates multiple opportunities for charismatic leaders and populists. They are desirable guests for media shows because they have news value, are known for their showmanship, and speak the language of the "common man" (Mazzoleni, 2008). As a result, "issue politics become displaced by political performers that have gained the status of celebrities" (Campus, 2003, p. 223).

Governing elites and government agencies have privileged access to the media and thus a better chance of promoting their opinions about controversial topics than other social actors. Driven by commercial imperatives to grow their audiences, the news media favor statements made by high-profile newsmakers and indirectly contribute to the distribution of their opinions.

The Rise of Incivility and Negative Content

Another aspect of mediatization is the rise of negative content and incivility in political discourse. Negative information refers to discussing political personalities, with an emphasis on the defects in their accomplishments, qualifications, and associates (Lau & Pomper, 2002). Negative messages vary in their content (direct attack, comparative attack, or innuendo), tone (uncivil, aggressive, brutish, etc.), framing approaches (news slant, bias, lack of objectivity, etc.), and use of dramatic production techniques (Perloff, 2018).

Naturally, negative content has more value for media producers. Clickbait content centered on scandalous news, rumors, or character attacks linked to popular politicians is constantly in high demand. Inherent in most media outlets' approaches to finding content is a search for problems and sensations, which are perceived as naturally newsworthy items; positive materials, by contrast, may require additional

effort on the part of newsroom staffs to make them reportable. The rise in negativity in media coverage of political campaigns in America is positively correlated with the rise in interpretive journalism covering political campaigns in the United States. This approach exploits the function of critical watchdog journalism according to a commercial logic. Following the Watergate scandal, American journalism moved toward a more confrontational style of politics. "With malice toward all" (Moy & Pfau, 2000), many contemporary journalists advance their careers through *confrontainment*.

However, negativity is equally driven by the needs and preferences of the audience. As suggested by Miroshnichenko (2018), negative content is more attractive to audiences and increases viewership, engagement, and revenues. The audience is naturally "drawn to stories that suggest conflict and the potential for what is shocking and sensational" (Tuman, 2010, p. 196). There is evidence that people remember negative messages better than positive spots, and recognize them more accurately (Lau et al., 2007; Lang et al., 1995). They also respond more strongly to negative stimuli (Soroka, 2014).

The negativity bias can be explained through the ideas of behavioral economics. As suggested by Kahneman and Tversky (1979), people are generally risk averse; they fear losses more than they prefer gains. If applied to the area of communication, this means that people are more sensitive and responsive to information about potential losses. At the subliminal level, people look for negative information in order to scan their social environment for possible risks and assess the probability of harmful effects. Individuals tend to weigh negative information more heavily than positive information when forming evaluations of social stimuli. The media exploit this subliminal "negativity bias" and cell negativity.

In 2014, Russian local news website *City Reporter*, from Rostov-on-Don, conducted an experiment. Journalists decided to publish only good news for one day. According to assistant editor Victoria Nekrasova, "We looked at events, excluded homicides and catastrophes, and placed positive headliners. Unfortunately, such news was not popular" (cited in Miroshnichenko, 2018). As a result, their website traffic that day was 70% below its usual level.

Negative media bias becomes even more prominent during critical national events, such as controversial elections. As previously noted, due to their economic setup, the media are not designed to deescalate the situation; on the contrary, they are inclined to commodify negativity. A minor slant in the news can trigger an emotional logic in the target audience by reinforcing negative stereotypes about political actors. In response to framed news, most audience members engage in "peripheral processing," which relies on emotional semantics and angry rhetoric to activate habitual associations and arrive at a quick judgement (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Enhanced arousal may be especially likely to result from exposure to negative advertising during heated political campaigns as candidates compete for a relatively small percentage of uncommitted voters (Pinkleton, 1997). The successful commodification of negativity is best illustrated by media coverage of Donald Trump.

THE COMMODIFICATION OF A POLITICAL BRAND

The strategic positioning of an individual political image and brand within the political market is important in determining the success or failure of an individual politician (Simons, 2019). The political brand of a political candidate is linked to how they are perceived and rated overall. Newman refers to politics as a "national game" in which "political consultants are the coaches and managers who determine the outcome, with the media serving as umpires" (1999, p. 18). As noted by Cwalina et al. (2011), the value

of that brand relates not only to the value and resonance of a particular political actor, but also to the perceived qualities of their competitors.

In contemporary media democracies, the development of a political brand always follows the logic of the media market. Political brands resemble seasonal products, increasing in value under favorable conditions or due to high public demand. However, public interest in some personalities is constantly high and can thus be monetized by various media retailers through positive or negative coverage. Naturally, negativity is quite profitable in times when Americans are polarized and uncompromising toward their ideological opponents (Iyengar & Westwood, 2014). Negative news is what people like to share with friends and circulate within their online networks. The value and resonance of a strong individual brand assures its potential liquidity. It can be bought and sold at stable prices by different media merchants; similarly, it can easily be converted into cash or new traffic, or rebranded in the face of new political realities. During the 2016 U.S. general election, the news coverage of both Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump was overwhelmingly negative in tone and extremely light on policy (Patterson, 2016). Both campaigns used appeals to fear and anger to assault the character of their opponent, elevating the anxiety and cynicism surrounding the campaign. Through negative character attacks, both candidates promoted the message that their opponent was unsuitable for office.

In 2017, the media market witnessed a so-called "Trump bump," or an economic upturn attributed to Donald Trump's electoral victory. Ironically, the win of the Republican populist led to the revival of the media market and instant subscription growth. In fact, Trump became a savior for the American media, which had faced economic hardship for several years. A controversial and polarizing candidate, he unleashed a range of emotions in American society—from love to hatred—with the result that any coverage of Trump became a valuable click-bait commodity. It was Donald Trump who made the previously struggling American media "great again." In an unprecedented manner, news materials centered on one political personality transformed the media industry from surviving to thriving.

The Development of the Trump Bump

Certainly, much of the Trump bump effect is due to Trump's restless agitation on social media. "A very stable genius" of publicity, the American president constantly provides content for headlines. Trump frequently tweets insults and strategically uses populist rhetoric to shock audiences and steal the media spotlight. For example, between declaring his candidacy for president in June 2015 and December 2016 Donald Trump made 289 Twitter insults (Lee et al, 2016). With his regular Twitter rants, the American president constantly generates news leads—and new opportunities for his critics. The Trump campaign's use of the pejorative "Crooked Hillary" rapidly became a meme (Cornfield, 2017). The corresponding hashtag, #CrookedHillary, was used 5.8 million times on Twitter alone between its debut and the election. The phrase triggered a popular response, "Lock Her Up," chanted at rallies and posted with a hashtag 1.1 million times. The party conventions and televised debates marked spikes in the number of tweets containing these phrases that were posted and shared.

However, the commercial media logic behind this incredible news coverage of the American President is indisputable. The fear of Trump promoted in loss-framed messages built around democracy and desperately fighting for freedom drew public attention and also drove up subscriptions. The use of fear appeals or scare tactics to increase public anxiety is a popular tool in strategic communication (Gardner, 2009). Reviews of the fear appeal literature have shown that inducing fear can bring about changes in attitudes, intentions, and behavior (Ruiter et al., 2001). The media sensed Trump's potential as a reliable

click-bait provider and turned the emotions of his haters and supporters into a full-scale commodification campaign.

By March 2016, Trump had already gained media coverage that was the equivalent of about $2 billion in advertising. By comparison, Hillary Clinton had earned about $746 million in free media at the time, and Bernie Sanders about $321 million, according to *The New York Times*. In February alone, Trump earned $400 million worth of free media—close to John McCain's media expenditure for his entire presidential campaign in 2008 (Confessore et al, 2016). Preoccupied with the idea of exposing Trump, the media granted him enormous coverage and free publicity. In exchange, they received increased audience attention and circulation and revenue growth. This was the beginning of the Trump bump ("Traditional Media Firms", 2017). In the 13-month period between August 2015 and September 2016, the leading American media published: 7,841 stories about Sanders; 18,640 stories about Clinton; and 29,019 stories about Trump. For comparison, over the 13 months of the 1992 presidential campaign, the same set of media published 7,945 articles about Bill Clinton (LaFrance, 2016). The leading American media seized the moment to exploit Donald Trump's political brand to boost their ratings and circulation. They began offering their agitated subscribers sensational content about Trump and his associates as an answer to fake news and illiberal tendencies.

As a result, since the 2016 election, the leading media have doubled or tripled their numbers of subscribers (Stelter et al, 2017) *The New Yorker* experienced tremendous monthly subscription growth, achieving its largest circulation ever, at more than a million readers. In the summer of 2017, the *Washington Post* reached 1 million digital subscribers and continued to rise. In July 2018, the *Post's* vice-president of marketing, Miki Toliver King, demonstrated a correlation between marketing efforts and subscription results (Veseling et al, 2018). However, as Figure 1 shows, the surges in the *Washington Post's* subscriptions correlate much more closely with the events of Trump's campaign and presidency.

The real symbol of the Trump bump is, of course, *The New York Times*, as shown in Figure 2. The Gray Lady showed astonishing progress, adding almost a million new subscribers during the first year of Trump's presidency. As of December 2017, the *New York Times* had 2,231,000 digital subscribers to its news product, setting a world record ("Company Reports 2017 Forth-Quarter and Full Year Results", 2018).

Television channels also took advantage of the Trump bump. 2016 became the most profitable year in CNN's history, with the channel enjoying a more than 50% increase in its average daytime audience (Mahler, 2017). Those talk shows highly critical of Trump also surged in the ratings. For instance, "Saturday Night Live" with Alec Baldwin increased its viewership 44% during the 2016-2017 season (Littleton, 2017).

An old reporters' adage goes "If it bleeds, it leads;" an appropriate contemporary rendering might be "If it's Trump, it leads." Comedian Michelle Wolf made a point about the media exploiting Trump's brand at the White House Correspondents' Dinner on April 28, 2018: "He's helped you sell your papers and your books and your TV. You helped create this monster, and now you're profiting off of him." (Perlberg, 2018). An article in the *CJR* reports that placing international stories at American outlets is getting harder unless they directly involve Trump. For political reporters, the daily White House press briefing has turned "into a career launching pad like it's never been before." As *BuzzFeed News'* Steven Perlberg put it in his article, "It's a good time to be a reporter covering Trump if you like money and going on TV." The same goes for book publishing. In 2018, each book at the top of *The New York Times* bestseller list had one thing in common: President Trump (Stelter, 2018).
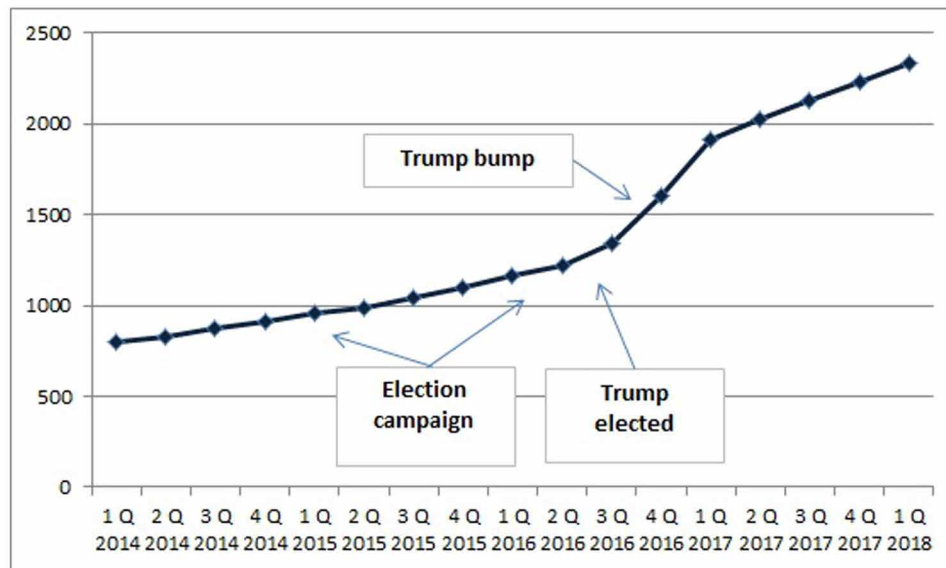
Figure 1. Adapted by the authors from Veseling (2018) to show major events of the Trump campaign and presidency (marked in red).

*For a more accurate representation see the electronic version.

Figure 2. The New York Times, digital-only subscriptions in thousands
Source: Calculated by the authors on the basis of data from The New York Times Company's press releases

The Effects of the Trump Bump on Media Democracy

The news coverage of Donald Trump has been highly profitable for the mass media industry overall. Ironically, numerous attempts to denounce Trump promoted what they were supposed to condemn. This was illustrated by the continued media scandal that linked Trump to Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election. The so-called *Russiagate* materials suit the interests of both ideological camps in America equally. The liberal public supports the crusade against fake news, which they see as having contributed to Trump's win. The conservative audience, on the other hand, is delighted by the constant attacks on President Trump, as these affirm their long-held belief in a conspiracy of the liberal media elite against the legitimate president. Beyond the US, the claims about almighty Russians have turned out to be very helpful to the Russian government, as they have helped it implement domestic policies and strengthen the image of Russia across the globe (Miroshnichenko & Samoilenko, 2018).

The best frame of reference for understanding both the 2016 U.S. presidential election and the subsequent Trump presidency is that of the soap opera, a metaphor suggested by van Zoonen (2003). With a vast number of invested stakeholders, the commodification of Trump has turned into a consistently profitable bonanza. Popular media narratives focused primarily on *scandal*, *conflict*, and *incompetence,* three core ingredients of any soap opera. This trend further contributed to the restyling of media-driven democracy in terms of consumerism and political marketing. This type of marketing-driven democracy is no longer based on objectivity and civility as required characteristics of political debate and leadership. By increasing emotional content, mass media have desensitized the public, making it easier for incivility to become acceptable.

In the era of Trumpism, the adage "bad news travels fast" has become the primary focus of news media. The Trump bump reproduces media environments in which rumors and conspiracy theories thrive. According to Morozov (2017), "The problem is not fake news but the speed and ease of its dissemination, and it exists primarily because today's digital capitalism makes it extremely profitable […] to produce and circulate false but click-worthy narratives."

Unsurprisingly, this contributes to creating a media environment in which uncivil politics are the norm. Scholars argue that tabloid journalism and television entertainment have normalized personal ridicule and serve as a breeding ground for unjustified personal attacks leading to social judgment and character assassination of political actors (Lichter & Farnsworth, 2019).

There is evidence that the rise in incivility has coincided with changed public perceptions of the character of political candidates, which have worsened substantially in recent years and are now more tied to partisan identification (Wattenberg, 2016). Even though audiences have become more desensitized or even attracted to negativity, media producers continue to seek new creative agenda-building and framing solutions to galvanize public sentiments. These prove especially effective when combined with public relations efforts of politicians intended to discourage public support for competing candidates (Fridkin & Kenney, 2011; Mutz & Reeves, 2005).

The marketing-driven philosophy of today's media system has a negative impact on the functioning of representative democracy. The current state of media democracy supports a relationship between politicians and their audiences in which political actors sell performances to buy a good reputation. Likewise, citizens are no longer expected to have an advanced level of political and media literacy, but to select a political brand—whether "media friend" or "media enemy"—and maintain their brand loyalty as consumers of marketing messages.

As discussed by Kriesi et al. (2013), the current state of affairs does not motivate the news media to demand accountability from politicians. As a result, citizens are able neither to evaluate the inclusiveness and fairness of the policy-making process nor to properly assess political outcomes for their service to the public good. This leads to growing public distrust in democratic institutions and the media themselves (Stelter, 2018). A 2017 study found that two-thirds of Americans believe the mainstream press publishes fake news (Harrington, 2017). This trend is linked to public cynicism and political alienation (Opdycke, et al., 2013). The arousal of negative emotions in political campaigns distracts people from reasoned deliberation and political engagement. Specifically, negative media coverage of politics and incivility causes dissatisfaction with politics (Mutz & Reeves, 2005; Patterson, 2003).

FUTURE RESEARCH

In recent years, changes in the media environment (digitalization, economic struggle), along with the mediatization of politics, have prompted new concerns about the media's ability to provide citizenry with nonpartisan and factual news and account for a diversity of viewpoints on current events. Some media experts express sheer pessimism, stating that the main objective of today's journalists is "no longer to disseminate the ideas and create social consensus around them but to produce entertainment and information that can be sold to individual consumers" (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 277). Essentially, the media's focus on capitalizing on and monetizing Trump impeded their ability to cover basic news, much less undertake nonpartisan investigative journalism. More generally, the current media system is compromising the media's democratic role as the fourth estate, including their primary function of providing substantive and diverse information and improving the quality of the civic public sphere.

Future studies should address the state of the current media system from the perspective of deliberative democracy (Held, 2006). A media ecological approach to the relations between media and politics should lead us to rethink the current media ecosystem. A new model compatible with deliberative democratic principles should be further explored to examine ways to enhance media literacy and citizen engagement, as well as to provide opportunities for reasoned public deliberation that influences policy.

CONCLUSION

The dominance of commercial logic in contemporary media democracies provides a compelling argument for a comprehensive view of political communication in terms of marketing. Importantly, the current media-driven democracy is governed more by marketing imperatives than by polity concerns. During Trump's presidency, the symbiotic relationship between media producers and the political system has reached its acme.

The *politicized media* is no longer an independent entity. Instead, its reliance on political culture and dramaturgy have made it the favored form of pop-culture in the United States. The preoccupation with Trump's personality prevented the media from taking a systemic view on the current political system. "Obsessed with Trump" as they were, the media paid much less attention to other processes set in motion by the tectonic media, social and cultural environmental shift that contributed to Trumpism (LaFrance, 2016). As a result, the media's agenda-setting and framing preferences contributed to a simplistic view of causes and strengthened the political polarization that brought Trump to power.

Similarly, *mediatized politics* have also been "colonized by media logic and imperatives, losing [their] specificity and integrity" (Corner & Pels, 2003, p. 4). The Trump bump has played a critical role in the aesthetization of the new political culture. The media helped promote the aesthetics of self-display of political celebrity, which subsequently reduced the political discourse to the personality of Donald Trump rather than allowing for the proper political deliberation and engagement.

The further mediatization of society is foreseen to evolve into a new form of *mediacracy* (Meyer & Hinchman, 2002) in which the interests of citizenry are secondary to interdependent media and political logic. This means that commercialized negativity is likely to remain a stable media currency for years to come.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Deliberative Democracy: A form of democracy in which deliberation is central to decision-making. It adopts elements of both consensus decision-making and majority rule.

Fake News: False information or disinformation spread via traditional or online media.

Framing: The process of selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in the news media. This is to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.

Mediatization: A theory that argues that the media shapes and frames the processes and discourse of political communication as well as the society in which that communication takes place.

Negativity Bias: The notion that things of a more negative nature have a greater effect on one's psychological state and processes than neutral or positive things.

The Personalization of Politics: The process of constructing a political news content around personalities rather than institutions and social issues.

Political Brand: The overarching feeling, impression, association or image the public has towards a politician, political organization, or nation.

The Trump Bump: A sudden rise in stock market share value or revenue as a result of the election of Donald Trump and his electoral victory.

Chapter 21
Troll Farm:
Anonymity as a Weapon for Online Character Assassination

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ABSTRACT

Anonymity can create cowards. Perceptions of mistreatment can create an urge for revenge. And online social media platforms create opportunities to exact vengeance. This chapter provides an overview of online character assassination as it has evolved within a profusion of social media sites offering forums for uncensored airing of opinions. When opinions constitute political speech, they can be life-threatening. When opinions are commercial speech rating character and competence of professionals, digital defamation can threaten livelihood. In commercial arenas, victims often feel helpless to protect their reputations; however, some legal remedies may be available. This essay investigates the nature of abusive communication online, the role anonymity plays in digital attacks, and psychological character-istics associated with trolls and cyber-bullies. Case studies of individuals' efforts to defend themselves from online character assassination illustrate concepts discussed and strategies being used for online reputational self-defense.

INTRODUCTION

In a virtual marketplace of ideas, where uploaded information has a global, eternal audience and is un-der little to no administrative control as to its truth value or ethical weight, ideas can become weapons. Character assassination using online postings to websites – and the emotional, psychological, social, and economic turmoil the inevitably results from such attacks – is a burgeoning problem worldwide. Chetty and Alathur offer a focused overview both of the "dark side" of advances in Internet Technologies (Its), especially social media evolving alongside their benefits to humanity. Their study focuses primarily on delineating the relationships among hate speech, terrorism, and cyberterrorism Within their definitions and descriptions, online character assassination would be a form of extremism they place beneath the umbrella of extremist hate crime or hate speech (Chetty and Alathur, 2018). In this chapter, this form of

hate speech or hate crime is explored in relation to ways that anonymity facilitates this form of violence, whether it be rhetorical or physical.

Virtual speech acts transmitted via the internet generally may allocated into one of two categories based upon intent and material purpose: political speech acts or commercial speech acts. Online communication of both categories carried out using social media sites can also be either categorized either as productive and prosocial or destructive and abusive, based upon both intent and outcomes. Figure 1 depicts this fourfold framework of virtual communication dimensions, providing sub-types of online speech acts within each dimension.

Character assassination is earmarked by its personal nature, its viciousness and its deliberate lack of truth. Such speech acts maliciously deployed as weapons to destroy an individual's reputation can fall into either the pollical and commercial dimensions of online speech acts. It may be apparent in the diagram that all four dimensions and varieties of online message types that comprise them may encourage message-creators to be either braver or more malignant if their communications are posted online under the protection of anonymity. In the case of character assassination, anonymity within the commercial speech dimension is likely to result in permanent, irreversible damage to one's good name. However, in the realm of political communication, anonymity can operate either to the public good or result in the actual assassination of its human target. While this chapter has as its primary focus the commission of character assassination through social media using an example of a professor who was targeted by a disgruntled student, an example of a politically motivated online cyberterrorism campaign powered by anonymity that resulted in the murder of a journalist is presented.

Technical, psychological, and legal throughputs that contribute to the expanding scope and escalating complexity of abusive communication online include:

- The proliferation of social media platforms that provide staging areas for online attacks on character.
- The phenomenon that has become known as the Streisand Effect (where raising the issue of damaging online communications actually worsens the impact by drawing attention to it) as well as audience-generated hurdles to reputational self-defense such as comment sections of news sites.
- In the United States, competing laws that protect rights to privacy on the one hand and rights to speak one's mind on the other have produced a double bind. It is difficult to defend simultaneously both sets of contradictory protections offered by the Bill of Rights when one undermines the other. This is particularly true with respect to online commercial speech that constitutes defamation. In this balancing act, safeguards to freedom of speech and association guaranteed by the First Amendment are pitted against Fourth Amendment guarantee that one's right to privacy is sacrosanct (Chemerinsky, 2017).
- The critical role that anonymity plays in facilitating the free expression of dissent while at the same time enabling the abusive dissemination of false or threatening messages is a key concern. Balancing safeguards to individuals' free expression while at the same time protecting rights to privacy and safety is a stumbling-block to developing workable protocols and legislation of digital speech, especially on social media sites.

In order to successfully balance Constitutional protections for American citizens and possibly to provide a model for worldwide application (since there are no national boundaries in cyberspace, and the problem is global), the issue of online character assassination could best be addressed at the na-

Figure 1. Categories of social media speech acts
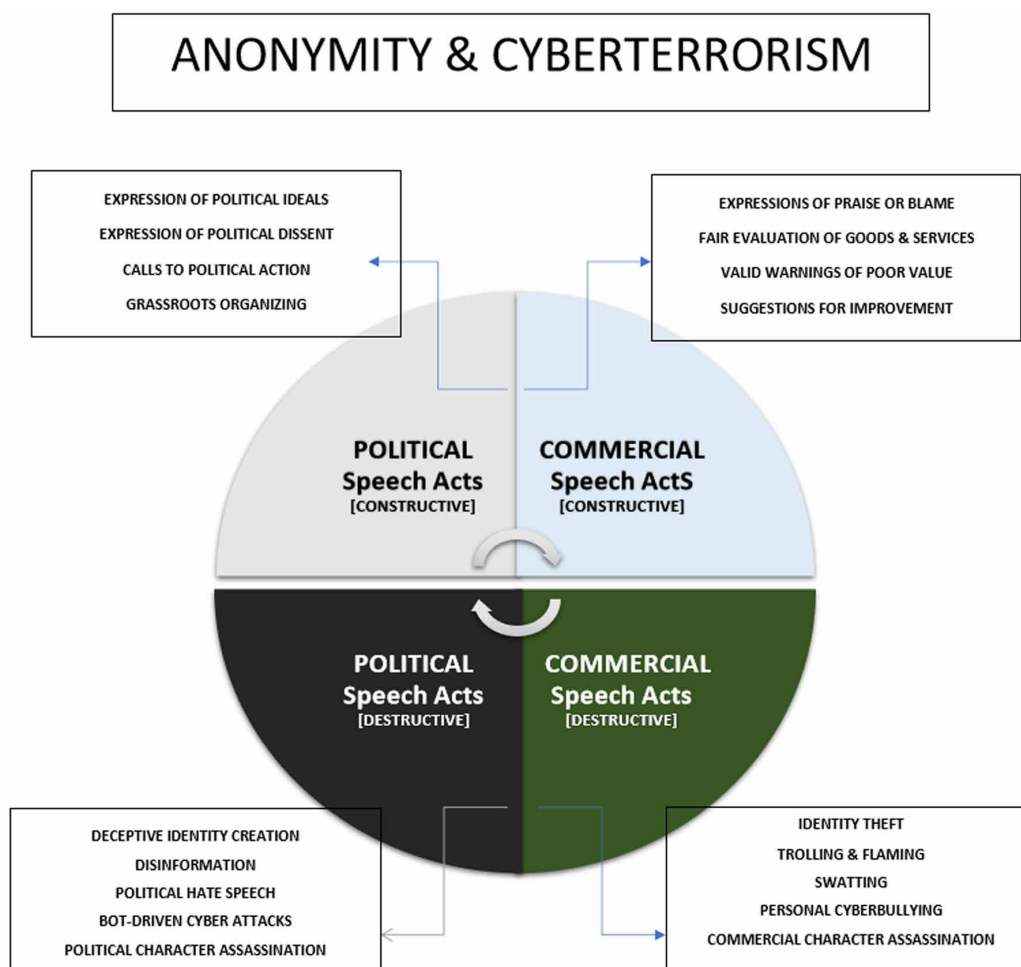
tional level and a protocol developed that can work on a state-by-state basis as well as in application to international issues. This chapter will provide historical foundation as to social media development, psychological and economic insight as to its use as a weapon, and balanced discussion of issues related to online character assassination.

Chapter Objectives

Abusive, defamatory, and threatening online content is increasingly problematic worldwide; legislative and organizational control mechanisms have not been developed that adequately contain or manage malignant content. Thus, information relating to legal definitions and legal actions is provided, from the perspective of a communication studies scholar with a focused interest defamation rhetoric and its role in conflict management and in First Amendment issues related to online journalism, but who is not a lawyer. More detailed information regarding specific causes of action and advice as to pursuit of legal claims should be directed to a licensed attorney who specializes in those specific areas of representation.

Ultimately, having a clear understanding of the threat that digital incivility poses to online communities, what constitutes actionable defamation, and ways to mitigate the wave of incivility and virtual violence that increasingly hallmarks online communication can offer a foundational line of defense against it.

Chapter Objectives

Embedded within a primary framework that examines the agonic engagement of virtuous anonymity and the malignant anonymity which emboldens online character assassination are four micro-level objectives.

The first objective of this chapter is to understand ways that the ability to "speak" anonymously in online venues can be both a blessing and a curse for human societies. Toward this end, the chapter describes the evolution of Web 2.0 social media sites in tandem with an increasingly virulent communication environment that fosters cyberbullying, trolling, and other forms of abusive communication (Gerrie, 2017; Obar & Wildman, 2015; Valentine, 2017). While political speech is a more fragile virtual arena, commercial speech as it affects professionals and public figures is a primary focus of this chapter. The role of anonymity and character traits associated with cyberbullying, trolling, and online defamation are primary objects of consideration. The case of US-based Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi is offered example of an online character assassination campaign which ended as an actual assassination.

A second, related, objective is to address the problem of protecting oneself from virtual character assassination, often complicated by the anonymity accorded to virtual attackers and laws that protect that anonymity (Obar & Wildman, 2015; Santana, 2014). The conflicting ideals of the First Amendment, which protects free speech, and the Fourth Amendment, which protects privacy, must be considered insofar as they affect legal remedies for victims of cyber-attacks on their character. Attacks on reputation are especially heinous when the professional status and livelihood of the victims is at stake.

Thus, a third objective of this chapter is to focus on interactive social media sites as arenas for digital hate speech and understand the growing "culture of hate" perpetrated by cyberbullies, trolls, and other cyberhaters.

A final objective is to provide a broad foundational understanding of what constitutes actionable defamation as a civil cause of action, with possible legal and extra-legal strategies for online reputation management. The case Dr. Sally Vogl-Bauer is an example of a reputational attack launched against an American college professor by a former student. This cautionary tale illustrates that defending against an anonymous online campaign is often a futile effort and that efforts to maintain or restore one's good name can, ironically, intensify the spotlight on the victim of defamation.

BACKGROUND

The Anonymity Conundrum

Similar to other crowd phenomena, such as the bystander effect (where people in a group are less likely to come to the aid of another person than if they were alone), groupthink (where the sense of group membership can obscure errors in judgment and lapses in critical thinking leading to bad outcomes), and the spiral of silence (where individuals measure the appropriateness of their own feelings against their perception of the feelings of the majority), troll behavior emerges from a combination of psychological and situational factors. This disquieting new form of mob mentality has come to be known as the *online*

disinhibition effect. Factors contributing to the emergence of a virtual mob include lack of effective regulation and control, a sense that consequences are not likely, asynchronous communication among the parties, leanness of the medium (which means nonverbal and visual cues that usually accompany meaningful communication are absent), a solipsistic mindset wherein one perceives themselves as the only "real" creature that exists, generational differences, and most importantly, anonymity (Dawson, 2017; Santana, 2014; Stein, 2015; Suler; 2004; Twenge & Campbell, 2008). Disinhibition can be benign or even beneficial, in facilitating the free expression of ideas and also in instances where anonymous strangers share experiences online in a mutually supportive manner with all parties benefitting (Bouchard, 2016). More often, anonymity in online communications is toxic, as occurs in trolling and cyberbullying. Where *benign disinhibition* tends to be curative and productive, *toxic disinhibition* is dangerous and destructive – often deliberately so.

People abiding in this category are app to explore places on the internet that they would never visit in the real world... toxic disinhibition may be simply a blind catharsis, a fruitless repetition of compulsion, and an acting out of unsavory needs without any personal growth at all. (Santana, 2014, p. 22, quoting Suler, 2004)

A number of studies specifically focusing on anonymity in computer mediated communication (CMC) find support for the hypothesis that anonymity is a key ingredient in online aggression, impoliteness, incivility, trolling and cyberbullying (Bartlett, 2015; Santana, 2014; Zimmerman & Ybarra, 2016).

On the Internet, Nobody Knows You're a Dog

Peter Steiner's cartoon of a key-boarding dog talking to another dog about his online activities was published in the New Yorker magazine, the deep and ominous meaning of that statement was not as readily acknowledged as it would be today. The sardonic humor of an ambitious canine pretending to be a human in order to network with others on the internet, 25 years later, has taken on more ominous connotations.

Whether anonymity is being used "properly" depends upon the situation, the communicator, and the subject matter of the communicator. In cases of political speech, the ability to remain anonymous often can be a matter of life or death; in case of commercial speech relating to assessments of professional competence, anonymity can be a weapon of character assassination. Anonymity is the basis for progressive tendencies because

[E]very country has a limit on which political opinions are allowed, and there are always people who want to express forbidden opinions, like racial agitation in most democratic countries… The border between illegal and legal but offensive use is not very sharp and varies depending on the law in each country. (Palme & Berglund, 2012, p. 3, 4)

This grey area between legality and illegality of certain speech acts constitutes the primary field of considerations of digital defamation and conflicting notions of management and control of online speech. Permissibility of certain forms of speech is further complicated in the United States and similar democracies where culturally imposed "political correctness" mandates constrain the free expression of opinions. Laws often simultaneously protect and prohibit anonymity. These laws are not consistent either

in application in specific countries and even less so if a focus is on international consensus-building relative to rights to speech *vs.* rights to anonymity *vs.* rights to privacy.

In the US, the First and Fourth Amendments exemplify protection of free speech that is not congruent with protection of the right to privacy. French law requires that Internet speech be presented with the true identity of the communicator. In Sweden, Internet service providers (ISPs) are accountable for content disseminated on their sites, while in the United States, Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act provides qualified immunity to ISPs. According to some European studies, there is a propensity to legislative and judicial bias against anonymity. "For example, U.S. Supreme Justice Scalia said, 'The very purpose of anonymity is to facilitate wrong by eliminating accountability'" (Palme & Berglund, 2012, quoting Froomkin, 1995).

Digital Speech Offenses

While the boundless virtual terrain of cyberspace offers incredible opportunities to advance humanity, it also expands the playing field for nefarious human behavior. An entirely new realm of criminal acts and forms of civil torts has come into being through the agency of Internet platforms. Cybercrimes and cybertorts are domestic and international issues of growing concern to legislators, legal practitioners and scholars.

The category of cybercrime encompasses online behaviors that would make an individual liable for criminal prosecution if they were committed in the material world. These include cyberterrorism, identity theft, cyberstalking, election manipulation, denial of service attacks, and inciting to violence. Other online behaviors may not be crimes but are actionable in courts of law – cybertorts - are those that "use the internet or computers to commit a negligent or intentional civil wrong against others" (Penn State Research Wiki, n.d.). Online defamation is a cyber tort.

The potential exists for the Internet to enable perpetrators to launch attacks from the cybersphere to damage or destroy power grids, computer networks, or other networked resources that drive 21st century human life. Malicious code embedded by remote network access can disrupt communication and information management systems and wreak havoc for individuals and for international organizations. As the Penn State researchers put it:

These threats are all around us and are now ever-present because our current society tends to be connected constantly. This interconnectivity often allows these cyber threats to go undetected.

Quoting Deloitte's 2010 cyber security watch survey, the Penn State researchers further note that

Hackers are the greatest cyber threat, over insiders, criminal organizations and foreign entities "... because on a global and national scale the typical approaches to cybersecurity are not nearly keeping pace."

Opinion manipulation by online influencers is entering public awareness, especially in light of an alleged Russian *troll farm* which attempted to manipulate the 2016 US Presidential election via other social media. especially Facebook. But this is not solely an American problem. Writing in 2015 for presentation at an International Conference on computational language learning held in Beijing China, a group of scholars addressed the problem of online opinion manipulation trolls as manifested in Eastern Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. The ready availability of online forums provides "the opportunity for

corporations, governments and others to distribute rumors, misinformation, speculation and he's other dishonest practices to manipulate user opinion" (Mihaylov, Georgiev & Nakov. 2015).

Those authors noted that Europeans had become aware of online opinion manipulation during the Ukraine crisis. In order to determine ways to distinguish internet trolls from well-meaning civilian commentators, they performed statistical analyses of the largest internet community forum linked to the Bulgarian newspaper, *Dnevnik*. Although it appears to have been a well-constructed experiment, the authors ultimately characterized it as "much of a witch hunt" (Mihaylov, Georgiev & Nakov, 2015, p. 313), suggesting that the data needs to be rechecked manually in the future rather than relying solely computer-generated results. In the end, the authors determined that there is currently no reliable way to recognize our Define who and what and online troll is. "We solve this issue pragmatically: we assume that a user who is called a troll by several people is likely to be one (p.310).

Although this chapter focuses primarily on defamatory online communication perpetrated against individuals in their professional capacities, which is considered to be commercial commentary, trolls who engage in online political commentary have become far more dangerous. While such operations pose a threat to life and democratic political processes, issues of anonymity, technological and governmental management of social media platforms, and protections for individuals similarly challenge the management of sites that facilitate commercial speech.

Anonymity and Character Assassination Online

Science fiction devotees are familiar with the concept of cloaking – as in *cloaking devices* that permit the Starship *Enterprise* to navigate uncharted interstellar territories in the fictional futures of the *Star Trek* chronicles. The cloak of invisibility also is a common theme of folktales, fairy stories, and myths across many cultures through many eras. The magical power of invisibility can facilitate heroic actions or villainous travesties. In much the same way, the cloak of anonymity in communication situations in the present time empowers persons to feel safe in sharing opinions that may otherwise be kept secret – bravely in some cases, nefariously in others. In certain venues, identity is protected by legal standards (as in information shared with attorneys, law enforcement, or medical practitioners) and in other cases identity is protected by religious conventions (as in confessions to a priest). In these instances, anonymity masks the individual's identity for a public good, in order to encourage sharing of information that might otherwise remain hidden.

It would be difficult to overstate the importance of anonymity to political speech worldwide. In the pre-revolutionary period in America, anonymity might be lauded as a critical strategy enabling independence from Great Britain. Sedition laws forced pamphleteers agitating for the establishment of an independent country had to operate behind a mask of anonymity in order to survive the publication of their ideas. Similarly, founding fathers James Madison, Alexander Hamilton and John Jay, authoring the Federalist Papers as *Publius*, found it necessary to publish using pseudonyms.

In the present time, safeguarding one's life in some cases and one's economic well-being in other instances mandates obscuring one's identity to disseminate ideas that contradict the values and practices of established authorities and power elites. In other cases, however, norms of civility (which have often morphed into extremes of political correctness conventions) come into play where anonymous hate speech or speech characterized as hate speech comes into play. In most instances, the free exchange of ideas has been the life force of a wave of democracies established worldwide in the past 30 year. Often, this has been contingent upon one's ability to communicate anonymously. Bloggers and citizen journalists have

been the driving force in political activism taking place in online forums; many of these commentators have been targeted for literal assassination because of their inflammatory ideas when unmasked by enemies to their ideals. Social media have served conflicting roles in the advance of democratic urges globally and in their suppression.

Anonymity, Trolls, Bots, and the Death of Jamal Khashoggi

An October 20th, 2018, *New York Times* article provided and in an in-depth analysis of the operations of a Saudi Troll Army and a suspected Twitter Insider who helped engineer the kidnapping and murder of Jamal Khashoggi, a Saudi living in the United States and working as a columnist for *The Washington Post*.

In many parts of the world, exposition of political and religious ideas is subsumed as one and the same, as theocratic power structures control all aspects of life in those countries. Penalties for sedition are strict and severe; even more grievous are penalties imposed for blasphemy in countries whose rule of law is based in religious tenets. Much has been written in the past decade or so about the gruesome executions of Bangladeshi bloggers – assumed to be unofficially state-sanctioned – whose expressed democratic ideals in their blogs that constituted blasphemy. Within cultures where Islamic Sharia law is the fundamental basis of all forms of life practices and activities, political speech is often deemed blasphemous. Saudi Arabia holds to a strict interpretation of Sharia law and, in conjunction with authoritative political rule, constraints on dissent are rigid.

Many Saudis had hoped that Twitter would democratize discourse by giving everyday Citizens Voice, but Saudi Arabia has instead become an illustration of how authoritarian governments can manipulate social media to silence or drown out critical voices while spreading their own version of reality. (Benner, et al., 2018)

The tragic fate of Jamal Khashoggi, the Saudi journalist advocating for democratic policies - especially free speech - in his native country while a legal resident of Virginia writing for *The Washington Post*, exemplifies the dangers of openly publishing unsanctioned, subversive political ideas. His murder inside the Saudi Embassy in Turkey in October 2018 is being seen as the culmination of a Web-based conspiracy originating at the highest levels of the Saudi government The crime is still under investigation as of the writing of this chapter, but it is becoming clear that a highly organized Internet-based operation of online trolls, humans not bots, was at the center of the conspiracy.

The *New York Times* reports that anti-dissident activities of an army of "Twitter trolls" based in Riyadh projected a disquieting foreshadowing of what was to become a political assassination. According to sources that include friends of Khashoggi, other dissident Saudi ex-pats, Middle East scholars, and cyber-tech experts, a concerted effort to silence him and other critics of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman weaponized social media, especially Twitter. It was reported that Khashoggi had been the victim of a campaign of psychological cyber warfare in the months preceding his death. His friend Maggie Mitchell Salem reported that each morning Khashoggi would check his cell phone and find himself the target of a plethora of venomous Twitter attacks. Salem states that "he would wake up to the equivalent of sustained gunfire online" (Benner, Mazzetti, Hubbard & Isaac, 2018).

Avoiding mistaking correlation with causation, it still should be noted that Saudi Arabia had the largest one-year increase in social media usage in 2018, up 31% since January, 2017 (Kemp, 2018; We Are Social, 2018). Twitter is the most popular social media platform not only for interpersonal communication but also per news in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the aftermath of the Arab Spring uprisings of 2010.

In the Khashoggi case, conflicting forces of democratic ideals and state-supported constraints of personal freedoms were heavily involved in internet-based communication, and those communications had opposing objectives. It might seem that government control of technological infrastructures and of internet functionalities that give authorities the ability to unmask those acting anonymously on the Internet would have a chilling effect on anti-authoritarian speech. However, according to Mark Owen Jones, an expert on the Persian Gulf and the Arabian peninsula,

In the Gulf, the stakes are so high for those who engage in dissent that the benefits of using social media are outweighed by the negatives, and in Saudi Arabia in particular. (quoted in Benner, et al., 2018)

The Khashoggi tragedy humanizes the anonymity conundrum and magnifies the dilemma of operationalizing dueling freedoms – the right to privacy coexisting with the right to speak - that faces those who must resolve that dialectic as it concerns online interactions. Further discussion of this point is undertaken in the Conclusions section dealing with future directions in research and legislation. Political commentary is crucial to the furtherance of democratic processes worldwide, and political speech often depends upon the speaker's right to anonymity. This goes to the crux of the issues presented in this chapter.

Commercial speech and the right to be protected from defamatory commentary, while offering a lower level of threat to life, remains a threat to global enterprises and personal well-being. While character assassination is clearly less grave than literal assassination, overcoming challenges to control, legislation and adjudication of communication abuses could establish the groundwork for preventing bloodshed that is the extreme consequence of free speech. Digital defamation and character assassination stems from the same heinous urges of people who want to hurt others physically and use social media to facilitate those objectives.

Social Media and Online Character Assassination: The State of the Art

A category of civil actions called "privacy torts" have evolved, extending classical definitions of torts of defamation, libel, and slander. Civil torts now include invasion of privacy, rights to control one's likeness, "false light" claims, and claims of "intrusion upon seclusion" (Mitrano, 2010). The emergence of these more recent communication-based causes of action are, to a great extent, the result of increasingly sophisticated communication technology.

Electronic media offers not only increasingly detailed surveillance of individuals but also establishes a network of web-based forums for commentary on individuals' activities that is global, permanent, and irrevocable (Neher & Sandin, 2017). Because of the Internet... " we not only have speech, we have endurance for all time, international scope and the potential for reverberation of that invasion or libelous statement to do real damage to people in terms of lost employment, emotional and reputational harm." (Mitrano, 2012)

The proliferation of social media sites, especially sites which review professionals such as doctors, attorneys, professors, and others whose reputations are based upon credibility and competence, have resulted in an increasing number of lawsuits for cyber-defamation (Bhimji, 2018; Boyle, 2017; Brooks, 2014; Browning, 2008; Davis, 2000; Ernst, 2018; Flaherty, 2014; Forde, 2008; Greenfield, 2014; Hur & Sequeira, 2018; Jackson, 2018; Licea, 2018; Rolfe & Douglas, 2018; Spencer, 2011; Stewart, 2016; Woodward, 2009).

Efforts are being made at state and federal levels to develop legal frameworks to manage key issues such as what liability should an internet service provider have for statements posted by their users, when should anonymity be relinquished and by what standard, and how might conflicts between mandates of the 1st and 4th amendments in cases of defamation be resolved (Balica, 2017; Cheung & Schultz, 2017; Gerrie, 2017; Nilsson, 2017; Siler, 2016; Young & Laidlaw, 2017).

As we move through the early 21st century, the core definitions of social constructs such as truth, news, and communication are being reconstructed as cultural concepts impacted by the norms and practices of those within a variety of information communities. The norms, values, and practices of professional journalists have been supplanted by the important activities of bloggers, online commentators, and other types of citizen journalists. Commentary abounds. And within this abundance of commentary, arises an abundance of potentially defamatory statements.

Although reputational crises in the virtual environment have become a global phenomenon, this chapter focuses primarily on its manifestation in the United States and Canada. Americans are guaranteed freedoms set forth in the Bill of Rights to the Constitution. Two of these, the First and the Fourth Amendments, are in dialectical opposition when considering matters of abusive communication, specifically defamatory speech acts which put the author of the communication in jeopardy of legal liability for publishing those ideas. In cases of defamation, specifically online defamation, these areas of Americans rights are on a collision course (Chemerinsky, 2017; Hopkins, 2017; Nilsson, 2017).

Actionable Online Character Assassination

Defamation, libel and slander are categories of speech which may be the basis of lawsuits in state courts, filed by persons about whom statements are made which can be shown to have caused harm to that person's reputation. To prevail in a lawsuit based upon defamation, libel or slander, the plaintiff generally must prove that the derogatory statement was false and was presented as a statement of fact and not as an opinion. Unless the statement was so abhorrent on its face that it falls into categories of *per se* defamation (set out on a state-by-state basis), the false statement also must be shown to have caused actual harm to the person's or organization's reputation. The person bringing suit usually must also show that the harmful statement of fact was made recklessly and without due diligence as to its truth or falsity. If the person who is alleging defamation, libel or slander is a public figure, then *malice* must also be proven. Malice is based upon the intentionality underlying the publication (Bhimji, 2018; Solmecke, 2013; Valentine, 2017).

Generally, *libel* is a form of defamation published as a written communication, while *slander* is a spoken or audible message. Both libel and slander can and do occur with increasing frequency on websites (Gerrie, 2017; Valentine, 2017). An individual may be slandered on a website, discussion board, blog, or review if the statement made is part of a video or podcast or audio file (Bhimji, 2018; Valentine, 2017).

Expansion of Social Media Proliferates Abusive Communication

Virtual defamation is an increasingly important area of legal practice, both in the United States and globally. Web 2.0, also known as the Participatory and Social Web, began evolving early in the 2000s due in part to changes in the way that web pages are designed and disseminated. This version of the World Wide Web provides a more dynamic and Interactive and interconnected internet, is more user-friendly, provides a high degree of user-generated content, and allows for greater collaboration and vitality of shared information. Moving away from earlier .html versions of websites that were essentially online bulletin boards and messaging sites spurred development of a multitude of social media sites, the most commonly used being Facebook and Twitter as of this writing. (Obar & Wildman, 2015) the number and types of social media platforms worldwide continues to expand rapidly.

Essentially, and most importantly for the purposes of this chapter, the shift to Web 2.0 can be characterized as a shift from user as consumer to user as participant." (Obar & Wildman, 2015. p.6) The critical element of Web 2.0 functionality is the continual input of content, which is "continuously modified by all users in a participatory and collaborative fashion." (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61) Control and regulation of the vast and interconnected network of virtual information providers and the virtual structures that facilitate communication in this network is incredibly challenging, and increasingly so as the Web expands (Balica, 2017; Brenner, 2006; Ober & Wildman, 2015; Young & Laidlaw, 2017).

The nature of virtual communication and digital communication technologies create unique challenges in terms of policy development and controls over Web content, including abusive communication generally and defamatory communication specifically. Whereas communication mediums that pre-existed the Internet and virtual communication platforms was relatively slow-moving in terms of novel developments and use-practices, tended to weed out newcomers to the benefit of established providers, and could be managed and controlled by essentially similar sets of rules and regulations.

In the case of virtual / digital communication technologies, the rate of change is so rapid and varied, that regulatory agencies do not have the luxury of time to gather information, ruminate on alternatives and potential outcomes of legislative protocols, "make adjustments while developing rules that applied, with some variation, to all providers of a given type of communication service" (Obar & Wildman, 2010, p. 15-16). Obar & Wildman note further that a second critical difference between old and new communication functionalities lies in the ways that users interact in online venues. Although there is great potential for benefit from these "new forms of socialization" generated online, there is just as much danger of harm:

[S]ocial media can facilitate injurious forms of social interaction, such as sexting, online stalking, and cyber-bullying that by any standards should be suppressed. How to craft laws and regulations that suppress what is harmful while preserving still the functionalities that facilitate positive forms of interaction is a challenge … (Ober & Wildman, 2015, p. 16)

Thus, extreme and rapid changes in communication technology, types of user interaction (especially within a social climate of pervasive incivility such as we see in the past several years), the potential for abuse that the cloak of anonymity in virtual domains provides, and the permanence of Internet-generated messages greatly complicates the establishment of control over malignant communication in virtual environments.

Another consideration that bears reflection, in terms of the challenges and pitfalls of social media communication relates to notions of ethical communication and loss of control over one's "sent" messages. Ethics scholar William W. Neher cautions that

Unlike face-to-face communication, we do not always know if the intended person (and only that person) has received the message or how the message was interpreted … The more people who have access to a message, the less any one person might control it. With the world as audience, there is little or no confidentiality or safety in sending it… The point is that digital communication can [and should] be considered public communication. (Neher & Sandin, 2017, p. 282)

Applying this thinking to the subject of social media defamation, a further point that should be considered is the ability of receivers to use screen-shots and other re-sending strategies to share the original sender's message. Thus, where actionable defamation is concerned, a claim of unintentional sharing of libelous or slanderous material may not offer protection from a lawsuit.

Social media sites are expected to continue their exponential growth and to become increasingly important globally due to the heavy involvement in these by Millennial users, who have "transformed every domain from entertainment to retail" (Bhangadia, 2017). Social media are, more and more, not only a marketplace for goods also of ideas. They are big business. The commercial importance and complexity of social media sites in both the virtual world and the real world further contribute to control challenges.

The following are striking statistics about social media use as of mid-October 2018 presented in the global social media research summary developed and maintained by We Are Social, a London UK-based firm. (We Are Social monitors and continually updates information on global social media use and global marketing strategies which tap into online capabilities.)

- Globally, internet users numbered 4.2 billion, an increase of 7% over 2017 figures
- Of these, 3.4 billion were social media users, an increase of 10% over those counted in September, 2017
- Two-thirds of the population of planet Earth used mobile phones, with 60% of these being Internet-connected smart phones
- Worldwide, there are 5.1 billion mobile phone users
- Between July and September of 2018, 68 million people went online for the first time; this is an increase of 1.5% in only 3 months
- 320 million people became first time users of social media between September, 2017, and October, 2018

Whereas only 7% of Americans interacted using social media a decade ago, that percentage has now increased to 65%. Facebook is by far the most heavily used of the social media sites with over 2 billion active users globally (Kemp, 2018; Smith & Anderson, 2018).

Marketing researchers and media scholars applying demographic information, including generational categories, are able to track popularity of specific social media sites and usage trends connected to these. The current generational classification schemed, building upon US Census figures and the Pew Center's fine-tuning of the time-frames for each, is:

- Silent generation: 1928 to 1945
- Baby Boomers: 1946 to 1964
- Generation X: 1965 to 1980
- Millennials: 1981 to 1996
- Post-millennials (as yet without a nickname): 1997 to present

Important to this discussion of online communication behaviors, these categories are defined in great part by the dominant "new" technological innovations impacting the period in which they became cognizant of the world around them. For example, television became a major force an American life during the Baby Boomer generation. Generation X saw computers generally, and personal computer specifically, have a massive impact upon daily life. While Millennials can still recall landlines and rotary phones, that generation also witnessed the development and implementation of the Internet and social media. It should also be noted that the Millennial generation further can be defined by their memories as impressionable children of the attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 and personal experience of the economic downturn of the 2008 recession (Duggan, 2014; Smith & Anderson, 2018; We Are Social, 2018).

Although all age categories are well-represented, users within the Millennial category are seen to be the heaviest participants on social media (Bhangadia, 2017; Chaffey, 2018; Duggan, 2014; Twenge & Campbell, 2008). This point becomes relevant in the discussion which follows of psychological traits attributed to cyberbullies, including Internet trolls.

Researchers also have attempted to develop a framework whereby social media may be categorized and defined by type. This endeavor – which is more complicated than it would appear at first glance – is a necessary stage in developing legislation or protocols by which defamation in the virtual realm may be identified, litigated, and controlled. There is scholarly consensus that six major types exist. These are summarized and discussed in Kaplan and Heinlein's 2010 paper setting out the challenges and opportunities of social media. The six categories they define are blogs, social networking sites such as Facebook, virtual social worlds such as Second Life, collaborative projects such as Wikipedia, content communities like YouTube, and virtual game worlds like World of Warcraft.

Kaplan and Haenlein apply relevant public communication theories and media studies theories to develop their typology table, including Erving Goffman's early work on face and self-presentation, media richness theories as described by Daft & Langel in 1986, and social presence theory, discussed by Short, Williams and Christy in 1976. They classify social media according to high medium or low levels of social presence / *media richness* on one axis and high or low according to *self-presentation / self-disclosure* on the second axis.

The Kaplan & Haenlein paper was published in 2010, just ahead of the rapid proliferation of online commentary and rating sites individuals can access today to publish what are essentially opinion-based reviews of experiences they've had with a variety of organizations and individuals. Messages are often published anonymously on these sites; anonymity somewhat confounds the usefulness of the typology described above. This is especially true relative to the dimensions of self-presentation and self-disclosure. The author is deliberately withholding disclosure and presentation of "self" when posting anonymously or with a pseudonym. It may be that an additional category is needed in order to apply relevant communication and media theories to the effects and ramifications of such rating sites. This is especially so when posts under consideration concern professionals and become subject matter in a defamation suit.

The overarching aim of this chapter is to describe, to understand and to manage malevolent communicators who use online technologies to disparage or otherwise injure individuals and organizations. The following discussion presents issues related to anonymity, characteristics of digital character assassinations, including cyber bullies and trolls, and strategies for managing and mitigating the challenges that abusive communicators impose on others.

"A Culture of Hate": Anonymity, (In)incivility and Trolls

The cover story of the October 18, 2016, issue of *Time Magazine* was entitled "Why We're Losing the Internet to the Culture of Hate." Aside from the familiar red *TIME* title, the only image on the white background of that cover is a flame-haired, pointy-eared little troll with a demonic smirk, busily typing on a laptop. The thesis of the *Time* special issue is that "trolls are ruining the internet." And the way they're doing it is to pervert a technology that is well oriented toward sharing ideas, values, wisdom, hopes, by turning it into a dark and eerie cyber-forest where bad, dangerous things are lurking.

Human beings indulging in variety of misbehaviors online have come to be known as *trolls*. The word may summon the image of a fisherman trailing a line while moving along the water or of a mean and smelly little creature who lurks under a bridge to frighten and extort tolls from travelers, depending upon one's cultural experiences. Both definitions properly capture the essence of the activity characterized as *trolling* in Internet venues. Trolls feed on attention, especially negative reactions, and exact psychological tolls upon their targets. Trolls are often *phishing* for data or entry into others' online accounts; the term *catfishing*, an extreme form of anonymity and identity theft morphed together, lures someone online into believing that they are forging a real relationship with someone who does not actually exist. Other specialized troll behaviors include *doxxing* (where personal financial and other sensitive data is released to the public), *flaming* (pulling others into heated and in civil discussions over usually trivial points of view), and *swatting* (summoning emergency or law enforcement personnel to someone's actual home – all just for the *lulz* (laughs). In the latter case, swatting has led to the deaths of innocent people clue when they resist law enforcement personnel who show up at their doors. Another form of vile troll behavior that is occurring with increasing frequency is an extreme form of cyberbullying known as RIP-trolling. This occurs when bereaved families are subjected to heartless taunts and insults of their deceased loved one. In similar behavior, cyberbullies and trolls attempt to shame their targets into such self-loathing and despair that they become suicidal.

Although liberals and progressives engage in trolling to some extent, "trolling has become the tool of the alt-right" (Stein, 2016). Digital troll voices tend to be racist, sexist, misogynistic, anti-Semitic, anti-immigrant, and generally anti" anything that the majority value and find praiseworthy. This is because, at its core, troll behavior can be seen to have its genesis in fearful self-loathing and envy. However, attempting to categorize persons likely to be trolls on the basis of age, gender, political likes, dislikes, and other demographic and psychographic data would be to misunderstand that persona. People who troll are not readily identifiable by distinguishing characteristics such as an intimidating scowl, a curled lip, or a nasty laugh triggered by other people's pain.

Jessica Moreno, formerly Reddit's (an online news aggregator feed with user-generated content) head of community, points to the actions of users within one Reddit online community called *fatpeoplehate* as instrumental in her decision to leave her job there. She and her husband, also a former Reddit employee, eventually had to move away from their home and conceal their new location when Reddit trolls became angry at her efforts to decommission the *fatpeoplehate* site. Administrative responsibilities and

privileges of her Reddit position gave her access to the real personal identification of anonymous posters, so she was able to know who the people behind the anonymous hate posts were. She noted that the troll personality isn't what one might think it is at first glance.

The idea of the basement dweller drinking Mountain Dew and eating Doritos isn't accurate... they would be a doctor, a lawyer, and inspirational speaker, a kindergarten teacher. They've been normal person. It's more complex than just being good or bad. (Stein, 2016)

Psychographic Characteristics of Cyberhaters

In virtual communication communities, abusive communication has become so widespread that, according to one researcher, 80% of young participants see it as "commonplace" (Stein, 2016). A 2014 study of the online environment by the Pew Research Center determined that a large majority of people who are active online have experienced hurtful communications to some extent. The age group of their respondents is linked to the venue in which the hurtful communication was encountered. Where internet users age 50 and older who had been hurt by a communication reported that the most recent incident happened in an email account, a large number of young adults age 18 to 29 (especially males) reported the most recent abusive communication they had experienced happened in online gaming. Analyzing responses by gender, 79% of women reporting named social networking sites as the location where they most often experienced abusive communication, compared to 59% of men reporting this. Overall, 66% of those who experienced abusive communication online stated that the harassment occurred on a social networking site or app.

In the same Pew Research Center study, 68% of respondents thought that the online environment "was more enabling of social support, with 31% disagreeing." At the same time, 92% of respondents felt that the online environment allowed people to be more critical of others, with only 7% disagreeing. The study also elicited number of first-person reactions to being targeted by anonymous online cruelty:

Cowards hiding beyond a keyboard and the anonymity of the internet provides were verbally abusive.

A disagreement in a chat ...people are ten feet tall and bulletproof behind a screen.

People who disagree acting out in ways that would never be acceptable when dealing with someone in person.

A 2016 survey of 1,000 Americans indicated that about one-quarter had been victims of online harassment in some form or knew someone who had been. Twenty percent of the victims were concerned about repercussions to themselves professionally; 20% reported being fearful about going into public; and 29% actually feared for their lives and well-being. "Experts believe that it's going to get worse" (Chastain, 2018).

Digital Haters: Who Does That?

A number of researchers have attempted to delineate the difference between a *cyberbully* and a *troll* (Bishop, 2014; Buckels, Trapnell & Paulhus, 2014; Shahan & Hara, 2010; Zezulka & Seigfried-Spellar,

2016). Again, there is consensus that anonymity has a stimulating effect on aggressive online communication, making attack communication more likely when anonymity is added to a constellation of personality traits.

A workable definition of online trolling is "the practice of behaving in a deceptive, destructive, or disruptive manner in a social setting on the Internet with no apparent instrumental purpose (Buckels, Trapnell & Paulhus, 2014). The pointlessness of the troll activity is one dividing line between trolling and cyberbullying. One of the first systematic studies examining the behaviors of Internet trolls focused on differentiating trolls from hackers operating in *Wikipedia*. That 2010 study characterized both behaviors as forms of virtual vandalism. Common features shared by trolls and hackers included their hidden identity as they undertake deceptive online behavior, the intentionality of their destructive acts, and the repetitive nature of the behaviors (Shachaf & Hara, 2010, pp. 363-365). A subsequent study tracked the changing characterizations of online trolling behaviors to develop a typology and construct a matrix of trolling types. Generally, the meaning of *trolling* has expanded from simply meaning dialogic flaming on a discussion board and otherwise provoking heated exchanges for shared enjoyment to meaning all forms of online abuse perpetrated purely for the troll's amusement. Broadly defined, the more recent definition encompasses

... a group of people looking for a new villain to attack in order to escape their own insecurities. And there are the counter culture groups who enjoy identifying as trolls as they know it is seen as deviant by others, making their subversive and transgressive humor that much more enjoyable. (Bishop, 2014, p.13)

The same study also charts trolling behaviors in terms of grades "... namely, playtime, tactical, strategic and domination, with the first the least severe, and the last most severe" Bishop, 2014, p.19).

The type of abusive communication this chapter focuses on most closely, defamatory trolling on internet rating sites, best fits the third category, also called "strategic cyberbullying." These trolls are described as going out of their way "to cause problems, but without a sustained and plan long-term campaign." Such messages are typically posted on websites that "are open to a wide audience, where many can see the message posted and then move on" (ibid., p. 20.)

The Dark Triad of personality - that is characteristics of narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy, often more narrowly framed as sadism - is a psychological link from children who bully in the real world to people who grow up to be trolls online (Buckels, Trapnell & Paulus, 2014). Other characteristics statistically significant in studies of abusive online behaviors include aggression, deception, and disruption. Generally, the pointlessness of the behaviors is underscored by the obscurity of the transgressor's intent and the cloak of anonymity (ibid., p. 98). Researchers have found that "cyberbullying is often perpetrated by heavy internet users, and disagreeable persons use mobile technologies more than others" (ibid., p. 97). Citing previous research, the authors stated that

...those with antisocial personality disorder use Facebook more frequently than others, indicating that dark personalities leave large digital footprints. After all, trolling culture embraces a concept virtually synonymous with sadistic pleasure: in troll-speak, "lulz" ... Internet trolls displayed high levels of the Dark Tetrad traits and a BFI profile consistent with those traits. It was sadism, however, that had the most robust associations with trolling of any of the personality measures ... [Associations were] so strong that it might be said that online trolls are prototypical everyday sadists ... both trolls and sadists feel

satisfaction at the distress of others. Sadists just want to have fun and the internet is their playground! (ibid, p. 98, p. 100-101)

Several quantitative analyses of generational differences among Americans have delineated four categories of individuals whose major life experiences (and technological advances that defined their youth and young adulthood). Insights as to generational aspects of a propensity toward incivility and abusive communication support those findings insofar as younger Internet users are concerned.

Twenge and Campbell's 2008 longitudinal study covered an 80-year time frame in an analysis of hundreds of psychological profiles of college students throughout that time, a sample of more than 1.4 million people. The four categories broken out of this meta-analysis were:

- Veterans (a/k/the Silent Generation) 1922 to 1945
- Baby Boomers 1946 to 1964
- Generation X 1965 to 1980
- Millennials 1980 to 2000

These time frames correspond generally to those established by the US Census Bureau and the Pew Center for research. Findings identified a set of specific traits statistically significant for Millennials which differentiate that demographic in terms of communication style, interpersonal interactions, personal and professional objectives, and psychological profile. These include:

- A decreased need for social approval
- A simultaneous increase in both self-esteem and narcissism
- An expectation of continual praise and a resistance to criticism
- An external locus of control (placing agency and accountability for outcomes outside oneself)
- Higher levels of anxiety and depression
- Increased assertiveness (in Millennial females)

Further, this research specifically associates the Dark Triad of personality traits with the Millennial generation, especially as these are manifested in the workplace and, one might assume, other similarly public spheres (Trapnell & Paulus, 2014; Twenge & Campbell, S.M., 2008; Twenge, Miller & Campbell, W.K., 2014).

Identifying and attempting to understand the personality characteristics of cyberbullies and internet trolls is increasingly the focus of scholarly research. The objective ultimately is to mitigate the effects of these people on internet discourse specifically and on norms of civility generally. A 2016 study of cyberharassment analyzed self-reports of those who engaged in cyberbullying, trolling, neither behavior, or both behaviors. Generally speaking, few factors differentiate cyberbullies from internet trolls; cyberbullies tended to be less extroverted and score higher on neuroticism than those who engaged only in trolling behaviors. The study suggests that an individual who is likely to engage in cyberbullying is probably just as likely to engage in trolling. Shared characteristics included low internal moral values, low conscientiousness, and especially, low self-esteem (Zezulka & Seigfried-Spellar, 2016). Turning attention to such online rating sites as RateMyProfessor.com, these psychological traits provide some illumination of the motives of defamatory trolling.

Interactive Online Sites as Arenas for Digital Hate Speech

When online news media began allowing for reader comments at the end of news stories, that provided an entry into all forms of emotional abuse in what could be called the Forum of Mean-Spirited Opinions. Originally, the commentary areas were anonymous. In response to the increasing incivility on the site, however, newspapers began requiring identification or requiring that users log into a Facebook or similar account prior to being able to post. That had some effect on increasing civility on the newspaper sites (Santana, 2015). However, many online opinion sites which publish reviews of such professionals such as doctors, dentists, and college professors continue to allow comments to remain anonymous. These sites have sometimes become rhetorical battlegrounds where allegations of defamation are being brought with increasing frequency and some increase in their success.

Character assassination is not constrained by national boundaries. A variety of cyber-tort issues are being raised around the globe over negative ratings and false narratives posted by individuals that are alleged by their targets to be nothing more than libel, slander, defamation, invasion of privacy, or otherwise actionable.

A 2014 report notes of 23% increase in defamation cases filed in the UK in the previous year. "The growth in the number of reported defamation cases is partly due to a sharp rise in claims brought over defamatory material publish through social media and websites" (Greenslade, 2014). Because these posts are anonymous, making it difficult to uncover the truth or falsity of the posted information, it is also difficult to determine who the person is behind the mask of anonymity who is making the statement or to understand why they are doing so. Thus, successful prosecution of digital defamation is extremely difficult.

Twenge and Campbell discuss the concept of a "psychological contract" that exists in organizational relationships, whereby the authoritative and subordinate parties negotiate beliefs and understandings of the terms of their shared objectives. This negotiation is not necessarily deliberate or even consciously undertaken in real life but, instead, exists in the minds of the parties – often in very different forms. This can lead to both functional and emotional repercussions when it becomes evident that no real agreement underpins the shared tasks and goals. Incongruence between the expectations of the employer and the employee can lead to perceptions that one or more obligations of the employer or unfulfilled. Since the subordinate likely does not have a sense of operational power, that can lead to blows struck behind the mask of an anonymous rating site.

Narrowing consideration now to ways that powerless individuals may feel safe in expressing dislike or disapproval of experiences they've shared with certain professionals, such as doctors, dentists, and college professors, the notion of what might be considered a broken promise (from the point of view of the subordinate) can manifest in feelings of anger and hurt that might cause the individual to turn to an anonymous forum in order to strike back at the perceived transgressor. This form of aggressive or abusive online communication that is potentially actionable in courts of law could be called *defamation trolling* to differentiate it from other forms of online incivility and allow for a clearer and closer investigation of that behavior with an eye toward understanding, controlling, and mitigating its ill effects.

Professor rating sites such as RateMyProfessor.com offer a lens through which the type of abusive communication that occurs on rating sites can be analyzed. Taking a logical leap but without attempting to quantify it, assume for purposes of this reflection that because the majority of college students fall between the ages of 18 and 25, the majority of individuals posting content to RateMyProfessors are likely to be members of the Millennial generation. This may enhance understanding whether and how

the personality traits connected with the Millennial generation manifest themselves in teacher ratings. When content alleged to be libelous or injurious to the target's professional reputation is posted on such sites, this is not necessarily done so deliberately or consciously, but may be deflecting difficult emotions into online statements that could meet the standards for actionable defamation.

The Case of Sally Vogl-Bauer

Case number 2013-001140 filed in the Walworth County Wisconsin Circuit Court on December 11, 2013, attracted a great deal of attention because it involved a professor's defamation action against a former student, a more novel occurrence then than currently.

Dr. Sally Vogl-Bauer, a tenured professor of Communication at the University of Wisconsin at White-water, had been made the target of a campaign of extreme online vitriol by Anthony Llewellyn, a graduate student she'd taught. In her court filing, Dr. Vogl-Bauer stated that the student's false and defamatory online statements had caused her "substantial economic, reputational and emotional injuries," and she requested actual and punitive damages as well as the legal costs of the suit. According to the student, however, Dr. Vogl-Bauer treated him abusively and unfairly to such an extent that she caused him to drop out of graduate school in 2013. Llewellyn accused Vogl-Bauer of calling him a "horrible student," "screaming and lashing out at him," accusing him of plagiarism, mocking him for a learning disability, and causing him to be dismissed from the University (Brooks, 2014; Flaherty, 2014; Greenfield, 2014).

Included among a large repertoire of retaliatory communications, were reviews of her teaching Llewellyn posted on a rating site called TeacherComplaints.com, similar narratives on several blog sites, a YouTube video entitled *Sally Vogl-Bauers' Garbage*, letters of complaint about Vogl-Bauer to her department at the University, to the Eastern Communication Association (a professional group to which she belonged), the Better Business Bureau, and the Federal Trade Commission. Additionally, a number of online communications similar to those that clearly were authored by Llewellyn carried similar content, although posted under other names.

Vogl-Bauer's attorney, Timothy Edwards, speaking on her behalf, made it clear that there was no argument that a student has a right to express unhappiness with a teacher's instructional methods and assessment approaches. In this case though, according to Edwards, the student went too far in making statements that went far beyond permissible statements of opinion into the realm where they were not only false but also defamatory. The objective of the Vogl-Bauer lawsuit was to draw a line between what is protected speech and what is defamation.

The case raises questions about the line between rating and defaming one's professor, and of what, if any, ethical and legal obligations students have in publicly assessing professors' performance. ... When you make false statements of fact repeatedly about another person with the intent of harming them, that's over the line. If you truthfully say, in my experience, this isn't a good teacher, I didn't have a good experience, she was late and that's your opinion, that's fair. (quoted in Greenfield, 2014)

Prior to filing the lawsuit, Vogl-Bauer and her attorney repeatedly requested the student to remove the defamatory postings and video, but Llewellyn refused to do so. Llewellyn states, "I don't feel I've went [sic] too far with my videos and comments because everything posted basically communicates exactly how Sally Vogl-Bauer treated me" (Brooks, 2014).

The apparently endless communication attack by Llewellyn finally forced Vogl-Bauer to resort to the courts in order to protect her professional reputation. Her attorney states a strong claim as to the permanent effects of a virtual attack on character:

Persistent defamation of one's peers and within a small professional Community can be devastating to the career of a well-respected professional such as Ms. Vogel Bauer. Students have a right to express their opinion, but when you go so far beyond that, into a concerted effort to attack somebody's reputation because things didn't go your way, that's much different. (ibid)

Ultimately, the case was settled without a trial. The widespread reports of the conflict, both in publications catering to higher education and in mainstream media, attracted quite a bit of attention and a polarized audience of commentators. Some of those commenting online made references to similar lawsuits where physicians and dentists have filed similar defamation actions against anonymous posters claiming to be disgruntled patients. As public awareness of these conflicts chains out into the online community, the attention the legal actions and controversies that arise around them attracts a great deal of attention. Individuals who are already embarrassed by content they found to be defamatory that they went on record with a lawsuit then get to experience the Streisand Effect firsthand. This is the phenomenon that occurs when an attempt to obscure or remove negative information on the internet actually attracts far more attention than it would have had the efforts to erase it had not been launched.

The Vogl-Bauer case also illustrates the complexity and ubiquity of containment challenges inherent in managing online commentary within the larger issue of controlling online content while, at the same time, fostering a climate of free speech and inquiry. There are various forms of privilege and qualified privilege that enable a person to post statements without fear of reprisal. But statements also are made that place the individual making them at risk for liability for defamation. While statements of opinion are permitted, making false statements – even those presented under the guise of opinion – are prohibited, especially when these cause harm.

REPUTATIONAL SELF-DEFENSE: IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As discussed above, abusive communication published on Internet sites is not an American phenomenon. It is not a North American phenomenon, nor is it an issue facing only developed, Westernized countries. It is a global issue. Legislative and policy-making bodies encounter daunting challenges in attempting to address this increasingly salient issue. Even defining the terms – social media, defamation, bullying *versus* trolling, and other concepts similarly associated with online communication – is very difficult. Agreement on a policy-making vocabulary is unlikely to become less complex in the future, due to the rapid proliferation of technological advances and new behaviors that accompany each new Internal functionality.

Chetty and Alathur's "Hate Speech Review in the Context of Online Social Networks" (2018) aims at categorizing online forms of terrorism and extremism, providing as well a compendium of their research of international legal frameworks that illustrate a fairly substantial corpus of shared human values encoded into "accepted declarations and conventions supporting fundamental rights to every human being (p. 111). Tables illustrating their findings summarize articles from five international bodies promulgating

pro-social norms for free speech as well as efforts to control and restrict hate speech. They find "that the view of all the treaties are almost the same with some added restrictions on hate speech by the [International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination]" (pp. 111-114). This research in combination with applications of US state and federal attempts to elucidate, define, and control actionable online speech acts may provide a solid starting-point for workable international conventions.

The issue of anonymity is a critical one to consider in devising an e-form of control over abusive internet communication and determining what, if any, forms of speech must be prohibited. There are compelling and prosocial reasons for an anonymity to be permitted, both in real world mediums and even more so, in the virtual world. While in some ways anonymity protects virtual character assassins, it also protects those who desire to freely share ideas and values related to democratic principles, allowing them to escape political assassination. While online defamation poses a risk to some professionals' livelihood and anonymity enables that risk, the lack of anonymity for certain online commentators seeking to further humanistic ideals is a threat to life itself. Identifying perpetrators, human and bot, linking behaviors to situational triggers. Identifying, predicting, and controlling these communications is greatly enhanced by developments in machine learning and artificial intelligence classifiers that translate Twitter and similar social media data into meaningful categories distinguishing between hate speech, especially those responses "with a focus on race, ethnicity, or religion" (Burnap and Williams, 2015, p. 223).

Ideally, legal, judicial, and policy-building best practices for managing online communication will be developed to an extent where an international framework can be developed that will permit for a set of standards that might tap into whatever core human values, if such can be determined, will offer guiding principles for adaptation and adoption within local and national communities. Artificial intelligence classifiers may be quite useful in sorting bots from humans and "used to forecast the likely spread of cyber hate in a sample of Twitter data" (*ibid*).

Individual actions at the institutional and individual levels could foster workable communication practices and establish educational objectives oriented toward ameliorating the growing and dense cloud of incivility overhanging today's communication networks, both on the internet and in the material world. Young students might learn in school to consider a variety of ethical approaches, both to daily life and to generic communication situations. Understanding the boundaries between free speech and prohibited speech, especially when publishing ideas on the Internet and especially through social media, is a good first step in training people to communicate ethically and honorably. Appealing to self-interest in teaching that the truth is an absolute defense in most cases where defamation is alleged, people might prefer to tell the truth simply to avoid consequences of defaming.

CONCLUSION

Anonymity is critical to democratic discourse and often empowers an individual's ability to exercise free speech, so it is protected by law in many venues including the United States. In balancing the right to privacy with the right to express one's opinion, a double bind arises. It is important to understand the intention underlying the public statement. Is it a heartfelt opinion based on an actual experience? Is it cyberbullying of a perceived enemy? Is it narcissistic externalization of a toxic lack of self-esteem? Or is it mean-spirited troll behavior sadistically acted out simply for the lulz?

The quandary arises when one must conclude that some form of unmasking the communicator is necessary to carry forward any legal action for defamation in most venues. Some preliminary speculation and assumptions about categories of persons most likely to be posting material alleged to be defamatory may be helpful, thus the focus on definition of terms.

It is important to recognize that online trolling behavior and norms of incivility are on the ascendant, mirroring the numerous chasms of cultural hostility developing within increasingly polarized factions. Hating is contagious, and haters can be found at every level of human enterprise. Anyone can be a troll; celebrities can be and are trolls, spreading toxicity even more potently than everyday people, because their fame and wealth add to their authority. The negative halo of their fame endows their words with a powerful virulence that causes abusive, malignant communications to metastasize and cultivate virtually any arena for commentary into a troll farm.

At the same time, the Internet empowers individuals as commentators and publishers to an extent never before experienced. Individuals have as much power to spread goodwill and amity via the Internet as they do to troll and cyber-hate. Message boards and commentary sites attached to media allow individuals to model effective engagement in online communications and to contribute to civility in the public cybersphere. Thus, education as to the rights and responsibilities that attach to free speech is critical as is the modeling of ethical communication practices by individuals working in virtual conversations, either as active participants or passive observers with the ability to post commentary. In this way, virtual realms can be cultivated to move beyond a farm that grows cyberbullies and trolls.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Abusive Communication: In this context, an online message that is false, derogatory or demeaning, uncivil, bigoted, or logically likely to cause hurt or harm to the target/subject of that communication.

Anonymity: As used in this chapter, the condition wherein an online commentator's actual identity is not made available. In addition to pure anonymity, where no identifying information is provided, this also would include situations where the commentator uses a pseudonym or an avatar for self-representation.

Communications Decency Act of 1996, Section 230: Federal law that creates freedom from liability for content of online forums which publish information, either visual or spoken by third parties, which may be defamatory. Internet service providers (ISPs) have used this act to absolve themselves from responsibility for online defamation. It also makes it difficult to identify, prosecute or sue for anonymous communications posted online.

Cyber-Bullying: A form of malevolent online abusive communication which intentionally demeans or otherwise targets the victim. Among younger internet users, this would include what they often term as creating *drama* or *pranking* or *punking*, the creation of memes or other disparaging, hurtful depictions of a victim.

Dark Triad of Personality Traits: Psychological attributes that produce a cluster of personality disorders that includes narcissism, Machiavellianism, or psychopathology (each of which manifests along a spectrum of behaviors for that trait). Psychopathy is sometimes discussed more narrowly as *sadism*. When an individual has these personality traits at the more extreme end of the spectra and the traits act together in the thought patterns and behaviors of that person, it often indicates an aggressive person with high regard for self and low regard for others which causes them to victimize other people. The Dark Triad is seen as statistically relevant in cyber-bullying and online troll behaviors.

Defamation *per Quod*: An allegation that a defamatory statement was made which falls outside the categories of obviously defamatory statements that produce defamation *per se*. In these cases, evidence that the individual suffered damage because of the statement must be presented to support and prove the charge.

Defamation *per Se*: Most states in the US have determined communication types that are so damaging to individuals' and organizations' reputations that the statements are false doesn't have to be proven. It is enough simply to prove that they have been published in order to prevail on a suit for defamation. Types of statements that can result in defamation *per se* vary by state. They include claiming someone suffers from a "loathsome" disease (which has come to include allegations of mental illness), engages in "abnormal" sexual behaviors, engages in criminal activity of various kinds, or making statements that are so extreme that the allegation itself is likely to injure one's reputation in their trade, business or profession.

Lulz: Internet slang term that evolved as the plural form of LOL (*laughing out loud*), when acronyms were used to depict a non-verbal affective dimension of communication prior to emoticon innovations. *Just for lulz*, meaning "for laughs," often in a mean-spirited vein as part of trolling behavior.

Machiavellianism: A personality characteristic that is one of the Dark Triad marked by an end-justi-fies-the-means attitude and a high willingness to manipulate people and situations to achieve one's ends.

Malice, Related to Defamation: Knowingly and deliberately communicating false or harmful informa-tion or doing so without investigating and with "reckless disregard" for the truth. In many venues, public figures must demonstrate malice as part of their burden of proof when bringing a defamation action.

Narcissism: A personality trait manifesting as extreme self-centeredness, desire for approving atten-tion and praise, belief in one's "specialness," lack of empathy, a tendency to exploit others, resistance to criticism, and a sense of entitlement. One of the Dark Triad personality traits linked to cyber-bullying and trolling.

Psychopathy: Sometimes called "anti-social personality disorder" or "sociopathy," manifests as ab-sence of remorse for bad behaviors, lack of empathy or compassion for others, often superficial charm, failure to learn from mistakes, displays disregard for the rights or feelings of others. One of the Dark Trial traits (also characterized as sadism) linked to cyber-bullying and trolling.

Streisand Effect: The phenomenon that occurs when one attempts to censor online information backfires by actually attracting more attention to the information once the attempt to remove it from view is made known. The name comes from an invasion of privacy situation that arose when Barbra Streisand's mansion was photographed by a professional who was charting the Malibu coastline; the pictures were published the photographers web-site. Prior to Streisand's lawsuit, the pictures were viewed only a few times. After the lawsuit, however, the photos received over 1,000,000 views. Relevance here is that lawsuits filed against rating sites such as Yelp or RateMyProfessor for defamatory content will often draw an extraordinary level of attention to the contested posting.

Section 5

Phishing, Email Scams, and Ponzi Schemes

Chapter 22
"Attention Beneficiary...!":
Assessing Types and Features
of Scam Emails

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ABSTRACT

This chapter identifies the various types and features of scam emails as a genre of computer-mediated communication. The types identified include money transfer, investment scam, inheritance claim, next-of-kin claim, charity donation scam, foreign aid scam, foreign lottery scam and email account lottery scam. The study also describes the linguistic and discourse features of these types of scam emails and argues that the more knowledge of online financial crimes that is created and disseminated, the more people are informed and empowered to protect themselves against them. This study hopes to contribute significantly to literature on phishing attacks and online financial crimes.

INTRODUCTION

Scam is synonymous with fraud, dishonesty or treachery. Like other types of phishing, "scam emails" refers to unsolicited emails that aim to defraud the receiver by tricking them into disclosing their bank details or other private security information. Phishing emails may appear in graphical form or in both written and pictorial formats. From ancient times, it appears that some people are endowed with sugar-coated tongues or are gifted with the exceptional ability to lie or tell stories that can deceive others. Before the advent the Internet, business scams or "confidence games" came in similar forms, suggesting business ideas or offering partnership in an already existing one. These "business deals" might involve financial commitments, where postal costs were incurred, and other risks such as letters being lost in transit, being

delayed in delivery or being sent to a wrong person were experienced. However, as awareness of business scams grew among business people, some scam mails were intercepted in the process of mailing and discarded; in some cases, where writers of scam mails were arrested, they were tried and imprisoned.[1]

Information technology and the Internet now make online fraud or email scams much easier and faster since its delivery to the target is almost instantaneous and occurs without an intermediary. It also retains confidentiality as it is not made public, except by the recipient.

The Internet further allows for sourcing of any kind of information and accessing other contacts through an initial contact, among other benefits to the scammer. Thus, criminal-minded persons have likely targets for their emails available on a daily basis. As an updated version of the pre-Internet confidence game, scam email removes the risk of seeing face to face, making crime easier to commit at this stage, insofar as facial and body gestures are eliminated or postponed.

The present study focuses on scam emails also known as "Nigerian 419 emails" or "advance fee fraud" (Chiluwa 2009; 2010). Recipients of such unsolicited emails are either offered a money donation or asked to partner with other persons to transfer a specified huge amount of money for a fee; sometimes recipients are asked to utilize some money that would be made available to them for some charity work. In the context of this study, scam emails are differentiated from the general spam emails in terms of their criminal intent and has actually resulted in scams, where unsuspecting victims have been defrauded of their money (Chiluwa 2015). In 2016, about $59 million were lost to investment scams in Australia alone, and it is estimated that losses will exceed US$1 trillion globally (See Chiluwa 2019; Vishwanath et al, 2011).

BACKGROUND

Studies in linguistics, law, cybercrime and cybersecurity have recognized the menace of phishing and email scams, many of which are said to originate in Nigeria (Heyd, 2008). Zook (2007, p.65) particularly argued that advance fee fraud "has strong historic ties to Nigeria" with a global network that operates in other countries. Email scams by Nigerians have been said to be justified as a way of providing reparations for crimes against Africans, who were cheated through slave trade and colonialism. This argument has assisted scammers to rationalize their crimes, convincing themselves that scamming is justifiable given these special circumstances. The idea of Nigerians being the kingpins of scam reached such an embarrassing height that the Nigerian Government formulated a legal injunction about scam being punishable by law. "419", which has come to be known as a synonym for scam, is a section of the Nigerian criminal code, dealing with advance fee fraud (Chiluwa, 2010).

The first studies of email scams adopted linguistic approaches to investigate the English competence of the writers of scam emails for a clue to the origin of the scammers (see Blommaert, 2005). Also, Blommaert & Omoniyi (2006) argued that while the authors of scam emails demonstrated technical skills in the use of information technology, they lacked the corresponding linguistic competence to produce the appropriate messages to reflect the credible identities and relationships in the proposed transactions. More recently, however, Taiwo (2012) argued that scammers had "improved" in terms of how the messages were constructed.

According to that study, the scam email writers relied on experiential knowledge of the recipient's vulnerability and constructed their messages to appeal to them. Hence, certain scam emails used fewer pressure tactics, and writers tend to construct for themselves an identity of a "non-confident, naïve,

vulnerable and ignorant person" in other to increase their persuasive power (p.143). Similarly, Chiluwa, (2017) analyzing stance-taking in email scam discourse, argued that scammers position themselves as victims of circumstances with deceptive narratives designed to invoke pity. Thus, the study identified stance markers such as self-mention, boosters and attitude markers that are prevalent in the scam emails. Self-mention technique is when the writer adopts a false self-representation to constructs an authorial identity for himself, such as "my name is barrister Kenneth Brown, I practice law and by the virtual of my position with Old Mutual Bank Plc…" (p.22). This type of false claim is to create an ambience of importance and to persuade the reader.

Chiluwa (2009, 2010) examined the discourse-pragmatic features of scam emails and showed that the writers applied some forms of cultural greeting formulas, reassurance techniques, confidence building and action prompting strategies to sustain the interest of their prospective victims. Some forms of "speech acts" such as greetings and polite address forms (expressive act), and unrealistic promises as persuasive tactics (commissive act) were copiously used. Directive verb-forms and appeals to scarcity (of time) were also used by scammers to urge email account owners to act promptly. Interestingly, Tan, Abdollahi-Guilani & Chen, (2017), also identified the three levels of John Austin's speech acts: namely locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts in the messages of "Chinese Cyber-fraudsters." Austin (1962) explains that when an individual makes a sentence with a certain meaning using the grammar, phonology and semantics of the language, s/he performs the *locutionary act*. The *Illocutionary act* is the intention of an utterance to constitute either an act of promise, command, invitation, agreement, greeting, pronouncement etc. If the utterance achieves certain response or effect, like embarrassment, fear, confusion, enjoyment, acceptance etc., it is called the *Perlocutionary act*. Searle (1969) expanded Austin's concept of the illocutionary act and identified other forms of "acts" such as representative–informing, asserting, stating; directive (i.e., ordering/commanding); and declarative (i.e. making pronouncements, informing or making statements) among others. Significantly, most of these acts like those highlighted above are found in the various scam emails. Tan, Abdollahi-Guilani & Chen, (2017) further noted that the Chinese fraudsters do "not bother to address face threatening acts," rather, they appear more aggressive and use imperatives more often. But when they communicate with their victims in real time, they "soften their diction" (p.102).

Unfortunately, Bobovsek & Slak (2013), observed that advance fee fraud messages are a "non-declining trend" as scammers "are constantly developing and using both bulks sending and narrower targeting." The latter medium was said to be more dangerous as the messages are more adapted to the interest of the target receiver. Miller (2016) blamed the growth of this cybercrime on the lack of research into the legal implications, community policing and resource challenges of dealing with advance fee fraud.

TYPES OF SCAM EMAILS

Before the advent of email scams, as highlighted above, various types of "grifter" schemes and confidence games were already quite prevalent in some societies, with unsuspecting victims being defrauded of large sums of money with apparent ease. Among the common ones was the "the Spanish Prisoner" scam, where a wealthy family would be told that their son was imprisoned abroad (i.e. if indeed they had a son abroad), and "a good Samaritan" could help facilitate his release if the family would make some money available to process his release. Some families actually fell for this scam and paid huge

sums of money. The scammer would come back with one difficulty and another and suddenly vanished and another person took the scene and the milking process would begin all over.

Another type is the claim that a paper can be washed with a particular chemical that would turn it to a currency. Scammers would produce papers shaped like banknotes and the victims would be required to provide money to buy the chemical to change them to genuine money.[2] At other times, someone would claim to be in possession of some "precious items" from a loved one abroad, who borrowed a sum from the bearer to buy the items. In return at the point of delivery, the recipient would pay the outstanding sum to the bearer. If the unsuspecting recipient pays the outstanding sum, the bearer would vanish without delivering the item.[3]

Some of these scams are still happening today, such as the common scheme where someone receives a phone call and is asked to pay the school fee of a student on his behalf; the caller (faking the name and voice of someone the receiver knows) is out of the country and would return in a few days. The school fee is urgent to enable the student write his/her exams. The receiver goes ahead and pays into a given account number only to realize later that it was a scam.

Blommaert (2005) identified four (4) types of scam emails and classified them according to their themes, namely *dormant account*, *lottery reward*, *rescue operation* and *charity*. After about 13 years since Blommaert studies, it appears more types have sprung up and earlier ones are modified. Hence, we identify eight (8) types, among which include those identified by Jan Blommaert. They are *money transfer, investment, inheritance claim, next-of-kin claim, charity donation, foreign aid scam, foreign lottery scam* and *email account lottery* scam.

Altogether, there are eighty-nine (89) scam emails in our data. Figure 1 below, shows the frequency of each of the types of the email scam samples. Money transfer emails are the highest constituting 36% of the data, while foreign aid and email lottery scams were the lowest each constituting 2%. The last two appear to be among the newest forms of scams. Interestingly, foreign aid scam did not feature in Blommaert's (2005) classification. Money transfer is among the oldest forms of email scam and pulls the highest number of samples in the data.

Figure 1. Number and frequency of types of scam emails in the data
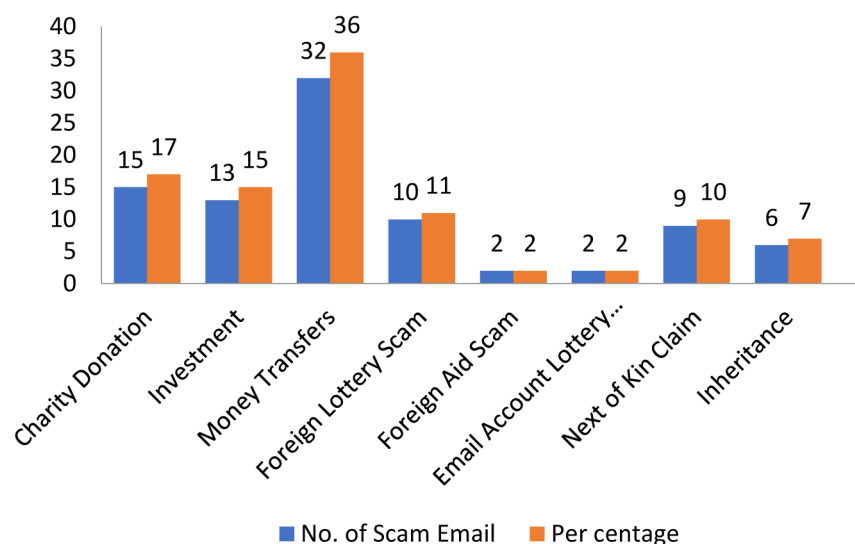
The money transfer scams often come in the form of a "business proposal" (Chiluwa, 2010) that seeks partnership to transfer some huge amount of money from one country to another for safe keeping or for "investment" purposes. In the money transfer email, (sample 1), the recipient is asked to provide his bank account details for the transfer and, in turn, will receive about 40% of the transferred money as compensation. This so-called "investment," which is usually not explained in detail (sample 2), also involves transfer of money running into millions of US dollars. A sharing formula would be worked out as soon as the receiver indicates interest and provides necessary information.

Another type of investment involves a receiver being asked to receive money from a security company on behalf of a child whose parents had died. The receiver would identify an investment opportunity in his country where the money could be invested. The investor allegedly would receive about 10% of the profits (see Chiluwa, 2010). Generally, the recipient of these emails is required to disclose some personal or security information to the writer in other to proceed with "the business."

Sample 1: *Money Transfer*

Greetings,

With due respect to your personality and much sincerity of this purpose, I make this contact with you believing that you can be of great assistance to me. I'm Mr. Issouf Moussa, from Burkina Faso, I'm the Chairman of FOREIGN PAYMENTS CONTRACT AWARD COMMITTEE and also Director of Foreign Remittance Department of African Development Bank (ADB) Burkina Faso, Please, see this as a confidential message and do not reveal it to another person because it's a top secret.

It is with trust that I wish to contact you on this matter concerning the transfer of US$28.2 Million Dollars. This money came out from contract that was awarded to a foreign Construction company for Supply, Installation and Maintenance of Underground Oil and Gas pipelines with Société Nationale Burkinabè d'Hydrocarbures (SONABHY)

in Burkina Faso years back. Contract No; SONABHY/EPR/104/PED/2011, The contract sum was over-invoiced by me to the tune of US$28.2 million. My proposition is that; Can you provide a reliable bank account, I want to present you in the bank as a Foreign Contractor Owner of Continental Engineering Construction Company (CECC) to receive

theUS$28.2 million? Regardless of your nationality, occupation or position. I have worked out all modalities put in place for legal and safe transfer of the funds directly into your nominated bank account. i want to repose the trust in you based on your profile and i need a mutual agreement for safe keeping of the funds…

Sample 2: *Investment*

Hello Dear,

My name is Mr. Henry J P Smith, from South Africa. I'm a Geologist by profession. I worked for Ex-President of Sao Tome and Principe Mr. Fradique de Menezes in many oil deals. In those years we ac-

cumulated lots of money totaling US$34M lodged in South African financial institution. This is to seek your assistance to move the funds overseas for better investment. After obtaining your information from the chamber of Commerce, I think this is the safest means to reach you. If you are interested reach me exclusively on the details below for confidentiality.

Thanks for your anticipated cooperation.

Regards,

Henry J P Smith

Email:

Tell: +27 73 777 7608

Another type of scam email invites the receiver as "beneficiary" to claim his/her "overdue inheritance," which has been lying dormant at a bank (usually at the African Development Bank, Burkina Faso or the Republic of Benin, or the United Bank for Africa) in West Africa (See sample 3). Interestingly, most of the false claims in this category of scam emails perform John Searle's representative act.

Sample 3: *Inheritance Claim*

Attn Dear:

WELCOME TO UNITED BANK FOR AFRICA.UBA GROUP OF BENIN GOVERNMENT,

UNITED BANK FOR AFRICA BENIN AGBOKOU STREET, COTONOU PLOT-47 AVE-APPOSITE

INT, STADIUM COTONOU REPUBLIC OF BENIN.WEB SITE

This united bank of Africa is pleased to inform you that we have been appointed After our annual meeting held in the united states of America last week, to effect the release of your overdue inheritance payment of $10.5 Million US Dollars to you without any further delay. And we have arranged your payment of $10.5 million united states dollars through an ATM card which you will use to withdraw your money in any ATM card machine in any part of the world, but the maximum withdraw in a day is ten thousand united states dollars per day until your funds of $10.5 million dollars have finished in the ATM card. The meeting was attended by Ms. Jane Wilson who represented Bank of America, Janet Yelled of the Federal Reserve board, Special Christopher A. Wray new FBI director Anti-Terrorist and Monetary Crimes division and some other financial institutions from different part of the world. You are hereby advised to send the following information as listed below and contact the blow person now to enable our bank execute your Fund of $4.5 Million US Dollars. delivering; your payment will get to you as long as you follow my directives and instructions….

Another scam mail is the type that advises the receiver to act as "next of kin" to someone referred to as "a client" of the writer who died in an air crash or other means but has left a huge sum of money in an unnamed bank account. Interestingly, the "dead client" whose relatives could not be traced has the same last name with the receiver. This makes it easy for the receiver to act as the "official next of kin" to the dead person and claim the unclaimed funds. (See sample 4).

Sample 4: *Next of Kin Claim*

Good day,

I am Joseph Wilman.

I have emailed you earlier few weeks ago without any response from you.

On my first email I mentioned about my late client whose relatives I cannot get in touch with. But both of you have the same last name so it will be very easy to front you as his official next of kin. I am compelled to do this because I would not want the bank to push my client's funds into their treasury as unclaimed funds. If you are interested you do let me know so that I can give you Comprehensive details on what we are to do.

My late client made a huge deposit in bank here and we must work to claim his funds before the bank will push it to their treasure as unclaimed funds. I await your immediate response.

Yours faithfully,

Joseph Wilman.

The next is the email that offers free money to the receiver as donation to him as an individual or to his family (see sample 5). The donors are either philanthropic companies or "foundations" or individual philanthropists (e.g. "a sister in Christ"), who would want their fortune to be used for charity, such as building orphanages, supporting natural disaster victims or building churches or mosques. An example is "a sister" whose husband died leaving her with his wealth. Now the sister herself is dying of cancer and needs a "born again" man or woman to use her money for charity and to fund churches.

Sample 5: *Charity Donation*

Donation Of $1,500.000.00 for you and family.

Congratulations from the Azim Premji Philanthropies Foundation-India, where life changing opportunities and cash are given-out on a daily basis! Our foundation/founder has indeed been a great Philanthropist to this generation and is truly committed to "giving while living,". However, we are pleased to inform you that you are one (1) of the lucky people to benefit and receive $1,500,000.00 USD from our foundation's ongoing goodwill project, grant/donations program.

Is this message sent to a valid e-mail account? Your email account was randomly selected to receive a cash donation of $1,500,000.00 USD from the Philanthropist. If this is a valid e-mail account, then click reply to contact us directly for comprehensive information.

Sincerely,

Dileep Ranjekar,

CEO, Azim Premji Foundation

azimpfoundation99@citromail.hu

The next type of scam identified in this study is the *foreign aid award* scam. The receiver of the scam email is told that he/she has won millions of dollars award, either from the "United Nations Social Welfare Organization" (see sample 6), or "Samsung Charity Welfare Award" or a similar charity-related NGO. There is also the *foreign lottery* scam, about which the receiver has no prior knowledge. The lottery is sometimes organized by the United Nations, the Qatar Foundation or the "Loterij-Awards International Amsterdam" etc. (See sample 7). The receiver would be required to contact the sponsor's agents at the address below the email.

In this category is the email account lottery scam. The receiver is told that his email account has won millions of Euros from a supposed *Google* random selection (see Sample 8). The receiver is asked to click on an attached file for details on how to access the lottery prize money.

Sample 6: *Foreign Aid Award Scam*

United Nations Social Welfare Organization (U.N.S.W.O)

World Charity Welfare Union

261 Avenue, Belford Street Southwest

London SW1–SW10 United Kingdom.

Good Day.

I am Miss Mirabel from United Nations Social Welfare Organization (U.N.S.W.O), I thought this opportunity may be of interest to you, If not I apologize for the intrusion. You Have Won $2,700,000 From Samsung Society Charity Welfare Award. Send Your Name, Age, Address, Mobile The World Global Welfare Organization Aid Nominated you as the end of year award winner. The board have noticed that people are dying of hunger, child abuse, Human Trafficking natural disasters and criminal activities have gone very high in the society these days. The international monetary funds IMF have placed easy funds to people all over the world to have good life and take care of good business, maintain good living for family and for educating students.

Yours Sincerely,

Miss Mirabel Thomas

United Nations Social Welfare Organization (U.N.S.W.O)

Matters Related To Poor Social Live,

Natural Disasters, Terrorism, Abuse.

Sample 7: *Foreign Lottery Scam*

2009 E-LOTTERY BONANZA*: CONFIRM YOUR PRIZE AWARD ASAP.*

Thursday, January 29, 2009 9:20 AM

From: "mohn@eircom.net" <mohn@eircom.net>

Add sender to Contacts

To: markvanbossen2010@yahoo.com

2009 E-LOTTERY BONANZA: CONFIRM YOUR PRIZE AWARD ASAP.

Sponsor Loterij~Awards International Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Lottery Claims/Service Department.

Sir/Madam,

This is to inform you of the Lottery Result of The Sponsor Loterij~ Awards International, which was held on the Monday 26th January 2009, with the aid of the E-Ballotting System.

Your e-mail address attached to E-Ticket Number: 34–11–27–51 (4–82), with Reference Number: NW-417–8090–08 and Batch Number: AMSNL2ND-0110 drew a prize of 500,000.00 (Five Hundred Thousand Euros). This lucky draw came first in the 2nd Category of the Sweepstake by an e-ballot draw from over 50,000,000 e-mail addresses (personal and corporate e-mail addresses). To receive your won prize you are advised to contact our appointed claim agent for you below who will facilitate the process of the claim of your won-prize. Note That because of the amount of winners in the different categories our management has out sourced the claim procedures and processes to the Government Accredited Agent below to assist all prize award winners complete all claims procedures so that the paying bank can then effect payment.

Contact your Appointed/Accredited Claim Agent:

Mark Van Bossen.

Tel/Fax: 0031–847–304–770

Email: kingzefinancialbv@aol.nl

markvanbossen2010@yahoo.com

Accept our heartfelt congratulations on your lottery prize winning.

Paula Van Mohn Lottery Co-coordinator

Sample 8: *Email Account Lottery Scam*

WINNING NOTIFICATION

Google Anniversary<kanrika@niikappu.jp June 12

Attn: "Winner'"

Your e-mail address has been randomly selected as Google Winner for 2016 Google Annual Award.

Please view attached PDF file for More "DETAIL".

Yours faithfully,

Lawrence "Larry" Page

Co-founder and CEO of Google Inc

Some new forms of scam email are directed to academics, such as those informing the recipient that he/she has been selected to attend a conference in the USA. The conference will continue in Africa (e.g. Senegal or Kenya), and all expenses including flight and accommodation have been fully paid. All that is required of the recipient is to pay the conference registration fee to a particular bank account. An abridged sample of this type of scam is shown below:

2019 *(I.C.C.R.I E.P.H.P) Conference Invitation*

cynthia <jjump@lscsn.com, Sun, Nov4, 7.35 AM (10 days ago)

Dear Colleagues,

It is a great pleasure to invite you to the International Conference U.S/Senegal January 2019.This including all Visa processing. Note: reply Via email below otherwise your message can not be receive. ()

Thanks and Regards,

Prof. Dr. Cynthia Garde, Member Organizing Committee.

FEATURES OF SCAM EMAILS

We examine linguistic and discourse features of the scam emails. A good number of studies have identified some discourse features that are unique to the emails, especially those that enhance their intellectual and emotional appeals. However, not many studies have examined their linguistic structures. The study of scam emails as a genre of computer-media communication (CMC) is still a burgeoning area, and genre studies of phishing and email scam is not yet widespread. We first examine the linguistic features (i.e. lexical and grammatical features) and secondly, discourse features (discourse structures).

Linguistic Features

According to Blommaert (2005), scam emails and their writers demonstrate strong evidence of "grassroots literacy" as well as basic English proficiency. However, the authors "struggle with norms, series of orientations to stylistic conventions in local lingua franca varieties, and a lack of exposure to the normative codes of their addressees. This results in unexpected turns-of-phrase, misnomers, [and] remarkable stylistic developments… (p.20). Many of the authors also struggle with basic literary skills and do not possess sufficient control over standard varieties of English. Thus, they write "grassroots English" characterized by "graphic features, such as inconsistent punctuation, frequent spelling errors, the unwarranted use of capitals, and cross-register transfers…" (p.19). Interestingly, Blommaert acknowledged that scam email authors were "fully literate as computer users and internauts"; however, they fail to produce the degree of "orthographic correctness sensed to ironicize the position from where they speak – a writing that marches their claimed identity as highly skilled professional elite members" (p.20).

Blommaert also agreed that the writers indeed possessed clear and precise understanding of the cultural semantics required in CMC; hence, some of the emails reflect what may be described as "Internet English" that switches between standard and non-standard English. According to Crystal (2011), Internet language combines features of speech exchanges and written communication. Grammatical forms of Internet English are characterized by multiple instances of subordination, elaborately balanced syntactic patterns and items of vocabulary that are never spoken. (See Chiluwa, 2013). Examples of multiple subordination may be found in the "next of kin", "investment," "inheritance" and "money transfer" narratives. Although email scam writers may be said to write Internet English, many aspects of scam emails are well-formed, but much of them are ill-formed. Errors associated with the non-standard variety of English, such as wrong use of verb forms, omission of articles/determiners and unusual use of prepositions are replete in the texts (See Chiluwa, 2013). Some of the narratives are written without any punctuation at all.

Below are a few examples from the data illustrating the grammatical errors highlighted above:

1. My late client made a huge *deposit in bank here* (sic) and we must work to claim his funds *before the bank will push it* (sic) to their treasure as unclaimed funds. I await your immediate response.

2. "… I have a proposal for *you in the tune of One Hundred & sixteen Million EUR* (sic) after successful transfer, we shall share in the ratio of forty for you and sixty for me…

3. … *I has no specific target* (sic) where I could get useful information about him hence I make a choice from a range of possibilities to use google archive where the description I got revealed your contact and I thought I could share this information with you with the impression to present you to the bank as the family relative to claim the $7,597,000.00 he left in a bank and the account is classified as 'inoperative' or 'dormant' at the end of the extended period because there are no transactions in the account since five years now and I feared the money will be paid to the govt account as an unclaimed deposit.

4. We congratulate you for being selected *as a winner on our ongoing promotion* (sic) *you were selected due to your* active use of our online services, find attached PDF file with more information (sic).

5. I am probably of the view that you are aware of the present situation in my country Zimbabwe sequel to the Land/Farm reform Act crisis in Zimbabwe … (sic)

6. It is a great pleasure to invite you to the International Conference U.S/Senegal January 2019.This including all Visa processing. *Note: reply Via email below otherwise your message can not be receive* (sic).

7. *Due to the crises that going on in my country.* Please I'm consulting you for my personal investment plan which I would like to discuss with you and know the possibility of how we can co-operate and work together to carry it out *as business partner*; which I believe it will be beneficial to both parties if handled with honesty (sic) … etc.

Some of the emails exhibit grammatical and lexical forms that are characteristically local usage. (e.g. *Sample 3, paragraph 1*).

According to Onanuga (2017), SMS sent by scammers reflect linguistic features similar to those in the scam emails. Although scam messages claim to emanate from reputable sources, the emails often contain obvious grammatical misnomers including "graphological deviation, and non-conformity to punctuation rules." Notice that example (iii) above, is without any punctuation until the last statement. However, scam SMS employ code-mixing and Internet text notations as well as the use of emotive language, polite salutations and "call to action" verbs. Significantly, the non-standard variety of English evident in most of the email scam messages, suggests that the writers are non-native speakers of English and gives insights to the origin of the scam messages. And according to Blommaert (2005), the literacy skills deployed by the authors betray a position in the margins of global literacy economies.

Discourse Features

Discourse features show the textual and persuasive strategies evident in the scam emails. For instance, the scam messages emulate the narrative structure of a formal business letter (i.e. comprising the introduction, the body and the conclusion). The introduction contains the usual polite formal openings or greeting formula such as "Sir", "Dear Sir" or "dear Google user," and a message title like "donation for you," "winning notification," "google annual promotion" "cooperation," or "congratulations." While the body of the message is written like a formal narrative, some of the openings are informal, such as

"Hello," "dear friend," or "dearest brother/sister in the Lord." Some begin with general greetings such as "good day" "attention beneficiary," or "greetings from Syria." These polite openings and introductions pave the way for the body of the narrative, usually the story of death by air crash, persecution from political opponents that led to the death of a father or parents, terminal cancer and the sick persons is giving away his/her fortune, or that some money was deposited in an account and needed to be claimed, etc.

The narratives generally end with polite closings or sign-offs. The general formal closings are "yours sincerely," "yours faithfully," "thanks in anticipation," or "best regards." Some of the informal emails close with "thanks," "your sister in the Lord," or conclude with a prayer like "May Almighty bless you and use you to accomplish my wish…" Most of the emails that begin formally or informally often end with formal closings, with "regards" and "best regards" occurring more frequently.

Because the narratives have features that make them suggestive, doubtful and /or contradictory, the writers apply persuasive techniques that aim at convincing the reader or playing with their emotional intelligence. The narratives that involve money donations, money awards or lottery winnings are easily verifiable, even on the Internet. For instance, the so-called *award* money in Sample 4 is said to come from the "United Nations Social Welfare Organization" (UNSWO). It can be easily determined that there is no such organ of the UN or any other organization by that name.

Chiluwa (2009) identifies five discourse/pragmatic strategies that are employed by scammers in their emails to hoodwink their targets. They are (i) discourse initiation/self-identification (ii) narrativity or "tellability" (iii) reassurance and confidence building (iv) confidentiality offering (v) action prompting tact. Generally, the scammers will identify themselves with academic or professional titles such as "Professor," "Barrister," or "Dr." in order to embed some form of credibility within their message. And in Africa like in other societies, a first meeting with someone demands an introduction – explaining who you are, what you do and where you come from. The scammers do these perfectly in the emails and many of them will go further to attempt to control any form of suspicion or surprise by sometimes beginning the mail with "Let not this come to you as a surprise," "Welcome this letter in the name of Allah" or "Let me introduce myself…"

The *tellability* is where the scammer tells his story by applying emotive language; this is generally to inspire emotional identification with the reader especially with stories of death, misfortune or terminal disease. Stories of natural disasters such as earthquakes, hurricanes or accidents are usually exploited by scammers to trigger the reader's sense of pity. As highlighted above, Chiluwa (2017) argues that scammers position themselves as victims of circumstances, deserving of public sympathy and assistance.

Some of the messages, especially those that invite the reader to claim huge dormant sums of money, prey on human frailty. Hong (2012) argues that scammers use social techniques, rather than technical tricks to fool their target and more importantly, they thrive on human greed, because scammers generally defraud their victims through some form of promise to enrich them. So, both the scammer and the scammed are to blame irrespective of where they come from (see Chiluwa, 2019).

The scammers generally assure and re-assure their targets of harmlessness and legality of their proposals. So, they apply some confidence and assurance building strategies. Statements or assurances such as "I guarantee that the transaction will be executed under a legitimate arrangement that will protect all from any bridge of law" is such simple manipulative strategy that attempt to re-assure the receiver. Many of the scam emails ironically demand sincerity, honesty and confidence from the receiver and emphasize the need for trust and strict confidentiality (Chiluwa, 2019). Furthermore, in most cases, scam emails attempt to create a sense of secrecy and urgency in their readers. Receivers are often told to "act

fast" or to "reply immediately" in order to hit the ground running. These strategies are simply deceptive techniques in order to sound authentic and convincing.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

As email scams increase in their scope of influence, creative forms and how the writers take advantage of information technology, scholarly studies of these trends are also beginning to gain traction. Moreover, other types of phishing such as *fake virus warning* (Heyd, 2008); *sick baby scam* (e.g. asking people to donate money for a sick child's "heart transplant"); *fake bank information confirmation* (Chiluwa, 2019) and *spear-phishing* or "whaling" (Hong, 2012) have also been studied. *Whaling* is where a receiver (in this case, management staff or senior personnel receives an invitation to attend a dinner or party and is asked to click on a link to confirm his or her participation). There is also phishing that comes in the form of setting up fake websites or monetizing stolen information taken from stolen credit cards (see Hong 2012 cited in Chiluwa, 2019).

Studies in psychology, media studies, linguistics and cyber security, among others, are extending research into phishing and cybercrimes taking place on the Internet and social media platforms (Hong, 2012). Some of these studies examine phishing susceptibility and combating cybercrime (See Wright & Marett 2010; Alsharnouby et al., 2015; Blommaert & Omoniyi, 2006; Vishwanath et al. 2011).

Studies in psychology apply approaches and theories that attempt to determine why certain individuals still fall prey to Internet scams (e.g. Vishwanath et al, 2011), and this appears to be the most fruitful future research direction. Studies of Internet scams and research into cybersecurity must endeavor not only to provide sufficient warning and insights as to ways online scams take place and why people are scammed but also determine how people can be protected against cyber fraud. Studies should also attempt to highlight methods to arrest perpetrators of Internet scams. Another interesting research area is to provide clues and further explanation regarding methods through which technology aids and abets the spread of online crime.

CONCLUSION

Although an emerging genre of CMC, scam emails and other forms of phishing are not a distinctive genre of asynchronous CMC on their own, as interesting studies are emerging across disciplines especially in security and law to examine online deception (Chiluwa, 2019).

This chapter demonstrates ways that online criminal intents expressed through scam emails are deliberate human acts mediated by online communication technology and that these are consciously constructed to emulate the familiar textual and discourse features of genuine business communications. They become identifiable as scams based upon certain unique linguistic and discourse structures that are misfits for standard business discourse. The writers, who are themselves victims of distressing social and economic conditions, appear desperate, suggesting that it would be reasonable to believe that many of these writers are likely to be young people from third world countries, struggling with poverty and suffering.

This chapter contributes to further create the awareness of email scams by describing and explaining their generic characteristics - their types, textual features and discourse structures. Although it appears that much awareness has already been generated that these scams exist, people are still falling victim to them through their use of the Internet and email. In February 2018 alone, for instance, over US$5 million were lost to investment scams in Australia, according to Scamwatch.com. Fraud losses on UK-based cards totaled £566.0 million in 2017, with an estimated £310.2 million of losses from e-commerce/Internet fraud (See https://www.ukfinance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Fraud-the-facts-Digital-version-August-2018.pdf).

It is our belief that the more awareness is created in research and through other forms of enlightenment campaigns, the more people might become informed and empowered to protect themselves against Internet scams.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Deception: The act of deceiving someone or deliberately making someone believe what is to false.

Discourse: Language use in oral or written communication. Computer-mediated discourse is language use in computer-based environments.

Email: Short form for "electronic mail."

Fraud: Wrongful or criminal deception intended to result in financial gain; this may involve deliberate concealment or omission or perversion of truth. A person is also described as a fraud if he/she intentionally deceives people by unjustifiably claiming to be what they are not or claiming an accomplishment that is false.

Phishing: A cybercrime in which someone is contacted by email or phone by someone who disguises as a trustworthy entity and tries to gain their confidence in an attempt to obtain sensitive information from them such as usernames, passwords and credit card details in order to defraud them.

Scam: A fraudulent or deceptive act, especially armed at defrauding someone or group of their money or other valuables.

Security Information (Infosec): The practice of preventing unauthorized persons from gaining access, use, disclosure, disruption or destruction of information. It is generally designed to protect the confidentiality, integrity and availability of computer system data from those with malicious intentions.

ENDNOTES

[1]   Unpublished invested cases of the Nigerian Postal Service (NIPOST), 1990-2007.

[2]   https://www.google.com.ng/search?rlz=1C1VSNC_enNG577NG582&ei=hwnnW8q01eqLgAa G37qwCQ&q=wh...); (FACT CHECK: Nigerian (419) Scam https://www.snopes.com), https:// www.lifewire.com/top-internet-email-scams-2483614).

[3]   Unpublished investigation and findings of NIPOST, 1990-2007/private recounts by victims.

Chapter 23
"Truth," Lies, and Deception in Ponzi and Pyramid Schemes

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ABSTRACT

The popularity of alternative online investment platforms has become worrisome in recent times. Adopting explorative methodology, this chapter examines the discursive practices of truth, lies and deception inherent in Ponzi and Pyramid schemes through their method of operation, recruitment strategies, products/ services and reward system via Bitconnect, OneCoin, and Zarfund – three online-based Ponzi schemes. The study reveals that the greatest deception of Ponzi schemes lies in the high returns they promise to potential investors and the low work requirement. These claims make it difficult for potential investors to make rational decisions before investing. This study recommends that proper evaluation and due diligence – basic financial literacy – be conducted before investing in any AFIP. Alternatively, expert advice may be sort before any financial commitment.

INTRODUCTION

Social media platforms enable individuals and business organizations to utilize the opportunity of mediatized relationships on the Internet to do business and create wealth. Significantly, the emergence of virtual currency that allows individuals to carry out financial transactions online, without the use of credit cards, has given rise to new forms of legal and illegal financial practices. The popularity of Internet-mediated financial institutions and transactions has in turn yielded the growth of fraudulent financial investments, such as Ponzi and pyramid schemes. These schemes that parade as alternative financial institutions, persuade investors using different approaches. Ponzi schemes which although, existed before the emergence of the Internet, have been made popular through the emergence of virtual currencies.

An important feature of the rise in these alternative financial practices online, is the rise of new ways of making money online promoted through peer to peer platforms. As virtual currencies increase, the financial means of acquiring them has also increased, giving rise to the proliferation of Ponzi schemes in the guise of cryptocurrencies, investment schemes and currency exchange platforms. The impact of

this new trend of financial fraud is evidenced by a report that there were over 1800 Bitcoin-based Ponzi schemes as at 2016 (Bartoletti, Ses & Serusi, 2018). Some of these schemes are built on half-truths and outright lies, intended to deceive victims and cajole them into making financial commitments that in some cases, result in losses. It is noteworthy that while these schemes are Internet-based, meaning that there is almost no direct contact between promoters and their prospective clients, the use of language whether verbal or non-verbal, plays important roles in the recruitment process of investors.

Although there is an emerging body of research on internet-based Ponzi schemes, these studies have explored the workings of Ponzi schemes related to Bitcoin and Ethereum, their ecosystem, as well as their risks (e.g Vilkins, Acuff & Hermanson, 2012; Vasek & Moore, 2015). The current study draws attention to the reproduction of 'truth,' lies and their juxtaposition as discourse practices that enable deception in Ponzi, Pyramid schemes and scam cryptocurrencies. This study which is qualitative, is an attempt to explore the discourse structures of these schemes as promoters of online mediated deception with a view to contribute to existing literature in this regard.

BACKGROUND

Ponzi Schemes

Ponzi scheme is named after Charles Ponzi who perpetrated the act in the twenties. It is described as a fraudulent scheme, which extorts money from investors with the hope of paying high returns (Walsh, 1998). The money collected is never invested in any business venture but is usually handed back with a fraudulent pretense that they are proceeds of investments (Frankel, 2012). The scheme began in December 1919 when Carlos Ponzi, who later changed his name to Charles Ponzi, started obtaining loans from friends in what he called a Ponzi plan (Walsh, 1998). Ponzi started inviting friends and relatives to his new plan where he asked them to invest some money in stamp coupons. He deceived them into believing that he had 100% profit for borrowing out money and needed more money to give out. Few of Ponzi's friends decided to risk this new business and in ninety days, Ponzi had raised over 750 million dollars in interest. As the profit increased, other people soon joined the scheme. With a promise to repay 150 dollars in 90 days for every dollar loaned, Ponzi convinced thousands of people to invest in his business. In eighteen months, Ponzi had received over nine million dollars while he issued notes of fourteen million dollars (Frankel, 2012).

Frankel (2012) explains that Ponzi had no proper means of earning but actually paid investors from money collected from earlier investors. While some reinvested, others walked away with their money. Ponzi in a bid to answer question raised by authorities, hired a public relation officer who exposed that Ponzi had no business plan. By the end of the scheme, Ponzi had borrowed ten million dollars from investors in Boston and New York. The scheme collapsed eight months after its establishment leading investors to loss. The scheme which started years ago has permeated different economic systems.

One of the well-known and perhaps, the greatest Ponzi fraud in American history is that involving Bernard Madoff, a former NASDAQ Chairman and founder of the Wall Street firm (i.e. Bernard L. Madoff Investment Securities LLC). Madoff started his career as a stock broker selling over the counter stock at the New York Stock Exchange between 1960 and 1990 (Arvedlund, 2010). As his business grew Madoff began to convince his investors that he could beat the stock market by promising 10-12% annual

returns on investment. While Madoff was able to pay early investors, he simply diverted the funds to his personal use. The Wall Street firm which started as a legitimate enterprise later turned out to be a Ponzi scheme. When he could no longer continue with his schemes due to the pressure from investors to retrieve their funds, Madoff confessed to his family that he was running a Ponzi scheme (Arvedlund, 2010). Madoff was convicted and jailed for 150 years in 2009 for fraud worth over 64 million US dollars. Just like Madoff and Ponzi, many other frauds have continued to exist in different countries milking investors of their resources and in some cases, relying on bailouts from the state to refund their victims.

According to Bhatachyrra (1998), a Ponzi scheme is an ingenious method to steal state assets by a politically well-connected promoter in a transition economy. This description however applies to economies where individuals have access to state funds. Thus, when the schemes fail, they rely on bailouts from the states. In situations where bailouts are not provided by the government, the survival of the scheme is usually contingent on the convincing effort of the fraudster or more recently, the investors' ability to recruit others since the scheme has no financial base. Asymmetric information is at play when the participants are unaware of the rounds they are playing and cannot determine when they are at risk. The inability to know the round one is playing, is one strategy that sustains a ponzi investment. Bhartachyrra (1998) identifies three stages for a successful Ponzi plan: First the scammer presents the idea, second promises high returns and third build credibility by paying initial investors. When trust is built, individuals share their experiences as a way of inviting others. Bhatachrrya further describes Ponzi as inverted pyramid scheme, where the scheme starts with many people and gradually ends at the swindler who receives from contribution of those at the top. The scheme thrives in high payouts and information manipulation of schemers (Deason, Rajgopal, Waymire & White, 2015).

Usually, a Ponzi scheme promoter diverts some of the invested money for personal use and continues to expand its network until a point that it no longer works. In recent years, the scheme has resurfaced and with the help of computer mediated technologies, the system has gained wider popularity. While the earlier forms of Ponzi schemes claimed to be forms of investments, new schemes claim to operate as mutual contribution schemes. Deason, Rajgopal, Waymire & White, (2015) carried out a large-scale study of 376 Ponzi schemes prosecuted by the FBI between 1988 and 2012. The study revealed that Ponzi schemes thrive in areas with low investment opportunities and rely on affinity for their success. The study also identified features of Ponzi Schemes such as:

- **Perpetrators:** Ponzi schemes are often practiced by males.
- **Victims:** Ponzi schemes often target the elderly with family and friends as major affinity link, with people of same ethnic religious affiliations as major targets
- **Marketing Strategies:** Ponzi schemes gain popularity through websites. The schemes often employ referral links and inventive to woo investors.
- **Trust:** The scheme involves building false trust. Ponzi schemes rely on the failure of the government and financial institutions to defraud victims. The payout of earlier investors also ensures more participation.

According to Jory and Perry (2011), Ponzi schemes usually do not have any future because their funding requirements increase geometrically over time. Consequently, there are not too many exit strategies for the perpetrator of a Ponzi scheme. "He or she will ultimately have to find a legitimate investment that pays off handsomely in order to make sufficient money to cover the fraud, or else, run and hide,

…commit suicide, seek immunity, or get caught" (p.2) Ponzi schemes occur in places with low investments like bonds and stocks. Carvajal, Monroe, Palitilo & Wynter (2009) in a study of Ponzi schemes in the Caribbean, observed that Ponzi schemes thrive in underdeveloped countries due to the absence of regulations in such areas. The success of the scheme is contingent on the absence of low investment opportunities in underdeveloped countries.

The success of Ponzi schemes whether in developed or under developed countries often rely on trust. Trust is essential in running a successful Ponzi scheme. Trust in this context is built by evidence (whether true or false), verbal communication or affinity ties. Ponzi schemes build trust by creating affinity ties through social networks. Nash (2003) in a study of Enron Ponzi scheme, a scheme that defrauded 2285 investors for a total of $ 240 million dollars, revealed that the success of the fraud relied on the principal officers and employers of the scheme, independent brokers and opinion leaders that recruited friends and family members. Deason, Rajgopal, Waymire & White (2015) further explain that trust in Ponzi schemes are structured along people with same ethnic group, religious background and individuals with supposed credibility. Contrary to these studies, participants in online based Ponzi schemes are strangers who may not have prior contacts. The networks are built through ecosystems and forums that then bring people together through related discussion to create affinity ties; hence, Internet mediated platforms provide opportunity for formation of network ties. Within online platforms, Jacob and Schain (2011) suggest that susceptibility to deception by Ponzi schemes is as a result of information overload. While using the Internet, people are exposed to multiple information that make it difficult to verify facts. Since the activities of Ponzi schemes are made available online including testimonials by early investors, others are lured to participate without verifying the authenticity of such schemes.

Moore Han and Clayton (2012) in a study of Internet-based high yield investment programs (HYIP) as postmodern Ponzi schemes, observes that in the HYIPs, participants are aware of the risk but are willing to participate at the initial stages. These forms of post-modern Ponzis, are promoted across Internet platforms through aggregators (online discussion forums) where information regarding paying, non-paying, trending and failed schemes are discussed. Such information tends to inform investors on current schemes and enable them participate while the scheme remain active. Unfortunately, there is usually no information regarding when a currently paying scheme would end; resulting in loss for unlucky investors. The study further reveals that cryptocurrencies are safe means of investing in HYIPs as they promote anonymity of participants.

Ponzi schemes have consequences both on individual and the society. On the consequence of Ponzi schemes on individuals, the scheme results in investors loss and sometimes suicidal attempts. In the same vein, Ponzi schemes result in diversion of funds, undermines confidence in financial markets and provides opportunities for money laundering (Omanya, 2017). With the emergence of digital currencies, Ponzi schemes have developed a new turn by acting as intermediaries between investors of cryptocurrencies and the schemes. Two types of Ponzi schemes that are common in the crypto world are those that are based on already existing cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin and Ethereum schemes or Ponzi schemes that disguise as crypto currencies. In the latter, a fraudster develops an application or a self-acclaimed cryptocurrency based on blockchain technology, recruit investors and pay these investors through bonuses from new recruits. The Ponzi currencies operate like multilevel marketing schemes where returns are products of sales promotions.

PYRAMID SCHEMES

The FBI website defines pyramid schemes as franchise fraud or chain referral scheme and investment frauds where an individual is offered a distributorship or franchise to market a product (www.fbi.com). This scam gets its name from the Egyptian Pyramid-usually with a small apex and a large base. In a pyramid scheme, the originator is usually at the apex with participants following in a tree matrix. Suppose an investor recruits two people who in turn recruit two others, the tree begins to expand. The success of a pyramid is usually dependent on the number of investors and involves hierarchies with different levels of profit distributed across each level. Promoters make their money as new investors register, leaving those at the base of the pyramid with little or no profit. As the program uses the Internet particularly social media platforms to recruit new investors, they continue to either sell products or involve in different chain activities till investors no longer receive profit. The scheme eventually crashes leaving those at the base of the pyramid with losses.

Carvajal, Monroe, Pattilio & Wynter (2009) note that pyramid schemes sometime operate in the guise of multilevel marketing, a system where individuals sell products and get commissions; where commission usually increases as sales increase. The difference between multilevel marketing and Pyramid schemes is that pyramid schemes disguise their true purpose by displaying products that are either fake or overpriced with the sole aim of making profits. Pyramids continue to thrive on the Internet because of the ease in accessing information across the Internet.

Pyramid schemes just like its counterpart, the Ponzi scheme, has raised global attention due to their impacts in nation states. In 2008, the Finnish government seized the investments of Wincapita, allegedly the biggest pyramid scheme in Finland which defrauded about 10,000 participants in approximately 100 million euros investment. The scam originally called Winclub, is an Internet-based pyramid scheme that claimed to invest in foreign exchange by trading a foreign exchange (FX) software to investors, with an annual interest of 260-400% to participants (Baker & Puttonen, 2017 p.165). Contrary to its investment claims, WinCapita according to reports, operated as a multilevel marketing scheme that simply circulated payments from funds from earlier investors. As a pyramid scheme, access into the club required receiving a recommendation from sales agents known as sponsors (Baker & Puttonen 2017, p.165). A sponsor attracting five members would receive a lifetime bonus of 20% investment from each of the recruits. This incentive increased participation in the club and saw investors recruiting relatives and friends into the scheme.

One variant of the pyramid scheme is known as Growth stock pick (Kipilimba, 2017). This form of pyramid disguises as charity clubs that assist members of the club and the less privileged. The recruiter is often asked to recruit people into the scheme to get returns on investment. A study of pyramid schemes in Tanzania (Kipilimba, 2017) revealed that participation was as a result of naivety, greed and peer pressure. Both pyramid and Ponzi schemes use the same discourse to recruit investors and are veiled in promises of outrageous returns that appeal to gullible individuals.

CRYPTOCURRRENCY

This is a digital currency that adopts encryption techniques to generate units of currency and verify the transfers of funds, usually operated without a central bank and used for online barter (de Vries, 2016). It can be described as a digital or virtual currency that uses cryptography for security. A *cryptocurrency* is

difficult to counterfeit because of this security feature. Many cryptocurrencies are decentralized systems based on blockchain technology and a distributed ledger enforced by different network of computers (Investopodia). Cryptocurrency became popular in 2013 following a period of economic crisis in Cyprus. During this period, individuals began to withdraw their funds from the bank in order to invest in Bitcoin resulting to an increase in the value of the coin. Bitcoin reached its all-time high in 2017 with the value of 20,000 US dollars to one Bitcoin. Blockchain as a form of decentralized technology poses a risk. Blockchains are open ledgers or databases that reveal changes and details of its transaction, usually maintained by network of computers known as miners (Walch, 2015). The most important feature of the blockchain is its decentralized nature that is, the absence of a single authority guiding the system. The absence of authority in its codes makes it an acceptable means of investment and transaction for individuals who are interested in having safe anonymous transaction.

Bitcoin, the first currency based on the blockchain technology was created by a group of coders with the pseudonym-'Satoshi Nakamato' in 2009. Since then, the Bitcoin software continues to undergo changes that result in mining of new coins (Walch, 2015). The coin has been described as a cryptocurrency with no tangible value other than an online identification address known as blockchain account that allow transfer from one address to another, often verified by nodes (Walch, 2015). Walch (2015) examines the structure of Bitcoin and its associated risks. According to the study, the risk in the digital currency's operations are structured along the lines of its software status, decentralized structure, open source software development process and expertise. In relation to software, the changing nature of software technologies and poor knowledge of the workings of softwares makes it difficult for non-tech savvy investors to mine Bitcoin. This limitation leaves the mining process in the hands of few miners that manipulate the price of the cryptocoin. Another risk related to the software is the production of new versions that might not be compatible with some computer systems. Walch (2015) illustrates the case of a double Bitcoin ledger in 2014 that arose due to upgrade of the system's software. This resulted in confusion regarding the right ledger balance of users. In other cases, vulnerability to cyberbug, attack by service providers such as smart contracts and exchange platforms pose great risk to cryptocurrency users (Johnson et al, 2014). Although Bitcoin claims to have a decentralized structure, in terms of decision making, the absence of defined power system make it difficult to resolve urgent crisis (Walch, 2015).

While Walch's study seem to be centered around Bitcoin, the same risks apply to other cryptocurrencies. Morisse (2015) attempts a comprehensive review of emerging studies on cryptocurrencies. The study identifies dimensions in cryptocurrencies to include issues relating to protocols, networks and ecosystems of cryptocurrencies. The study further suggests a shift in research focus to issues relating to culture and cryptocurrency; with a focus on the impact of both ethnic and individual culture on the cryptocurrency.

In examining the importance of the blockchain technology, De Vries (2016) observes that the cryptocurrency is important, as it serves as escape to fiat currency inflation; provides easy access to financial transactions and a safe haven for non-banking population. These gains perhaps have contributed to the success of the cryptocurrency. The success in Bitcoin has seen the launch of other currencies such as Ethereum, Ripple, Litecoin and smart contracts that promote the sale of these coins. The nature of the Internet with its spatial and temporal barriers as well as anonymity allow users to create blockchain, smart contracts, generate accounts and attract online investors; some of which are ignorant. In many cases, some cryptocurrencies and smart contracts run for a brief period before they are terminated.

Vasek and Moore (2015) in a study of Bitcoin related scams examines threads from bitcoin.talkorg, a website that discusses Bitcoin related issues. The study identifies four types of Bitcoin scam, which

are: fake mining exchange, high yield investment programmes, fake scam wallet and fake mining scam. The study further reveals that over 11 million US dollars were lost to Bitcoin scams as at 2015. The cryptocurrencies, beyond their use for smart contracts are associated with Ponzi schemes, volatility in market price and scam from hackers that result in losses. The absence of regulations on these currencies make it difficult to trust them. As coders continue to create new digital currencies, long term Ponzi schemes, pyramid schemes, scam exchange platforms, fake cryptocurrencies and high yield investment programmes that pay investors using these currencies are on the rise. These schemes are characterized by the presence of a promoter running the scheme or automated system in cases smart contracts, the absence of a legitimate business structure, the presence of investors ready to cash out fast, and absence of a specified source of returns on investments (Tsai 2009 cited in Wilkins, Acuff & Henderson, 2012). On the influence of Ponzi scheme promoters on investments, Wilkins Acuff and Henderson (2012) reveal that promoters usually possess a show of special skill in trading in foreign currency, appear credible and display a show of wealth. The schemes are presented in the guise of charity, religious moves and support schemes. These features predispose individuals to invest in the schemes. Bartoletti, Salvatore, Cimoli and Saia (2017) examines Bitcoin related smart contract frauds as forms of Ponzi scams. Smart contracts are computer programmes that execute instructions without verification of source. The advancement of cryptocurrencies has contributed immensely to the proliferation of smart contracts as intermediaries between cryptocurrency companies and investors. The study further identifies the risk of false trust associated with the open nature of the blockchain technology.

PONZI AND PYRAMID SCHEMES UNDER STUDY

Zarfund

This is a Bitcoin-based pyramid scheme that operates in the guise of a financial investment platform. the scheme which claims to provide direct funding for financial needs (www.zarfund.org) was founded by Haanes Jordan, a South African-based online financial entrepreneur. Just like other pyramid schemes, Zarfund operates a binary matrix where an investor registers by paying 0.03 Bitcoin to an earlier investor known as an *upline*. Once the payment is made, the investor recruits two new investors who then repay him. As the new investors recruit two others, the initial investor gradually moves up to the next levels that qualifies him to earn more Bitcoins. As recruitment continues, those at the apex of the scheme benefit more. The scheme which began in 2016 spreading across over 150 countries (www.zarfund.org), collapsed in 2017.

Bitconnect (BCC)

This is a self-designated cryptocurrency and a bitcoin-based lending platform. The platform which serves as investment scheme, Bitcoin smart contract, a cryptocurrency and a community of investors, promise unrealistic returns of 40% on investment monthly. The website does not disclose the owners of the Bitconnect system, but it parades itself as the biggest cryptocurrencies(www.biconnect.com). As at 2017, Bitcoin was one of the top 20 cryptocurrencies with an all-time high of 463 US dollars to one Bitconnect coin in December 2017 (William, 2017). On January 3, 2018 the Texas State Securities Board issued an <u>emergency cease and desist order</u> to Bitconnect with several allegations against the

company, including BitConnect's inability to disclose financial information regarding payment of their Bitconnect-QT wallet investors. The scheme was also accused of using deceptive communication to lure investors by not disclosing its associated risks (www.finder.com/uk/bitconnect).

Onecoin

This is a digital currency, based on cryptography and created through a process called 'mining'. (www. onecoin.eu). The self-acclaimed cryptocurrency runs an educational package that individuals use to mine coins. The platform also runs an ecosystem, a community of participants, as part of its promotion. Investors are expected to recruit others as a criterion to earn 10% of the recruitment fee of their downlines. The scheme has been characterized by many controversies which includes absence of a blockchain, promising high yield in the value of the cryptocoin and continuous postponement of its initial coin offering. In 2016, the Indian authorities accused the scheme of duping thousands of investors to the tune of over 10 million US dollars (Young, 2017). While the website remains active, the scheme has been shut down in different countries.

LIES AND DECEPTION IN EMERGENT PONZI AND PYRAMID SCHEMES

Deception has been generally defined as a communicative act that is intended to induce a certain type of belief in the listener with the intention of manipulating truth and falsity of information (Galanski, 2000). Deception according to (Buller & Burgoon, 2016), is described as an intentional act in which senders knowingly transmit messages intended to foster a false belief or interpretation by the receiver and involves an interactional nexus with three classes of strategic, or deliberate, activity which are information, behaviour, and image management (Buller & Burgoon, 2016). Information management also entails an attempt to control the content of a message for instance, a deceiver would use convincing words to ensure that his message is considered genuine. This could include ambiguity, vagueness or strategic lexical choices.

Image management refers to all attempts to ensure that a deceiver appears credible while behavioural management involves all conscious attempts to control behaviours that would reveal one's deceit. Buller and Burgoon (2016) recognises particularly the role of context, interactivity and familiarity as factors that influence deception. During deception therefore, deceivers have the ability to choose lexical items that would influence their victims. This is reflected in studies on email scams where deceivers use names of authorities, create interpersonal relationship with their victims in order to defraud them (Chiluwa, 2009).

Deception can be described as outright lies, false information, concealing information or the use of unclear or vague expressions intended to blur communication or create a false belief (Galanski, 2000). Deception involves manipulating the mind and is often practiced through discourse (Van Djik, 2006). The goal of every deceptive communication is to alter the cognitive state of targets by creating a change in belief usually realized by manipulating the ignorance or knolwdge of the target.

Carson (2010) creates a clear-cut distinction between lying and deception. He describes lying as a deliberate false statement that the speaker claims to be true. In the description above, lying unlike deception involves merely verbal communication. Second, lying may not necessarily be intended to deceive others and finally, lying involves a statement which may be false to the speaker but is claimed to be true by the speaker (Carson, 2010). Carson further argues that lying involves first, an expected or established

trust, and a breach of that trust. In creating a distinction between lying and deception, Carson further argues that a deceptive communication may or may not be falsity to the deceiver. This accounts for cases of unintentional deception (Shuy, 2017). While there are other forms of deception, lying seem to be the centre of research across disciplines. In Ponzi schemes, deception may not be outright lies or half-truths, which are expressed through vague expressions, misinformation or disinformation.

Truth either based on general assumptions or in relation to a particular context is one of the techniques used in fostering deception. Paltering is a term used to describe a deliberate use of truthful information to deceive. It involves the use of true information to induce a false belief. (Rogers, 2014). Through the use of truthful statements, deceivers evade forms of doubt and present a positive image. In Ponzi schemes and other fraudulent financial schemes, deceivers use facts to attract investors. These truths are hinged on failing economies, profits of earlier investors and evidences based on general assumptions. Rogers, Zeckhauser, Gino & Schweitzer 2014), (2014) distinguishes between lying and paltering when they observed that lying by omission intentionally avoids truthful information but in the case of paltering, truth is acknowledged but manipulated to induce a false belief. The topics on truth and lies in Ponzi schemes are discussed below within the subheads of general truths, assumptions and concealment.

'TRUTH' IN PONZI AND PYRAMID SCHEMES

Although Ponzi schemes are described as fraudulent, there are underlying truths that serve as incentives for investors. These truths are based on their general features, which include: quick returns on investment, less labor needed to generate returns, testimonials by affiliates and different alternatives for investments. These general truths are reflected in the discourse of Ponzi scheme operators discussed below.

Quick Returns on Investments

Ponzi schemes unlike other schemes often provide quick returns on investment. The Bitconnect platform for instance, provides a 15-day window for individuals to invest their coin and yield returns. The use of quick returns on investment (ROI) is an incentive that defies existing market structures and serves as a bait to lure investors. In Ponzi and pyramid schemes, returns are often generated within the shortest time making them attractive investment options. These returns are advertised in websites and web forums of online based schemes. Some examples are found below:

*EX1: Minimum Stake Age is 15 Days which means you require to hold BCC minimum for **15 days** to start receiving minting blocks. The frequency receiving blocks depends on your stake weight. (Bitconnect)*

EX2: I decided to give BitConnect a try right now BitConnect token doubled in worth within the last 2 weeks or so and also Bitconnect the actual site pays me every day I made a YouTube channel to document my journey with BitConnect (Bitconnect).

EX3: To improve the lives of all people worldwide, we give instant access to financial services. (OneCoin)

Excerpts 1, 2 and 3 above depict quick returns on investment as one of the deceptive strategies of Ponzi schemes. Investors are given specific investment periods and returns that are usually shorter than genuine investments as seen in EX1. due to the short time frame, many investors who are aware of the

risks also delve into the scheme with the intent to cash out fast. There are cases when individuals have used their life savings to invest because of the short period of investment with the aim of withdrawing sooner.

Ex3 which is found on the OneCoin webpage, corroborates the instant bonus offered by the scheme to participants as incentives for recruiting investors. OneCoin functions both as a pyramid scheme and Ponzi scheme. As a pyramid scheme, the OneLife network, the parent company of OneCoin, distributes unrealistic educational packages and tokens to investors who are asked to recruit others in order to gain instant 10% bonus. As a Ponzi scheme, payouts are often from the sales of the educational packages. There is no valid business plan offered by the scheme.

Ponzi Schemes as Offering Multiple Streams of Income

In the digital era, Internet based Ponzi schemes are characterized by different financial streams that tend to blur their risky nature. Ponzi and pyramid schemes provide incentives through recruitment of others, staking and saving or selling of products. The discourse of the Bitconnect investment provide four opportunities for investors to participate making it difficult for investors to suffer complete loss. The following excerpts illustrate the multiple opportunities provided by postmodern Ponzi and pyramid schemes

EX4: Investing in BitConnect Coin and Staking…Earn from BitConnect Coin trading…Earn from Bit-Connect Coin Mining…(Bitconnect)
EX5: We are proud to say that our users will be able to choose among a growing number of OneCoin related and connected products in the areas of education, payments, exchange, business app solutions, trading and investing, and more One academy. The OneAcademy products are distributed by the network exclusively. (OneCoin)

As illustrated by EX4 above, affiliates of Bitconnect are provided with opportunities to make money through recruitment of others, selling of their coins, participating in mining and staking or depositing their coins for interest. These multiple incentives predispose investors to participate hoping to make returns from at least one on the available options.

In the case of OneCoin in EX5, in its function as a pyramid scheme, individuals are expected to create a binary matrix where investors gain for each participant that purchases the educational package. This incentive provides individuals the opportunity to gain either by investing in buying educational packages worth tokens that would be mined or make proceeds simply by recruiting others. This form of discourse tends to blur the risks involved in investing in Ponzi schemes. The scheme also claims to provide solutions for cryptocurrency trading through its educational packages. This innovative discourse appeals to individuals who are new to the cryptocurrency world, particularly in less developed countries, which are the major targets of new Ponzi schemes.

High Returns

One of the major truths involved in Ponzi and Pyramid scheme investment is the promise of high returns often benefitted by early investors. High returns range from 30% to 200% for high yield investment programs. Outrageous returns are the major incentives that drive investors to consider the scheme without considering their genuineness. Excerpts of high returns are illustrated below:

Ex6: *The moment you acquire BitConnect Coin it becomes an interest-bearing asset with **Up to 120% return per year** through **PoS minting (BitConnect)***

In the sample above, individuals are expected to gain massive returns on investment which are above expected returns for a regular investment. The Bitconnect just like other Ponzi schemes pay such returns to initial investors in an attempt to recruit others. When they can no longer maintain the payments, they tend to shut down operations and, in some cases promoters go into hiding.

Low Work Stress

Since financial transactions are usually carried out by the promoters that pay returns to affiliates in Ponzi schemes, the scheme is presented as an investment opportunity with little or no stress involved. In the case of cryptocurrency-based Ponzi systems, the system adopts automated or computerized method that make payout easy. With Internet access, individuals are expected to popularize the scheme by simply sharing referral links to their network. While this seems easy, investors are not acquainted with the difficulties in convincing others to join the scheme. The discourse of low use of labor promoted by Ponzi and pyramid scheme operators are expressed in the following instances:

EX7: No more waiting for transactions to be confirmed between banks and the delays with it. No more submitting of proof of payments. No more fake transactions and fake POPs (Zarfund).
EX8: You find only 2 people. Duplicate the process. And before you know it. Your success is easily achievable (Zarfund).
EX9: Just started 3 days ago already in level two with 5 referrals. awesome. 03-Sep-2016 (Zarfund)

The excerpts above which are retrieved from the website of Zarfund show the ease in using Ponzi schemes to make fast money. Since individuals are looking for means to survive with the least effort possible, Ponzi and pyramid schemes provide opportunities for seemingly stress-free investments. in EX 7, the scheme is presented as devoid of all the hassles connected with regular banking system especially common with less developed countries (Omanya, 2017). The scheme also offers opportunities for individuals to work from home thereby reducing all forms of intensive labor. In Ex 8 also, the only prerequisite to yield return is by simply recruiting two people. The discourse is explicitly expressed using the determinant 'ONLY'. While it seems true that recruitment involves only two people, the success of pyramid schemes depends on the ability of downlines to recruit others. When investors recruit two downlines, the possibility of these downlines to recruit others who will recruit others to sustain the scheme remain uncertain. Hence, the reality of the sustenance of returns on investment is often unknown. In EX9, a testimony of a participant posted on the testimonial navigation of the Zarfund website expresses the ease in the recruitment process and the success associated with it. While this seem to be an incentive for upcoming investors, the banal truth remains in the ability to sustain the recruitment process.

ASSUMPTIONS

Beyond using truth for paltering (Rogers, Zeckhauser, Gino & Schweitzer 2014), Ponzi and pyramid schemes are built on general assumptions that may not reflect the reality. Ponzi and pyramid schemes

adopt discourses of economic market to support their claims. Such principles as demand and supply, risks and gains are adopted to lure investors. Some general assumptions employed by Ponzi schemes are discussed below.

Cryptocurrency Is Driven by Demand and Supply

One of the truths guarding cryptocurrency trading is the principle of demand and supply. As demand for the currency increases, there is a drive for more supply of the currency. While this economic principle applies to financial markets in general, Ponzi schemes and fraudulent cryptocurrencies rely on this claim to promote their businesses. The following excerpts from Bitconnect and OneCoin illustrate the use of the principle of demand and supply for paltering:

*EX10: The general answer to "**why Bitconnect coin valuable in terms of price?**" is "**supply and demand**". Price discovery occurs at the meeting point between demand from buyers and supply of sellers. Following demand and supply model will create wealth in BitConnect ecosystem as a whole. (Bitconnect)*

EX11: Unlike money issued by governments, there is a finite number of OneCoins, ensuring they cannot be affected by inflation and are impossible to counterfeit Because cryptocurrencies are not tied to any particular country or central bank, the value of the coin depends on factors such as usability, demand and supply. (OneCoin)

In EX10 above, the mechanism of Bitconnect is described in terms the principle of demand and supply. The principle of supply and demand denotes that since cryptocurrencies are in limited supply, an increase in demand would result in an increase in supply (Raisova & Ducova, 2014). The Bitconnect scheme adopts this discourse to claim that as long as there is need for the coin, there will certainly be more demands resulting in increased in price. The statements hide all possible forms of risk and adopts positive statements to recruit investors. Every investment is characterized by its peculiar risk; the risk involved in the Bitconnect such as hacking of the website, decrease in demands or even government regulations that might affect their operations are intentionally avoided. EX11 is built on the assumption that the decentralized nature of cryptocurrencies makes them resistant to inflations. While this assumption may be true for decentralized currency, OneCoin is not listed among cryptocurrencies in the world and as such cannot ascribe to itself, the features of a cryptocurrency. However, Ponzi schemes build on such assumptions to promote their schemes.

Scarcity

Scarcity is a state of limited supply which drives individuals to demand certain products. Largenderfer and Shimp (2001) in their theory of visceral influences on consumer response to scam offers, observes that scarcity, although a legitimate marketing technique, is used by scammers to appeal to cognitive loads of investors. Ponzi scheme operators use the economic principle of scarcity to create a need thereby increasing the demand of their products. Cryptocurrencies are mined in limited numbers, which makes them a scarce resource. The scarcity in mining results in increase demand. Post modern Ponzi schemes and scam cryptocurrencies such as the excerpt illustrated below, also rely on the notion of scarcity to recruit investors by claiming to have unique offers.

Ex 12: *The OneCoin blockchain has a limited supply of 120bn ONE (OneCoins). Tailored for future-proof mass transactions, the OneCoin blockchain runs every minute and is designed to accommodate merchant needs. (OneCoin).*

In the excerpt above, OneCoin creates artificial scarcity by limiting the number of coin it claims to have in its reserve. This is intended to prey on less informed investors who would seize the offer to invest. Ponzi and Pyramid schemes adopt discourse of scarcity to create an intense feeling of urgency in investors. To this end, victims of Ponzi schemes are made to believe that the offer presented, is a one in a lifetime opportunity that should not be missed. The use of the expression 'limited' in EX12 strongly portrays OneCoin as a viable investment opportunity that might be missed if urgent investment decisions are not taken. Such expression could prompt investors to make irrational decisions without proper investigations of the risks and benefits.

Lies and Vagueness as Concealment Strategies

Vagueness could be described as the use of non-explicit expressions. In business contexts, vagueness could occur as commodity vagueness, commodity price vagueness, time and direct vagueness (Zhao & Nie, 2015). Quality of goods are described through implicit expressions such as best, reliable, acceptable and so on (Zhao & Nie, 2015). Vagueness as a deceptive communication strategy is used by Ponzi and pyramid schemes to conceal shady practices that these schees engage in. The products and services of the schemes are further described using exaggerative discourses, and bogus claims that are found on the webpages.

Exaggerations

Ponzi schemes use exaggerative discourses that present them as well proven schemes. These expressions are not described in relation to anything tangible. Examples are 'best, foremost, perfect' and so on. The use of exaggerations and bogus assumptions are expressed in the texts below:

Ex 14: *Tailored for future-proof mass transactions, the OneCoin blockchain can perform more transactions than global credit card providers. (OneCoin)*
Ex 15: *With its finite number of 120 billion coins, OneCoin is one of the biggest reserve currencies worldwide. (OneCoin)*

In Ex14 the OneCoin describes itself in comparison to other financial service providers using the superlative degree 'more than'. While it describes itself in comparison to existing schemes, the technicalities of its operations and the mode of operation of the currency are not provided. There is neither any detailed information that reveals how the scheme attained its self-designated status, expressed in the OneCoin webpage nor any other evidence validating its claims. Such information appeal to individuals who are less tech-savvy, as these persons -usually uninformed participants of the Ponzi schemes, spread such spurious information as a recruitment discourse. In EX15 also, the scheme makes a claim that is not verified by any record. Cryptocoins are built on mathematical notations. While these currencies can only be mined, there are no reports on the success in the mining of the OneCoin. Hence, the identity of the scheme is completely built on obfuscations and lies.

Bogus Claims

As part of the deceptive ploys of Ponzi and pyramid schemes, these schemes often claim to offer promotional services such as education, health and wellness and financial aids. These services are the guise by which pyramids and Ponzi schemes operate. As part of the deceptive discourse of the OneCoin, education and training of members is one of the concerns of the scheme; the importance of education is foregrounded in their discourse. According to the OneCoin page, the scheme promotes education for participants diverting attention from the major operations of the scheme. Some examples below illustrate discourses that foreground other offers provided by Ponzi and pyramid schemes.

EX16: We are proud to say that our users will be able to choose among a growing number of OneCoin related and connected products in the areas of education, payments, exchange, business app solutions, trading and investing, and more One academy. The One Academy products are distributed by the network exclusively. (OneCoin)

EX17: Earn from BitConnect Coin trading…Earn from BitConnect Coin Mining…Investing in BitConnect Coin and Staking (OneCoin)

In Ex16, The OneCoin educational material, which is tied to the value of tokens that would be converted to coins after mining, is simply a disguise to conceal the main activities of the scheme; that is the sales of OneCoin and recruitment of investors using the matrix system typical of a pyramid scheme. In a YouTube promotional video of OneCoin, Sebastain Greenwood, one of the founders of the OneCoin rightly stated that the value of the coin value is the most important part of the OneCoin business. According to the post, the future of the OneCoin business is tied to the value of the coin (www.youtube.com). This statement simply contradicts the emphasis placed on the so-called One academy promoted by OneCoin. There is therefore an expression of falsehood intended to deceive investors who might have doubts regarding the operations of the scheme. In EX17 also, the Bitconnect platform claims to offer different streams of income for investors. These purported streams of incomes are however tied to the purchase of BitConnect coin. The use of these bogus claims tends to appeal to individuals who would desire multiple streams of income.

Value in Networking

One of the features of Ponzi and fraudulent cryptocurrencies is the use of a network system. The crypto currency has been described as a peer to peer currency, which implies that the success of the currency is contingent on the number of participants. Thus these schemes rely on the creation of networks to promote their activities. The impact of collaboration is found in the discourse of crypto-based Ponzi schemes found below:

*EX18: The system is designed in a way to self-regulate Bitconnect ecosystem which **creates wealth in entire Bitconnect community in near future. (BitConnect)***

There are speculations that cryptocurrencies could change the way Internet-connected global markets interact with each other, giving rise to a revolution in trade markets (Devries, 2015). Based on this speculation, the success of the cryptocurrency market depends on its ability to build a large network of users. As genuine schemes strive to build a community of digital currency users, fraudulent schemes such as HYIPs, Ponzi pyramid and scam cryptocurrencies also rely on this discourse to recruit investors. Outright honesty is illustrated in EX18 which is built on the ability of the scheme to predict its success based on the population of its community.

The emphasis in building a successful network portrays the scheme as credible even with the absence of any tangible means of sustaining investments. Chataris-Black (2005) explained that in cases of political speeches, followers only believe ideas that align with their value system. Bitconnect adapts with this notion of trust and communication to present truth. Since new forms of Ponzi schemes are emerging on daily basis and in different forms, adapting a stance by categorically stating what they represent is an important means to appear credible.

Concealment

This is a rhetorical strategy that involves hiding information or presenting half-truths. Concealment could manifest as false assumptions or emotionally manipulative expressions. As part of deceptive communication of fraudulent online investment schemes, certain expressions are adopted to hide the main motive of the scheme. The various description of the schemes under study are presented below:

EX19: Register and donate to start your journey. You can now invite others to donate to you (Zarfund)

In Ex 19 above, the scheme is presented as a financial institution that promotes mutual support rather than a Ponzi scheme. It is also presented as a charitable organizations through the use of the expression 'donate'. Donations are ideally not profit oriented hence, the discourse appeals to the human desire to seek and get support. In a world of financial uncertainty, low income earners who are indeed targets of most Ponzi schemes, are lured to participate in Ponzi activities through discourses that claim to support them. As part of concealment strategy, the use of mutual investment/donation discourse further hides the main activities of Ponzi, Pyramid and other fake financial schemes, which is to collect money from late investors to pay to early investors. As part of concealment, the schemes also use denial strategies as means of self-representation. The sample below is an illustration of concealment that denies any negative activity.

EX20: Bitconnect as an open source all in one bitcoin and crypto community platform.

The expression above describes the functions of Bitconnect both as a financial system and a cryptocurrency. It hides the fact that the scheme is a smart contract that trades with Bitcoin. Online based Ponzi schemes in their use of ambiguous expression divert attention from their main objectives. This form of concealment preys on inexperienced investors who end up investing without knowing how the schemes actually work.

SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study has identified the truths and lies in Ponzi schemes. From the study, Ponzi schemes are masked in general truth about forces of demand and supply that describe them as internet based and hassle free investment schemes with high returns on investment. Despite these assumed truths, these schemes are shady without providing details of their operations. Their similarity to genuine investments makes it difficult to detect deception. While the analysis of Ponzi and pyramid schemes provided in this study is designed to provide guide for identifying deception in online business investments, it is important to adopt this study alongside computerized methods of deception detection. While evidence abound on Ponzi schemes as forms of online deception, it is necessary to adopt a holistic approach to the study of emerging online Ponzi and pyramid schemes taking cognizance of their characteristics, cultural background of investors, victims' response and other forms of disinformation and deception in online investment schemes. This contributes to the burgeoning research on Ponzi schemes providing a detailed insight into their truths and lies as forms of deceptive communication.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Taking a broad look at deception and misinformation online, this study situates itself within a growing body of research on Ponzi schemes as forms of online deception in the digital era with a focus on half-truths and outright lies in Ponzi schemes. The study further argues that discourse practices of Ponzi and pyramid schemes are forms of online deception and disinformation. When investors participate in these schemes, they are often not completely informed of what they are getting involved in. The study therefore serves as a reference point for the identification and analysis of emerging Ponzi schemes in the wake of cryptocurrency revolution. So far, there are emerging studies on the ecosystem of smart contracts and computerized approaches to their identification and detection.

CONCLUSION

In Internet mediated era, Ponzi schemes operate as cryptocurrency, exchange platforms and pyramid schemes. The complex nature of these schemes makes it difficult to detect their fraud. Previous studies have examined the risks and ecosystems of the fraud. This study has however examined the so-called truth and lies of the schemes as forms of deceptive communication. From the study, Ponzi schemes offer outrageous returns on investment, less difficulty that might be simply recruiting two investors and bogus claims of providing multiple streams of income. The schemes serve as financial alternatives for individuals or places with low investment opportunities and in the case of cryptocurrency related Ponzi schemes, they serve as exchange platforms and alternative currencies for Bitcoin. The truths offered by Ponzi schemes serve as bait for potential investors on one hand and their success over time provide opportunity for the proliferation of other Ponzi schemes. While there seem to be truths about Ponzi and Pyramid schemes that prompt investors to try them out, these schemes are encrypted with lies such as bogus offers. The nature of their operations is not fully disclosed to participants resulting in deception.

From the study, postmodern Ponzi schemes, enabled by the Internet are characterized by discursive practices that make it difficult to identify them. Discussion platforms and online testimonials also serve as frontiers to promote these schemes. With the presence of such testimonials, the boundaries of detecting deception become blurred. In a bid to forestall some of the consequences of Ponzi schemes arising from their associated deceptive discourses, it becomes necessary for government to focus on monitoring the development of alternative financial investments and virtual money. Hence financial regulations should be provided to minimize the growth and expansion of these schemes.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Cryptocurrency: A digital currency in which encryption techniques are used to regulate the generation of units of currency and verify the transfer of funds, operating independently of a central bank.

Deception: A process of sending message intended to induce a false belief in the receiver.

High Yield Investment Programs: A type of Ponzi scheme, an investment scam that promises unsustainably high return on investment by paying previous investors with the money invested by new investors. Usually generate returns between few hours to over a long period of time.

Ponzi Scheme: A fraudulent investing scam promising high rates of return with little risk to investors. The Ponzi scheme generates returns for older investors by acquiring new investors.

Pyramid Scheme: A type of business that recruits members by promising of payments or services to early investors when they recruit others.

Smart Contract: A computer protocol intended to digitally facilitate, verify, or enforce the negotiation or performance of a contract. Smart contracts allow the performance of credible transactions without third parties.

Section 6

Deceptive Online Dating and Romance Scam

Chapter 24
The Role of Deceptive Communication and Gender in Shaping Online Dating Interactions:
A Discursive Approach

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ABSTRACT

Online dating is becoming an increasingly used method for meeting significant others. As the research of lying behavior has advanced so has the technique of detecting the act of lying, especially in the online environment where deception is more likely to happen. The aim of this chapter is to simplify the perception of lying behavior to the general population and examine gender differences of lying behavior, namely, to verify whether one can observe a statistically significant difference in the speech behavior and exploitation of lying cues among men and women. The study shows correlation between gender and deception in online environment.

INTRODUCTION

Individuals are frequently confronted with circumstances in which they must select their words carefully. People making that choice regularly ought to weigh the motive of assigning precise and truthful information against the requirement to preserve that relationship or to save face that is crucial to maintain the proper interaction (McCornack, 1992). At a point when people wish to be truthful, these two objectives may appear to be irreconcilable. With the intention of resolving this discord, people frequently abandon one aim for the other, which repeatedly means that the intent to preserve face as well as maintain the relationship wins out.

Communicators make these decisions continuously, some when they "fudge" on their financial situation, others when they lie about their sexual history to a potential dating mate (Pawlowski & Dunbar, 1999). Such choices may include judging whether the goal can be achieved by deception, whether the deceiver will revel in lying, or if the deceiver can ethically validate misleading the other about the topic. These are examples of the views people may have when they are challenged with a state in which people feel uncomfortable presenting the truth. The beliefs people have as they are preparing and expressing their messages are shaped by such aspects as one's social motives, background, ethical attitude, awareness of one's communicative behaviors, or perceptions of the approval of deception (O'Hair & Cody, 1994). Influences such as these have an influential impact on how truthful or deceptive that individual is in a certain state (Rowatt, Cunningham, & Druen, 1998) .

Romantic relationships are not always the result of complete honesty. Most individuals specified that they have been dishonest towards their romantic partner (cf. Levine, 2014). In some circumstances, relational deception is used to circumvent sensitive topics (Baxter &Wilmot, 1996) or to suppress appropriate information (Roloff & Cloven, 1990). The ubiquity of relational deception does not appear to be astonishing as there are various studies that aim at indicating that individuals are dishonest in different everyday situations (Drury, 2019; Levine, 2014; Tracy, Robles, 2013). DePaulo et al. (2004) show that individuals reserve their most severe lies for those they are romantically related to (DePaulo, Ansfield, Kirkendol, & Boden, 2004). Besides, there is also research that proposes that while there seems to be a great deal of deception in the mate selection procedure, those involved in that procedure are aware of its existence (Benz, Anderson, & Miller, 2005).

Meeting a significant other online is becoming more and more popular and appropriate way to find love, yet little is documented about the accurateness of the information individuals propose in these online forums. Current work suggests that online daters have diverse motivations for employing the Internet to find love (Lawson & Leck, 2006). Furthermore, deception appears to be more predominant in computer-mediated interactions than to face-to-face communications. Toma, Hancock, and Ellison (2008) are certain of obvious deception in online dating is reduced by the balance between the deceptive likelihoods that is accessible and the social restrictions that can originate from the expectancy of meeting the individual at some time in the future.

The connection between communication and deception may be helpful in understanding how individuals act while attempting to find a possible dating partner. Deception may be used as a way to keep an individual's independence (Solomon, 1993). Conversely, deception can also be employed as an approach to manage one's impression (Goffman, 1959), which would make nervous individuals more predisposed to lie

In the background of online dating, it is crucial to assess how truthful the initial messages are as they predetermine the tone for communication in the relationship. Moreover, one ought to be conscious that men and women often differ in how they see and react in romantic relationships (Shulman & Scharf, 2000; Zak, 1998). Consequently, it is important to examine the concept of gender in deception in romantic relationships. DePaulo et al. (1996) state that men and women have been detected to lie roughly the same amount. One can see that men and women have an inclination to lie in different ways. While men more regularly employ self-oriented lies, women are likely to lie in a manner that rises the other person (DePaulo et al., 1996).

Along with investigating lying behavior in an online dating context, this paper also examined how attachment styles might be related to participants' motivations as well as justifications for their lies. Framing participant's deception in terms of romantic attachment styles is predominantly significant in

comprehending how different individuals conceptualize the lies they tell. Moreover, in relationships, every lie does not have the same weight and impact. The significance and impact of each lie arises from both the lie teller's intent and the lie receiver's understanding. This paper evaluated the role of attachment in comprehending drives for deception and beliefs about the tolerability of deception in romantic relationships in online dating.

BACKGROUND

Current lie detection methods are grounded on several replies including physiological reactions, polygraph measurements, and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). The polygraph method assumes that lying creates increases in autonomic arousal, which is replicated in changes of pulse as well as respiration rates, blood pressure, sweating, and galvanic skin response (GSR) or the electrical resistance of the skin ("Polygraph Validity Research", n.d., para. 3). According to the American Polygraph Association, the polygraph has an average accuracy of 98% ("Polygraph Validity Research", n.d., para. 3). Yet, validation research has specified that the employment of polygraph equipment seems to be controversial because of the range of accuracy concerning the polygraph technician and the concerns of validity (Iacono, 2008; Iacono & Lykken, 1997).

The fMRI technique, which is grounded on the premise that four regions of the brain are stimulated when a person lies, has a higher level of correctness than a polygraph (Simpson, 2008). The fMRI technique is grounded on the notion that lying is a more complex cognitive act than telling the truth. Consequently, greater neural activation should take place when an individual is being deceptive compared to when she or he is telling the truth. Still, there are also important apprehensions about the validity and reliability of brain activity showing deception (Simpson, 2008).

In addition to the exploitation of equipment to measure physiological responses, human expression can be understood to identify deception (Kleinmuntz & Szucko, 1984). Ekman and Frank stated that facial expressions of emotion may be important cues to unveil dishonesty (Frank & Ekman, 1997). They discussed individual facial features which could be categorized as genuine vs. deceitful behavior (Ekman, O'Sullivan, & Frank, 1999).

Ekman's work recognized "microexpressions" as facial muscle movements that are obvious for a fraction of a second and can be detected, although only with practice and by skilled professionals (Ekman & Freisen, 1969). Furthermore, he recognized "squelched expressions" as expressions that an individual is aware of making, but makes efforts to hide from others (Ekman & Friesen, 1978). A study conducted in 1991 by Ekman and O'Sullivan requested participants to look for facial, vocal, and behavioral cues to regulate whether a woman observed on a videotape was telling the truth, or lying. The results confirmed that only trained individuals scored better-than-chance levels at precisely perceiving liars. Correspondingly, a study by Mann et al. (2004) supported the research by Ekman and colleagues (1991) and suggested that experience allows an individual to better control the difference between truths and lies.

The double standard in assessing deception in oneself and others was briefly deliberated by Bond and DePaulo (2006). The basic discovery and prediction was that people judge other people's lies more critically than their own. The research specified that individuals project their own moral emotions (anxiety, shame, guilt) and stereotypes of deception on a deceiver to assess a lie. Still, people are not critical of lies told by themselves and those with whom they are acquainted or have a relationship. Remarkably, the researchers speculated that the truth bias offered in the literature signifies an extension of the self-

bias to others who are reminiscent of the self (Jusimm, 2017). To disregard this bias, the partakers in the present investigation will assess the deceptive behavior of people outside of their social network.

A small number of studies has evaluated the interaction of gender and lying behavior. Preliminary research confirmed that the content of a lie was gender-specific. Men are involved in a greater number of "self-centered" lies while women took part in a greater number of "other-oriented" lies (DePaulo et al., 1996). The review of research literature on gender-based motivations for lying showed that women and men have the same occurrence of lies; however, the nature of the lie was dissimilar (Tosonse, 2006). The motivation of a man's "self-centered" lie was to improve his social attractiveness, while a woman's "other-oriented" lie was determined by the desire to defend the feelings of others.

A study by Tyler and Feldman (2004) discovered the occurrence and nature of lying in men and women. The number of lies provided ranged from 0 to 8 in a 10-minute interaction. Contrary to previous research, the results specified that women showed a greater occurrence of lying than men. The frequency of lying was not reliant on the gender of the individual being deceived. Researchers explicated the difference in frequency because of the social context of lying and the tendency of women to adjust their response to be socially recognized by others. The clarification was further maintained by the frequency of lying being greater for woman than men if the woman was offered the expectation of meeting the partner again (Hancock, Toma, Ellison, 2007).

MAIN FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER

Issues, Controversies and Problems

This study will try to simplify the perception of lying behavior to the general population and examine gender differences of lying behavior in online environment, namely online dating applications. The emphasis is to discuss the following research questions:

Research Question One: Do men and women choose and display various lying cues in online dating?
Research Question Two: What is a person's behavior while communicating deceptive information to others?

For the purposes of this paper, the term "lying cue" can be loosely described as the movement and/or change in the body, face, voice and/or language that may be the consequence of lying. The term "lying cue self-description" is the person's interpretation or identification of his/her own lying cues.

Three hypotheses have been formulated:

Hypothesis One: There is a difference between the lying cues noticed by men and women in online dating,
Hypothesis Two: There is an alteration in lying cue self-description of men and women in online dating, and
Hypothesis Three: There is a correlation between the lying cue self-description and the lying cues perceived by men and women in online dating interactions.

On the basis of the research in the field, it can be claimed that the study outcomes would prove no significant difference in the lying cues observed by men and women. This speculation was created on the motivation individuals have for deception being transferred to the self-perception of lying (Bond & DePaulo, 2006). Yet, it can be projected there would be significant differences in the perceived lying cue self-description of men and women. Specifically, women would have greater answers in the Beliefs Regarding Deceptive Behavior (BRDB) than men on the apparent self-description of lying cues. This rationale was founded in the investigation demonstrating that a woman's lying behavior is created on social acceptance (Tyler & Feldman, 2004). Consequently, it can be speculated that the self-description of lying cues might also be founded on social acceptance. Furthermore, it can be projected there would be some correlation in the lying cues for the self and the other as observed in Bond and DePaulo's (2006) meta-analysis.

Design, Method and Participants

The study was a combination of a 2 x 2 mixed subject design and a correlational design. The two independent variables included: gender (male or female; between subjects) of the participant and person rated (self and other ratings of deception; within subjects). The dependent variable was measured by the BRDB questionnaire, which assesses a participant's evaluation of their own perceived deceptive behavior (self) and assessing another person's deceptive behavior (other).

One hundred and fifty volunteers from Poland were recruited to take part in the study. 81 female and 69 male participants were recruited. Taking into consideration that a power analysis provided by G*Power 3 (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007) requires 111 participants to accomplish an actual power of .95 to find a medium effect of .03 and an alpha of .05. This research surpassed this requirement

An inclusion criterion for the research was established and stated on the sign-up posting. The only condition was that all participants should be fluent in written and spoken English to take part in the research. Contributors assessed themselves for this condition, and it was expected that they were fluent in written and spoken English if they choose to take part in the study. This inclusion criterion was essential since the videos and BRDB questionnaires were prepared in English. The aim of this was twofold: 1) to minimize misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the instructions, and 2) to limit confusing variables in the participants' understanding of the deceptive behavior noticed in the video.

The study was conducted online. All contributors were offered the lying and truth-telling videos created in an online survey. Participants were shown different kinds of behavior concerning people who took part in online dating that involved using video e.g. Skype.

The acts of lying and truth-telling were shown on two distinct videos. For the purposes of the study the videos characterized how the participants evaluated another person's deceptive behavior. The video showing deceptive behavior was about 50 seconds in length, and that representing non-deceptive behavior was about 60 seconds in length. Each video represented a diverse male interviewee who was being interrogated by a man, not noticeable on the screen, about money that was taken from a shop. The man representing deceptive behavior lied to the interviewer, and the man representing the non-deceptive behavior offered a truthful response. Both videos had the same setting, questions and the male interviewer. The videos were confirmed with the Facial Action Coding System. This validation established that the two men on the video showed different facial behaviors and body language that were in line with their truth-telling status.

Deception was evaluated with the Beliefs Regarding Deceptive Behavior questionnaire, which was created by Lucy Akehurst et al. (1996). It assesses four types of lying cues employing four subscales namely, 18 speech behavior lying cues, 16 facial behavior lying cues, 13 body language lying cues, and 17 content of statement lying cues. Speech behavior cues comprise items that exemplify the details in dialogue. Facial behavior cues include items that define the movements and expressions in the face. Body language cues comprise items that detail the movements of the body. The content of statement cues concentrate on the type of information carried in a statement.

The cues were assessed for frequency as well as intensity during deceptive behavior in contrast to truthful behavior. Participants categorized the lying cues on a 7-point scale of +3, +2, +1, 0, -1, -2, -3, which permitted grading between extremes as defined below: 0 - designates that the frequency/intensity of the matching behavior does not steadily modify during your deceptive behavior compared with your truthful behavior. While (-3) specifies that the frequency/intensity of the equivalent behavior strongly declines when you are lying compared to when you are telling the truth; (+3) suggested that the frequency/intensity of the matching behavior strongly rises when you are lying related to when you are telling the truth.

The same BRDB was employed for the assessment of self (perception of own lying behavior) and other's deceptive behavior. The only modification between the two questionnaires was the instructions offered to the participants, which clarified how to score the lying cues in the context of themselves and others. For the purposes of this research, a set of demographic inquiries that evaluated other's deceptive behavior was added to the last page of the questionnaire. These questions requested the participants to mention their gender, age, occupation, familiarity with deception, and awareness of Statement Validity Assessments.

Before the study, contributors were provided with an informed consent form. The participants were asked to read the consent form and ask any questions related to the study via e-mail. Participant discretion was sustained by not including personal identifying information as they were recognized by ordered sequence and gender.

Participants were informed that the study was about lying behavior and that they would be requested to respond to some questions about themselves, watch two short videos, and provide answers to some questions about the videos. When all the questionnaires were finished, the participants were asked to watch two videos. Participants were requested to watch the videos and informed that some of the individuals in the video would be lying and some would be telling the truth. The videos were shown once, in the order of deceptive behavior and then non-deceptive behavior. After watching the videos, the participants were given the questionnaire and requested to recognize the lying cues they noticed in the videos.

Results

Each contributor's numerical reply from the BRDB for self and BRDB for other's deceptive behavior and the demographic replies were entered and examined in Predictive Analytics Software, SPSS Statistics. Data was recognized as missing and left blank if a participant did not specify a reply to a question; only 10 data points were misplaced.

The evaluation of the demographic inquiries showed that 58% of the participants were employed. The mean age of the participants was 27.45 years ($SD = 3.34$) and ranged from 18 to 52 years. Furthermore, all participants were unacquainted with Statement Validity Assessments and were not effective in defin-

ing the study hypothesis. Later, all participants were informed about the study hypothesis. Consequently, the data for all 150 respondents were included in the data analyses.

In an attempt to simplify the interaction of gender and lying cues and visibly evaluate the correlations, the BRDB was divided into its four subscales of lying cues: speech behavior lying cues, facial behavior lying cues, body language lying cues, and content of statement lying cues (see Table 1).

To evaluate the BRDB for interior consistency, the dependability of the four sub scales for the evaluation of self and others were assessed with the calculation of Cronbach's alpha. Table 2 specifies that for the evaluation of self the lowest internal consistency was in the facial behavior and content of statement subscales, while the highest internal consistency was observed in the speech behavior subscale. Furthermore, for the assessment of others, the lowest internal consistency was noticed in the content of statement subscale, while the highest internal consistency was observed in the speech behavior as well as body language sub scales. Generally, the level of reliability considered by the Cronbach alpha specified a high level of consistency.

The descriptive statistics of each of the item lying cues was carried out to study the profile of distribution of the participant's replies for self-assessment and others assessment of lying cues. The total answers for an item, minimum and maximum response value, mean response, and standard deviation of a response were examined.

The item means for self-assessment fluctuated for men from a low of M (mean value)= -.28 to high of $M = .79$ and female from a low of $M = -.17$ to a high of $M = .96$ The means for the others assessment varied for men from a low of $M = -.32$ to a high of $M = 1.79$ and female from a low of $M = -.67$ and a high of $M = 1.7$. Generally, the majority of the self and other means were about .05 and the minimum and maximum responses ranged from -3 to +3 for most of the items, and the standard deviation was around 1. This restricted mean range suggested that the participant's responses to the BRDB did not intensely modified, yet there were extremes for some lying cue elements. For the self-assessment, item17, "range of vocabulary" had the highest lying cue decline ($M = -.18$) and item 40, "shrugs" had the highest lying

Table 1. Summary of four lying cue subscales in the BRDB

Lying Cue Subscale	Total Number of Items	Item Number
Speech Behavior	18	1 – 18
Facial Behavior (e.g. Skype)	16	19 – 34
Body Language (e.g. Skype)	13	35 – 47
Content of Statement	17	48 – 64

Table 2. Summary of Cronbach's alpha of the beliefs regarding deceptive behavior (BRDB) by four subscales and assessment

Lying Cue Subscale	Assessment of Self Alpha	Assessment of Others Alpha
Speech Behavior	.86	.82
Facial Behavior	.78	.81
Body Language	.85	.82
Content of Statement	.77	.78

cue rise ($M = .8$). For the assessment of others, item 27, "smiling" had the highest lying cue reduction ($M = -.50$) and item 23, "eye blinks" had the greatest lying cue rise ($M = 1.75$).

The first hypothesis was tested by an independent sample *t*-test relating the responses of men and women across the four subscales. The second hypothesis was also assessed by an independent sample *t*-test. The *t*-test assessed the mean alterations between men and women for each of the item on the BRDB. The third hypothesis was measured by a Pearson correlation.

An independent sample *t*-test, with equal variance assumed was carried out to evaluate whether there was a main effect between gender, precisely the alteration between the mean scores by gender of the four lying cue groups of the BRDB. Before the *t*-test was carried out, the participant's replies for each of the four subscales was added, and the total was averaged. Table 3 specifies that for the self-assessment of lying cues there was a statistically significant difference between the responses for men and women for the speech behavior as well as facial behavior lying cue groups. In both cases, women were more prone than men to define themselves as varying their speech and facial behavior when lying in comparison to when they were not lying. The effect size ($d = .38$) showed that there was a .38 standard deviation difference between men and women, which further indicated that women were more prone than men to differ their speech behavior when telling a lie. Furthermore, women were approximately a half a standard deviation higher than men ($d = .47$) in the amount of modification that arisen in their self-assessment of their facial behavior lying cues. These outcomes showed that women were more apt than men to change their facial behavior when lying. Table 4 specifies that for the assessment of others lying cues there was no statistical implication between the means for men and women.

Table 3. Summary of self-lying cue subscales by gender

Lying Cue Subscale	Gender	M	SD	t	p	d
Speech Behavior	Male	4.28	14.18	-2.21	.05	.43
	Female	8.98	11.77			
Facial Behavior	Male	3.78	9.77	-2.07	.06	.49
	Female	6.97	8.06			
Body Language	Male	4.81	9.37	-1.49	.17	.29
	Female	7.14	7.77			
Content of Statement	Male	4.09	9.48	-1.84	.08	.35
	Female	7.17	9.47			

Table 4. Summary of others lying cue subscales by gender

Lying Cue Subscale	Gender	M	SD	t	p	d
Speech Behavior	Male	12.61	10.53	.30	.77	.05
	Female	12.05	10.82			
Facial Behavior	Male	11.39	9.84	.41	.69	.07
	Female	10.67	10.00			
Body Language	Male	5.17	8.05	-.12	.92	.02
	Female	5.31	7.29			
Content of Statement	Male	4.89	10.34	-.66	.51	.12
	Female	6.04	9.12			

In addition to the subscales, independent sample *t*-tests, with equal variance assumed, were conducted to assess if there were significant differences between the item mean responses of men and women for each of the BRDB for self and others assessments of lying cues. For self-assessment, there was significance ($p = .00$) for item 4, "false starts" and there was significance ($p = .01$) for item 17, "length/detail of answer". For both of these items, women had a higher mean response than men, indicating they were more likely to change these forms of speech behavior when lying. For others assessment, there was a significance difference ($p = .04$) for item 46, "reserved posture" and significance ($p = .01$) for item 59, "description of interactions". For both of these items, women had the higher mean, implying that when a woman evaluates other's lying cues, she is more likely to notice changes in reserved posture and description of interactions.

Pearson correlation analyses were calculated to evaluate if the self and other's lying cues were positively correlated on each of the BRDB subscales. There were significant correlations between the self-assessment lying cues and the assessment of other's lying cues. There was a significant correlation (with p at 0.01 level to control for family-wise error) for the following: other speech behavior and self body language; other facial behavior and self body language; other facial behavior and self content of statement. In addition, there were trends (i.e., $p < .05$) for the following: other speech behavior and self speech behavior; other body language and self body language; other content of statement and self content of statement.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study assessed the lying cues detected by men and women in themselves as well as in others in the process of online interactions. The three hypotheses studied deliberated whether there was an alteration in the lying cues men and women articulated; whether men and women observed diverse lying cues in others; and whether there were correlations between the lying cues described in self and others.

Supporting the assumption, men and women varied in their lying cue self -description for speech behavior as well as facial behavior. There were no gender-specific variances on the self-reported lying cues for body language and content of statement. Furthermore, there were no fluctuations in the lying cues men and women detected in other individuals. Consequently, the only alteration between sexes was that when women lie, they stated they had a greater modification in frequency and intensity of speech and facial behavior in contrast to when they told the truth. These outcomes can be clarified by the conclusion from Tyler and Feldman's (2004) research, which determined that women structured their responses to be socially believed by others. Hence, the women in the study anticipated a greater change in the self-lying cues since they structured their speech and facial cues to be socially recognized.

Remarkably, the most apparent correlation was the positive linear relationships within all the self subgroups and the other subgroups. These correlations suggested that when the research participants noticed that they made changes in one of their own lying cues, this change was associated with a self-lying cue. This correlation can be further understood to propose that the cues were working together when the research participants were deceptive or detected deception.

The lying cues detected in others had the same connection. One can state that the act of lying and inferring lying behavior is a multifaceted system of inter-related behavior fluctuations. The lying cues were evidently related and may even have influenced or primed the person in passing and detecting another cue. Essentially, a chain reaction would be triggered to observe lying cues.

There were also observed some correlations between the other communicative behavior and self-body language, other facial behavior and self-body language, other facial behavior as well as self -content of statement. The correlations specified that when an individual lies and perceives another person lie, these precise lying subgroups are interrelated. The meta-analysis by Bond and DePaulo (2006) referred to this connection between the self and others. Yet, the outcomes of this research were not constant with the conclusions suggested by Bond and DePaulo (2006) and Akehurst et al (1996) since their research disclosed indication for alterations between self and other lying behavior. Conversely, this study provided some evidence that there were positive correlations between the self and others lying cues. Remarkably, the outcomes of the present study agreed with the self-another study by Epstein and Feist (1988). Their study investigated if there was a correlation between the favorable ratings of self and others in pre-teen boys and girls. The outcomes specified that there were important positive correlations for self and others in favorable assessments.

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One can also observe that very few, if any, of the researchers formerly discussed mentioned the possibility that gender differences may exist in the detection of deception. By analyzing these differences, one could discover that males and females differ in determining the validity of a response. The results of the study showed that there are gender differences in detecting deception, even if they are sometimes small differences. This study allowed the researcher to analyze how genders differed not only in their accuracy rates in the detection of deception and use of various cues in the CMC to detect deception, but also how each gender displayed these cues as well. More research should be done in the use of cues by subjects in similar scenarios such as the one presented in this study.

This study analyzes the truth and deception detection ability of male and female receivers in online discourse when responding to true and deceptive messages from both male and female speakers. Although the differences between females' and males' capacity at detecting truthfulness or deception were not always, the difference seems to be significant under specific conditions. Females may be significantly more transparent than the males, especially when females are being honest. Conversely, males' deception behavior tends to be more difficult to detect. Consequently, it might be reasonable to infer that earlier studies yielding around-chance level accuracy might be triggered by two factors, namely high accuracy rate on transparent female speakers (especially female truth-tellers) and low accuracy rate on difficult male speakers (especially male deceivers).

LIMITATIONS

As with most deception research, methodological problems occur with the assessment of lying. Having the participants record what the more precise response to each lie would have been does give the researcher a clearer representation of the context in which each deceptive statement is being employed. There is, however, motive to propose that in a procedure of this kind, the total number of lies can be miscalculated, in that participants would be least prone to reveal any lies that would put them in a negative light. Furthermore, of those participants who stated no lies, it is relatively probable that some were being deceptive about not lying. In either case, the outcome would be an underestimation of the total deception.

Even with these apprehensions, it is stated to be dubious that this potential underestimation would have any systematic alteration across experimental conditions that would in line lead to imprecise assumptions from the data.

One potential reason for the lack of more robust findings from the experimental manipulation is believed to be as a result of the studies sample.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Grounded on the limitations of the present study, it is apparent that further research is needed to fully understand the patterns shown by individuals and deception concerning online dating. Valuable upcoming studies may be qualitative in nature. This would allow for people to convey their experiences on these sites in their own words and offer researchers with the detailed richness of information that can be gained through personal narratives. Moreover, as a consequence of time constraints the present study was

incapable of addressing all questions offered by previous literature. Further studies should exploit this research and other available literature. This would allow researchers to increase a better understanding of the nuisances of participant's experiences to study in more detail how people form relationships online and the exact nature of these relationships in relation to deception. Future research would take advantage from dealing with the question of the reason of the correlation between the lying cues a person detects, expresses, and observes in others. Explicitly, what factors affect how individuals express lying cues and how they distinguish these lying cues in themselves and in others.

CONCLUSION

The study evaluated the lying cues perceived by men and women in themselves as well as in others. The three hypotheses studied considered whether there was an alteration in the lying cues men and women articulated; whether men and women observed diverse lying cues in others; and whether there were correlations between the lying cues defined in self and others. Taken into consideration the research, a restricted number of influences have been recognized for being deceitful (e.g., motivation, social acceptance) and being successful in perceiving deceit (e.g., experience, occupation). Nevertheless, the literature does not reveal a clear connection between practiced self-deception and an evaluation of other's deception.

With online dating becoming a universal form of meeting possible romantic partners, this research seems to offer an approach how to the concept of deception works in those initial interactions. These findings recommend that online dating may give some people the chance to discover a diverse approach to mate selection taking into consideration the process of effective communication. The relative concealment of online dating allows women to more willingly talk about themselves and permits those with more relationship experience the chance to convey their expectation for a relationship before finding potential partners. This research, however, also proposes a more negative conclusion, that online dating permits users to generate deceitful versions of themselves with the intention of becoming more successfully find a partner. The end result of this deceptive approach may end up reinforcing the fear of rejection that was the initial impetus for creating the false profile to begin with. Whatever the motivation, it is clear from this research that the online dating universe is far more complex than it may seem on the surface and further study on this topic could yield a richer understanding of modern dating life.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Computer-Mediated Communication: Any human communication that occurs through the use of two or more electronic devices.

Frames: Abstractions that work to organize or structure message meaning.

Gender: Refers to sexual identity in relation to culture and society.

Chapter 25

Online Romance in the 21ˢᵗ Century:
Deceptive Online Dating, Catfishing, Romance Scams, and "Mail Order" Marriages

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ABSTRACT

The rapid advancement of technology has changed the dating world for millions of people. While dating scams are not a new phenomenon to the online dating community, a new form of scam known as "catfishing" is also taking place. Catfishing is the verb used to describe the actions of a "catfish," a person who creates falsified online profiles on social networking sites with the purpose of fraudulently seducing someone else. In addition to talking about online dating scams and catfishing, this chapter will also examine "mail order" marriages and the potential impact of this practice.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of Internet-based technologies has changed many aspects of our lives. One area of human communication that has been effected by technological advances is the opportunity for online romantic endeavors. The Internet has now made it possible for a person to date without ever leaving their home. The use of Internet dating sites, social networking sites, and dating applications has enabled humans to date 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year (Rege, 2009). It is estimated that one in four dating relationship begin online, making the Internet the second most common way that dating couples meet (Cocalis, 2016).

With the increase in popularity of online dating in the past twenty years has come a growth in both the numbers and revenues of online dating websites (Close & Zinkhan, 2004). There are over 1,400 dating site in North America alone (Rege, 2009), which are estimated to generate $2 to $4 billion in revenue annually (Hamm, 2014; Harwell, 2015; Rogers, 2013). Popular sites such as Match.com, eHarmony. com, Chemistry.com, OurTime.com, and OKCupid.com make it easy for individuals to meet potential online matches (Harwell, 2015; Rege, 2009). Online dating sites provide an avenue to meet people online with the potential to move offline into face-to-face relationships (Barraket & Henry-Waring, 2008). In addition to traditional websites, there are also a number of popular online dating applications. Popular apps such as Tinder, Coffee Meet Bagel, and Zoosk that users download on their phone make it easy to browse for potential mates (Windelman, 2018). Online dating is not limited to dating sites and apps only; social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter have generated a new method of connecting with others who may share similar interests (Wortham, 2014). It is through this new method of social networking that a new type of dating scam has emerged known as "catfishing". Catfishing is the verb used to describe the actions of a "catfish", a person who creates falsified online profiles on social networking sites with the purpose of fraudulently seducing someone (Harris, 2013).

Recent research by Smith (2016) in conjunction with the Pew Research Internet Project echoes the trend towards online dating, with 12% of Americans reporting using online dating sites or mobile dating applications. This represented a 3% increase from the 9% who reported usage in 2013 (Smith & Duggan, 2013). In regard to social networking sites (SNS), 31% of respondents reported using these sites to check up on someone they used to date or be in a relationship with, and 15% asked someone out on a date using an SNS (Smith & Duggan, 2013). While the majority of people who go online to date do not experience major difficulties, it is an industry that has faced a number of problems, particularly the emergence of dating/romance scams (Button, McNaughton-Nicholls, Kerr, & Owen, 2014; Rege, 2009). This has left many online dating users weary of dating on the Internet, with 45% of adult online dating users agreeing that it is more dangerous than other ways of meeting people (Smith, 2016).

In addition to the "traditional" online dating/romance scams, the emergence of catfishing has brought about a new and different type of online dating victimization for online daters to be weary of. Also, something to consider is that the increase in the use of online dating is also correlated with increases in the use of the Internet for finding marriages. One particular practice, the use of mail order brides in the United States, will be explored in detail in this chapter. It is important to understand the difference between these types of online dating victimization, as the motivation of the scammer and the potential for victimization varies greatly depending on the type of scam a person fall victim to.

TRADITIONAL ONLINE/DATING ROMANCE SCAMS

While the exact origins of the traditional online dating/romance scams are unknown, its roots can be traced back to the mid-2000s (Buchanan & Whitty, 2014; Whitty & Buchanan, 2012). Although these scams can manifest in a number of ways, there are commonalities among them. It should be noted that online dating romance scams are increasingly being conducted by international criminal groups, though lone individuals still engage in this activity as well (Whitty & Buchanan, 2016). Many victims of online dating scams in the United States fall prey to international scammer. Research by Beldo (2016) found that countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, the Netherlands, Romania, and South Africa had the highest fraud rates. Indeed, many are familiar with Nigeria's reputation for email scams. This certainly does not mean

that all online dating users from these countries are involved in scams, but it is something online daters in the U.S. should be aware of.

The typical anatomy of an online dating/romance scam goes as follows: the criminal (scammer), who is often the initiator of a conversation, will make contact with their victim through a dating or social networking site or application (Rege, 2009; Buchanan & Whitty, 2014; Whitty & Buchanan, 2016). The scammer, whose profile is often created with stolen photographs, will declare their affection and/or love for the victim at an early stage, and will seek to move the communication from the dating site or SNS to other forms of communication, such as instant messenger or email (Buchanan & Whitty, 2014; Whitty, 2013).

The communication between the scammer and the victim is described as being both frequent and intense, and will build over a period of weeks, months, or even years (Buchanan & Whitty, 2014). During this grooming phase, the victim will often begin to self-disclose intimate secrets about themselves, building the sense of trust felt in the relationship (Whitty & Buchanan, 2016). After a trusting relationship is built, the scammer will begin with requests for small amounts of money or gifts (i.e. cell phones, tablets, etc.) Buchanan & Whitty (2014) refer to this as a "testing-the-water" strategy, where the scammer is looking to see if the victim grants their request. The small requests often quickly accelerate into requests for larger sums of money. The scammer may bring in a third party to assist in the scam to make the monetary appeals more realistic. For example, a third party may contact the victim and explain that the scammer is "ill" or has been in an "accident" and requires money to make payment on a hospital bill, capitalizing on the feelings of empathy the victim has developed for the scammer (Rege, 2009; Whitty & Buchanan, 2012, 2016). For most victims, the online dating/romance scam ends when the victim both realizes and accepts that he or she has been scammed and refuses to pay the scammer (Whitty, 2013). Unfortunately for many victims, when they do decide to come forward there is often little room for recourse regarding these actions (Rege, 2009). While the FBI does offer warning about online dating/romance scams (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2012), beyond this there is little assistance for victims of this crime (Rege, 2009).

VICTIMS OF ONLINE DATING/ROMANCE SCAMS

Victim Characteristics

To date, there is little information regarding the typical characteristics of fraud victims (Buchanan & Whitty, 2014). Rege (2009) asserts that romance scams are gender neutral in that males and females are targeted equality. While there are no reported differences between male and female victimization, it is believed that the most common targets for online dating/romance scammers are women over the age of 40 who are divorced, widowed, and/or disabled (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2012). Buchanan & Whitty (2014) hypothesize that there may be feelings and characteristics that are common among victims. For example, those who experience extreme feelings of loneliness may tend to form strong attachments and relationships on the internet, increasing their chance of victimization. Additionally, one's romantic beliefs many play a role in whether or not they fall victim to the traditional online dating scam (Buchanan & Whitty, 2014). Sprecher & Metts (1989) Romantic Beliefs Scale measures four dimensions of romantic beliefs; "love finds a way" (i.e. love can overcome barriers to obstacles), "one and only", "idealization", and "love at first sight". It has been found that those who score higher on the Romantic

Beliefs Scale tend to experience more passionate love for their partner and reported a fewer number of dates before falling in love (Sprecher & Metts, 1989). Buchanan and Whitty (2014) hypothesize that individuals who experience these strong romantic beliefs may be more prone to accept propositions from online scammers who claim that person is "the one". Their research found an increased risk of victimization for those who scored higher on the Romantic Beliefs Scale (Buchanan & Whitty). Another hypothesis is that those individuals who are high sensation seekers looking for new, complex, intense sensations may be willing to risk their financial and emotional well-being to achieve these sensations (Buchanan & Whitty, 2014).

In looking to understand why a person becomes a victim of online dating scam, Whitty (2013) interviewed twenty individuals who had been victims of online dating/romance scams; fourteen heterosexual women, four heterosexual men, and two homosexual men. Many of these victims had been scammed for money, one person repeatedly (over 40 times). One of the themes that emerged was that many victims felt the person who scammed them portrayed themselves as an "ideal romantic partner" (p. 673). Others described feeling addicted to the relationship, and found it difficult to exit the relationship even when they learned the true intentions of the person they were speaking with. Under what Whitty (2013) refers to as the elaboration likelihood model, some individuals were so motivated to find a romantic relationship that they could ignore cognitive cues that they were being scammed. When presented with information that could be thought of as authentic and that which was clearly inauthentic, the victim was able to dismiss the inauthentic information as non-credible and believe what he or she wanted to believe (Whitty, 2013).

Part of the difficulty in determining who the typical online dating/romance scam victim is due to lack of reliable victimization statistics. It is difficult to maintain statistics as many victims do not report their victimization to law enforcement officials. An individual may not report because he or she is embarrassed, feels the police cannot help them, or they simple do not know they are a victim (Button et al., 2014; King & Thomas, 2009; Rege, 2009). Further, finding a romance scammer for research purposes is very difficult as these individuals are often a part of an "underground culture" that is unknown to most individuals (Rege, 2009; p. 496).

Costs to Victims

As previously mentioned, online dating scams can result in huge financial loss for its victims. Conservative estimates are that online dating/romance scams cost victims more than $50 million annually (Rogers, 2013). More recent figures suggest that loss is well over $100 million annually (Shadel & Dudley, 2015). Personal losses can range from a few hundred dollars to upwards of 6-figures or more. For example, in 2013 it was reported that a Vancouver, Canada man lost $500,000 (CAD) to online dating/romance scammers (Rankin & Uda, 2013), and another American woman lost $300,000 reportedly in 2015 (Shadel & Dudley, 2015). In addition to being a potential source of financial victimization, online romance scam victims also suffer emotional harm. This harm can erode a person's senses of self and trust in others (Berg, 2009). Emotions such as fear, anxiety, anger, and depression are often reported. A victim may feel embarrassed that he or she fell for an online dating scam, which can affect a person's overall online experiences (Rege, 2009)

In addition to financial costs, online dating scams can also have a lasting psychological impact on its victims. In a study of 20 victims of online dating scams, Whitty & Buchanan (2016) found that all participants were affected negatively by the scam. Some of the emotions they reported included shame, embarrassment, anger, worry, and stress. Besides the shame from being involved in a scam in general, some

victims reported feeling especially shameful because they had revealed sexual details about themselves to the offender, some even admitting to performing sexual acts for the offender via webcam (Whitty & Buchanan, 2016). Another dimension to their victimization was the often negative reaction they received from family, friends, and work colleagues once they revealed they had been scammed. Many participants felt these individuals did not provide them adequate social support, and only furthered their feelings of victimization. Something that is also worth mentioning is that despite the fact that these individuals had been scammed, many reported problems associated with the loss of a significant romantic relationship. Interestingly, those who did not lose money were more likely to report feeling devastated by the loss. Overall, all of the victims felt that the experience changed them personally and socially, mostly in a negative manner (Whitty & Buchanan, 2016).

Catfishing: A New Type of Online Dating Scam

While many scammers associated with online dating/romance scam are focused on monetary gains, not all of these scams have a financial basis. Recent attention has been brought to the online dating/romance scam known as "catfishing". According to *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, a catfish is "a person who sets up a false personal profile on a social networking site for fraudulent or deceptive purposes" (Catfish, n.d.). Catfish's differ from other types of online dating/romance scams primarily in two ways; catfishing is in reference to scams that take place primarily via social networking sites, and while there may be financial aspects involved, catfishing scammers often commit their acts for personally motivated, non-financial reasons (Warner, 2012). This non-financial motive is important to understanding catfishing, as it is what sets it apart from the more traditional online dating scammer described earlier.

Since the concept of catfishing is relatively new, it is of interest to discover not only who the target victims are of this behavior, but also the motivations behind someone becoming a catfish. Future research should be directed towards a better understanding of this behavior. Based on numerous episodes of the hit MTV show *Catfish: The TV Show* (where catfishing victims are given the opportunity to confront the person who has catfished them), Rothman (2013) suggests several themes that emerge as potential explanations for a catfish's behavior:

- **Revenge**: In season one, episode four a female catfish (real name Mhissy) pretended to be a man named "Mike" for two years in order to engage in a relationship with Jasmine, her self-proclaimed enemy. When asked her motivation for doing so, Mhissy replies with "Why not?"
- **Loneliness:** In season one, episode 8, a male catfish named Aaron poses as a female named "Amanda" in order to begin a relationship with Tyler, a male. When asked for his rationale Aaron confesses that he is homosexual and feels ostracized by his community for his sexuality. Out of feelings of loneliness, Aaron poses online as "Amanda" to gain attention from men.
- **Sexual Identity Anxiety:** Season 1, episode 6 highlights the story of Dani, born a female but identifying as a transgender man, who catfishes as a male named "Alyx". He begins an online relationship with Kya, a female who is admittedly a former catfish. Upon their meeting Dani felt that posing as a person of another sex was a means of helping him gain confidence in his own gender identity.
- **Low Self-Esteem:** In season one episode three, a male catfish named Matt who was in an online relationship with a female named Kim for over a decade, refused to meet her in person or show her recent pictures. When they two finally met, Matt admitted that his struggles with obesity and had

left him feeling self-conscious about his outward appearance. Catfishing Kim became a mechanism for Matt to boost his own self-esteem (Rothman, 2013).

Case Study: Catfish – The Nev Schulman Story

The popular MTV show "Catfish: The TV Show" was inspired by the documentary of the same name (*Catfish: The Movie*), which was based on the real-life story of Nev Shculman, a 24-year-old New York City photographer (Warner, 2012). Schulman's story began innocently enough when he was contacted on the popular social media website Myspace by an 8-year-old girl named "Abby", a budding artist from Michigan. Abby contacted Schulman to request permission to paint a photograph he had taken that was published in a newspaper months before. Flattered by the young girl's request, and with the blessing of Abby's mother, "Angela", Schulman began an online correspondence with Abby, which eventually developed into a friendship with her and her entire family (Jarecki, Smerling, Joost, & Schulman, 2010). Schulman's relationship particularly blossomed with "Megan", Abby's 19-year-old half-sister, whom Schulman described as "very attractive" and his "dream woman" (Berman, Deutsch, & Sher, 2010). After seven months of flirtatious correspondence with Megan, Schulman (with his brother and a friend documenting the trip with a video camera) set off to Michigan to meet Megan and her family (Schulman, 2014; Warner, 2012).

Upon arriving in Michigan, Schulman and his crew were met by a woman named Angela Wasselman. It was quickly revealed that Wesselman had been posing as both 8-year-old Abby, and 19-year-old Megan. Wasselman, a married women in her 40s who claims to be a diagnosed schizophrenic, explained that "Megan" and "Abby" were characters in a complex fantasy world she had developed (Berman et al., 2010). While some may view this as an unforgiveable betrayal, Schulman instead has chosen to view it as a learning experience. He still keeps in regular contact with Angela, and admits that he does not hold anger or grudges towards her (Schulman, 2014; Solon, 2010).

The title of the documentary that followed Schulman's story is *Catfish*. The title was inspired by Wasslemann's husband, Vince Pierce, who recounts the following story that inspired the name of the film:

They used to tank cod from Alaska all the way to China. They'd keep them in vats in the ship. By the time the codfish reached China, the flesh was mush and tasteless. So this guy came up with the idea that if you put these cods in these big vats, put some catfish in with them and the catfish will keep the cod agile. And there are those people who are catfish in life. And they keep you on your toes. They keep you guessing, they keep you thinking, they keep you fresh. And I thank god for the catfish because we would be droll, boring and dull if we didn't have somebody nipping at our fin. (Jareck et al., 2010)

How to Catch a Catfish?

When the documentary *Catfish* premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2010, techniques to uncover these catfishes were not as sophisticated as they are today. Season one of the popular television show Catfish relied on what would now be considered the simplest of Internet tricks to uncover a catfish's identity. McHugh (2015) argues that techniques such as Facebook snooping, reverse image searches on Google, and Google searches of phone numbers were fairly novel at the time; however, as the show and technology have progressed, new techniques are being used to dig deeper to uncover the identity of a potential catfish (Horn, 2014; McHugh, 2015).

As discussed by the *Catfish* television show's hosts, Nev Schulman and Max Joseph, Instagram is now the first stop in their line of detective work, as these profiles provide clue to identity through things like number of followers, and type of followers. Further, when photographs are taken on Instagram they are in a square shape. If an alleged catfish's Instagram pictures show up on other social networking sites and they are not in the square shape, chances are that it was a screen-grab of the original image from a cell phone, and thus a fake picture (McHugh, 2015). The geotagging system on Instagram, which can denote the physical location in which a photo was taken, often proves to be helpful for Schulman and Joseph. Another recent tool that has been helpful in searching for catfish has been the use of Spokeo, which is a website that aggregates data about a person from both online and offline sources. According to Max Joseph, the increase in technological capabilities has "…[made it] harder to be a catfish" (McHugh, 2015; p. 1)

'MAIL ORDER' MARRIAGES

Given the effect that the Internet has had on dating relationships, it is of no wonder that this has also impacted the marriage industry. Some American's, particularly men, are utilizing online international match-making brokers to find foreign woman to marry. Referred to as 'mail order' marriages, it is estimated that between 8,000 and 12,000 of these marriages occur every year in the United States (Jehle & Miller, 2010). It is of interest to note that mail order marriages are not a new phenomenon; they have existed across the world for centuries, and were usually seen as a welcome act (Zug, 2014). Traditional mail order marriages were made on the presumption that there was a disparity in the marriage market; it was believed that there was a shortage of marriageable American women. As stated by Zug (2014), for centuries mail order marriages were viewed as "…good for men, good for women, and good for America" (p. 153). So, while not a new arrangement, the introduction of the Internet has created a different, often times faster way for American men to get married to foreign women.

Research on the men who seek out mail order brides indicates that these men share characteristics that may systematically exclude them from the traditional American marriage market. O'Rourke (2002) found that only 50% of those men using mail order bride services had two or more years of college education. These men reported doing poorly in the job market, making them less appealing to women seeking marriage. Critics of mail order marriages argue that men are not looking for their "better half", but rather are seeking women who they can dominate and oppress (Zug, 2014). However, counter to the argument of men seeking an uneducated woman they can dominate, other research indicates that in many instances, these men are looking for smart, well-educated, accomplished women. As discussed by Zug (2014), "American men seeking mail order brides often seem to be searching for a foreign version of the type of woman who is rejecting them at home" (p. 153). Research by Visson (1998) found that in many mail order marriages, the brides were very assertive in their relationship, many taking charge of family finances and steering their husband's career path. Indeed, while proponents of mail order marriages do recognize that domestic violence and death do occur, it is only a small proportion of the entire industry, and most mail order marriages end in success (Jehle & Miller, 2010). An example of a "success" story from a mail-order marriage is that of Vitaliana Wilson (Oksman, 2016). Wilson, who was born in the Ukraine, had one previous marriage that ended in divorce at age 21, and described her dating life after that as "difficult". On the advice of a friend she signed up for a mail-order bride service. She met a man from America, and after 8 months of correspondence she moved to the United States to marry him. Life

at first was difficult as she did not speak English, but her husband was supportive and got her English lessons at the local university. With her husband's support she plans to go back to school to get her degree in accounting. She is thriving in the United States and feels she made the right decision for her and her family (Oksman, 2016). Descriptions like this call the submissive stereotype of mail order brides into question (Zug, 2014); however, there is also information that indicates that there are dangers associated with this practice, particularly those associated with domestic violence (Heiman, 2011).

In 2010, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) released a fact sheet on mail order brides in the United States. The fact sheet was created out of the International Marriage Broker Regulation Act (IMBRA), a federal law enacted in 2006 to regulate the mail order bride industry. The impetus for IMBRA was a growing body of evidence that a nationwide trend of abuse of foreign women who were mail order brides for American men (Heiman, 2011). IMBRA regulates the mail order bride industry to permit well intentioned people the opportunity to find international romance via matchmaking services, while trying to prevent needless abuse of women (Jehle & Miller, 2010). IMBRA includes safeguards such as requiring criminal background checks for potential partners and advising prospective brides about their rights and making them aware of domestic violence resources available in the United States (Heiman, 2011; Jehle & Miller, 2010).

As discussed by Heiman (2011), there are certain industry practices in the mail order bride world that increase the dangers for these women. These women are often marketed to American men as "traditional" or "submissive". When the women do not live up to the expectations of their husbands, potential for conflict and violence may result (Jehle & Miller, 2010). Also, individuals who call themselves international marriage brokers (IMB'S) often promote foreign brides as "great investments" and with "satisfaction guaranteed" promises. Rather than using an IMB to foster a relationship, it creates and environment where a husband is "purchasing" a bride, which may lead to a false sense of entitlement on part of the husband, ultimately leading to an unsafe situation for the ordered bride (Heiman, 2011).

An example of a mail-order marriage that ended in violence is the story of Kyrgyzstan native Anastasia Solovieva (Fisher, 2002). Solovieva was 18 when she married 36-year-old American Indie King from Washington State. They met through a mail-order bride service. Starting shortly after the marriage King, who has come off initial as a charming college graduate, began to abuse Solovieva. He demanded her location at all time, put pressure on her to have children, and refused to let her get a job or driver's license. King, who had a previous mail-order marriage that ended in divorce, was determined not to let the same thing happen in his second marriage. With the help of an accomplice, he strangled Solovieva to death. In 2002 King was found guilty of Solovieva's murder, and was sentenced to 28 years in prison. At sentencing, Solovieva's mother said "I feel no sense of joy over the verdict, just bitterness that we lost our daughter" (Fisher, 2002). The death of Anastasia Solovieve is a stark reminder that while there may be positive aspects to the industry, there are inherent dangers in the mail-order bride business and these dangers should never be minimized or overlooked.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

While the literature on traditional online dating scams is limited, when it comes to newer scams like catfishing, information is almost non-existent. Exploratory research is needed to determine the prevalence of catfishing, how catfishes scam their victims, and the potential consequences for victims. The

same holds true for the topic of fake marriages and mail order brides; this effects millions of people annually, yet little is known about this topic. Again, more exploratory research is needed to determine the prevalence of fake marriages, and the impact these marriages have on all parties involved.

CONCLUSION

As more and more individuals turn to the Internet to find love and romance, so do potential predators that look to exploit this particular population. Through popular dating websites we have seen the emergence of online dating scams where the primary motive for the offender is financial or monetary gain from the online victim (Buchanan & Whitty, 2014; Rege, 2009; Whitty & Buchanan, 2012). This type of online fraud and victimization can be burdensome and painful for the victim on multiple levels (Rege, 2009, Whitty & Buchanan, 2016). While there are certainly negative aspects of online dating scams, it is important to note that people can heal from this crime. In research of online dating scam victims by Whitty & Buchanan (2016), despite how much they were hurt, all of the participants in their study were making attempts to cope with the situation. As far as what was helpful in helping them cope, few reported receiving support from others. Some did seek out counseling, but because counselors were uniformed regarding this crime, they were of little help to the participants. Some participants reported writing or journaling their experiences. Writing for therapeutic purposes has been found to be an effective method to help individuals deal with trauma (Pennebaker, 2004). Interestingly, all participants reported that carrying out the interview for the research study was helpful for them. For many, it was only the first or second time they had disclosed their experiences in full, especially to an accepting audience (Whitty & Buchanan, 2016). From this it appears that more research is needed not only to learn more about victims of these crimes, but also because victims may feel empowered by having their story told via academic research.

At the present time there is little awareness regarding online dating scams, and many police forces simply lack the experience and information for how to best help victims dealing with being scammed (Buchanan & Whitty, 2014). While this type of victimization is certainly serious, a different type of online victimization is also occurring in the form of catfishing. The primary differences between traditional victimization from online dating sites is that catfishing happens primarily through social networking and social media website, and is typically not done for any financial gain (Warner, 2012)

While it is certainly important to understand all types of online dating scams, the emergence of catfishing has brought about a behavior that is in need of further research. In addition to victim of a catfish facing extreme embarrassment once it is discovered that they have been catfished, one must also consider the identity stolen by the alleged catfish; they (the catfish) will often go to great lengths to withhold their true identity by shamelessly exploiting the identity of another person (Horn, 2014). It is important to further understand this behavior as it has serious consequences for the multiple parties often involved in a catfishing scam. Future researchers should explore catfishing from multiple perspectives, as the academic literature on this particular topic is very limited.

Finally, more research and attention is needed into the IMB industry, focusing on the protection of mail order brides from abuse and exploitation. While the mail order bride industry provides a service for eligible bachelors to engage in international dating, there is a fine line between finding international

love and exploiting a vulnerable population. The passage of IMBRA is a step in the right direction, but over a decade has passed since then, and technology has only enhanced, making it easier for these relationships to occur, and ultimately for abuse and exploitation to be covered up. It is of interest to learn how technology, particularly the use of social networking sites, has altered the mail order bride industry. Again, the research on this topic is very limited in nature, and much more attention should be given to this topic in the academic literature in order to understand the impact of mail order marriages, both for the positive and the negative.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Catfishing: The verb used to describe the actions of a "catfish," a person who creates falsified online profiles on social networking sites with the purpose of fraudulently seducing someone else.

Fake Marriage: A marriage of convenience entered into purely for the purpose of gaining a benefit or other advantage arising from that status.

Grooming Phase: The phase in an online dating scam where the victim will often begin to self-disclose intimate details about themselves to the scammer, building the sense of trust felt in a relationship. This is when the scammer will begin with request for small amounts of money or gifts in an attempt to play on the victim's trust.

Mail-Order Bride: A woman who lists herself in catalogs and is selected by a man for marriage. This is typically done by a woman who wants to marry someone from another country, usually a financially developed country.

Online Dating Application: An online dating service presented through a mobile phone application, often taking advantage of a smartphone's GPS location capabilities, always-on-hand presence, and easy access to digital photo galleries.

Online Dating Website: A website that enables people to find and introduce themselves to new personal connections over the internet, usually with the goal of developing personal, romantic, or sexual relationships.

Social Networking Site: An online platform that allows users to create a public profile and interact with users on their website.

Traditional Online Romance/Dating Scam: A confidence trick involving feigning romantic intentions toward a victim who they meet online, gaining the victim's affection, and then using that goodwill to commit fraud, usually monetary in nature.

Section 7
Online Religious Deception

Chapter 26
Patterns of Deceptive Communication of Social and Religious Issues in Social Media:
Representation of Social Issues in Social Media

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ABSTRACT

Deception and religion have evolved over the years. Deception and belief manipulation are aspects of religious communication. The digital space revolves around fake news and indicates that humans are more susceptible than ever to mental manipulation by powerful technological tools. This chapter demonstrates patterns in deceptive narrative usage in a communication of social and religious issues (CSRI) in social media among a religious community in Mumbai. Drawing from deception theory of David Ettingery and Philippe Jehiel, the exploitation by rational players of the fundamental attribution of error (FAE) made by other players, where FAE allows for belief manipulation. The authors propose that an increased presence of social media promotes patterns in CSRI in social media. The analysis depicted patterns in the preference to the use of text visual images, audio-visual, and audio formats when communicating social and religious issues.

INTRODUCTION

The digital world is growing in all dimensions of communication. Deception in digital space has encouraged evolving stakeholders to find new methods and digital platforms for enticing and promoting ideologies of different communities. Communities belonging to various religious communities over the world do use social media network to be connected with each other to meet their religious and social needs. Religion and digital space has evolved over the years of human existence. The digital space is now an answer to several social, religious issues and representation in the physical world. Social media provides this digital space and facilitates representation. Unlike other traditional mass communication platforms in the digital space, social media is interactive and participatory in nature. It aims to educate, inform and entertain masses. As a mediated communication technology (MCT) application, social media platforms play a vital role in its augmentation of design and patterns. 'No man is an Island' (Donne, 1570). This study focuses on deceptive communication patterns in mediated communication, using social media for religious and social issue representation. Over the years deception and belief manipulation are key aspects of many strategic interactions, including religious communication. It is when the needs for communication are not met with solutions to the problems in the society, human beings look for divine intervention. In this process of looking towards divine interventions, for solutions to the problems, human being tries to communicate with other human beings, in a prescribed manner, through various existing religious groups and communities. It is this process of exchange of information on religious and social-issue related information and its exchange using social media platforms that is being addressed in this short research study. Religious practices involve a certain specific set of communication patterns, argues Howarth Caroline, (2011). She argues that social representation is 'a system of common values, ideas and practices that enable people to understand each other and communicate about similar issues. It also involves a degree of subjective interpretation that leads to differences in understanding, different readings of texts and therefore the motivation to communicate. Representations may be hegemonic, negotiated or oppositional'. Bride well and Isaac define a model of dynamic belief attribution for deception in their research [Bride well and Isaac, 2011]. Jones models self-deception using epistemic logic in [Jones, 2015]. This study explores and demonstrates the patterns in the representation of social and religious issues in social media, among a religious group of Syrian Catholic Diocese of Kalyan-Mumbai (SCDKM) parish church community in Mumbai. The members of this group are active on 'WhatsApp' a social media platform and are constantly in touch with other fellow members of the group, for representation of their social and religious needs. In fact, according to Moscovici and Mrkova (2000, p.274) 'We cannot communicate unless we share certain representations'. This representation of identity, culture and diversity is communicated and gets reflected in social media. The need of the study is spurt in the usage of social media platforms in the world for deceiving representation of social and religious issues.

Deceptive Social Media Usage and Socio-Religious Issues

Deception is all around us. The digital space is also deceiving. Socio-religious practices have an audio visual representation in social media. It was opined that the 'technology degrades religious practices when it breaks communal bonds' (Alex Verschoor-Kirss, 2012). This is because the definitions of religion vary in their emphasis on belief, faith, or the supernatural nature of religion, although what they nearly all have in common is a focus on the communal aspect of religious practice. Some of the community aspects of religious practices are enticing to its members and non-members. Digital deception in

the narratives of religious representations in the recent alleged 'Bishop-nun' and 'Land-deal' scandals that rocked the Catholics in India is one such event. Emile Durkheim, (2008) for instance, writes that 'religious representations are collective representations which express collective realities'. While the number of social media users is rowing on a day to day basis, it is quite difficult to enumerate the exact numbers on a given time, due to lack of technology. The modern digital technology and wireless connectivity, hardware miniaturization and central data storage are main reasons for web 2.0. The social media enabling software for storage moving from local hard drive to cloud simplifies sharing. This has resulted in proliferation of services that are based on relationships between people and various groups in society. Hence we say that media has become social and deceptive communication in socio-religious issues has increased its reach due to social media usage among religious communities.

'WhatsApp' a Social Media Platform

'WhatsApp' messenger is a freeware, cross-platform and end-to-end encrypted instant messaging application for smartphones. It uses the internet to make voice calls, one to one video calls; to send text messages, documents, PDF files, images, GIF, videos, user location, audio files, phone contacts; and to forward voice notes to other users using standard cellular mobile numbers, Cade Metz, (2016) writing in 'Wired', said 'WhatsApp, more than any company before it, has taken encryption to the masses'. The 'WhatsApp' group is the social media platform that is used in this study with reference to a particular religious community, in Mumbai. Certainly the better dissemination of a message is one form that technology can take, but it is not the only form. An equally important role is played by technology that helps reinforce the communal aspects of religion observed by, among others, (Durkheim 2008). Some might argue that this focus on community building technology only represents a subsection of the larger role that message disseminating technology plays. Certainly technology that promotes a religious message has a tendency to draw individuals to organized religion, thus enhancing and enlarging the community. It is this technological advantage that brought together members of group of SCDKM parish church community in Mumbai to use 'WhatsApp' application. There are, however, also other ways in which religious technology forms communities. Similar is the case of social issues that draw a group of persons together on a social media platform. India as a country stands at third position in the world populations as depicted in Figure 1.

Social Media Usage in India

'Social media can be defined as digital multi-way channels of communication among people and between people and information resources and which are personalized, scalable, rapid, and convenient' (Katz, Barris, & Jain, 2013, p. 12). However, this research analysis will not be complete without considering the fact that there is a significant digital divide in India, where limitations on access to new media technologies and an inequality of digital literacy clearly exist (van Dijk, 2005). The users of social media belong to various domain area of the society. They include professionals, students and cultural / religious/ political groups. Even though social media helps out in interaction among socio-cultural/religious/political groups, different social media platforms are used by them to share information. Currently, there are more than 1.6 billion social network users worldwide with more than 64 percent of internet users accessing social media services online. According to Sensis social media report (2017), social networking is one of the most popular ways for online users to spend their time, enabling them to stay in contact

with friends and families as well as catching up with news and other content. In India it is estimated that approximately 350 million of the 1.3 billion people use the Internet (Kemp, 2015). Approximately 134 million are social media users and about 590 million Indians are mobile phone users (Kemp, 2015). In contrast, approximately 360 million Indians lived below the poverty line in 2011–12, according to the government of India Planning Commission estimates (Katyal, 2015).

India is among the top five countries in the world when it comes to the pace of growth in internet users, according to a new report by social marketing agency '*We Are Social*'. India is also the top in terms of number of religions practiced in one country. While the global average for growth in internet users is a merely 19%, India is at 90 percent. Thus social media is tailored for many-to-many communication and media content is primarily created by participants. Social media users find that posting information in such platforms generates an immediate dynamic interaction with the audience. The social media users are able to access the informational post from anywhere and anytime. They can respond, share, rate, like, tag or comment on the images, articles and other contents. In fact social media is defined as a 'group of Internet-based applications that allow for the creation and exchange of user-generated content, enabling two-way communication and enhanced participation' (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Syrian Catholic Church's Kalyan Diocese of Mumbai

Migration of the Syro-Malabar Church to Mumbai (SMC) and other major cities of India and other parts of our country, started after Indian Independence, seeking employment and better prospects in life. Hundreds of thousands of Christians of the SMC, who migrated were in a totally alien atmosphere with regard to their identity, culture and religious life. They depended on the local Latin Church of Mumbai Diocese (LCMD) for their spiritual needs in the absence of Syro-Malabar jurisdiction. The priests of the Latin Dioceses were taking care of their spiritual needs. Yet they preferred to preserve their ecclesial identity, culture, traditions and heritage intact and to transmit them to their children. In order to preserve their faith and cultural heritage intact, the SMC organized several social, community

Figure 1. Classification of countries with social media platforms in terms of monthly active users in 2016 (Source: wearesocial, InternetWorldStats, and Statista 2017)
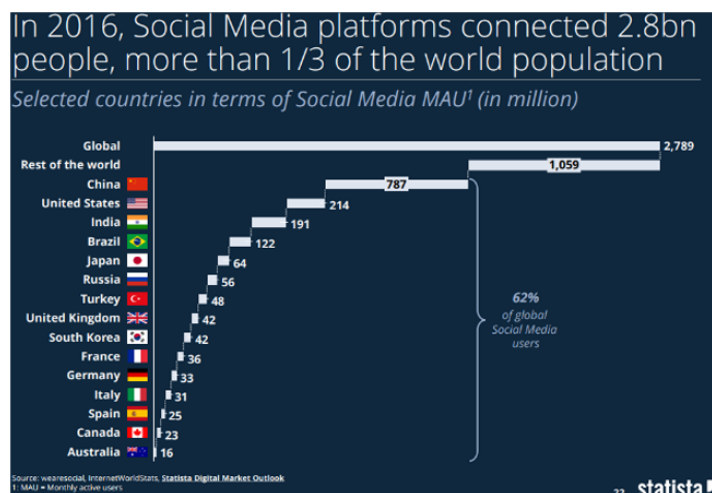
and spiritual activities. In this process with the advent of social media networks (SMN) the migrated members of SCDKM began to connect with each other and form social media groups. The social media group selected for this study uses 'WhatsApp' as the platform for communication. The members of the group belong to the SCDKM parish church community in Mumbai. These members use 'WhatsApp' to represent their social and religious communication needs. While we analyze the patterns in the use of social media to communicate religious messages, we cannot forget the use of symbolism. Symbols play a very important role in furthering these messages. Symbolization processes of mankind probably started through man's attempt to overtly express his series of inner religious experience in his culture. This is probably the reason why human beings have been described as cultural beings on the ground that they are symbol-using animals. For example, White (1972) says that, "all human behavior consists of, or is dependent upon the use of symbols" (Ofuafo, 2013). Symbols could be defined as "objects, acts, relationship or linguistic formations that stand for a multiplicity of meaning" (Ofuafo, 2013). Symbols also serve as agents of identification. For example, different individuals who profess the same faith who had not known each other before wearing an emblem that belongs to particular cult or sect can easily identify each other belonging to the same faith. In other words, members are identified welded together by religious symbols.

'WhatsApp' for Communication of Social Issues

'WhatsApp' is a Smartphone application that operates on nearly all current types of devices and operating systems. The application has been on the market since 2010; the declared purpose of the developers was to replace the existing SMS platform for a system that is free of charge in an ad-free environment. As a means of sending and receiving messages to and from individuals or groups, 'WhatsApp' includes a variety of functions, such as text messages, attached images, audio files, video files, and links to web addresses. Over the last two years, the application has become very popular, gaining over 350 million users and is rated the most downloaded application in 127 countries; everyday an average of 31 billion messages are sent (Deshen, 2014). Technically, 'WhatsApp' can be viewed as a social network that allows people to access a great deal of information rapidly. The simple operation scheme makes the program accessible to a variety of people of different ages and backgrounds to share their social needs. 'WhatsApp' enables communication with anyone who possesses a Smartphone, has an active internet connection, and has installed the application. The overall cost of the application is very low, up to one dollar per year. One of the application's unique features is the option to create a group and to communicate within its boundaries. The creator of the group becomes its manager, a position that includes the privilege of adding and removing participants without the need for approval from the group members. A number of reasons why people adopted 'WhatsApp' as their main communication channel rather than alternatives (such as SMS or other social networks) were listed by (Church, 2013). One reason being the low cost of the application combined with the ability to send an unlimited number of messages, immediacy, the desire to feel a part of the trend since their acquaintances have already adopted the application, the capacity to conduct an on-going conversation with many friends simultaneously, the knitting together of a community of friends or family, and a sense of privacy relative to other social networks.

Uses and Gratification Theory

In the process of communication, most of the theories on media explained about the effects media had on people. According to uses and gratification theory, people make use of the social media for their specific needs. This theory can be said to have a user/audience-centred approach. Even for communication (say inter-personal) people refer to the media for the topic they discuss with themselves. They gain more knowledge and that knowledge is got by using media for reference. Using this theoretical base, we can analyze how 'WhatsApp' as a source of religious communication is used to meet certain needs. These needs revolve around spiritual guidance, encouragement to keep following the faith, to empathize with co-believers and also to pass on information regarding clergy and laity matters. According to this theory, it is the basic need the gratification of the users that promotes the wide usage of social media for solving and gratifying their social and religious communication needs (Ruggiero, 2000).

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study explores and demonstrates the deception in the representation of social and religious issues in social media, among a religious group of Syrian Catholic Diocese of Kalyan Mumbai (SCDKM) parish church community in Mumbai. To establish this aim various deception factors and patterns in religious and social issue representation, related communication using a social media platform as digital space were analyzed to the 'WhatsApp' chat of 93 members in the group over a period of 3 years. These techno-religious digital spaces (Kong 2001) reframe notions of what it means to be users and depict how such deceptions and conceptions are enacted in a contested arena, in which competing technological solutions and cultural preoccupations interact in often highly innovative ways. These highly innovative ways of representations and deceptive narratives sometimes call our very identities into question. We struggle over them because they matter – and these are contests from which serious consequences can flow. They define what is 'normal', who belongs – and therefore, who is excluded" (Hall, 1997, p.10). Hence survey study was undertaken to establish and demonstrate various patterns and the usage of social media in representation of social and religious issues.

Research Questions

1. What is the significance of various patterns in the usage of 'WhatsApp' in terms of deceptive representation of social and religious issues in the SCDKM parish church community in Mumbai?
2. What are the formats of communication used in deceptive representation of social and religious issues in the SCDKM parish church community in Mumbai?
3. What is the significance of gender bias in the social media usage, while representing deceptive social and religious issues?

Hypothesis

1. There are an existing patterns in the usage of 'WhatsApp' in terms of deceptive representation of social and religious issues in the SCDKM parish church community in Mumbai.
2. The text is the major format used for communication in 'WhatsApp' group in deceptive representation of social and religious issues in the SCDKM parish church community in Mumbai.

3. There is no gender bias in the social media usage, while representing deceptive social and religious issues.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a purposive and convenient sampling method. In fact, the data was gathered using the research tool developed, consisting of a questionnaire for the purpose of the survey based study, in order to demonstrate the deceptive representation of social and religious issues in the SCDKM parish church community in Mumbai. The data was gathered after administering the online survey, using Google forms. The same is analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version-22). Besides, in order to establish the patterns in the usage of 'WhatsApp' as a social media platform by the SCDKM parish church community in Mumbai, an online tool namely 'WhatsAnalyzer' was also used. The results of the findings and the details are given in the charts and tables. The study adopted a purposive and convenient sampling method. The data was gathered using the research tool developed, consisting of a questionnaire. A survey based study was adopted along with online analysis tool namely 'WhatsAnalyzer' was also used. The study was on 'WhatsApp' group chat of 93 members over a period of 3 years. Only deceptive representation of social and religious issues in the SCDKM parish church community in Mumbai was part of the study.The data was gathered after administering the online survey, using Google forms. The data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS- Version:22). Analysis of the 'WhatsApp' messages in terms of usage of text, visuals and audio formats of communication were only done. However, no efforts were made to analyze the cognition skills of the participants and no direct contact with the participants was made to gather the data.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The data gathered using the research tool developed for the study was fed into SPSS and the same was analyzed in terms of descriptive and inferential formats. The descriptive analysis was done in terms of age, gender, marital status, occupation, education qualification etc. The inferential analysis was done in order to answer the research question and to test the hypothesis in terms of demonstrating the pattern, domain and usage of 'WhatsApp' as a social media platform among SCDKM.

Classification of 'WhatsApp' Group Members of SCDKM

The data analysis in terms of and gender wise classification of 'WhatsApp' mobile application users was done in order to find out the existing pattern, age and gender wise usage for social and religious deceptive representations among SCDKM are given in the Table 1.

In Table 1 it may be noted that there was no significant difference between the gender and the age group of the users of 'WhatsApp' application. It may be seen that maximum (45.16%) users of 'WhatsApp' group in deceptive representation of social and religious issues in the SCDKM belonged to the age group of 21 to 30 years. This may be because youth are more open to the usage of modern technology for deceptive representation of social and religious issues using social media. However there was

Table 1. Depicting the classification of 'WhatsApp' mobile application users among members of SCDKM in terms of age and gender

Age group	Gender of the user		Total
	MALE	**FEMALE**	
10 to 20 years	11 (11.82%)	1(1.07%)	12(12.90%)
21 to 30 years	30(32.25%)	12(12.90%)	42(45.16%)
31 to 40 years	12(12.90%)	6(6.45%)	18(19.35%)
41 to 50 years	66.45%)	3(4.30%)	9(9.67%)
51 to 60 years	5(5.37%)	2(2.15%)	7(7.52%)
61 to 70 years	4(4.30%)	1(1.07%)	5(5.37%)
Total	68(73.11%)	25(26.88%)	93(100%)

'p'- value =.721

a significant difference in the gender of the users of 'WhatsApp' in the group. In fact 73.11% users belonged to male gender.

In Table 2, it may be noted that there was no significant difference between the qualification and the occupation of the users of 'WhatsApp' application. It may be seen that maximum (n=25) users of 'WhatsApp' group in deceptive representation of social and religious issues in the SCDKM had graduation as the qualification and were also employed. This may be because more education might result in better usage of social media.

In Table 3., it may be noted that there was no significant difference between the frequency of usage of Text in 'WhatsApp' in terms of gender. However it may be seen that maximum (59.13%) users of 'WhatsApp' group members used occasionally used text narratives in deceptive representation of social and religious issues in the SCDKM.

In Table 4., it may be noted that there was a significant difference between the frequencies of usage of Image in 'WhatsApp' in terms of gender. However it may be seen that maximum (n=41) users of 'WhatsApp' group members frequently used Images in deceptive representation of social and religious issues in the SCDKM.

Table 2. Classification of the Educational Qualification and Occupation of the 'WhatsApp' Group Members of SCDKM

Educational Qualification	Occupation of the 'WhatsApp' Group Members of SCDKM						
	Employed	**Study**	**Voluntary service**	**Employed& studying**	**Employed& voluntary service**	**Study & voluntary service**	**Employed, study & voluntary service**
Secondary	2	1	1	1	0	0	0
Graduation	25	14	5	5	4	2	1
P.Graduation & above	12	2	8	6	3	1	0
Total	39	17	14	12	7	3	1

Table 3. Classification of the Gender and Frequency of Text Usage as 'WhatsApp' Group Members of SCDKM

Gender of the User	Frequency of Text Usage as 'WhatsApp' Group Member of SCDKM					Total
	Never	Occasionally	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	
Male	00	30	18	13	7	68
Female	01	25	4	1	4	25
Total	01	55	22	14	11	93

'p'-value = .116

Table 4. Classification of the gender and frequency of text usage as 'whatsapp' group members of SCDKM

Gender of the user	Frequency of Image Usage as 'WhatsApp' Group Member of SCDKM						
	Never	Occasionally	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	Total	
Male	00	21	16	25	6	68	
Female	00	1	8	16	0	25	
Total	00	22	24	41	6	93	

'p'-value = .018

In Table 5., it may be noted that there is no significant difference between the usage of 'WhatsApp' in terms of gender for deceptive representation of social and religious issues. However it may be seen that maximum (n=40) users of 'WhatsApp' group members deceptively represented social issues more than the religious issues.

In Table 6, it may be noted that there is no significant difference between the frequency of video usage of 'WhatsApp' in terms of gender for deceptive representation of social and religious issues. However it may be seen that maximum (n=63) users of 'WhatsApp' group members deceptive representation of social issues more than the religious issues using videos.

In Table 7, it may be noted that there is a significant difference between the frequency of usage of 'WhatsApp' for deceptive representation of social and religious issues. However it may be seen that maximum (n=40) users of 'WhatsApp' group members deceptively represented social issues more than the religious issues.

Table 5. Classification of the gender and usage of 'whatsapp' platform for deceptive representation of social and religious issues among members of SCDKM

Gender of the user	Usage for Deceptive Representation of social and religious issue				Total
	Not applicable	Social issue	Religious issue	Both social and religious issue	
Male	11	27	20	10	68
Female	3	13	7	2	25
Total	14	40	27	12	93

'p'-value = .681

Table 6. Classification of the gender and frequency of videos usage as 'whatsapp' group members of SCDKM

Gender of the user	Frequency of Video Usage as 'WhatsApp' Group Member of SCDKM					Total
	Never	Occasionally	Sometimes	Frequently	Every time	
Male	00	15	42	8	3	68
Female	00	4	21	0	0	25
Total	00	19	63	8	3	93

'p'-value = .173

Table 7. Classification of the frequency of usage of 'whatsapp' group members of SCDKM, to represent social and religious issues.

Frequency of Usage of Text	Frequency of Usage as 'WhatsApp' Group Member of SCDKM for Deceptive Representation of Social and Religious issues				Total
	Not applicable	Social issue	Religious issue	Both social & religious issue	
Never	0	16	11	5	32
Occasionally	0	5	8	1	14
Sometimes	6	9	3	4	22
Frequently	4	5	4	1	14
Everytime	4	5	1	1	11
Total	14	40	27	12	93

'p'-value = .022

Figure 2 provides the descriptive analysis of the 'WhatsApp' chats of 93 members of SCDKM using online analysis tool 'WhatsAnalyzer', of the 'WhatsApp' chat. It may be noted that user -1 most often replies to all message (40.3%) in the group. Maximum media messages in the group were by user-46, whereas user-4 provided the maximum messages (8%). This means the deceptive representation and participation in discussions, narratives are not restricted to few members.

Figure 3 provides the descriptive analysis of the 'WhatsApp' chats of 93 members of SCDKM using online analysis tool 'WhatsAnalyzer', of the 'WhatsApp' chat. It may be noted that user-3 often starts the new session after a short inactivity, and 'Thursday' is day of the week for maximum texting.

CONCLUSION

The results of the analysis therefore depicted that, there is a pattern in the usage of text, visuals and audio formats of communication in terms of time, initiation, response, evaluation, when deceptive representation of social and religious issues in social media are represented. The analysis also established that there is significant gender difference in the social media usage, while deceptive representation of social and religious issues. In fact the analysis of the 'WhatsApp' chat of members of the group (n=93) in the group over a period of 3 years depicted that, there is a pattern in the preference in usage of text

Figure 2. Screen shot of Descriptive analysis of the 'WhatsApp' chats of 93 members of SCDKM using online analysis tool 'WhatsAnalyzer'
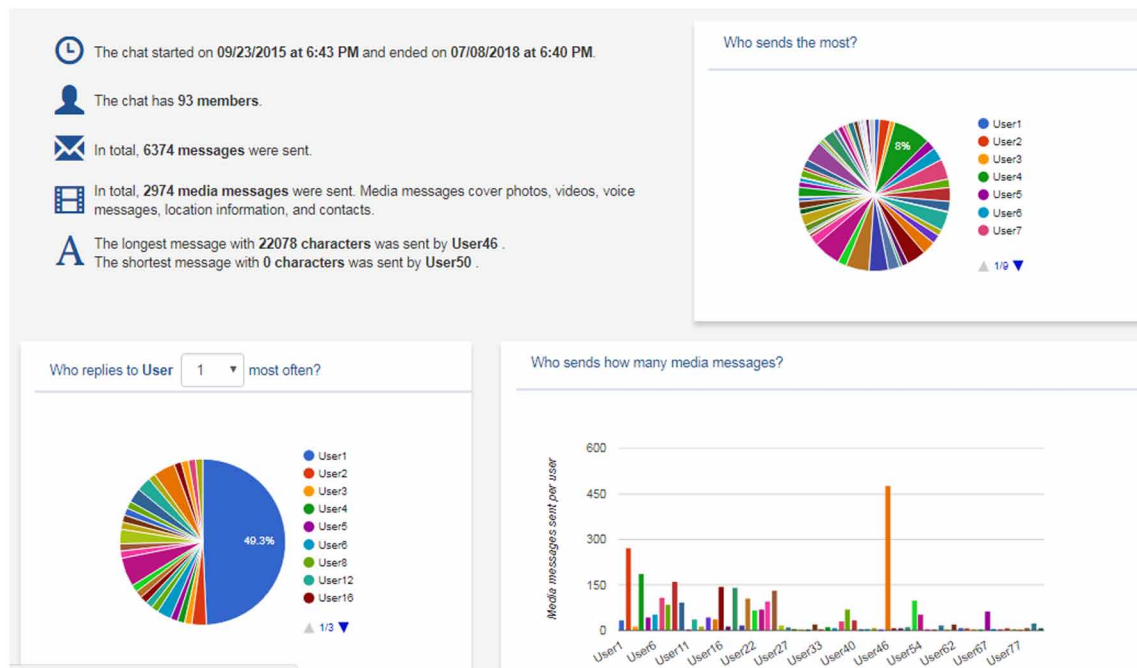
Figure 3. Screen shot of Descriptive analysis of the 'WhatsApp' chats of 93 members of SCDKM regarding messages, sessions, and popularity
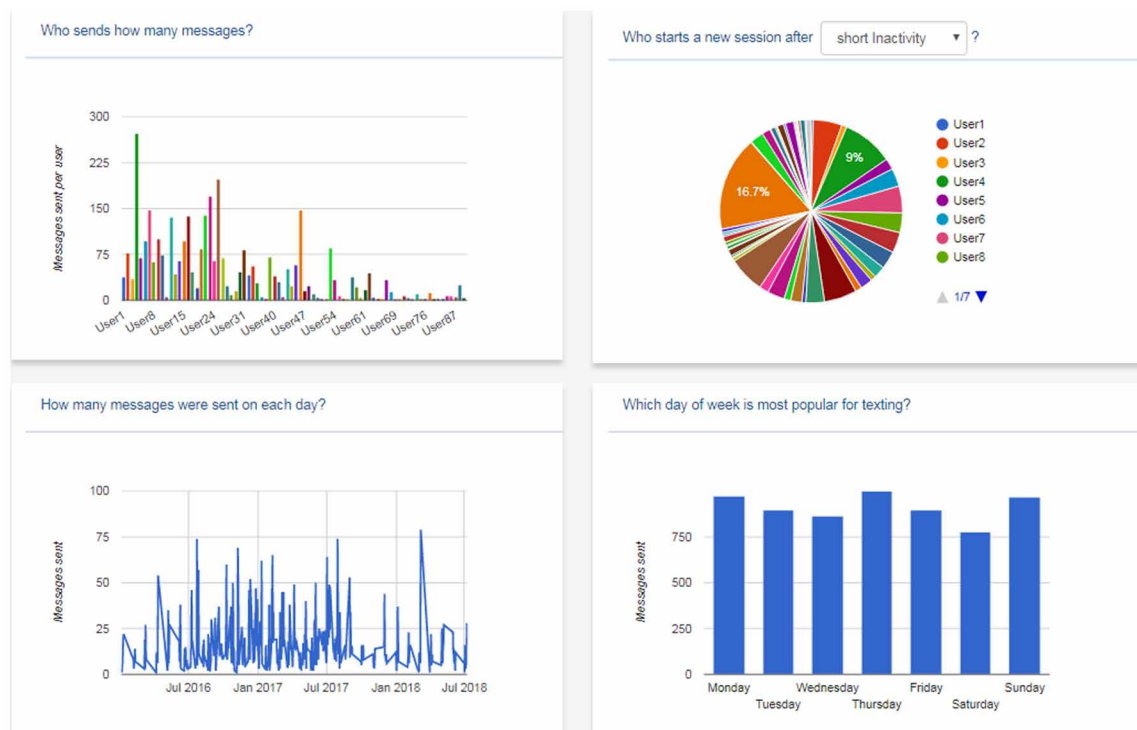
narrative (24%), visual Images (31%), audio-visual (41%) and audio (4%) formats of communication in the group, with reference to deceptive representation of social and religious issues. The analysis also established that there is no significant gender difference in the social media usage in deceptive representation of social and religious issues. In fact it was found that 43.01% users of 'WhatsApp' group members deceptively represented social issues, as compared to the religious issues. However it was seen that maximum (67.74%) users of 'WhatsApp' group members deceptively represented social issues more than the religious issues using videos.

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Chapter 27

"Type Amen" or Perish!
Religious Deception on Facebook

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines religious discourse on Facebook and brings to the fore the recurrent deceptive requests that have given rise to new forms of religious extremism and radicalism. Many Christians have turned to social media as a medium where their faith can be practiced and with the intention of enforcing it on others. One major avenue through which this ensues is in the inherent ideological requests on Facebook where members are threatened to either type "Amen" or be afflicted with curses as punishment. These misleading requests usually attract instantaneous thousands of "likes" and consenting responses that depict underlying fear. An awareness of these extremist inclinations against the backdrop of religion is crucial to the understanding and interpretation of the semiotic realities within such Facebook posts.

INTRODUCTION

The present information age is marked by the urge for people to share their beliefs and world views with others especially in limitless and porous spaces as provided by the Internet (Hjarvard, 2011); in turn, the internet has been saturated with propagation of beliefs that are not completely true, leading up to the dissemination of deceptive information. For instance, Mejias and Vokuev (2017) observe that in state politics citizens are active participants in their own disenfranchisement by using the social media to generate, consume or distribute false information, thereby legitimizing disinformation. Deceptive information in this study refers to all forms of disinformation and misinformation that are geared towards dissimulation, propaganda or distraction. Religion is one of the social domains that has suffered major hit by this flawed information trend (Campbell, 2013). Being the ''opium of the people'' as observed by Karl Marx[1], religion affords people the opportunity to freely and persuasively propagate both shared and individual beliefs on the efficacy of the supernatural, however, this freedom sometimes metamorphose

into the use of subtle verbal or written ideologically saturated threat, patterned after specific religious dogma, to enforce ones view on others without recourse to facts. According to Kumar and Geethakumari (2014), the birth of social networks has made every user a self-publisher with no editing, checking for factual accuracy and clearly with no accountability. They are also of the opinion that the truthfulness of a post is certified once such post is seen by millions of users on their computer screen. Agreeably, it must be acknowledge at this earliest point that many propagators of deceptive religious information on the internet do not often see any harm in their practice, rather they perceive it as a way of evangelising their doctrines.

Consequently, with the extension of religious practices to an online platform, many have turned to the social media as a medium where their faith can be practised and enforced on others. One major avenue through which this forced participation ensues is in the inherent ideological requests on Facebook where members are threatened to either type 'Amen' or be afflicted with curses as punishment. These persuasive requests usually attract thousands of 'likes' and responses such that one wonders at the motives behinds the posts and responses and on whose authority are such posts endorsed (*see Caspi & Gorsky, 2006*).

The study examines an emerging ideological threat on Facebook in order to bring to fore the subtle deceptive acts that are embedded in them. The deception in them are presented as graphic posts with various afflicted individuals, objects and renowned personalities, requesting readers to ''type amen'' or be afflicted or even ''perish''. To achieve this objective, the study will answer the following questions:

1. What are the semiotic patterns used in 'Type Amen' texts on Facebook?
2. How do such semiotic pattern express deceptive persuasion?

BACKGROUND: DISINFORMATION AND MISINFORMATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a computer and Internet-based technology that expedites the sharing of information, ideas and thoughts through the building of virtual networks and communities. It enables people to quickly share contents such as videos, photos, documents and other personal information via their computer, tablet or smartphone (Newman, 2011). The social media was created as a fast and easier way to find, connect and interact with family and friends. It has also been embraced by businesses as a faster way to reach customers (Qualman, 2010). Global Digital Statshot Q3 2017 puts the number of active social media users at over 3 billion, with over 90% of users being young people between the ages of 18 and 29 (Pew Research Centre, 2016).

Table 1 shows the top ten popular social media networks worldwide and ranked by the number of active accounts as at January, 2019. Facebook which is the first to hit 1 billion active subscribers maintains its position as the leading social media network. Facebook was created by Mark Zuckerberg at Harvard University and launched as FaceMash in July 2003 but later became TheFacebook on Febuary 4, 2004. Although access to the website was initially limited to the United States and Canada, by September 2006, everyone with a valid email address and 13 years and above was allowed to join the Facebook community (Ellison, *et al.* 2007).

While social media has many advantages, especially in terms of making business connections easier and faster, a lot of disadvantages still trail its use; one of which is social media being a conduit for dis-

Table 1. Top ten most popular social media websites as at January, 2019

SN	Social Media	Number of Users
1.	Facebook	2.27 billion
2.	YouTube	1.9 billion
3.	WhatsApp	1.5 billion
4.	Facebook Messenger	1.3 billion
5.	WeChat	1.08 billion
6.	Instagram	1 billion
7.	QQ	803 million
8.	Qzone	531 million
9.	Douyin/Tik Tok	500 million
10.	Sino Weibo	446 million

Source: Statista, 2019. https://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/

information and misinformation (Tsikerdekis & Zeadally, 2014). In other words, social media allows for the quick spread of uncensored and false contents into public domain. Although misinformation and disinformation may be used interchangeably to denote false information, they differ in the sense that while misinformation refer to an unmotivated inaccuracy (Rojecki & Meraz, 2016), disinformation is an intentional lie motivated by the intention to mislead and confuse (Jack, 2017).The proliferation of false information is therefore part of the contemporary social media system where varying degree of information sources contend for attention. Kumar & Geethakumari (2014) put it succinctly, noting that as the usage of social networks increased, the abuse of the media to spread disinformation and misinformation also increased many fold. In other words, anyone with access to the Internet is always a click away from becoming an active distributor of false information.

According to Shin, *et al*, (2018), individuals are likely to believe any dubious statement that match their [beliefs] than one that counters them. Thus, with the move of religious activities to an online platform, and the lack of accountability and verifiability, proliferators of religious deceit have larger vulnerable audience that would either consume the false contents or further facilitate the spread of such contents. Religious misinformation and disinformation is used here to refer to every undeliberate and deliberate misrepresentation of religious doctrine and deceit propagated on the social media; in this case, Facebook, the website this study draws its data.

Members of Facebook community are vulnerable to deception from varied forms of dubious extremists. One of such recurrent trick is the persuasive request for viewers to either 'like' or type 'amen' against fictitious posts . Failure to comply with such request often promises punishment of evil tidings to the viewer. It is therefore not surprising to find tens of thousands of 'likes' and 'amen' against such posts as shown in the sampled data. The perpetrators of such posts are often people not conferred with any form of religious authority; many of them impersonate popular Christian Pentecostal leaders, or hide under the umbrella of 'apostle of mercy' (*see Whitehead, 2015*) to perpetrate their nefarious acts. Consequently, interactions on the social media, especially Facebook, are culpable for underlying treats through false information (Tsikerdekis & Zeadally, 2014).

Framing Religion on the Internet: Cyber, Online and Digital Religion

Several scholars have noted the impact and implications of NM on communication in general and religion in particular, using specific conceptual framings to describe the interaction between religion and the Internet. The term ''cyber-religion'' was introduced in the mid-1990s to define the move of religion to cyberspace; leading to the birth of a virtual religious community (Dawson, 2000; Brasher, 2004; Hojsgaad, 2005). However, the term was perceived to evoke an incomplete and false form of religiosity (Campbell, 2013:2). In an attempt to distinguish the different patterns of religious use of the Internet, Helland (2000) introduced the concepts of ''religion online and ''online religion'' and asserts that religion-online is the self-conscious use of the online context by religious organisations or movements for the purpose of publicity, education, outreach, proselytization etc., while online-religion is the online context becoming or being used as a locus of religious, spiritual or other similar practices (Helland 2000:207; Hoover & Park, 2005: 122).

However, it is observed that worship via the Internet among Christians combines features of both religion online and online religion when compared to the description of both terms (Chiluwa 2012). Many Pentecostal Churches design their websites in such a way that they provide information about their history, mission/vision, doctrine and church activities. This is in addition to providing opportunities for practical involvement and participation in online worship via prayer, praise/worship, and teaching (Hadden & Cowan, 2001). Visitors to the websites can also fully participate in religious rituals such as feet washing, communion, blood of sprinkling, anointing, etc.

Recently, another conceptual frame, digital religion has been introduced to describe the contribution of digital technology to religion. Campbell (2014) describes it as the religion that is constituted in new ways through digital media and cultures, with its attendant online and offline implications. In other words, digital religion explains the integration of offline and online religion spheres, and requires new logic and distinct form of meaning-making.

The Internet church is used by some worshippers as a supplementary avenue to exercise their faith alongside their offline churches. Thus, (Hadden & Cowen, ibid) is of the opinion that online worship significantly supplements offline church membership and participation. Whereas, there are some others online worshippers who may be referred to as 'digital worshippers'. They use online religion platform as their sole avenue of worship, in place of any offline place of worship and are more susceptible to deception and divided loyalty (Chiluwa, 2012). This set of members usually claims to experience the same spiritual effects online as they do offline.

Although the practice of religion on social media is still relatively new to many Pentecostal Churches (*see Rice, 1984*), some church planters around the globe use it as a legitimate means of communication. For instance, Shaun King of the Courageous Church, Atlanta is very active in incorporating multichannel communication across the media; Eugene Cho, the pastor of Quest Church in Seattle, has made blogging part of his daily routine through which people outside of his community get a holistic view of who he is, and of what his community looks like[2]. Some churches have Internet campuses that they use as broadcast medium even though not yet as a conversational one. It would appear that one of the major reasons churches do not yet conduct full blown conversational services on the social media is because of the concern of religious authority. This is examined in the following section.

Online Religious Authority

Among all the revolutionary changes brought about by the Internet, especially as it concerns religion, one innovation that poses a socio-political threat in its practice is the way it is transforming our understanding and exercise of authority by creating new positions of power, reducing traditional hierarchies and providing new avenues that give voice to the voiceless. Although Campbell and Teusner (2011) assert that ''this ability of the Internet to challenge traditional political, social and religious authority has become an accepted assumption (Campbell and Teusner ibid: 59), there is still a need to revisit the extent to which religious authority has been arrested on the Internet, especially on social media. For instance, there is the question of impersonation of religious leaders, and threats intertwined with psychological violence on the social media for fraudulent reasons, as in the posts where some people use old pictures to create false stories on Facebook and request that readers should 'Like' and type 'Amen'.

Thus, arises the questions: Is the Internet allowing for the emergence of new religious leaders with new theological interpretations, ideas and instructions? Are online texts re-framing traditional religious texts or mirror them? Is online religion transforming people's understanding of commonly held Christian teaching, or of a specific group's religious identity?

Dawson (2001:43-44) expresses this fear of authority hijack with the view that the Internet will result in the "proliferation of misinformation and disinformation" by opponents of particular religious groups or disgruntled insiders, the "loss of control over religious materials" by religious organizations, and provide "new opportunities for grassroots forms of witnessing" that encourage the rise of unofficial or alternative voices to traditional discourses Campbell and Teusner (ibid). They also underscore the Internet's potential to enable users to transcend time, geography, and traditional channels of protocol, which may encourage practices and discourses that bypass or subvert the authority of accepted religious structures or leaders [p.62]. The fear that the moderator of an online group may become identified and treated as a legitimate spiritual authority by members of an online religious community is real from what is found on the social media (Herring 2004; Campbell, 2011). Although the Internet has also provided a platform for questioning and checking excessiveness, as it makes room for users to challenge some instructions and remarks by religious leaders (Baker, 2005), this study is of the view that the offline laws that guide such crimes as impersonation, defamation and slander, should be applied online in order to checkmate the influx of scammers and Freud.

Theoretical Framework: Kress and van Leeuwen's Social Semiotics

The study depends on Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) Social Semiotics which is an approach to multimodal analysis influenced by the works of Halliday (1994; 2004). Here, language is viewed as a system of meaning potentials embedded in either visual or written means of communication. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) also examine both visual and written modes (multimodality) as against the emphasis that had been placed on written mode over time, and study texts as a socially created network of options incorporated with meaning possibilities and ideological underpinnings which is interpretable in specific context of use. As a result, the full range of meanings that a text connotes is in a continuum, and applicable in different social contexts. They opine that common semiotic principles operate across modes (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001), and meaning is dependent on the context in which a text is construed. A multimodal study examines the integration of all semiotic elements present in all modes, both written, graphic, colour and size so as to identify the underlying message(s) embedded in a text in relation to the

reasons people make the choices that they do and the meaning potential in such choices (Chimuanya and Ajiboye 2016). In addition, certain strategies employed to create emphasis and 'de-emphasis' are identified and described in order to understand the reasons for the choices text creators make.

In line with O'Halloran (2004), Social Semiotics is appropriate for a multimodal analysis because it takes the integration of different semiotic modes (written and visual) into consideration when analysing meaning in specific context. Extending Halliday's metafunctions to visual communication, Kress and van Leeuwen propose three metafunctional levels of text as representational, interactional and compositional functions (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006). Based on insights from Halliday's concept of *transitivity process,* Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) opine that interpretation of images in representational terms requires the identification of the represented participants, the process or the activity described, the qualities of the participants and the circumstances in which the action is being developed. Representational function, therefore, is derived from two kinds of image structures, narrative structure and conceptual structure, each of which involves certain processes. For instance, narrative images involve action, reaction, speech, mental, and conversational processes, and further categorised according to the kind of vector and number/kind of participants a text involves, on the other hand, conceptual images point to the way abstract structures are realised in language and comprise classification, analytical and symbolic processes.

Secondly, interactional metafunction examines the patterns of interactions between participants; this may either be depicted (represented) or real (interactive). The way participants are represented can be interpreted to mean various types of interrelationships between the image and the viewers (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006: 114). Lastly, just like Halliday's textual theory, compositional metafunction relates to ''the way in which representations and communicative acts cohere into meaningful whole'' to form text [181]. In other words, compositionality examines how visuals combine with text and other graphic elements within a layout. Meaning here is established by three interrelated systems: information value, salience and framing.

A major challenge with Kress and van Leeuwen's approach to multimodal analysis is that each image presents so many aspects to examine, therefore, an analyst may have to either focus on one or two of their metafunctions. This study will interpret selected texts based, primarily, on the representational metafunction with insights from interactional and compositional functions. This is so because a text can actually combine several modality markers to express the complete message (Stoian, 2015).

Methodology and Data Presentation

The study is qualitative in nature and it involves descriptive and discursive multimodal analysis of data. Data comprises sixty (60) Internet memes (photos, verbal and visual posts, etc.) of 'Type Amen' posts purposively sampled from Facebook. Because of similarity among some of these samples however, fourteen (14) texts are selected for analysis. Analysis focuses on socio-semiotic interpretation of the representational metafunction of the memes, with the aim of discussing the inherent structural patterns in 'type amen' posts and situate them within Pentecostal doctrine in order to tease out markers of deception.

The selected Texts have been numbered T1 – T14 and are included in the appendix for ethical reasons; some of them are graphic and hurting to the senses.

Data Categorisation

The data for this study is categorised into narrative structures and conceptual structures within representational metafunction as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 shows the recurrent text structures identified within representational metafunction. This is not to suggest that other features of interactional and compositional meanings were not observed; they are captured and discussed along the key structures the study focuses on. From the Table, narrative structures occur more in 70% of the data population. While conceptual structures feature in just 30% of the population. The reason for the huge different between the structures may be because it is easier to embed deception in an unfolding story line that viewers can easily relate to, especially when more than one participant is involved.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The data for this study is analysed within the two sub-categories of Kress and van Leeuwen's representational metafunction. Representational metafunction has to do with the patterns of visually encoding experiences. This can be achieved in two ways; narrative structures and conceptual structures. The number of 'likes', 'comments' and 'share' that each text attracts have been deliberated included in order to show the rate at which the texts impacts on the society.

Narrative Structures

Narrative structures represent ''unfolding actions and events, processes of change and transitory spatial arrangements'' (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006:59). They always include a depicted element which forms an oblique line and indicates directionality, called vector. There are six kinds of narrative processes depending on the type of vectors and participants presented: action, reactional, speech, mental and conversational. The following analysis and discussions describe the recurrent narrative patterns in 'type amen' texts.

Religiosity is usually expressed in one's ability to empathise with others who have fallen into one misfortune or the other; thus, it is usually not surprising when religious individuals are taken advantage of by deceivers and robbed of their peace of mind. One way through which such deceit has successfully been achieved is through posts that relay stories of sick people and accident victims, integrated with written request to readers to type 'amen' or be afflicted with severe consequences. T1 to T7 below show a representation of deceptive narrative structures; achieved through the combination of visual and written modes. From the number of comments and likes received against each post, there is no doubt that such posts affect the peace of a number of people who come across them.

Table 2. Categorisation of data

SN	Representation	Frequency	% Frequency
1.	Narrative Structure	42	70
2.	Conceptual Structure	18	30
	TOTAL	**60**	**100**

For instance, T1 uses a combination of bidirectional action process and transactional reactional process; both within a narrative structure to foregrounds four main Actors; a light skinned man in sky blue shirt with checked collar who is the main non-transactional Actor, carrying a seriously wounded light skinned female toddle smeared with thick blood all over her white clothing and face. He is non-transactional because his gaze form a vector with the Viewer, and he appears to be oblivious of other participants in the text. This signals a situation of emergency; with his gaze persuading the Viewer for attention. The other two main participants are behind the toddler carrier; a light-skinned lady in lemon green gown and scarf who is being restrained by another participant; a light-skinned man in grey shirt. A transactional reactional relationship is depicted by these last two as their gazing at each other make them appear to be involved in a sub-event within the larger scheme. The circumstance, that is, the setting portrayed is an emergency ward of a hospital as depicted by the attributive vector depicted by the hand gloves worn by the baby carrier. Also, the baby carrier's focus on the Viewer follows a vector that connects with him; inviting him to participate in the event. In other words, his stare forces the viewer to pay attention to the bundle in his hands, which is the goal of the post. The tussle between the other two transactional Actors behind the baby carrier, and the way they stare straight into each other's eyes creates a vector that depicts a dire situation.

There is a caption written in text format along the horizontal axis immediately above the picture that reads, ''type Amen otherwise u will die within 24 hours Dn't Ignore''. Observe that 'Amen', 'Dn't' and 'Ignore' are written in uppercase initial letters. This is done to emphasize those words. The caption portrays a kind of senser that has been used to replace any form of speech process. The viewer is therefore left to a moral battle within himself whether to act or remain passive.

What connects this text to religion is simply the use of the word, 'Amen', a ritualized conclusion to prayers that means, 'so be it'. This connection on its own is a form of disinformation as there is no logical bearing between the visual text and religion rather, a moral one which appeals to the emotion of the viewer may be considered. It has been argued by Jennifer Abel[3] that this type of manipulative text is solely designed to trick or exploit people into liking, commenting and sharing the post in order for the page to accumulate followers and invariably, earn more money. Hundreds of thousands of likes, comments and shares trail T1, which shows that about a million people are victims of this scam. Since 'Amen' is a religious mantra which denotes agreement to declarations made in prayers and wishes, the thousands of people that liked, commented and shared T1 have done so either in order to avert death or to placate their conscience.

T2 (not included in the appendix) shows one main Actor, a dark-skinned man in white shirt, holding two edges of a brown casket with gold cross and trimmings (the goal) with both his hands. Both participants are in a dug grave which is a symbolic process depicting a burial. There is a written text above the picture which is captioned in text form as, ''PLS DON'T IGNORE!!!''. The caption is written in block letters and punctuated at the end with three exclamation marks to probably emphasize the warning and threat embedded in the message. The written text that follows instructs the reader to type a *BIG AMEN*, and goes on to pray that the reader would not lose any of his acquaintances or family members as they were under the protection of God. Since the instruction to type a big amen comes before the prayers, it can be deduced that the prayers will only be effective if the Viewer types amen. In order words, failure to obey attracts a reverse of the prayer.

Like T1, several thousands of likes, comments and shares trail T2 showing the number of individuals that have fallen victim to this kind of disinformation; with attendant severe psychological implications for such victims (Martin, 2010).

T3 on the other hand is a non-transactional action that shows a single human Actor with written texts as goal. The human actor is a popular Nigerian Pentecostal Pastor and General Overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Pastor Enoch Adeboye. He is in a pink shirt, wine coloured bow tie and a grey jacket. Clutching a microphone in his left hand, he lifts his right hand in the manner of prayer, smilingly staring at the Viewer in an inviting dispositions and friendly ambiance. The picture is captioned, ''I'VE GOT GREAT NEWS TODAY…'', written in bold font to show emphasis, with some part of the texts omitted as indicated by the sign of ellipsis. The ellipsis provokes the mind of the reader to find out the great news and thus, is persuaded to read up all other written texts within and outside the picture.

The complementary text outside the picture in typed in bold font, and it is a declaration that the reader will not die but would step into the coming year to say congratulation to the preacher. However, a persuasive condition to the fulfilment of the declaration lies in the last line of the text which reads, ''TYPE AMEN TO CONFIRM THAT YOU WILL CONGRATULATE ME TOO.'' It is pertinent to note that persuasion and coercion have been identified as markers of deception (Kampik, *et al.* 2018); all the post examined so far have these features embedded as conditional clauses.

Like the previous posts, hundreds of thousands of like, comment and share trail T3, showing the huge number of people vulnerable to this type of deception.

T4 shows triplicated pictures of a bubbling toddler in green polo vest and blue trousers as the non-transactional actor. He is smiling and starring directly at the Viewer, and by so, captures the Viewer's attention. While T5 shows a wounded blood stained baby with very deep cuts on her forehead, chest and arm as the non-transactional actor. The paleness of the baby's skin contrasts sharply with the redness of the blood on it thereby foregrounding the pitiable condition of the Actor. This is like T6 which also shows a single Actor, a crying naked baby with a big open wound on her belly. The Viewer of these posts has been requested to type ''Amen'' or to ''ignore'' if he was heartless. Since being heartless is not a characteristic feature of a religious person, many are forced to type amen in other to soothe their consciences of any guilt (see Feldman, 2000).

These deceptive 'type amen' posts hold grave trauma for individuals on Facebook, especially those of them that are not analytical in nature to understand that the mere act of typing amen against such posts has no impact on the participants in the post, nor does it in anyway affect his wellbeing - the viewer has not in any way helped the predicament of the participants in the posts. Such viewers also need to know that the posts are just tools used by page owners to gain recognition and followers and emotionally de-fraud the Viewer (Whitehead, 2015). The page earn money using stolen images of sick babies without the knowledge of the babies' family.

T7 is a departure from previous texts as it represents a symbolic attribute. It shows several bundles of Nigerian five hundred naira currency, held together with bands and stacked up in tens of piles. The written text above the picture reads, ''to the fist* [first] 1000 people to type Amen, I declare prophetically this week your hands shall count money. Share this and testify.'' In other words, if the viewer does not share, he would not testify, and if he is not among the first '1000 people' to type amen, he loses his chance of the free money. According to Malan (1997), one of the characteristics of 'Jesus' in new Pentecostal doctrines is 'gift giver'. Little wonder the visual representation of a stack of money with the written promise work effectively to convince the Viewer.

In addition, other lexical items within religious domain have been introduced in the written text above T7; they include *declare*, *prophetically* and *testify*. These words are popular within Pentecostal discourse.

The foregoing discussion describes the processes inherent in the selected narrative text structures. Findings show that both transactional and non-transactional action and reactional processes characterise the patterns.

Conceptual Structures

Conceptual structures are used to represent participants in relation to class, structure or meaning (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). They can be divided into classificational; relates participants to each other, analytical; connects participants in terms of part-whole structures, and symbolic; depicts what a participant is or means. This is another recurrent method observed within 'type amen' deceptive posts. Here, participants in the texts comprise fictitious human Actors who are used symbolically to reinforce the message. Just as in the forms of role play, the Actors take up the roles of sacred religious personalities like God, Jesus, Saints, Martyrs, and so on to portray ideologically saturated meanings. For instance, the originators of such posts understand that it would be almost impossible for any Christian to ignore the picture of 'Jesus', and so they leverage on this to send out messages with underlying deceits and misinformation as seen in T8 to T12.

T8 shows the picture of a half-clad man with a crown of thorns on his head, set up to be Jesus Christ. The Symbolic Actor is carrying a long wooden cross to his shoulders with his right hand, bent as though fallen on his knees, with his left hand placed on a rocky ground. The picture is used to re-enact the story of Jesus Christ's travail on the way to the Mount of Calvary as recorded in Luke chapter 23, Verses 25 to 33. There is a written text framed across the length of the cross which reads, 'I did this for you'. And right below the picture is another bold uppercase-letter written text that says, 'TYPE AMEN IF YOU AGREE'. This second text has been written in bold to emphasize the message of the entire post, which imply that 'if' as a Christian one does not type, that person has rejected the acts of Jesus Christ. The use of the conditional conjunction 'if' presupposes that some 'deviant' or 'disloyal' Christians would not agree, thus, in order not to be label 'disloyal', and to save themselves some embarrassment many viewers opt to comply.

Just like T8, T9 shows another Symbolic Actor depicted as a man in a blue hospital staff uniform, with an identity card hanging around his neck, set up as Jesus Christ and running through what appears to be the passage of a hospital. An inscription above the head of the man reads, 'Jesus Is Coming To Save You From Devil', and at the bottom of the picture is another written text which says, 'Type ''Amen'' To Be Saved'. The initial letters of the written texts have all been written in capital letters to probably show emphasis, and the word *amen* has been enclosed in double quotation marks to further foreground what the Viewer is required to do to be saved – failure to type amen implies that the Viewer will not be saved.

The story line in T8 is continued in T10, showing a wailing fair-skinned woman in black robe (set up to signify Mary, the mother of Jesus) as the Symbolic Actor. She is clutching a now bruised, naked and dead Jesus Christ with both hands. Above the picture is an emphatically written text which instructs the reader to 'Type AMEN If JESUS died for you!!!' Just like T8, a Christian who refuses to type amen may be overwhelmed with the guilt of unbelief and denial.

T11 shows two reactional and interactional Actors depicted by a different version of Jesus Christ in white robe as the Symbolic carrier, beckoning on a fair-skinned man in black suit. The man is shown to have dropped his brief case, probably out of the excitement of meeting Jesus Christ on a street of what appears to be an urban city. The circumstance (on the street) is illogical in itself as the possibility of meeting a real Jesus in such situation; even from a biblical perspective is fallacious. The text above the

picture reads, 'Type AMEN if You will Follow Jesus'. The recurrent use of the conditional conjunction 'if' creates a kind of division between two groups of people; the group that will and the group that will not. While there is a reward for the group that would comply, there always appears to be an unwritten punishment for the group that would not type. The unwritten punishment usually appear to portend more trepidation for the vulnerable Viewer than the written punishment does.

The second pattern of conceptual structures found in the texts is classificational process. This process relates participants to each other and attempts to pair participants in such a way that there will always be a subordinate for a superordinate (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006: 79-87). For instance, T13 shows two attributive participants, depicted by two well-known Nigerian Pentecostal leaders, Bishop David Oyedepo of the Living Faith Church, Incorporated and Pastor Enoch Adepoye of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, who their congregation usually refer to as 'prophets of God'. The text above the picture reads, ''EVERY HAND THAT TYPED AMEN AND SHARE! You will not die before

your time. -Voice of the Prophets''. The implication of the text is that every hand that does not type amen against T13 shall die. The condition to live is therefore, to type amen, especially with one having been informed that the written text represents the joint voice of the Prophets. In other words, typing amen translates to near everlasting life of seeing ones fourth generation. The creator of Text 14 is aware of the level of sacrosanctity Nigerians ascribe to their 'Daddy GO' or 'Papa' as such Pentecostal leaders are fondly referred, to the extent that their words are efficaciously held on to by their followers. The composer of the text is also aware that longevity remains one of the top prayer points of Nigerians. Texts 14 is therefore able to successfully manipulate readers to achieve the number of responses it gathered. An overt subordinate – superordinate relationship has been set up between the participants by the vector created by the direction of Oyedepo' hand and gaze. He is depicted as the subordinate, holding the microphone towards the superordinate; Adeboye. The truth condition of this representation is ascertainable in the real world as it is a known fact that Pastor Adeboye ordained Bishop Oyedepo. However, the message encoded in the written text cannot be verified to have been uttered by either of participants.

Also, T14 shows another classificational process where three Actors above and two Actors below are depicted in an overt subordinate-superordinate relationship. The integrated written text informs the Viewer that the actors are family, a mother, her four year old and her new born baby. The story above the picture narrates how the heroic four year old saved her mother and her unborn sibling from dying by calling 911. The instruction that follows the narrative reads, 'Please like in 1 second and type amen to show respect to this four year hero'. This post is more likely to appeal to the consciences of females. Many Nigerians also believe that what one does not appreciate does not come through for them. Thus, T14 as well as other previous texts examined, is viewed to be a highly manipulative tool used to enforce subtle deception.

So far, the conceptual structures in 'type amen' texts shows the predominant use of classification and symbolic patterns. Both have been effectively used to fabricate the text in such a way that viewers are manipulated to respond.

SOLUTION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study has examined the recurrent representational structures in 'type amen' Facebook posts with the aim of teasing out the deception and ideological underpinnings that are embedded in them. Findings reveal that both the narrative and conceptual structures are present in the posts. The action processes

with the transactional and non-transactional types and transactional reactional processes are the most frequent narrative structures, while within the conceptual structure, the symbolic and classificational processes where observed. Also, persuasion and coercion have been validated to be veritable tools of deceptive communication as seen in their recurrent use in the integrated written and visual texts. Their effectiveness is also seen from the compliance by hundreds of thousands of text viewers.

Thus, it is recommended that Facebook users be enlightened by both social psychologists and other stake holders on the futility of the threats issued by the type-amen meme creators, and encourage viewers to see them as other ways of soliciting attention on the social media. It may also be necessary to begin to take legal actions against meme creators that use pictures of famous personalities to propagate messages that project deceit in online communities. Such actions should be considered in the same light as libel committed against the person whose picture appear on such nefarious posts.

FURTHER RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

As pointed out earlier in this chapter, the tendency to tell lies and deceive is a functional part of both plant and animal. What is key to research is being able to account for;

1.   What motivates deception and fake news dissemination?
2.   How can deception be identified in language?
3.   What positive directions can deception be made to take in specific setting?
4.   What direction will religion take in the face of increased deceptions?

The above questions call for a multidimensional research approach across disciplines, especially in the domains of cognitive psychology, linguistics, language learning, artificial intelligence and computer science.

In the light of this, cognitive psychologists are taking up interest in examining how access to religious information can be extended to determine memory effects to specific religious stimulus[4]. Within behavioural psychology, research is looking at the psychological mechanism of religious altruism, with the need to place morality ahead of religiosity[5].

In addition, there is the multidisciplinary interface between linguistics, cognitive neuroscience, speech production and artificial intelligence in the design of an Information Manipulation Theory 2 (IMT2). Within the proposition, specific conditions under which various forms of information manipulation will or will not occur can be identified.[6] Also within linguistics lies the potential to identify specific language – lexical, syntactic, semiotics and discourse – markers that can reveal the different structures of truthful and deceptive messages. Two levels of linguistic analysis in Russian language, lexis and discourse have been successfully experimented[7] using Support Vector Ma-chines with rbf Kernel (F-measure 0.65). Perhaps, this method or an improved version can be applied to test for syntactic and semiotic deceptive cues.

With the turn of centuries and as life continue to evolve, research in deception and fake communication will continue to expand and open up more opportunities for multidisciplinary research collaborations.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, New Media provides a virtual pulpit via the social media for the sporadic extension of religious practice; with some of the consequences being the rise of alternative voices of authority; the re-framing of traditional religious texts; and the loss of control over religious materials, all leading up to gross religious deception. This chapter is an exposé that calls out one of such deception on Facebook with the intention to contribute to the awareness of misinformation and disinformation that abound online.

From the discussions so far, it is obvious that religion is one major domain that is fertile for breeding deception especially because of man's continuous quest to seek explanations for all the astonishing happenings in his environment. Advancement in communication technology has made it easier to access and share information with very little security policy and check thereby making cyberspace, especially the social media a dumping site for misleading messages like the 'type amen' category examined in this chapter.

With the high religiosity rate found among Africans, Nigerians in particular, it is no surprise the thousands of comments and shares as well as millions of likes against each text. This clearly demonstrates the effect deceptive posts have on communities online.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Authority: The legitimacy to enforce rules or give order entrusted on an institution or individual.
Community: A group of people sharing common space, language, and law.
Deception: The act of lying or misleading others.
Online: A system that enables one to connect to a larger network of people and activities.
Religion: The belief and worship of the supernatural.
Social Media: An interactive forum powered by the internet that allows users to interact with and publish to each other.
Threat: An expression of fear or indication of imminent danger.

ENDNOTES

[1] Karl Marx in ''A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Rights'' published on the 7th and 10th of February 1844.

[2] Discussion on 'Social Media and the Church' by James P. Long: http://www.outreachmagazine.com/features/4048-Social-Media-and-the-Church.html (April, 3, 2011).

[3] https://www.consumeraffairs.com/news/like-farming-facebook-scams-look-before-you-like-042215.html

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Section 8

Deceptive Content by Extremist and Terrorist Groups

Chapter 28

Deception in Online Terrorist Propaganda:
A Study of ISIS and Boko Haram

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the meaning, types, and practice of propaganda by two prominent terrorist groups, namely ISIS and Boko Haram, and how deception and deceptive communication form aspects of their propagandist tools. The chapter begins with the conceptual description and discussion of deception and propaganda and situate them in the research literature. It goes further to examine the impact of the internet in the enhancement and spread of terrorist propaganda by ISIS and Boko Haram; the reasons and various forms of propaganda and radicalization online are also examined. Some specific samples of terrorist propaganda by the two terrorist organizations are qualitatively analyzed using discourse analytical methodology. Studies in counter-propaganda appears to be the future research direction; although it has been argued that aggressive counter-narratives may be counterproductive, grievances expressed in terrorist propaganda should be addressed.

INTRODUCTION

The practice of deception in oral or written/visual communication is noticeable where the communicator (or deceiver) intentionally misrepresents information by tactically choosing between two forms of lying, namely concealment or leaving out the true information, and falsification; that is, presenting false information as if it were true (Ekman 1985 cited in Samoilenko, 2017). Interestingly, strategic communication (such as propaganda) often applies some forms of lying and deception; for example, fabricating false information, concealing or omitting truthful/relevant information, minimizing or downplaying aspects of truth, or mixing truthful information with lies. This kind of deceptive communication generally has the tendency of misleading and misdirecting attention, sometimes by exaggerating or overstating truthful information and creating false beliefs, or skirting issues through changing the subject or responding indirectly (i.e. equivocations) (Samoilenko, 2017).

Terrorist propaganda selects from this list of deceptive communication, and in most cases all of these forms of lying play out clearly in terrorist propagandist online content and video. This study shows from online propagandist content by ISIS and Boko Haram, that deception is a key factor in terrorist propaganda. The study is intended to add significantly to literature in terrorism and deception studies and give more insights to terrorist's process of radicalization through mind game or psychological warfare.

PROPAGANDA IN ONLINE TERRORISM DISCOURSE

The United States military defines propaganda as "any form of communication in support of national objectives designed to influence the opinions, emotions, attitudes, or behavior of any group in order to benefit the sponsor, either directly or indirectly" (See Lieberman 2017, p.95). The character of propaganda is made clearer in some other definitions such as the definition by the Oxford Living English Dictionary, which defines propaganda as "information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote a political cause or point of view." The Cambridge English Dictionary also defines propaganda as "information, ideas, opinions or images often only giving one part of an argument, that are broadcast, published or in some other way spread with the intention of influencing people's opinions." A definition by the Encyclopedia Britannica captures the fact that propagandist information is often not "objective and is used primarily to influence an audience and further an agenda, often by presenting facts selectively to encourage a particular synthesis or perception, or using loaded language to produce an emotional rather than a rational response to the information that is presented." And much of what is disseminated as propaganda is "information – facts, arguments, rumours, half-truths or lies…" presented not only as words (or texts) but also may be in the form of gestures, banners, monuments, music, clothing, insignia, hairstyles, designs on coins and postage stamps etc."[1]

Lieberman (2017) identifies and characterizes different forms of propaganda namely (1) white propaganda – propaganda that identifies the source of the message sent to a particular target (2) black propaganda – propaganda that comes from an unknown source often containing fabrications and lies (3) Gray propaganda – containing neither completely true nor completely false information and does not identify its source. ISIS generally practices black propaganda associated with unreliable information and half-truths. An example is their negotiations with Jordan for the release of the captured pilot, Muath Safi Yousef al-Kasasbeh in exchange for the release of captives in Jordanian jails in 2015. ISIS released a video showing al-Kasasbeh's death by burning on 3 February. However, the Jordanian government's investigation showed that the pilot was actually killed on 3 January, 2015. If that was true, it would confirm that ISIS never intended to exchange him for prisoners. But their propaganda succeeded because the publicity around the graphic online video of their victim's execution resulted in global media coverage of the event (Ali, 2015).

Propaganda is also categorized on the basis of its subject matter. For instance, *defamatory propaganda* is such that degrades, reviles and insults foreign states, their institutions, leaders or other agents with the aim of disrupting peaceful relations between states. *Subversive propaganda* refers to any communication that is intended to overthrow the political leader, or existing internal political order of a state, which violates international principle of non-interference in the internal affair of a sovereign state. *Propaganda or incitement to aggressive war or genocide* is communication intending to infiltrate the minds of the people with hate and disposition to engage in or normalize unlawful violence (Lieberman, 2017, p97). All the three types of propaganda are able to effectively win the hearts of local populations

if used effectively but can also turn against the originators if used ineffectively causing what is known in the intelligence community as "blowback." (Ibid). Interestingly, ISIS or ISIL and Boko Haram have used the different types of propaganda relatively effectively.

Terrorism and the Internet

The Internet and social media have not only revolutionized terrorism, but have also turned the Internet into a dangerous tool for terrorist propaganda and recruitment. Berger (2015) notes that Jihadists' "highly organized social media campaign, uses deceptive tactics and shows a sophisticated understanding of how such networks operate," (p.1). Thus, the Internet has served Islamic extremists a variety of resources for disseminating their ideology and propaganda. Some extremist groups have "established websites designed specifically for youth audiences, disseminating propaganda through colorful cartoons and games. These sites – many of which are available in English – help to get the groups' message out to a worldwide audience…"[2] ISIS for example, have even developed an app to spread their propaganda through images and the streaming of violent online videos (Awan, 2017).

Lieberman (2017) has identified nine ways that the Internet has revolutionized how terrorist groups use propaganda. First, social media enable terrorist groups to provide volumes of content directly to websites and individuals without having to go through a third party, such as the traditional media, which cover, interpret and analyze terrorist incidents. With this freedom, terrorists can now tailor their messages systematically to different audiences based on their age, location or other factors. For instance, messages sent by ISIS to Arabic speaking Muslim countries are different from those sent to English speaking Western countries. While messages sent to the Western world present Jihad as a means of personal fulfillment, messages in Arabic to Muslims in the Middle East tend to insist that Jihad is a duty for all Muslims (p. 101-102).

Second, because the Internet breaks geographical or spatial barriers, terrorist groups are able to efficiently recruit new members and spread their ideology and propaganda with ease online. They can create any number of account names on social media platforms, and since communication is free and easy, it is almost impossible to stop them despite efforts by social media companies like Twitter and Facebook to do so. However, according to Berger (2015), the number of Jihadists on social media is still minuscule in comparison to the overall user base and after years of debates among free speech advocates, Facebook and YouTube have instituted reporting procedures that allow users to flag content that supports terrorism for removal. Significantly, "starting shortly before ISIS disseminated a video of the beheading of American journalist James Foley, Twitter began to take a more aggressive approach to ISIS specifically, and thousands of ISIS supporter accounts have been suspended since" (p.1). For instance, there were almost 800 confirmed ISIS supporter accounts suspended between 2014 and 2015 and about 18,000 accounts related to the ISIS network, which were suspended during the same period (Ibid). In 2013, Al-Shabaab of Somalia live tweeted (in English) their attack on the Westgate Mall in Nairobi that killed 72 people. Twitter then shut down the account. Al-Shabaab tried to reopen the account but after getting shut down again and again by Twitter, they gave up. Until 2012, *Boko Haram* maintained two separate twitter accounts namely: *Boko Haram@BokoHaram* (Chadian Border) and *BokoHaram@BokoHaram* (Republic of Arewa). The former, which was short-lived, was presumably hosted by group members in Chad and Niger and attracted more followers (Chiluwa, 2014). The latter account with the slogan: "I hate School" existed for a longer time and gradually become dormant and vanished. What remains now as

Boko Haram (English) Twitter account is @*Boko Haram Watch* with the slogan: "western education is sin." It is not certain how many of suspended jihadist accounts have sprung up again under some guises.

Third, social media makes it easy to access terrorist propaganda even accidently, without having to locate a terrorist website. Individuals may stumble across terrorist content by clicking on a link posted by a friend and unintentionally lands on a Jihadist forum (Lieberman 2017). Also, most smartphones are connected to the Internet with WhatsApp enabled interfaces; thus, more people are online 24 hours and are vulnerable this way. According to Alcantara (2018), WhatsApp currently hosts over 200 terrorists' channels for sharing their propaganda and recruiting.

Fourth, Internet postings are not regulated as sources of news; thus, Jihadists can post inaccurate information unhindered. Readers are often prone to consuming terrorist propaganda as facts, and misleading stories and messages may just go on to achieve terrorist propagandist objectives. Fifth, because the Internet supports anonymity, terrorists exploit it to promote higher levels of violence in people. They use anonymity to encourage hatred and draw sympathy to their cause, while evading detection by law enforcement agents. Sixth, terrorist use social media to distort the prevalence and ranking of their messages on search results. Twitter in particular allows them "to amplify their messages by posting links to their propaganda and 'hashtag' at an unnaturally fast pace, causing the postings to place higher in search results and in content aggregated by third parties. ISIS and al Qaeda reportedly both use 'bots,' which are computer-controlled Twitter accounts that automatically send out content in a similar manner," (Lieberman (2017, p.102).

Seventh, the Internet enables multidirectional communication between terrorists and potential recruits, and this allows terrorists to send propaganda to specific types of individuals. When interaction is established, a sense of cohesion and unity is generated with potentials recruits. This creates some kind of virtual community between the terrorists and recruits. Eighth, Jihadist use social media to search for and target individuals who might be particularly vulnerable to their ideology. As highlighted above, ISIS utilizes social media platforms that are popular with children and teenagers to attract and recruit young people, who are more prone to their propaganda. They can also select and weed out less susceptible populations by blocking them (i.e. nonbelievers) from their communities. ISIS for example have used Facebook and Twitter to target youths and have attracted thousands of views, comments and posts; and through videos posted on YouTube had embarked on its "one billion campaign," called on Muslims to join ISIS. The videos were accompanied with the words "proudly support the Muslim cause" (Irshaid, 2014 cited in Awan, 2017), and specifically called on Muslim young men around the world to fight for ISIS. The videos were broadcast in different languages and countries like Algeria, Libya and Egypt (Awan, 2017). The ninth point made by Lieberman (2017), about encryption is very important and I reproduce it here:

…encryption allows terrorists to maintain private networks of communication without law enforcement oversight. Encrypted communications cannot be easily accessed by law enforcement, and as such, recruitment efforts and other terrorist activities can take place in relative secrecy. As more websites and smartphone applications turn to encryption, its ability to hide such communications and actions will likely be a growing concern…Two encrypted messaging applications, WhatsApp and Kik, have been especially popular with ISIS. These applications make it much more difficult for law enforcement to intercept communications than would otherwise be possible on Twitter or Facebook. Furthermore, extremist propaganda that might be filtered out on Twitter due to its violent or graphic nature can be transmitted freely through encrypted platforms… (p.103)

PROPAGANDIST TOOLS OF ISIS AND BOKO HARAM

Propaganda is "half the terrorist's armoury and perhaps the decisive half in terms of survival," and the greatest challenge with countering ISIS/ISIL's propaganda is the terrorist's consistency in exploiting ideas and grievances that reverberates with various audiences, and using warped ideology to recruit disaffected youth by offering them a false sense of purpose, belonging, and religious obligation and reward (Tugwell, 1986, p.1). ISIS also uses "branding and political marketing to increase their intangible value and assets in order to influence their tangible (operational) capacities." This approach to political communication is used "to raise the awareness of the ISIS brand in order to differentiate the organization and to create a greater sense of credibility and authenticity in an increasingly crowded market place of terrorist organizations seeking for attention, support and fear… Aspects of political marketing are used to create sets of relationships of attraction and avoidance with different target audiences" (Simons 2018, p.1). Simons (2018) identifies two types of propaganda; namely propaganda of the word and propaganda of the deed. Language is a critical aspect of the process of propaganda of the word, which is the ability to shape an emotional perception of the projected reality. Propaganda of the deed on the other hand, involves actions or the use of symbols/symbolism as a tool. Symbolism is important in identity politics and is often "an emotional rallying point that enables the priming and mobilization of an audience," and can "provide points of reference that ground a campaign," (p.8).

In this section, certain propaganda tools are identified and discussed. Though these are not exhaustive, they give clear insights to types and features of propaganda that have been used by ISIL and Boko Haram at different times and places.

Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp

The Guantanamo Bay prison and the maltreatment of detainees there have for several years acted as a powerful propaganda tool for terrorist groups' recruitment of young people. Guantanamo Bay detention camp is a military prison, where inmates are reportedly detained indefinitely without trial and inmates are sometimes alleged to have been tortured. The operation of this camp by the US is viewed as a major violation of human rights by Amnesty International[3], which was why President Obama insisted in closing it down. Some political analyst however, believe that Guantanamo bay is not "a key component" of terrorist propaganda, although there is some few mentions of it in the ISIS online magazine (Carroll, 2015). According to *Human Rights First*, Al Qaeda and ISIS' continuous reference to Guantanamo Bay is an attempt to paint the United States as hypocritical and amoral and as a call to arms for Muslims and support for Jihadism.[4] This is why ISIS uses orange jumpsuits for their hostages.

Propaganda Targeted at Children

Some propaganda strategies that are specifically crafted and targeted at children have been used to lure underage children into terrorist acts. According to the *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime* (2017), about 8,000 children have been recruited by Boko Haram since 2009 and used as fighters, or to carry equipment and weapons. Some abducted boys are also used to identify those who refused to join the group. Children abducted by ISIL (as young as 7 years old) are often used as human shield, or used

as spies and scouts, to transport military supplies, conduct patrols, man check points, videotape attack for propaganda purposes and plant explosive devices. Young girls are forced to marry, clean and cook for their Jihadist captors, and some are trained as suicide bombers. In 2015, for example, a girl of about 12 years detonated a bomb at a bus station at Damaturu, Yobe state (Nigeria) killing seven people. In 2015 alone, the United Nations verified 274 cases of children having been recruited by ISIL in Syria.[5]

Unfortunately these children were victims of deceptive propaganda strategies and mind game. Colorful propaganda online cartoons and games are aimed at children. Some high-level propaganda targeted at children include highlighting the advantages of joining the group, such as offering status and prestige, smart uniforms and weapons. Children and youth who lacked education and employment are often swayed by the opportunity for employment and power. ISIS also applies the strategy of portrayed "victimhood," using images that show the "crimes of the enemy" in order to provoke anger and empathy with those injured or killed and creating a desire for revenge. The groups also use communication materials that attract and engage children, such as cartoons and computer games to spread their message. Other interactive media and colourful content that are popular on the Internet are often designed and used by terrorist groups to glorify terror acts including suicide attacks.[6]

Beheading of Victims as Propagandist Tool

In 2014, ISIS beheaded some American journalists namely James Foley, Steven Sotloff and Peter Kassig. They also killed a British aid worker David Haines, a French citizen Hervé Gourdel, and a British humanitarian worker, Alan Henning. In 2015, they beheaded two Japanese journalists, Haruna Yukawa and freelance video journalist Kenji Goto. These execution-style murders were videotaped and shown by ISIS. This is where propaganda of the act (not just of the word), is used to raise awareness of the terrorist organization and to consolidate its brand identity (Simons, 2018). In order words, beheading of their victims becomes a symbol for creating their brand, which according to Simon (2018) is "the basis of forming the expectations as to the nature and quality of political relationships that are formed with various stakeholder groups." And significantly "potent and powerful symbols to publics are key historical events, their propagation and perception in the consciousness of publics" (p.7).

The Jihadist propaganda of beheading creates the image and symbol of a brutal group, and this has been an essential element of psychological warfare and subversion used for waging wars and promoting political ideologies (Samoilenko 2017). Psychological warfare is achieved by the destruction of the enemy's will to resist and helps a nation to impose its will on an adversary without using a military force (MacDonald 2007 cited in Samoilenko, 2017, p.140). This can also be achieved through military intelligence involving denial and deception, counter-intelligence and counter-propaganda. Denial refers to concealing facts and blocking all the information channels available to the enemy, preventing them from obtaining intelligence about the real situation. This includes presenting a distorted reality such as deliberately exaggerating capabilities (i.e. making the enemy feel that they are stronger and more dangerous than they really are), which helps to deter a stronger adversary (Samoilenko 2017). The beheadings by ISIS served the purpose of portraying them as very powerful and also ensuring the group's international media coverage, and ensures that ISIS is introduced to a larger number of people. Because of these killings, large media companies no longer permit their employees travelling to ISIS-controlled areas, and this will mean that ISIS's propagandist means of deterrence have succeeded (Ali, 2015).

Manipulation of Media Information

Terror organisations such as the Taliban and Al Qaeda have at one time and another faked cooperation with journalists as a useful tool to deliver their propaganda. This "cooperation" allowed them to establish friendship with media personnel and writers, enabling them (terrorists) to manipulate journalistic stories to some degrees. They do this by providing the relevant person exclusive access to a certain area, or an interview with a very important Jihadist personality. In exchange, they expect the journalist to write a good piece on them while utilising an opportunity to manipulate information for their own benefit in a story. Jihadists have also professionalised their own propaganda techniques by providing packaged, ready-made material of high quality. They write and offer reports from daily life inside ISIS areas, exclusive interviews and pictures, and ensure that the information is disseminated through the social media (Ali, 2015).

Exploitation of Political Grievances

For the purpose of youth radicalization, terrorist propaganda typically exploits political grievances such as those that blame Western countries for the killing and suffering of Muslims around the world. Some of the accusations, as in the excerpt below specifically single out America as an enemy of Islam.

…The US had killed women, children, and the elderly, during its direct occupation of Iraq prior to its withdrawal. There are countless accounts of American soldiers executing families and raping women under the sanctity of the US military and Blackwater… (Dabiq Issue 3, p.3)

Boko Haram also accuses the Nigerian government of marginalizing Muslims in northern Nigeria. In 2o11, The Kano state governor was accused of intimidation, killings and police harassment of Muslims in Kano state (Nigeria) (Chiluwa, 2017). They (Jihadists) also blame the West for discrimination and alienation, repression of the freedom of expression and freedom of religious worship, violation of human rights and lack of economic opportunity for Muslims. In many countries (especially in developing countries), the fact that there is indeed poverty, illiteracy and poor education provide fertile grounds for Jihadists propaganda and radicalization drive (Hussain, 2015).

Religious Ideology

Ideology is the driving force of the activities of terrorist groups as well as accentuates other factors that strengthen their propaganda and radicalization impetus. According to Hussain (2015), terrorist use a distorted version of Islam, "including the manipulation of verses of the Quran and *hadith* (sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad) to argue that Muslims have an obligation to use violence to defend Muslim communities around the world. Their message has also taken on a decidedly sectarian tone, as they call on Muslims to defend Sunni Muslims from Shia aggression." They also misuse and exploit the concepts of *jihad* and *takfir* (declaring individuals and groups to be non-Muslims). In the ISIS's call to re-establish the caliphate, they claim that a small group of fighters are empowered by God to take armies, acquire land, fulfill the vision of creating an Islamic state and defend the Muslim *ummah*. Terrorist groups use these concepts to build a sense of purpose, empowerment, adventure, religious obligation and reward (Hussain, 2015).

Promise of Paradise

The promise of paradise is another strong terrorist propaganda, especially towards women (Terras-Wahlberg, 2016). Since the civil war in Syria began in 2011, about 30,000 people have travelled to areas controlled by ISIS with the purpose of joining the so-called Islamic state. Already there about 5,000 foreign fighters that came from Europe with Belgium, France, Sweden and the UK supplying the largest number of fighters. About 20% of the foreign fighters from Europe are women (Terras-Wahlberg, 2016). Women are lured by promises of paradise contained in some of the issues of the ISIS magazine (Dabiq), and statements of the ISIL leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, about a glorious kingdom of bliss and a future of great possibilities for young women (Terras-Wahlberg, 2016). These promises include a paradise of better life in the now and in the afterlife. The formal inauguration of ISIS was marked by a declaration of a "Caliphate," that would ensure peace, oneness and prosperity for its people. An excerpt below is culled from *Dabiq* (Issue1, p.2).

O Muslims everywhere, glad tidings to you and expect good. Raise your head high, for today – by Allah's grace – you have a state and Khilafah, which will return your dignity, might, rights, and leadership. It is a state where the Arab and non-Arab, the white man and black man, the easterner and westerner are all brothers… Their blood mixed and became one, under a single flag and goal, in one pavilion, enjoying this blessing, the blessing of faithful brotherhood…The time has come for those generations that were drowning in oceans of disgrace, being nursed on the milk of humiliation, and being ruled by the vilest of all people, after their long slumber in the darkness of neglect – the time has come for them to rise… The sun of jihad has risen. The glad tidings of good are shining. Triumph looms on the horizon. The signs of victory have appeared...

Women are promised a central role in the state-building process of the Caliphate such as becoming esteemed wives of the brave and righteous warriors, mothers of ISIS next generation and possibility of becoming state officials. Women would enjoy a meaningful sense of belonging, as equals in the land of Islam portrayed as a utopian society from discrimination. They are not only equals in terms of all the Islamic state have to offer but also will experience a deeper experience of sisterhood that guarantees security, honour and dignity. There are also the promises of romance and adventure. Women who join ISIS have the advantage of meeting strong, handsome and righteous young men on the soil of the Caliphate. Also, women who join ISIS are promised extraordinary influence in the internal and international politics of ISIS (Terras-Wahlberg 2016). According to Terras-Wahlberg (2016) "official propaganda stemming from IS speaks directly to women and the number of female adherents confirms that the target group is listening intently. The promises paint a picture of a young nation state resembling a paradise on earth. The nature of the message sent to women is one of hope, opportunity and empowerment" (p.3).

METHODOLOGY

Some samples of propagandist data by ISIS and Boko Haram (BH) are reproduced here and are analysed qualitatively from critical discourse analysis (CDA) perspective. CDA is a method of analyzing discourse that not only analyzes the significance of language patterns, but also the values and ideologies underlying them. CDA analysts believe that "the way we talk does not neutrally reflect our world, identities and

social relationships, but rather plays an active role in creating and changing them," (Suurmond, 2005, p.20). Hence, CDA as theory and method shows how language works in sociocultural and political contexts, focusing on power relations and ideological perspectives reflected in discourse texts, and their wider implications for the society (Chiluwa, 2016). Thus, CDA identifies social problems expressed or reflected in texts (such as political power abuse, racial discrimination, ideological/religious stereotyping, polarization, profiling of identities, theorist propaganda etc.) as part of its main objectives and the possibility of finding solutions to them (Fairclough, 2003).

The data for this study are in the form of terrorist threats (Chiluwa, 2017) issued by BH between 2009 and 2012, which illustrates how threats also function as propaganda, showing those features of propaganda that exaggerates the ability and capability of a terrorist group in order to deter attacks and instill fear on the mind of the perceived enemy. The ISIS data are culled from some of the editions of *Dabiq*. Data are also obtained from the BH twitter account page of 2012, showing how the group exploited grievances against the Nigerian government stemming from wide-spread corruption, youth unemployment, poverty and human rights violations.

The links to some of the propagandist threats of BH used as data for this study are shown below. Some samples from the data are reproduced in the analysis. "SP" stands for "sample."

1. Boko Haram's open letter to the Kano State Governor (August 2011) (see http://muhdlawal.word-press.com/2012/01/22/bokoharams-open-letter-to-kano-state-governoraugust-2011/.
2. Boko Haram resurrects, declares total war. https://www.vanguardngr.com/2009/08/boko-haram-ressurects-declares-total-jihad/.
3. Boko Haram leader - Imam Abubakar Shekau's message to President Jonathan. http://saharareporters.com/2012/01/12/video-boko-haram-leader-imam-abubakar-shekau-message-president-jonathan.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

CDA methodology applied in this study identifies and analyses ideological statements by BH and shows how these constitute and re-echo the global Jihadist ideology of just war and more importantly, how they reflect the military tactics of psychological warfare. Psychological warfare through propaganda is characterized by denial and deception involving concealing of facts and denying the enemy access to information and intelligence about the real situation (Samoilenko, 2017). It also involves what van Dijk (1998) describes as "ideological square," namely: emphasizing and exaggerating 'our' good properties and actions and de-emphasizing the enemy's good properties, while emphasizing "their" bad properties or actions. In the analysis, we identify the Jihadists' strategy of (i) deliberate exaggeration of capabilities (ii) exploitation of grievances and (iii) strategy of portrayed victimhood. Because of the data available to this researcher, the analysis tends to focus more on the activities of Boko Haram.

Exaggeration of Capabilities of Boko Haram

As highlighted above, black propaganda involving distortion of reality and magnification of military capacity is often used to cripple the enemy's will to fight or deter a stronger adversary. Samoilenko (2017) cited the use of this strategy by the United States during the Gulf War against Saddam Hussein. During the war, the US military downplayed their lack of armored forces by focusing reports on the arrival in

Saudi Arabia of the 82nd Airborne, F-15C Eagles and the Marines. The aim was to make Saddam Hussein believe that the US had sufficient forces on the ground to defend itself against the Iraqi invasion (Hallion, 1992 cited in Samoilenko, 2017, p. 140). In the Boko Haram's statement entitled: "Boko Haram resurrects, declares total war," the writer of the statement issues warnings and threats that are viewed in this study as an exaggerated capability threats but succeeded as propaganda that publicized the group as global terrorist franchise. Some of the exaggerated threats in the data read:

SP1

…We have started a Jihad in Nigeria which no force on earth can stop. The aim is to Islamise Nigeria and ensure the rule of the majority Muslims in the country. We will teach Nigeria a lesson, a very bitter one…That from the Month of August, we shall carry out series of bombing in Southern and Northern Nigerian cities, beginning with Lagos, Ibadan, Enugu and Port Harcourt. The bombing will not stop until Sharia and Western civilisation is wiped off from Nigeria. We will not stop until these evil cities are tuned into ashes…That we shall make the country ungovernable, kill and eliminate irresponsible political leaders of all leanings, hunt and gun down those who oppose the rule of Sharia in Nigeria and ensure that the infidel does not go unpunished… We promise the West and Southern Nigeria, a horrible pastime. We shall focus on these areas which is the devil empire and has been the one encouraging and sponsoring Western civilisation into the shores of Nigeria. ("Boko Haram resurrects, declares total Jihad" Vanguard, August 14, 2009)

Between 2006 and 2016, Boko Haram's insurgency led to over 32,000 fatalities with over 16,000 deaths resulting directly from the Islamist group's attacks.[7] These attacks were concentrated in the Northeast of Nigeria, where the attacks focused on military targets, churches, mosques, markets, prisons and schools. The Northeast comprises Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe states. However, from 2016 to early 2017, BH attacks appeared to dwindle with the Nigerian government claiming that BH had been "technically defeated" and restricted only to "soft targets."[8] However, since December 2017, BH resurfaced with renewed vigour and rather than direct gun attacks and bombing of security and government targets, their recent attacks have been characterized by suicide bombings carried out by young teenage girls at Mosques and market places; kidnapping and abductions of school children and sacking of whole villages in the northeast.

However, apart from the attack on the United Nations building at Abuja on August 26, 2011 that killed 21 people and wounded 60 others, and the attack on Saint Theresa's Church at Suleja (Plateau state) on December 25, 2011 (and several other churches in the Middle Belt of Nigeria), which killed several worshippers, there have not been "series of bombing in southern Nigerian cities beginning with Lagos, Ibadan, Enugu and Port Harcourt," as promised by BH. This also suggests that Boko Haram is not in "all 36 states of Nigeria" as claimed by the BH propaganda. This threat was made in 2009 and it says: "from the month of August (2009)." According to the propagandist threat "the bombing will not stop until Sharia and Western civilization is wiped off from Nigeria," and will not "until these evil cities are turned into ashes." Interestingly, there was no single bombing in August in any of the cities mentioned. The UN building bombing took place in August, 2011 and there has not been any other ever since in the southern cities which was supposed to be the focus of the attacks according to the propagandist threats.

Although, the Nigerian government's claim of defeating BH is also a deliberate propaganda and deception, BH was actually pushed back and many of the villages captured by them have been reclaimed by the Nigerian armed forces. Many of the hostages have also been released. As a matter of fact, the war against BH has been marred by sabotage, intelligence leaks, politicization of the problem and high-level corruption, which cuts across all the levels of the Nigerian government (Oriola, forthcoming). Former President Goodluck Jonathan himself confessed that his government was infiltrated by Boko Haram members, their supporters and funders.[9] According to Oriola (forthcoming), the war against the Nigerian Islamists has also been undermined by the alienation of the public through human rights violations, shortage of arms and ammunition, lack of interagency coordination and the rise of criminal syndicates formed from collaboration between actors within and outside the Nigerian military from the counter-terrorism operations. Otherwise, BH would have been history by now. If the claim by the former President Jonathan that BH had secret backers in his government was correct, that would have further bolstered their capacity to destroy southern cities. But despite the possibility of secret government supports of BH, the attacks had concentrated in the north, and there is no likelihood that BH had the military or intelligence capacity to carry out their threats. So, it is clear that the threats to turn southern cities to ashes were mere propaganda.

Exploitation of Grievances by Boko Haram

The Boko Haram insurgency has been blamed on youth employment, abject poverty and lack of education and opportunity especially in northern Nigeria (Agbiboa, 2013). Hence, many of their members are unemployed youths, who are lured by the promise of a better life. Interestingly, according to IMF, Nigeria is the largest economy in Africa with GDP of $415.080 billion ahead of South Africa and Egypt since 2016.[10] According to the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Nigeria earned N7.2 trillion (about $19 billion) from crude oil in 2017 alone.[11] While the average Nigerian still lives below the poverty line, much of Nigeria's wealth is mismanaged, and much of it is stolen by those in power. Hence, Boko Haram had a very strong argument to craft their propaganda towards the Nigerian youth. Sample 2 below are tweets posted by the Jihadists that built on the already existing discontentment against the Nigerian government. Here, BH makes very strong points and presents themselves as rescuers and authentic political actors. Abraham, Beauchamp & Mroszczyk (2017, p.899) has argued that "terrorist leaders are thought to behave as essentially rational political actors, whereas lower level members are believed to harbor stronger non-political incentives for harming civilians, often in defiance of leadership preferences."

SP2

Twt1: *@Boko_Haram. Boko haram would not sit by and allow a gang rape. The infidel government of Nigeria has done enug#ABSU#EVIL5.*
Twt2. *Who needs 25 million naira for their family to spend on their behalf?* http://dlvr.it/m39wH#**BLOODMONEY**...
Twt3.*@Boko_Haram. Federal govt of Nigeria has killed more people thru incompetence this year than Boko Haram, armed robbers, kidnapaz and MEND.* **#GASKIYA**
Twt4: *How many jets does the president have? How many jobs would that have created? Boko Haram to the rescue (**#wherewedarethread**).*

Twt5*: @Boko_Haram. The government is the terrorist. When last did you have light (electricity) for 24 hrs? Boko Haram are the freedom fighters.*

Twt6*: Nigerians would rather tolerate their thieving rulers than face them. We are not the problem, the government is #Faceyaproblem (Chiluwa & Ajiboye, 2014)*

The voice and stance of the writer of sample1, differs significantly from the writers of the tweets in sample 2. In the sample 2 tweets, BH subtly pretend to play the role of economic advocates of the Nigerian public rather than the brutal Jihadists that they portray in SP1. Thus, hiding under the popular feelings and the general political resentment, they sold their religious ideology to the people. The writers of *Twt4-Tw6* see themselves as heroes and also by asking revolutionary questions that tend to portray the Jihadists as revolutionary fighters (e.g. "How many jets does the President have? How many jobs would that have created?" (*Twt4*), they sound quite credible and their argument is valid, which implicitly identifies with the Nigerian people (Chiluwa & Ajiboye, 2014). Here, BH uses the general economic conditions to give impetus to their propaganda. And interestingly, those who tweeted in response to BH arguments agreed with them and it appeared some of them gave their support to the group.

Strategy of Portrayed Victimhood by Boko Haram and ISIS

In most of BH's online postings and media statements, they portray themselves as the victim and accuse the Nigerian government of victimizing them. They describe their political cause as just and constitutional. And in most cases, they represent themselves as the victim and the government as the aggressor. SP3, below is a narrative of portrayed victimhood in the BH ideological propaganda (the text is unedited):

SP3

…You all saw on AL-JAZEERA TV how unarmed men, youths, women, cripple and even under age were asked to lie on the ground and were shut on the head and chest by security agents. You all saw our leader MALLAM MUHAMMAD YUSUF with handcuff and shot severally. You all saw how both MASJID AND THE HOLY QUR'AN were being destroyed.

What are our crime? What damage have we caused or cost Nigeria government, which leads to our attack in Bauchi, Wudil, Gombe, Yobe and Maiduguri two years back? Is sticking to the teachings of the Holy Qur'an and Hadith a crime? Is funeral right a crime?

…Everyone knows what Christians did to Muslims, not once or twice…Everyone knows what happened to our leader. Everyone knows what wickedness was meted out to our members and fellow Muslims in Nigeria from time to time in Zango kataf, Tafawa Balewa, Kaduna, villages, Langtang, Yelwa shendam. Different things were meted out to Muslims in this country…

SP4, below is a similar narrative by ISIS, where US military airstrikes are constructed as "barbaric killing of the innocent," and viewed as deliberate victimization of Muslims under the guise of "collateral damage."

SP4

…Muslim families were killed under the broad definition of "collateral damage," which the US grants itself alone the right to apply. Therefore, if a mujāhid kills a single man with a knife, it is the barbaric killing of the "innocent." However, if Americans kill thousands of Muslim families all over the world by pressing missile fire buttons, it is merely "collateral damage" … (Dabiq Issue 3, p.3)

These ideological representations of the United States and Nigerian government as aggressors and killers have the potential to play on the emotion of the reader and strategically makes an appeal for support and revenge. This type of emotional appeal and mind game works most as propaganda when indeed certain confirmed forms of violent actions have been perpetrated against some Muslim populations. Such actions whether deliberately or not, such as the case of US bombings in Syria, Yemen and Iraq, which reportedly caused mass civilian deaths are inexcusable. When civilians are unintentionally killed in war times, Jihadists utilize the actions as propaganda and tools of portrayed victimhood. The illegality perpetrated by the Nigerian police in which the first Boko Haram leader was killed, actually fuel the Jihadist revolt, and many of the BH attacks were attributed to the death of Mohammed Yusuf. This has also for long serve as buffer to the Jihadist propagandist message in Nigeria.

The main point where Boko Haram's propaganda differs from that of ISIS is that Boko Haram members rely on the image of their leaders; first it was Muhammad Yusuf and now, Ibrahim Shekau) as a symbol of legitimacy. They also draw inspiration from the leader's religious preaching. This is similar to Al Qaeda that used Osama bin Laden as a key element in their identity branding. But this differs significantly from ISIS that "deliberately avoids using the symbolic face (or image) of its leader in the brand of the organization, they do however, use his writings as a source of legitimacy. Instead of using a key public personality, ISIS chose the path of symbolic ideological and policy appeal as the basis of their brand strength." (Simons 2018, p.8).

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Studies of Jihadist activities and propaganda are still ongoing; new tactics and forms of propaganda are still being discovered and studied. Interestingly, while researches still investigating new forms Jihadists propaganda and recruitment drives, other studies have focused on countering terrorist propaganda. Studies that investigate terrorist propaganda also attempt to suggest ways of countering them (See Tugwell, 1986; Hussain, 2015; Neuman, 2017); however, researches into countering terrorist content and propaganda online are still very sparse and appears to be the future research directions.

Counter-narratives or counter-propaganda seems to be the only response being suggested by researchers and adopted by governments and international organizations such as the EU and the UN. Interestingly, Hemmingsen and Moller (2017) have argued that counter-propaganda are generally ineffective and may be counter-productive going by the initiatives introduced in the "third Danish national action plan on countering and preventing radicalization and extremism."[12] According to the report, counter-narratives are viewed as "reactive" and may end up reinforcing the very narratives they are attempting to undermine. Also, confrontational counter-narratives, which engage directly with a narrative to expose, correct, or ridicule it, run the risk of being automatically rejected, and there is no evidence that counter-propaganda has actually been instrumental in minimizing the impact of terrorist narratives or preventing the act of

violence. Hence, the authors suggest an approach that is correctional, rather than reactionary. For instance, grievances expressed in the terrorist narratives should be addressed; rather than countering narratives, efforts should be geared towards engaging with them and providing alternatives, etc. Hence, research in this direction becomes more imperatives than ever.

And if the 2018 Europe's "State of the Union" report[13] still shows a great deal of dissatisfaction with the progress on countering terrorist content online evidenced by the series of terrorist attacks on European soil in the last couple of years, it is clear that more studies on better ways of countering terrorist propaganda and recruitment should engage current research efforts.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has explored the meaning, content, production and proliferation of terrorist propaganda online, and has also shown that propaganda produced by Jihadists are characterized by half-truths and outright lies. But still worrisome is the power and prevalence of terrorist propaganda on the Internet. The fact that youth radicalization and widespread terrorist attacks around the world, especially in Europe and Africa suggests that terrorist propaganda are still as powerful as ever. Berger (2015) gave hope that online presence of terrorist groups was dwindling. For instance, his research suggested that "the vast majority of ISIS supporters on Twitter, about 73% had fewer than 500 followers each." And at the time of his study, no accounts actively supporting ISIS had more than 50,000 followers, which was a significant decrease from early 2014 when ISIS attracted over 80,000 followers. This was as a result of Twitter's "aggressive campaign" to suspend ISIS supporter accounts.

However, Alghorra & Elsobky (2018) shows that ISIS "churned out" some 900 pieces of propaganda a week in 2015, mostly through Twitter. This means that while efforts are increasing to curtail the spread of terrorist and harmful content online, ISIS especially are still very active both in the mainstream media and the Internet.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Boko Haram: Boko Haram is an Islamist terrorist group in Nigeria with links to Al-Qaeda and ISIS. The group is engaged in a jihadist war for an independent Islamic state in northeast of Nigeria. It was founded in 2009 by the late Muhammad Yusuf and now led by Ibrahim Shekau. Boko Haram is among the most brutal terrorist groups in the world. Between 2006 and 2016 their attacks are said to cause over 16,000 deaths in Nigeria and West Africa.

Deception: The act of deceiving someone, through hiding the truth or tricking them for personal advantage.

ISIS: "ISIS" is an acronym for "Islamic State of Iraq and Syria," a global Jihadist organization established in 2004 in Iraq and declared itself as a Caliphate with specific interpretation of sharia laws that is brutal and with less regard to human life. ISIS also known "Daesh" controls certain regions of Iraq and Syria. The group was founded by the late Abu Musab al-Zarqawi as breakaway from Al Qaeda.

Propaganda: Information, ideas, opinions, or images often only giving one part of an argument, that are broadcast, published, or in some other way spread with the intention of influencing people's opinions.

Radicalization: Action or process of schooling someone to adopting a radical position on political or social issue. A radicalized person usually progresses from a passive believer to extremism, sometimes by enlisting as a jihadist soldier or fighting as a "lone wolf" where they live.

Terrorism: The use of violence, threat or intimidation to achieve political aims.

Violence: Physical action or words intended to hurt or cause harm, damage of kill someone or something.

ENDNOTES

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Chapter 29
Persuasive Propaganda:
An Investigation of Online Deceptive Tactics of Islamist, White, and Zionist Extremists

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ABSTRACT

Various persuasion methods are used on the internet to sell products or ideas, as individuals are highly susceptible to believing much of what they access online. With about 4 billion netizens and counting, the internet provides wide access to gullible individuals. In this context, terrorist and extremist groups are witnessing an unabated increase in their membership and support, largely by employing deception-based persuasion techniques, inciting religious, regional, or racial sentiments. While religion-based Islamist terror is infamous for its large-scale adverse global impact, there are two other groups driven by the motives of racial and geographical hegemony that impact the world – the white supremacists and the Zionists. The chapter purports to achieve a three-part aim: (1) to examine these three groups in context of the deceptive information they put up online, (2) to analyze why such deceptive content has such an impact on the general public that it convinces them to resort to extremism, and (3) to discuss some methods of identifying and preventing online deception.

INTRODUCTION

Violent extremism has risen exponentially over the past few years, as a result of volatile socio-political conditions around the world. The quest for establishing hegemony has particularly motivated the emergence of various extremist outfits. Extremism is characterised by radical belief systems within social, political, or personal spheres. It includes advocacy of violence against, separation from, defamation of, deception about, or hostility toward others based on their race, religion, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation (Franklin, 2007; Kurtz & Turpin, 1999). Groups endorsing extremism comprise individuals

who often share a common goal of opposing or eradicating certain populations from the world, citing them to be threats to their group and beliefs. The organised hatred stemming from religious, ethnic, or geo-political extremism, which is incitement, is most likely to culminate into terrorism (Baker, 2012), with the sole purpose of eradicating individuals who are believed to be threats to the group. All forms of extremism operate under the paradigm that most other groups are 'threatening outsiders'. Such perceived outsiders are often depersonalized and labelled (Alava, Frau-Meigs, Hassan, Hussein, & Wei, 2017) and paranoia is created around the narrative that these outsiders are a hazard to the group's heritage or lineage.

Radicalization of Individuals Based on Propaganda

Radicalization of individuals forms the very crux of extremist outfits. This is because extremist beliefs themselves are formulated based on the worst possible perceptions of others, and therefore the group members often attempt to further their agenda by portraying themselves as the victims of unfair treatment. Individuals (especially youth) are manipulated into partaking in extremist activities, under the pretence of doing service to their own 'ingroups' (social and political), or to their deities (religious). In exchange of playing a role in furthering relevant propaganda or causing some form of harm to the supposedly threatening outgroups, they are often promised a better future. In cases of religious extremism (particularly Islamic), there is a confirmation of a lucrative and lubricious afterlife. Such a belief is propagated by religious leaders, who cite holy texts as the basis for such an outcome. Gullible individuals, who feel strongly about their group affiliations or are lured by the material, spiritual, and at times even romantic offers made to them, often buy into the propaganda, and aid in furthering it (Blaker, 2015; Milton & Dodwell, 2018; Shorer, 2018).

There is a public notion that radicalization of individuals is frequently facilitated by family members or close friends. However, there is no scholarly work that suggests this. Moreover, in several instances of radicalized children, parents are either found to be unaware about the situation or too scared to intervene (Sikkens, San, Sieckelinck, & Winter, 2017). In cases of religious extremism, places of worship are often cited as being complicit in recruiting individuals to perpetrate extremist activities (Horgan, 2009). However, for other forms of extremism, recruitment strategies may vary. Over the last few years, a more expedient form of recruitment has emerged for the extremists, and terrorism and extremism has experienced a shift from terrestrial modes of recruitment. Various extremist organizations are using the Internet to further their propaganda, and galvanize individuals to carry out terrorist activities; this shift is to online media, which includes websites, social media, and personal messaging applications.

Role of the Internet in Furthering Propaganda

As of 2018, it is estimated that more than 4 billion individuals use the Internet, of which approximately 3.92 billion are social media users. This number is increasing by 12% each year (Kemp, 2018). Various social media groups are adept at amassing like-minded individuals in order to discuss topics of common interests, or exchange information regarding common goals. Through this, the members are able to seek solidarity with like-minded people, and engage in unencumbered communication regarding their thoughts and motives. While such solidarity may be used to propel social movements, it could also enable individuals to express their hatred without inhibitions (Keum & Miller, 2018; Koehler, 2015). The cloak of quasi-anonymity that the Internet provides also proves to be beneficial, and is perhaps the primary appeal of racist and extremist dialogue online (Lauterbach, 2009). Extremists have banked upon

this aspect of social media by creating various hate groups online, which are targeted against specific communities. For instance, an article in The Guardian (Wong, 2017) spoke about how Facebook's policy of bringing people closer together backfired, by citing the example of Caya, a person who joined an anti-Islam group. This individual was intrigued by the Facebook group La Meute, which claimed to give a platform to people with no voices and to increase the strength of similar-minded people in numbers. Caya became an active member of this group, and claimed that people want to be united in something which is bigger than them, as that brings about a sense of belonging.

Although these groups might not be able to get many individuals to proactively undertake extremist activities, they are indeed instrumental in provoking a large majority to further propaganda online, or indulge in hate speech that paints a false picture of other communities. The Internet has indeed been deemed as a powerful tool of recruitment for extremists (Gerstenfeld, Grant, & Chiang, 2003). The Dark Web also serves as a medium for online extremist and hate groups (Liang, 2015). The Dark Web is an aspect of the World Wide Web which is not accessible through standard search engines such as Google, Yahoo, and Bing, and also includes password-protected or dynamic pages and encrypted networks (Palmer-Ellingson, 2015). It is considered to be an offshoot of the deep web, but more perilous and secretive in nature. The tenacious rise in terrorism can be partially attributed to the Dark Web, as extremists have shifted from operating solely in the terrestrial domain; the Dark Web serves as a newer platform within the Internet. Specifically, radical Islamist organizations such as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) have taken to publishing monthly and annual reports of their terrorist activities, and spreading of propaganda over the Dark Web.

Incitement to such extremist discrimination occurs via hate speeches themselves, which are termed by the United Nations (UN) as "propaganda for war" or "any advocacy of national, racial, or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence." Article 20 of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), considers such speech to be an exception to the UN's freedom of expression clause in Article 19, and thereby calls for a prohibition on it (Alava et al., 2017). It is therefore imperative to identify and tackle any such instances of hate speech online.

Usage of Deception by Extremists in Spreading Propaganda Online

As mentioned previously, many of the perpetrators of such hate speech are lured into extremist groups by means of certain promises, or through feeding them information that makes them look like a victimized group. This information is often a deliberate misrepresentation of facts. Such fabricated information is termed as deception, which refers to deliberate transmission of false information to an individual, with the sole intent of fostering false beliefs or conclusions among them (Buller & Burgoon, 1996; Burgoon & Buller, 2016; Caspi & Gorsky, 2006); deception often includes disguising the real objectives of the deceiver (Schultz, 2015). Within visual mediums, deception can exist in form of text, infographics, or videos. Various businesses and organizations often indulge in online deception in order to make themselves appear pleasing to consumers, or to hype the quality of products they are selling. This tactic of persuasion involves systematically exploiting the weaknesses in human cognition (Grazioli & Jarvenpaa, 2003). The ones who employ these tactics are the *deceptors*, while those on the receiving end of this deceitful information are the *targets*. The Interpersonal Deception Theory (IDT; Burgoon & Buller, 2016) largely helps understand various aspects of deception in online and offline contexts. IDT asserts that there are various aspects to deception, ranging from fabrication and concealment to equivocation in presenting information. Within context of online deceptive communication, the aspect of 'information management'

aids in understanding specific characteristics of deceptive content. Information management refers to efforts made by the deceptors to control the contents of a message, particularly concerning the verbal aspects of a message (while information management is supposed to work in conjunction with behavior management, i.e. management of body language and image management, i.e. management of physical cues, in most cases, these two factors may not really play a role in online deception, unless pictures and videos are involved in the deception). Moreover, Burgoon and Buller also contend that deceptors claim to engage in deceptive behaviors for the benefit of their targets, but in reality, this helps the deceptors themselves. Yet another technique to perpetrate online deception could be via the "false flag operations," (Schultz, 2015) which refer to posting misrepresented information online and attributing it falsely to individuals against whom the deceptors want to turn the targets (Donath, 1999). There could also be various blog posts written by individuals falsely pretending to be victims of an individual whose reputation they are seeking to destroy. This is sometimes extended further by posting the aforementioned negative information on various other forums as well. Thus, the propaganda spread online is, in a way, directed communication, which could be one-way or dual, and is aimed at deceiving the receptors about realities of the situation at hand.

Extremist outfits need to resort to deception, because they are well aware that their original intentions may not be well received by their targets, and therefore it would be difficult to appeal to them. For instance, when hatred is perpetuated against groups along racial lines, it may be difficult for targets of deception to understand how and why race comes into play when unpleasant behaviour is concerned. Thus, the deceptors may create a narrative stating that they have been wronged by a certain race and they are fighting for rights related to their own racial identity, thereby making the target think dubiously about the intended group. The main purpose of deceptive online narratives is to create shock among the readers, and make them think that the situation is either far worse than it actually is, or to present entire fabrications as the truth.

As evidenced by further sections, all these methods are more or less used by extremists to deceive their targets.

Present Study

Over the past few decades, three types of extremism have largely impacted world political and sociological scenarios – white, Islamic and Zionist extremisms. Out of these, white extremism is largely along racial lines, while Islamic and Zionist extremisms encompass religious underpinnings. The three groups are similar in that they all present themselves as the victimized group. Over the years, they have all resorted to spreading propaganda online, which is prominently characterised by deceptive content. Considering that a large chunk of radical online content comes from the websites owned by either of these groups, or members and pages affiliated to these groups (see https://phys.org/news/2013-03-expert-extremist-websites-web.html; https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/online-radicalisation/online-radicalisation), they are of particular interest. Moreover, all three groups have a global impact, the magnitude of which cannot be ignored. Islamic and Zionist groups have since long caused several international security concerns, while white extremists pose a threat to other racial groups that exist around the world, via the hate crimes they perpetrate.

Online deceptive content posted by those associated with such forms of extremism is aimed at radicalization of individuals, and turning the public sentiment in their favour. Despite having varied goals, the persuasion techniques employed by them often follow a similar path. Their appeal to individuals

often includes reinforcing the idea that their well-being is, in some form, being threatened by the target groups, and these 'other' groups must therefore be controlled. Effective communication of these aspects plays a crucial role in successful implementation of deception. When the online propaganda put forward by these three groups is deception-based, it encompasses important aspects of the IDT. Specifically, all the groups resort to information management. This chapter, therefore, examines various aspects of deceptive content and deception-based propaganda, spread online by white, Islamic, and Zionist extremists. An integrative approach is used to understand how deceptive communication is employed within propaganda, what the content of such communication is, and how it contributes towards radicalizing individuals. The focus is largely on the targets of deception, and the content of what is communicated to these targets. This is particularly imperative as one approach is not suitable for all, and the deceivers have to present information based on what would appeal individually to the targets, based on their socio-cultural background and personalities. The varied approaches encompass the types of deception underlying the Interpersonal Deception Theory. These aspects are evident in the way deception manifests across the three groups. The chapter is three-fold in that it first analyses the communication involved in online deception-based propaganda, and also discusses some reasons as to why such deception is effective; then it discusses some ways in which it could be tackled.

METHODOLOGY

The following sections purport to discuss online deceptive content posted by the three groups, via deliberation of general themes present in deceptive content, and the kind of impact caused by such content. This is done to understand how these groups present themselves, as well as the groups by whom they claim to be victimized. Therefore, a discourse analysis approach was employed. Further, the study also examined how recruitment happens by capitalizing on certain views. To understand this, various newspaper and magazine articles, websites associated with extremist content, in addition to previous literature in the domain, were qualitatively studied. Given the varied manifestations of the three types of extremism, examination of real extremist websites and pages, expert articles on extremism, and media analyses covering these issues, were all undertaken. Major themes emerging from all these mediums were extrapolated and assessed to clarify mechanisms of deception. Each of the sections below discuss how deception is employed as a tool by white, Islamic, and Zionist extremists directly and via media.

DISCUSSION

The analysed material was largely indicative of ideological discourse (van Dijk, 1998), which was represented via the polarizing rhetoric of positive *us* versus negative *them,* presented by all the groups in question. This further subsumed a racism discourse characterized by negative speech about minorities and immigrants, superiorization of own group, and self-preference for all commodities and opportunities (van Dijk, 1992, 2002). Last, themes associated with hegemonic discourse were also observed. These were represented by ethnocentrism, and boundaries of 'citizenship' allocated to those perceived as 'other' groups, by not counting them as real citizens of the land (Rouhana & Sultany, 2003)

White Extremism

With the world political spectrum slowly shifting towards the right over the past decade, white extremist groups are gradually regaining prominence. While these groups have a presence in Europe, they exist ubiquitously throughout the United States, with each state having at least one outfit underlying this ideology. Since Donald Trump was elected the President of the United States in 2016, the Alternative Right (Alt-Right), which is an offshoot of the white supremacy movement, has gained some prominence. Members of the Alt-Right took to streets in late 2017, in Charlottesville (USA), terming it as a 'Unite the Right' march. The intent was to create a 'white civil rights' movement, which was an attempt to regain the so-called lost opportunities for whites. Their decision to rally was defended by the President, stating that they have as much a right to rally and express their issues as other groups. The Alt-Right has a strong online presence. Members of the Alt-Right are particularly involved in the new age Internet culture of memes and trolling, which refers to putting up content online that derogates other ethnicities in some way, or cyberbullying individuals that do not belong to the white race.

White supremacist groups typically believe that the white race is being threatened, and take it upon themselves to promote the unique cultural heritage of Europeans (Lauterbach, 2009). The interests of such groups also lie in establishing a white ethnocentric state. Consequently, they find themselves opposing everything that endorses multiculturalism. Other races are thought of as inferior humans that need to be eradicated or given lower rights and status, in order to preserve a superior gene pool. Sociologist Mitch Berbrier (2000) observed that white nationalists prominently paint their own state in their home countries through the following 5 ways: (1) discrimination – implying that they are the ones being discriminated against on the basis of their race; (2) rights abrogations – in which they complain about minorities being able to advocate their groups while the whites are unable to promote their own cultural heritage; (3) stigmatization and the denial of pride – which refers to the idea that the whites are stigmatized if they express pride about their own group; (4) loss of self-esteem – insinuating that the denial of their rights has led to higher negative affect among the group, which they try to corroborate by quoting an increased number of white male suicides ; and (5) racial elimination – through this aspect the groups insinuate that the cumulative effect of all the atrocities is going to be the complete annihilation of the white race. The overall narrative regarding white pride is misrepresented by painting other groups as atrocious.

A modern day online voice of the white supremacy movement is the Stormfront (www.stormfront.org), a forum which hosts racial, neo-Nazi, anti-Semite, and Holocaust-denying content online, and provides a platform to post against non-White ethnic groups. Much like the Alt-Right, they have a stark online presence, and claim that they are extremely sincere in their goals as opposed to the Alt-Right. As of May 2015, the Stormfront claimed to have as many as 300,000 members ("Stormfront | Southern Poverty Law Center," n.d.). As these groups believe the White race is being victimized, much of the content on their online forums revolves around furthering that idea. The Stormfront operates with the motto that just as thousands of organizations promote the interests, values, and heritage of non-White minorities, the Whites are promoting theirs through the forum. This implies that they look at themselves as minorities whose interests need to be furthered. In a similar vein, the Ku Klux Klan website (officially called The Knights Party; www.kkk.com) run by its Knights (members) states that 'those who want to associate with the Klan because they believe the Klan will be fertile ground to promote their hatred towards Negros quickly learn the Klan is based on LOVE and not hate' (Douglas, 2007, p. 157).

Such a representation is put up only to promote a positive image of the group, so as to recruit more members to the organisation. This convinces people that they are part of a repressed group, and many end up changing their perceptions about other groups. In reality, the Klan is responsible for active hate crimes against communities they consider themselves superior to. For instance, Frazier Glenn Miller Junior – declared a terrorist by the United States – was a Klan leader responsible for opening fire at a Jewish community centre in 2014, which resulted in three deaths (Leonard, 2018). Dating back to 1987, he had openly declared war against the African-Americans, the Jews, and the queer population. Moreover, members of the Klan have been actively involved in taking out anti-minority rallies, although thinly veiled as 'white rights' movements. Within The Knights Party website itself, there are claims such as "Non-whites who reside in America should be expected to conduct themselves according to Christian principles and must recognize that race mixing is definitely wrong and out of the question. It will be a privilege to live under the authority of a compassionate White Christian government" ("Knights of the Ku Klux Klan | Southern Poverty Law Center," n.d.). This indicates a different reality about the Klan, than the purpose of love for their own identity which the group tries to portray.

Through their online presence, the white supremacy groups also push the belief that the American Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlawed discrimination on basis of race, sex, religious beliefs, or national origin, is a harbinger of white-genocide. In what can be called as the aftermath of these events, a white supremacy group called National Knights Youth Corp attempted to paint Martin Luther King Jr. as a communist, a fraud, and a rapist, on their website, extending this narrative to insinuate that all white women must be wary of black men in general (Lauterbach, 2009). Furthermore, these groups also propagate that the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which removed several nationality-based clauses for immigration to America, marginalizes white people by taking away their opportunities. Such laws, and affirmative action, which are intended to uplift historically marginalized committee are presented by extremists in such a way, as though they are taking rights away from the white community. This may have cumulatively resulted into formulating some of their modern day beliefs, which revolve around creating narratives such as the jobs belonging to white people are being taken over by immigrants who are people of colour. Moreover, these groups also put forth the argument that their anti-immigrant stance is from the view point of having their own state, rather than hatred for other groups. At the same time, various white supremacy groups ascribe human development and behaviour to racial lines, claiming that the 'white-race' is genetically superior. In this context, a controversial study (published as a book) by Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray, called The Bell Curve (1996), is often overtly quoted.

The Bell Curve, among other things, focused on expounding the racial differences in IQ, and claimed to found evidence that white people have a higher overall IQ as compared to the African-American population. Since the book came out in 1994, it has constantly been criticized for lax methodology, the overall conclusions drawn; and most of all, for implying correlation for causation. Yet, the data presented in this book is constantly quoted in order to forward an anti-African American agenda, and portray that group as detrimental to social growth. The link about IQ being genetic is sometimes quoted as part of a list of pitfalls of empowering the African-American community (see Figure 1), which are either based on dubious data, one-off incidents, or just pure conjecture. Some websites push the superiority of whites over others through carefully crafted historical narratives. For instance, anti-Semitic websites do not actively advocate violence against Jews, but claim that the Holocaust is a falsely construed event with historical inaccuracies, sometimes claiming that the Jews themselves perpetrated the barbaric acts associated with the Holocaust (Douglas, 2007). This suggests that online deceptive content is also characterized by a blame shifting aspect, which furthers the scepticism about reality in the target's mind.

Figure 1.

Among other minorities, the hatred against Muslims is often observed in higher frequency. This stance is perhaps observed more actively in the current world political scenario, with the Syrian refugee crisis, and President Trump instituting a ban on individuals from Muslim countries entering America. When hatred against the Muslim population is concerned, all targeted speech and actions are at times veiled as retaliation against Islamic extremism, with all Muslims being painted as terrorists. Here again, the victims are portrayed as perpetrators, and the act of white extremism against Muslims is suggested to be a mere reaction for survival. Much like white extremists, the Islamic radicals have also found the Internet to be of great aid in furthering their propaganda. News of individuals lured in to join Islamic radicals is almost a daily occurrence. Strikingly, these individuals are not limited to those coming from an Islamic background, which indicates the magnitude of persuasion tactics used by extremists.

Islamic Extremism

Recently, a 19-year old cheerleader from Mississippi (USA), who was the daughter of a police officer, tried to run off to Syria with her husband after converting to Islam. Three teens from Colorado were found and stopped by authorities in Germany, and it was revealed that they were on their way to Syria. Hundreds of youth from the Kosovo region of Europe, have left their home state to join the ISIS (U.S. Embassy in Kosovo, 2018). Another alarming case was of three London teenage girls who ran away from home to join the Islamic caliphate in 2015. The reports of their radicalization state that they were heavily influenced by content they came across online, either on websites or on social media, to take such drastic steps (Bennhold, 2015; Green, 2017). Islamic extremism is largely driven by the notion of *jihad*. *Jihad* refers to the Islamic concept of spiritual struggle, most often referred to in context of one's own sins and the struggle within yourself. However, the extremist notion of *jihad* views it as a struggle

against 'infidels,' essentially referring to any activity undertaken by anyone that falls outside the pillars of Islam. Such an act committed even by individuals not born into the religion is looked at as something to retaliate against. The end goal is to achieve Islamic domination by making the entire world submit to covenants of Islam.

A recent study (Shorer, 2018) denotes that about 450-500 western women left their homes in 2016 to join the ISIS Mujahedin. This number was estimated to be between 550-1000 in 2015 (Neumann, 2015). The mobilization of these women was achieved via specific social-network targeting and persuasive communication. They were roped in to undertake administrative or nursing-related jobs, and were also expected to set up families with *jihadi* fighters. Thus, women were expected to play most of the 'supportive roles' within the caliphate. The modus operandi here predominantly involved differential approaches for women with a Western background or education versus those with an immediate Islamic environment and upbringing. Western women were mostly lured in by the prospect of adventure and thrill-seeking. To achieve this, they were befriended online by ISIS women who came from a similar background as theirs, and were slowly shown the (false) appeal of a *jihadi* life. Women who came from Islamic backgrounds connected with other Islamic women, who held powerful positions, and could be perceived as role models. The thought processes and actions of these women were consequently perceived as the right ones to be emulated, and thus, many women were lured into the extremist way of life. Moreover, Muslim teenage girls, or those in within the marriageable age, who already feel discriminated against in Western countries, are lured into the caliphate ways by avoiding early marriage or merely as means to take their life in their own hands (Bennhold, 2015). There is a warped version of feminism at play here, which makes the women believe that living a certain kind of life, either with respect to wearing a head scarf, or becoming a *jihadi* bride, arises from their own agency, rather than a choice forced upon them. The true intention is very likely hidden under the guise of so called freedom. Women are most often considered to be successful recruiters of women in the ISIS, and the recruited women may start looking at themselves as someone instrumental in increasing the population of the Islamic state (Blaker, 2015). On the other hand, Western men are often lured into the Islamic State by promises of sexual escapades. However, the end goal is to get them wed to *jihadi* brides (Milton & Dodwell, 2018).

Osama Bin Laden and his associates had regularly used the Internet to further communicate their propaganda, prior to the 2001 attacks on the World Trade Centre. This rose exponentially after the successful execution of their plan (Conway, 2012). Islamic terrorists' online presence focuses mainly on mobilizing more individuals to participate in terrorist activities, and encouraging Muslims around the world to migrate to the Islamic State. In addition to making their group appear as victims, Islamic extremist groups try to misrepresent what the Holy Quran says, in order to make their propaganda seem like something in accordance with religious norms. For instance, in 2003 the Al-Qaeda codified a document called 'The 39 Principles of *jihad*,' which called for Muslim participation in online forums to defend Islam (Stalinsky & Sosnow, 2015). This document also asserts that every Muslim has to take an active role in the holy war against the infidels, that is, non-Muslims. These 'duties' are justified with the fact that the Holy Quran calls for self-sacrifice for Allah. 'Brain-washing' often includes over-emphasis on the fact that it they would be participating in a war crucial to assert their religious identities. The distorted notion of what being a true Muslim means has led thousands to leave their well-paying jobs and comfortable lives, to go and join the caliphate (often times with their families, and recruiting their kids to carry on the 'struggle' in the future).

Many of the Islamic extremist outfits have whole wings dedicated just to online posting. Appealing to the millennial generation is one of the quintessential aspects of their online targeting and recruitment. In that regard, they actively keep tweeting and retweeting about their propaganda, often making claims that the individuals that are followers of Allah, but do not actively engage in what these groups have deemed as Allah's service, are merely hypocrites (Greenberg, 2015). Such speech often exasperates individuals into thinking that they are bad Muslims, propelling them to join the extremist cause in some capacity. Almost 90,000 such messages are posted on Twitter on a daily basis (Blaker, 2015; Greenberg, 2015). These tweets often also push the narrative that they are being victimized by the government. For instance, Boko Haram handles have often tweeted that the Nigerian government is the real terrorist, while they themselves are freedom fighters for the people (Chiluwa & Ajiboye, 2009). Another tactic is to produce high quality videos, often in tune with the current popular culture of Hollywood movies which makes it seem like a glamorous cause to participate in. This also contributes to image management of the groups. These outfits also abuse Twitter hashtags (Blaker, 2015), by often posting propaganda-related content but with trending hashtags in real time on social media. There are computer programs which automatically undertake these tasks (Greenberg, 2015), and also algorithms that customize content shown to users based on their inclinations (Kean, Hamilton, & Danforth, 2018). A more cumbersome aspect of creating deceptive content is that of well-orchestrated beheading videos. This is done in order to make a video impactful, and make a statement about the fates individuals meet when they do not follow the recommended path. The media wings of these groups often make participants of real beheadings go through several rehearsals so as to make the 'actual' filming of it perfect. These videos are commonly posted on YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter, and have also found a way to be shared around via messaging applications such as WhatsApp and Telegram, and. An extremist group that has often been targeted by the Islamists themselves is that of the Zionists. Such a sentiment stems from an anti-Israel stance – perhaps the only ideological commonality between the political left and the Islamic right.

Zionist Extremism

Zionism as a concept gained prominence in context of the aftereffects of World War II. The fall of communism in the Soviet Union and pogroms, led the Jewish population to either flee to the United States or establish their own land. Zionism is a national movement of the Jewish people to re-establish the Jewish land of Israel. The Zionist nationalists have progressively attempted to achieve this goal by reclaiming land along the Mediterranean strip, and causing the exodus of Palestine which led to about 700,000 Arabs fleeing or being evicted from their homes. The political ramifications for the Palestinians were to lose land in exchange of peace. The Internet does not have much content specifically targeted towards spreading pro-Israel propaganda. However, the online media portrayal of the issue, international government support (particularly by the United States, India, and some European governments), and the stance taken by the Zionist government throughout the years paints Zionist atrocities as earning a rightful place for Jews.

In essence, Zionism refers to a Jewish religion nation, of which all Jews from anywhere around the world are citizens, and can physically migrate to at any time. A specific need for the state that is often quoted and supported by various governments is that such a place is the solution to tackle anti-Semitism from around the world. In this context, a narrative is often created that anti-Zionism stance is tantamount to anti-Semitism, which is a misrepresentation, given the complexities of the Israel-Palestine issue. Most criticism of Israel has focused on the Zionist usurping of the Gaza strip, and the war crimes committed in

order to aggressively acquire Palestinian land. Such a view misdirects from the Zionist assertion that the rights of Jews to the state are considered superior than those of indigenous Arabs (Wise, 2003). Online deception by Zionists differs from white and Islamic extremists in the way it is manifested. However, the core deceptive communication remains the same.

Typically, the western media plays a large part in disguising and softening the intensity of crimes committed against the Palestinians. This is done by the choice of words such as 'clashes' or 'tensions between groups,' rather than depicting a proactive attack. A predominant example of this is the slaughtering of Palestinians, which took place as people of Gaza commemorated their land day in March 2018. Here again, deceptive propaganda is characterized by portraying self as victims, and using historical narratives to justify wrongful actions. While Zionism claims to advocate peace, the transgressions associated with the group indicate otherwise. Information perpetrated by the media echoes thoughts and sentiments aggressively put forward by proponents of Israel.

Online pages and individuals often report pro-Palestine statements which oppose a Jewish state within Palestine, highlighting that as the real barrier in peace. However, the Zionist movement itself strives for the aspect being heavily criticized here, i.e. a Jewish state, with citizenship to no other individuals. The extent of deception based propaganda, however, is limited to organizational pages and websites, and the magnitude of this is not comparable with the white and Islamic content found online.

WHY DOES THIS DECEPTION WORK?

A predominant theory in the area of morality is the Moral Foundations Theory (MFT; Graham & Haidt, 2011; Graham et al., 2013, 2011) which asserts that five different moral foundations are universally observed. Of these, two foundations concern themselves with individual rights and fairness, and are referred to as individualizing foundations; these are Harm and Fairness (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009; van Leeuwen & Park, 2009). The former encompasses concerns about personal harm being caused to other individuals, while the latter entails beliefs against cheating under any circumstances. The three other foundations of Ingroup, Sanctity, and Authority pertain to protection of groups, rather than individuals, and are called binding moral foundations (Graham et al., 2009). Ingroup refers to severe concerns about the social groups one identifies with, sometimes at the cost of other 'outgroups.' Sanctity is about the concerns of maintaining (moral) purity based on social standards. Authority entails general respect for rules, authority figures, and laws of the community one belongs to. In scenarios of online deception, where the end result is almost always partaking in extremism to some extent, the deception targets' concerns for binding moral foundations seem to play a dominant role in them being influenced. Generally, individuals on the right side of the political spectrum predominantly tend to have higher concerns about binding moral foundations than individualizing ones (Graham et al., 2009). Individuals partaking in extremist activities that are the focus of this chapter tend to represent the extreme political right. Therefore, those being influenced by the deceptive content likely endorse similar belief systems, and are therefore engaged in order to benefit the group with which they identify. Protection of group norms acts as the driving force in this aspect. When the deceivers use the group identity of their targets as a reason to further their propaganda, it is likely that their deception will work, as the targets would be accounting for the overall benefit of their group, by perceiving their own participation as a duty towards the group. Therefore, when the deceptors appeal from a point of view of the extremist action being beneficial for the greater good of the group, it most likely acts as a tipping point for the target. The as-

sociated guilt is therefore an imperative factor that needs to be reasoned with rationally. Moreover, the media-derived notion that the world is slowly turning liberal and left-leaning, may be perceived as a threat to some individuals' religious and cultural identity, and that motivates a struggle against any thus perceived forces. Terrorists' glorification of their own existence and rejection of liberal values (Survey of the drivers of youth radicalism and violent extremism in Serbia, 2016) comes across as a thought process one can identify with.

While individual morality and religious preferences may act as the catalysts for resorting to extremism, the role of leaders in such movements cannot be downplayed. Stanley Milgram, in his work 'The Perils of Obedience' (1973) made several assertions about obedience to authority in context of the Holocaust, and proposed the 'agentic' theory. According to this theory, individuals start seeing themselves as mere instruments of carrying forward another person's wishes, and therefore do not see themselves responsible for their own actions. Thus, online charismatic figures that disburse extremist propaganda can be seen as those who speak the truth and whose wishes should be carried out. Therefore, carrying out violent behavior in the service of extreme overvalued beliefs (Rahman, 2018) of these figures may seem extremely appealing to targeted individuals. Moreover, the Internet brings about a feeling of critical mass within the movement, which assures individuals that the group is capable enough to be brought to power, thereby aggravating the radicalization (Koehler, 2015).

Individuals are attuned to believe that they will have achieved their cause once the group is brought into power.

Interestingly, there is a materialistic dimension to radicalizing individuals via online deceptions. This is achieved through the sale of right-wing merchandise, music and clothes, among others (Koehler, 2015), which could almost be equated to fandom-based merchandise. The idea of owning and consuming such merchandise may bring about a sense of belonging to the movement, and liberation. A majority of the extremist websites surveyed included these materials, and therefore it is likely that targets face regular exposure to these products. Such benefits ensure that individuals become further radicalized, and make extremism a way of life.

Some individuals may purely look at deceptive content as a justification and outlet for their thrill-seeking tendencies. Specifically, individuals coming from collectivist cultures may find it appealing to be protecting their own groups by simultaneously being in charge of weapons, having easy access to various machinery or cyber-tools, and proactively participating in aggressive behaviors.

HOW TO COUNTER ONLINE DECEPTIVE CONTENT BY EXTREMISTS?

Merely reading deceptive content online is not enough to radicalize individuals. As discussed throughout the chapter, gullibility mostly comes from truly believing one's own ingroup to be a victim, and concluding through various reports that the 'others' are the real usurpers. Specifically alarming is the magnitude of youngsters that are lured by extremists, and are trained to strategize plans of action without being suspected of violent extremism. Those between ages 16-25 form a high target group, but as suggested earlier, younger teenagers may also be easily targeted. In this regard, parents have the role of speaking to their children and informing them about extremism. The youth could be informed about what the typical modus operandi of extremist groups or individuals would be like, and how they could identify such

red flags while browsing social media and immediately block any problematic individuals. They should also be provided with a safe non-judgemental space to discuss interactions with strangers online, so that parents can take appropriate counter-actions if necessary. Moreover, the parents could employ parental supervision on their minor children's social media, and see that they are following only age appropriate content, and are not sharing too much personal information to unknown people on social media.

Schools and universities could hold workshops and seminars to make youth aware that any extremist content they come across online may not be the entire truth, may be made up facts, or exaggerated versions of facts. Discourse in critical thinking in this regard is extremely crucial to equip the youth with the ability to distinguish right from wrong, undertake additional research regarding radical content they come across online, and make an informed decision about the truth. Encouraging them to report any suspicious online interactions with any individuals would also alert the authorities, thereby preventing others in similar circles to be targeted. Fact-checking can universally aid in tackling deceptive content. Religious groups can also engage in similar discourse, by disbursing more information on what the real teachings of the religion are versus what extremists would propagate. The community can also play a vital role in identifying any individuals susceptible to radicalization by simply confronting or reporting any such talks they might hear from any members. Some governments have also recommended counter-measures to tackle online extremism, which outline some helpful policies (e.g. United Kingdom - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf; Australia - https://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/WhatAustraliaisdoing/Pages/default.aspx; United States - https://www.state.gov/j/ct/; Pakistan - https://surfsafe.pk/)

Mediums used to spread deceptive propaganda online are actively working against identifying and removing such content from their portals. For instance, with the intent of countering online extremism, Facebook, Microsoft, Twitter, and YouTube announced a platform by the name of Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism ("Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism," 2017; "Update on the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism," 2017). The overall scope of this was to engage with smaller companies to develop programs that would tackle online terrorism, to advance research in the area, and to develop robust counter-terrorism actions. The organization (www.gifct.org), in partnership with the UN, is currently working to formulate discourse in the area of identifying and countering online deceptive content, by building several resources for public perusal. Moreover, their internal countering strategy involves identifying and removing problematic hashes (hashes refer to the generation of a value for a specific text string, which is unique for each text string. If the hash from a sent message matches that of the received message, then it indicates that the message has not been tampered with. This helps maintain cybersecurity by weeding out dubious messages). This clears out substantial online extremist content. A recent update shows that websites and social applications such as Ask.fm, Cloudinary, Instagram, Justpaste.it, LinkedIn, Oath, and Snap have also taken up this mode of countering extremist content on their own portals. WhatsApp has come up with its own method of being able to trace messages at a micro level, by adding a feature that allows a user to know whether a message they have received is forwarded (Agarwal, 2018). While this feature was not meant strictly as a countermeasure for radical content, but rather as a measure for tackling misinformation, it can easily be extended to identifying the source of any radical deceptive content that is shared via the medium, and the source can be legally dealt with. Currently the feature is active only in India as per a directive by the Indian government, but can be adopted world-wide as a countermeasure for extremism.

CONCLUSION

Although the Internet may not be directly responsible for making active terrorists, it certainly is a formidable tool in creating extremists. Mere exposure to certain ideas can instill hatred, bigotry, and prejudice among individuals, against certain communities. Online deceptive content has a powerful way of influencing people's sense of personal duties and morality, and of making them dubious about their own standing in the society. The onus of identifying such content and differentiating the truth from conjecture and blatant lies, rests upon the community as a whole. As our exposure to the Internet is progressively increasing, staying away to avoid sensitive content is not an option; therefore, individuals, governments, and Internet experience stakeholders need to work together to combat online deceptive propaganda.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Deception: False or distorted information shared by individuals or groups in order to influence the thoughts of those it is targeted at.

Extremism: The act of perpetrating radical social, political, and religious beliefs, with the intent of causing harm to or maligning other communities.

Ingroup: The group to which a person feels a sense of belonging.

Jihad: The Islamic idea of struggle against sins, often misused by Islamic extremists to encourage violence against those considered enemies of Islam by the extremists.

Online Radicalization: The act of influencing a person's or a group's thought processes to an extent that they begin resorting to extremities in terms of hate speech or active violence.

Propaganda: Deceptive or biased information, often shared extensively and aggressively, in order to receive social or political gains.

Terrorism: The act of using violence to harm people, with the sole intent of furthering extremist propaganda.

White Supremacy: A racist belief held by some white people stemming from the notion that whites are genetically superior to other races, and that other communities are taking away the rights of white people.

Zionism: A Jewish socio-political movement established with the intent of forming a separate Jewish state of Israel.

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Index