

Team 9 Project Idea: How Content Amplifiers Created Fake News Loops on Twitter During the COVID-19 Pandemic

- Phenomenon of interest: Fake news loops
- Pandemic led to widespread misinformation regarding origin, treatments, and prevalence
- Misinformation was propagated by content amplifiers (super-spreaders)
 - Bots that automated activities to boost content visibility
 - Liking, sharing, retweeting, etc.
- AI interaction amplifies content reach and sustain narratives
 - Developed fake news loops
- Understanding bot amplification and fake news loops is vital for analyzing misinformation spread in media ecosystems



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Virus on a Network - Entities, Affordances, Algorithms

1. Entities

- Content Amplifiers (Misinformation bots) - bots that like, share, retweet, comment or repost content
- Susceptible Users - Twitter users that could be influenced by misinformation
- Misinformed Users - Twitter users swayed by bot-amplified misinformation
- Fact Checker Users (Birdwatch Program) - Twitter users that fact check posts from users and bots
- Resistant Users - Twitter users that are not influenced by misinformation

2. Affordances

- Retweeting/Sharing - bots ensure maximum spread by retweeting other users/bots' post
- Liking/Upvoting - bots interact with the post to inflate the engagement metrics
- Tagging - Bots can tag influential accounts, which will amplify the misinformation further

3. Algorithms

- Recommendation algorithm - based on the users preferences and biases, which can be reinforced by misinformation (e.g anti vaxx campaign)
- Ranking algorithm - responsible for Trending section of twitter, it is based on the engagement of posts. In other words, the more likes and retweets a post receives, the more likely it is displayed to all users of the platform. The bots can exploit this mechanism by artificially amplifying the post engagement metrics

