

<side.chat>

Problem



Social media has been a great platform for users to share common interests, perspectives and narratives. An issue that has emerged, however, is the creation of 'echo-chambers', where like-minded individuals gather in homogenous online environments and lose consideration for other viewpoints [1, 2]. Within these communities, users achieve recognition from their peers by being awarded tallied points such as 'Likes' or 'Upvotes'. Usually, comments that do not reflect the popular opinion of the environment are neglected or downvoted, which effectively silences balanced discussion.



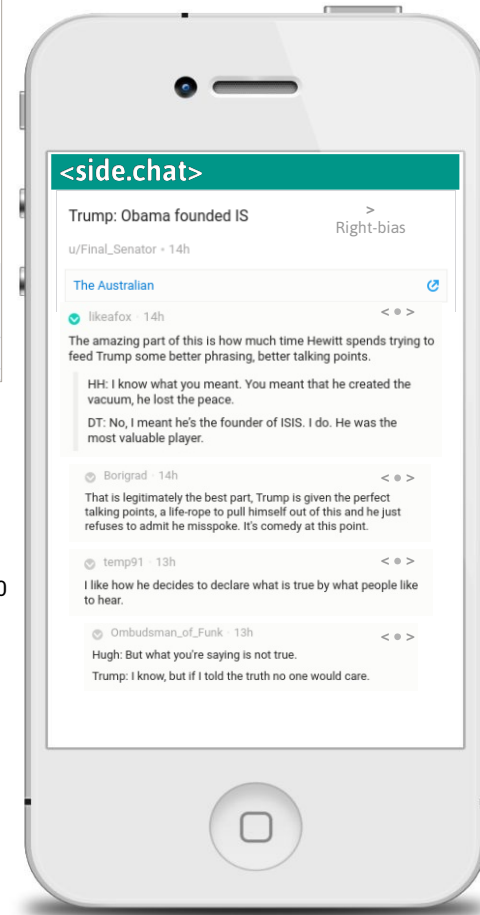
References

- [1]http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2795110
- [2]<http://www.pnas.org/content/113/3/554.abstract>

Solution



If a social media user has come across a biased political thread (e.g. on facebook or reddit), they can set up a **side.chat** thread for more open discussion. Rather than Upvotes and Downvotes, each comment in the thread can be voted as Left-leaning, Right-leaning or Balanced by other users. Each **side.chat** thread has an overall 'score' to indicate how biased the discussion is. The more balanced and active the thread is, the higher the thread will appear on the main page of **side.chat** (similar to reddit's front page). This features encourages multiple viewpoints to be expressed, as biased discussions drop down the page and become less visible.



Technical

The website will be built using standard frontend tools (HTML/CSS/javascript). The backend will be built in the PHP framework Laravel, and use a reddit clone (<https://github.com/halnex/laravel-reddit>) as a basis. Information will be stored in a MariaDB database.

To stay up to date with the project, visit: www.side.chat