Fake News

HF795 Research Project Proposal

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Motivation

During the run up to the 2016 U.S. presidential election:

“1 in 4 Americans visited a fake news website from October 7-November 14, 2016”
“...Facebook was a key vector of exposure to fake news and the fact-checks of fake news almost never reached its consumers”
(Guess, Nyhan, & Reifler, 2018)

Motivation

In an effort to curb traffic to fake news articles, Facebook applied **disputed tags to stories** its third party fact-checkers determined were fake news. This approach backfired as it **drew even more traffic towards these stories**. Facebook has removed this disputed tagging since mid-December 2017 and is now pursuing other methods of curbing fake news.
(Shu, 2017; Clemm, 2018)

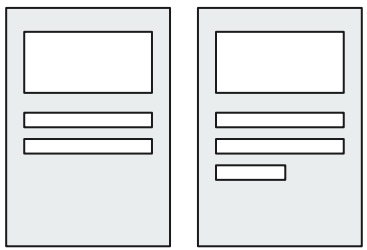
Research Goal

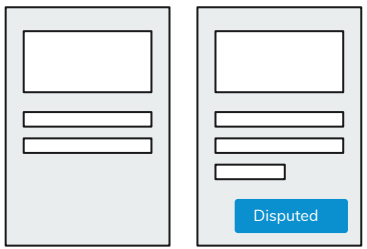
We are interested in how much attention disputed tags, such as the one used by Facebook can draw towards particular news stories.

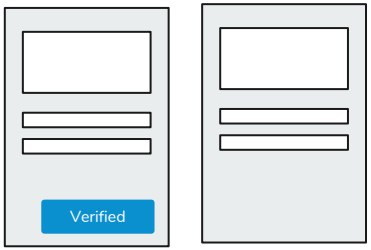
We are also interested in how an opposite approach would fair–where stories are tagged verified instead of disputed.

Disputed or Verified

Two approaches



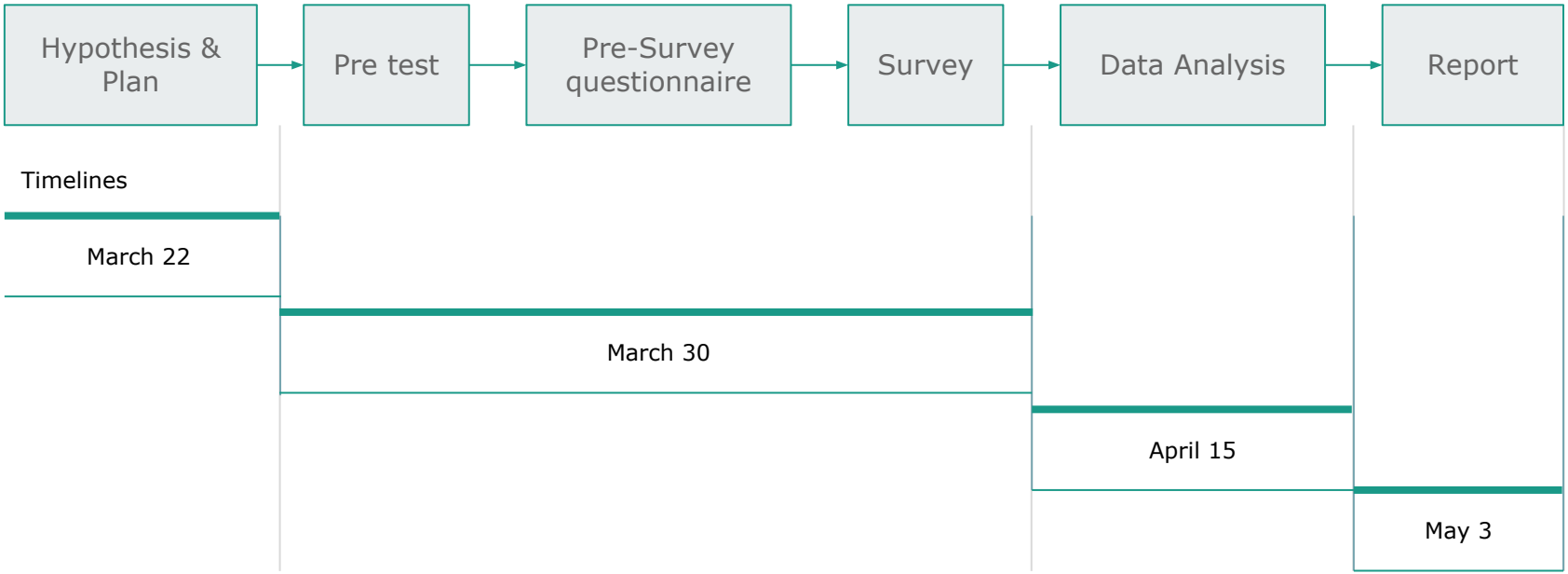




Hypothesis

We believe that the amount of attention drawn to a story by the addition of a disputed tag will be greater than the amount of attention drawn away from it when a competing story has a verified tag.

Research Roadmap



Pre-test

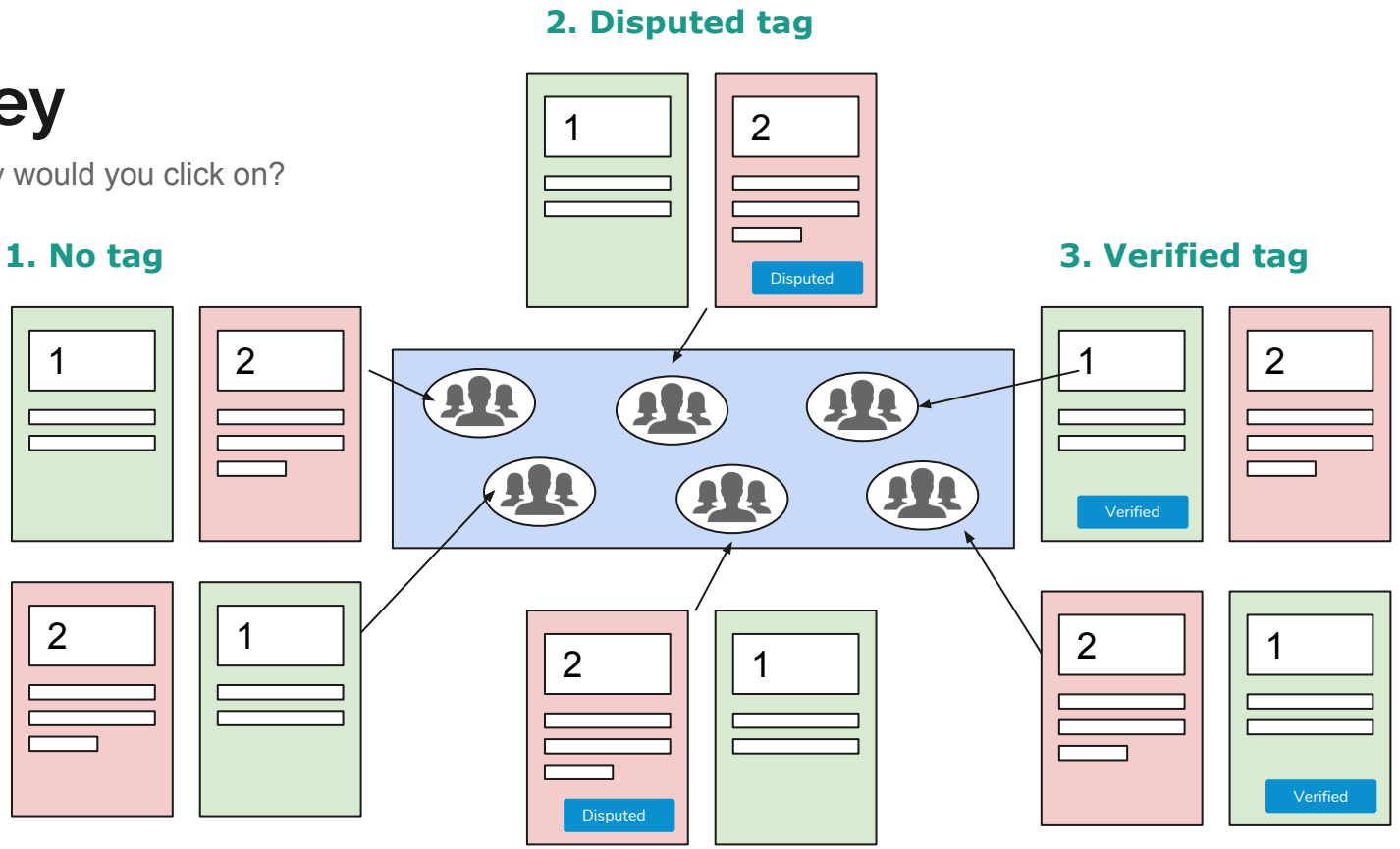
Will send out a survey where users will rate a set of 10 news stories for the following qualities.

- Intrinsic level of controversy
- Intrinsic level of interest

This will allows to present news stories in the following section of the experiment with these factors controlled.

Survey

Which story would you click on?



Experimental Design

Between-subjects design.

Data gathering with survey responses. Hallway intercept testing?

Participant Selection Criteria: Anyone who has read an article linked through Facebook in the last 6 months.

Walkthrough of study plan.

Survey will be send out to two different groups of participants where each participant will be shown 8 stories (2 real stories without tags, 2 fake stories without tag, 2 real stories with verified tags, and 2 fake stories with disputed tags). Likert scale will be used for users to rate their likelihood of reading and sharing the article. Results of tagged stories will be compared against the results of untagges stories. The difference will be used as evidence to support or reject the hypothesis.

References

Clemm, H. (2018, February 1). Facebook wants its users to drive out fake news. Here's the problem with that. - The Washington Post. Retrieved March 20, 2018, from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/02/01/facebook-wants-to-drive-out-fake-news-by-having-users-rate-news-outlets-credibility-heres-the-problem-with-that/?utm_term=.597e901eaa04

Guess, A., Nyhan, B., & Reifler, J. (2018). Selective Exposure to Misinformation: Evidence from the consumption of fake news during the 2016 US presidential campaign.

Shu, C. (2017, December 20). Facebook will ditch Disputed Flags on fake news and display links to trustworthy articles instead. Retrieved March 20, 2018, from http://social.techcrunch.com/2017/12/20/facebook-will-ditch-disputed-flags-on-fake-news-and-display-links-to-trustworthy-articles-instead/