Forum:	Social, Humanitarian, Cultural Committee (SOCHUM)
Issue:	Promoting Truthful Information on the Media and the Internet
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Overview

For nearly two centuries now, technology has been evolving and revolutionizing the way we communicate and share information. In 1809, the first electric telegraph was invented and used to send signals around two thousand feet away. In 1991, CERN, the European Organization for Nuclear Research, first released the World Wide Web to the public. Today, there are over 4 billion people connected to the internet.

Ever since the advent of the internet, society has changed significantly. Today, communication and sharing of data has become faster than it has ever been before, and has fueled innovation and collaboration in all areas of life. This has caused drastic changes within the media as well, which has now shifted from older forms like newspapers, to more modern platforms such as social medias and websites. These widely-used platforms have allowed media outlets to deliver information with much more ease and efficiency.

However, the widespread use of the Internet as a communication tool also brings with it a host of problems currently plaguing our modern age, especially in the area of media and news. At the forefront of these problems is the resurgence of misinformation, deception, and fake news spreading rapidly through the media and the internet. With today's new media and the internet being the primary sources of information that most people rely upon in their everyday lives, the spread of misinformation can have dire consequences.

Misinformation and fake news is not a new concept. It has been present in societies of the past as well, used largely for purposes like spreading propaganda and swaying public opinions. Nowadays, it is spread for the same reasons, and more. However, the major difference is that this misinformation is on a global scale in nowadays and is visible and accessible by anyone who access to internet, which has created an environment of mistrust and doubt.

Key Terms

Digital Revolution

The "digital revolutions" is a term that generally refers to the switch from older

technologies, which were mechanical and analogue in nature, to the more modern digital electronic technologies. This shift is said to have begun around the early 1970s at latest.

Information Age

Similar to the Digital Revolution, this term refers to the idea that our current era of civilization is characterized by our use of and access to information and information technology.

Propaganda

Propaganda refers to the spread of information that is meant to mislead or manipulate the audience, usually for the purpose of changing public opinion on something.

Fake news

The term itself is rather new, and often used in the context of the digital media. It usually refers to the circulation of fabricated content, usually in social media, meant to mislead or deceive viewers.

Traditional Media

Traditional Media refers to channels of media that have been in use since before the Internet became as widespread as it is today. This includes channels like television, newspapers, radios, print advertisements, magazines etc.

New Media

New Media refers to channels of media that are built upon or require computers to function. This includes social media, websites, and blogs.

Media Ethics

Media Ethics refers to the ethical standards surrounding media and journalism.
Among other guidelines, it includes the reporting of valid and truthful information, free from bias and prejudice.

Important Events/Timelines

Date	Event
1865	The International Telecommunication Union is founded with the aim of standardizing communication networks and facilitating international connectivity.
1978	The UN General Assembly Committee on Information is established, with the aim of promoting a more "effective world information and communication order".
1991	The World Wide Web is released to the public.
2003	The first of the two-phase World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) meeting took place in 2003, in Geneva.
2005	The second phase of the WSIS took place in 2005, in Tunisia.
2006	The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) is established as a result of the outcomes of the WSIS, as a platform for discussion on internet and technology-related issues.
2010	The Asia Internet Coalition was established, to "[promote] the understanding and resolution of Internet policy issues in the Asia Pacific region."
2015	First Draft, a global non-profit, aiming to address challenges relating to trust and truth in the digital age, is formed, along with nine Founding Partners.
2017	The Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Committee of the British House of Commons began a two-year long inquiry into Disinformation and Fake News.
2019	The DCMS Committee of the British House of Commons establishes a Sub-committee on Disinformation - the International Grand Committee on Disinformation and Fake News.

Major Nations/Organizations involved

International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

The International Telecommunication Union is a specialized UN agency focused on addressing issues related to information and communication technologies, originally founded in 1865.

Internet Governance Forum (IGF)

The Internet Governance Forum, formed in 2006 as a result of the outcomes of WSIS, serves as a platform for discussion to exchange information and share good policies and practices relating to the internet and relevant technologies.

Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF)

Reporters Sans Frontières / Reporters Without Borders (RSF) is an international non-profit, non-governmental organization based in Paris. It addresses issues relating to freedom of information and freedom of the press through political advocacy.

UN Group on the Information Society

The UN Group on the Information Society was formed in 2006. The main purpose of the UNGIS is to oversee the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society.

UN General Assembly Committee on Information

The UN General Assembly Committee on Information was established in 1978, to maintain the functions of the Committee to Review United Nations Public Information Policies. Among its aims is the goal of promoting "the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order", as well as encouraging a "wider and better-balanced dissemination of information".

First Draft

First Draft is a global non-profit that supports journalists, academics and technologists working to address challenges relating to trust and truth in the digital age. Created in June of

2015, the original coalition with nine Founding Partners has expanded to become an international Partner Network of newsrooms, universities, and civil society organizations.

Important Documents/Passed Solutions

The International Partnership on Information and Democracy was an inter-governmental accord initiated by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) in 2018 to "promote democratic principles in the online public arena". This accord was signed by 20 UN member states.

International Telecommunications Union (ITU) Resolution 174 (Rev. Busan, 2014) on the topic "ITU's role with regard to international public policy issues relating to the risk of illicit use of information and communication technologies" was a document passed by the ITU focused on addressing the issue of misuse of communication technologies.

ITU Resolution 181 (Guadalajara, 2010) on the topic "Definitions and terminology relating to building confidence and security in the use of information and communication technologies" was a document passed by the ITU focused on improving literacy and awareness regarding communication technologies in order to build confidence in the use of said technologies.

The Declaration of Principles, document WSIS-03/GENEVA/DOC/4-E (2003) created during the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, lists the goals and principles of the Information Society.
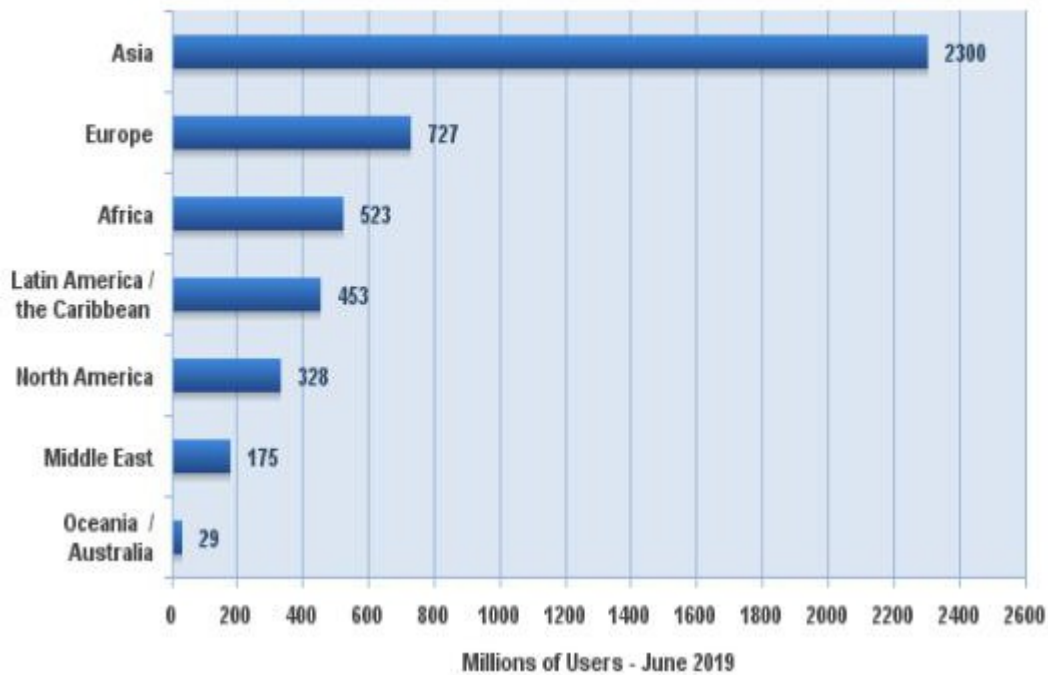
A list of resolutions adopted by the General Assembly, on questions relating to information, can be found at: https://www.un.org/en/ga/coi/documents/garesolutions.shtml

Statistics

(1)   Internet users around the world

Internet Users in the World
by Geographic Regions - Mid-Year 2019

| Region	Millions of Users - June 2019
Asia	2300
Europe	727
Africa	523
Latin America / the Caribbean	453
North America	328
Middle East	175
Oceania / Australia	29

Millions of Users - June 2019

Source: Internet World Stats - https://www.internetworldstats.com

Web Supremacy
China internet users top combined population of Japan, Russia, Mexico and U.S.

■ Number of internet users in China

Crosses 100 million users
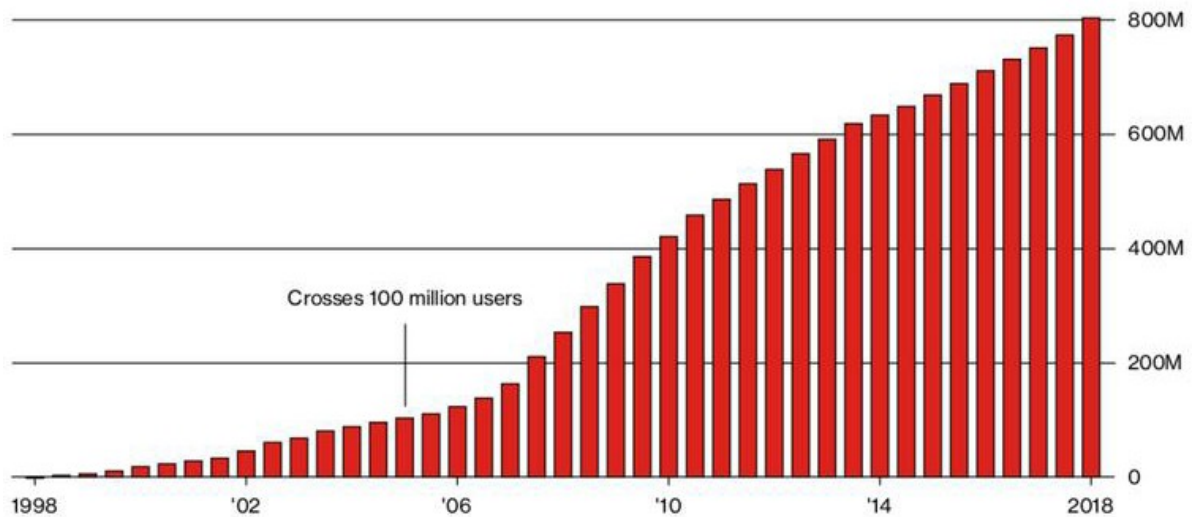
Data: China Internet Network Information Center; graphic by Bloomberg Businessweek

(2)   Growth of internet users within China, up till 2018.

Source: China Internet Network Information Center - https://cnnic.com.cn

(3)   Visualization of the spread of the #SB277 hashtag about a Californian vaccination law.

Dots are Twitter accounts posting using that hashtag, and lines between them show retweeting of hashtagged posts. Larger dots are accounts that are retweeted more. Red dots are likely bots; blue ones are likely humans.
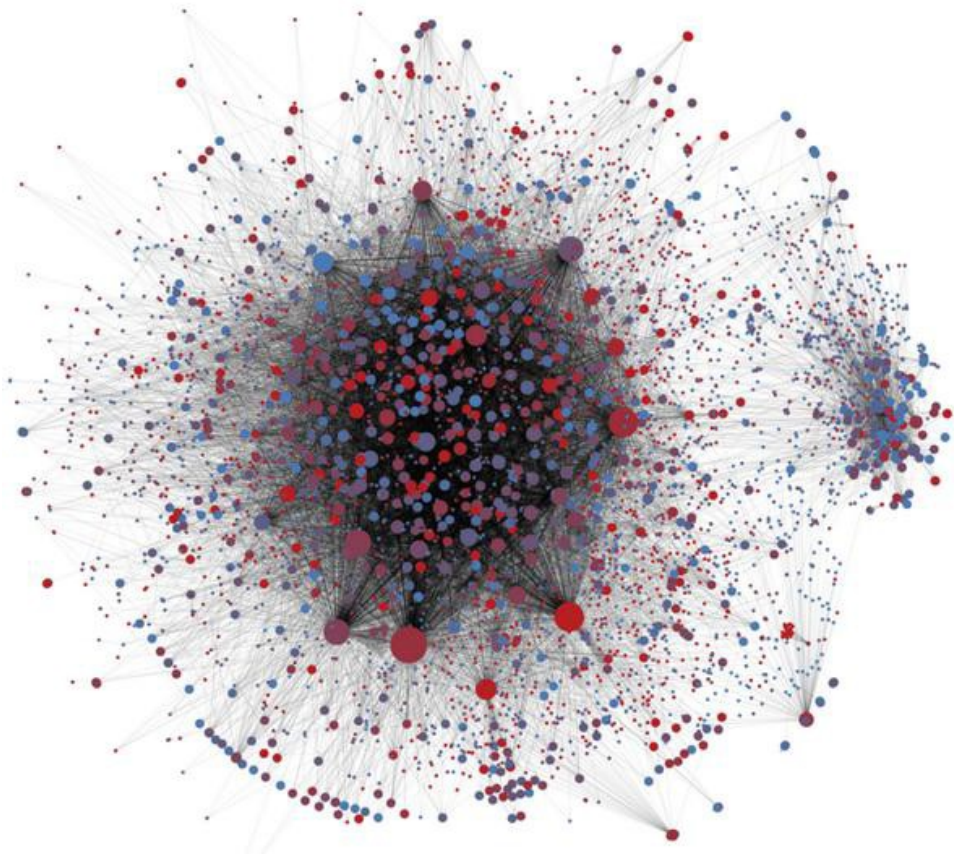
The visualization compares the spread of information on the internet through what are likely automated bots (red dots) versus actual humans (blue dots). This visualization is just one example giving insight into how automated bots are often used on the internet to spread information, which can often be false and inaccurate, for purposes such as increased viewership.

Onur Varol, CC BY-ND.

Source: Center for Complex Networks and Systems Research - http://cnets.indiana.edu

Possible Solutions

(1)   Promoting media literacy: One of the most effective ways to promote truthful information is by teaching its consumers to recognize and avoid information that is misleading or deceptive. Avoiding fake news on the media and the internet will prevent it from spreading, and in turn encourage the spread of truthful information. Hence, education on media and technological literacy for both young and old is vital to solving this issue.

(2)   Enforcing media ethics: One of the main causes behind fake news is the lack of respect for media ethics and poor journalism. A proper set of guidelines regarding media ethics and ethical journalism should be organized. If needed, a special committee to oversee the implementation of these guidelines may also be created.

(3)   Cooperation with social media platforms and technology companies: With regards to the amount of influence of social media platforms on the spread of information through the internet and the media, a stronger cooperation with technology companies is encouraged. As larger companies like Facebook and Twitter are more susceptible to issues with fake news, cooperation with them would help eliminate these issues and promote reliable information.

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