

EN_43597625 Research Introduction

In modern society, social media is increasingly recognized as having a considerable influence on users' beliefs (Pereira et al., 2023). Especially in relation to the growing quantity of fake news that is spread on the internet. The growing impact of social media together with the expanding amount of fake news on these platforms, have raised concerns about the societal effects they could have. Misleading information that is designed to influence public opinion, undermines trust in media outlets (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). This poses a threat to the credibility of social media platforms. Although there have been efforts to educate the public on the recognition of fake news, such as creating an interactive choice-based game named "Bad News", which Roozenbeek & van der Linden (2019) developed for their study, in which users can acquire six badges by learning to apply the misinformation techniques, the problem remains. To address the issue properly, it may be beneficial for social media platforms to have a deeper understanding of the factors that contribute to this dilemma. This understanding might help governments concerned with the societal impact of fake news.

Research suggests that a key factor in the spread of fake news is the personalized algorithm that has been implemented by social media platforms (Pariser, 2011). This algorithm shows content based on users' past behaviors, preferences and interests, creating a sort of bubble with similar posts in which users are mainly exposed to like-minded people, which reinforces existing beliefs. As a result, users are less likely to encounter content with another perspective that might disprove their beliefs. Studies have further suggested that people are more inclined to believe fake news when it aligns with their existing values and previous beliefs (Pereira et al., 2023). The same study also found that people were more likely to believe and share news that reflected positively on their political group. Another factor in the belief in fake news might be the law of propaganda, a concept that is rooted in the psychology of persuasion. This law suggests that repeated exposure to fake news will familiarize users with the false information, ultimately leading them to believe it to be true (Lewandowsky et al., 2012). Therefore, it is suggested that misinformation is not only spread, but also reinforced

and eventually believed on social media through the algorithm that distributes the content of social media platforms.

More research has found that the type of message source was significant for the acceptance and spread of fake news among twitter users (Park & Chai, 2024). This study shows that users use the message source as a clue when deciding whether to accept and spread the news. Meaning that rather than checking the authenticity of the news, users are more inclined to focus on the provider when deciding whether to accept the news as true. This research has shown that people tend to trust information from sources that they perceive as experts, and thus, reliable. This is largely because experts are perceived as knowledgeable, whereas the public is seen as less credible. Another effect on the believability of the message could be the language the information is presented in. Research has proven that people are more likely to believe fake news when it is written in a foreign language, compared to when it is written in their native language (Muda et al., 2023). Due to the widespread distribution of English news on social media platforms, this finding shows that language could have a significant influence on the fake news recognition of non-native speakers of the English language. Consequently, it is suggested that the source of a message has an influence on the acceptance of the news as well as the language that the news is communicated in is on the ability to recognize it as false.

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