

Facebook and Fake News

Consider each of the below proposals, and fill in each of the below TODOs.

Proposals

Proposal 1

Facebook relies on an algorithm as well as individual users' reports to identify content that is potentially "fake news." Once the content has been identified, it is sent to third party fact-checkers for verification. If the content is verified as fake news, it is publicly flagged with a warning that the content is disputed by fact-checkers.



Proposal 2

However, a designer at Facebook believes that there needs to be a different approach to content regulation. Their proposal is that content deemed problematic by third-party fact-checkers should be prevented from being shared on the platform altogether.

Questions

1. Which form of content regulation, Proposal 1 or Proposal 2, do you feel is better? Why?
 - a. Proposal 1. It allows for transparency and non-censorship. It contributes to healthy democracy because it provides both parties, for and against, a chance to unbiasedly review information (provided the third-party reviewing body is held to a high standard of trustworthiness). Those who oppose “fake news” being disseminated may have a chance to clarify, in democratic terms, why their opinions or beliefs are valid. Those who share “fake news” have a chance to reconsider and think critically why they are sharing such information. In doing such, problems that arise from censorship can be avoided or attenuated. The flames of echo chambers cannot be fanned in certain internet communities when information remains public. I feel this is a reasonable middle ground that is democratically sound for the majority of a people.
2. Which form of content regulation, Proposal 1 or Proposal 2, do you think best preserves or promotes the [five rights and opportunities necessary for a democratic public sphere](#)?
 - a. Which proposal best preserves or promotes Rights? Why?
 - i. Proposal 1. Keeping information available, while flagging potential misrepresentations, still allows all people to exercise their rights to express themselves, associate with whomever they please, and to interact with each other democratically in a public sphere.
 - b. Which proposal best preserves or promotes Opportunity for Expression? Why?
 - i. Proposal 1. It could be argued that the second proposal goes against this opportunity for expression, whereas proposal 1 preserves the tenet. If the designer at Facebook wields this power to deafen the content flagged as problematic without a second thought, how is communicative democracy upheld where all citizens are equal and free to express themselves?
 - c. Which proposal best preserves or promotes Access? Why?
 - i. Proposal 1. Along the same lines as question 1, the proposal may be a trigger for someone who spreads misinformation to reconsider his/her perspective. With some effort, being alerted to the idea that you are about to spread information may be the seed for someone to review ideas from the other side. Both proposals allow for access, but proposal 1 is a more robust proposal because access to other information is promoted.
 - d. Which proposal best preserves or promotes Diversity? Why?
 - i. Proposal 1. Although the competing views may be problematic and harmful, they should not be removed. Bombarding the party spreading misinformation with “facts” and why the other should change has been proven to be ineffective. Guiding the misinformed person should be done diplomatically and with reference to democratic ideals of fairness, equality, and justice. If these democratic structures are taken away from one group of people, it can no longer be called a democracy. However, the dissemination of harmful and problematic content must be regulated and flagged (as idealized in proposal 1) to enforce critical thinking in the moment.
 - e. Which proposal best preserves or promotes Communicative Power? Why?
 - i. Proposal 1. This falls along the same lines as my answer to 2c. If we censor all views that are deemed problematic, those who may be misinformed will never have the chance to reform values or beliefs where trust has been misplaced in a harmful person/idea.