

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. I am of the perspective that Proposal 1 is better. The extreme censorship of Proposal 2 could well detach an already polarised group from a public medium of discourse, leading such communities to utilise other unregulated mediums to propagate and share their ideas, which would lead to an even sever echo chamber, resulting in a backlash of the very intended aims. A brute force approach to try to eliminate misinformation does not take into consideration other factors (eg. educational), that if acted upon, could help to raise the level of discernment in such communities. In contrast, Proposal 1 offers a more sustainable approach that tackles the core issue of accountability, by reminding viewers to be more cautious and exercise credibility checking whenever they see the misinformation pop-up. Proposal 1 has educational benefits to the public, while Proposal 2 merely removes the surface problem without tackling the root factors of education and individual responsibility. The transparency of Proposal 1 in addition, helps to ensure that fact checking is not abused, maintaining the public's ability to hold fact checkers accountable for their definitions of truths and untruths.
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 better preserves or promotes rights. The brute force censorship of false information in proposal 2, would be denying an individual the rights of expression, as the content is completely prevented from being shared on the platform. On the other hand, proposal 1 allows the content to be viewable still, thereby allowing individuals to retain their right of expression, while still holding people accountable to the factuality of the information that they are propagating, and providing an educational opportunity to the public about the circulating fake news. The public should have a right to know what unfact was censored, rather than blindly allowing information to be censored under the hood. Therefore, for transparency reasons, the public should also have the right to hold the fact checkers accountable, whom would otherwise exercise absolute power if information were to be absolutely censored, such that even the public would be oblivious to the potential unfact that was propagated, and even less clueless as to what was unfactual about the information.
 - b. Which proposal best preserves or promotes Opportunity for Expression? Why?
 - i. As was partly mentioned in (a), proposal 1 is better in providing more opportunities for expression. It should come to light that there are socio-economic and educational factors that are associated with individuals that have a tendency to propagate fake news. In a study by the University of Kansas, vulnerable groups of lower income and lower educational attainment were associated with a tendency to share misinformation. The ability to check the credibility of information on social media is often affected by the individual's digital savyness and educational opportunities. Should we absolutely deny an individual the opportunity for expression like in proposal 2, we would be quenching the opportunity for expression in vulnerable groups. Furthermore, vulnerable groups cannot be held accountable for misinformation, when they may have been a product of the unmerits of a imperfect education system that did not provide such groups with an equal opportunity of education and therefore the skill of credibility checking. Proposal 1 instead enables the misinformation pop-up to be an educational opportunity that would educate the general public on circulating fake news.

- c. Which proposal best preserves or promotes Access? Why?
 - i. Proposal 2 is surely better in preserving or promoting Access. Since the misinformation is censored and therefore restricted from spreading on social media, the spread of it is curtailed, thereby ensuring that information on social media remains to be quality and reliable information. This therefore ensures that the public acts on information that is reliable and factual and allows for informed citizen participation in the democratic decision making process.
- d. Which proposal best preserves or promotes Diversity? Why?
 - i. As socio-economic and educational factors are associated with the tendency to share misinformation (refer to b), proposal 1 better promotes Diversity, as it ensures that the vulnerable groups still participate on the platform, since they would otherwise turn to other mediums to share misinformation if they were to be censored absolutely. This provides them with opportunities for various groups to listen to a range of views. Proposal 2 would instead serve to polarise views further as groups are censored from a public social platform and would likely become detached from public discourse and reasoned information.
- e. Which proposal best preserves or promotes Communicative Power? Why?
 - i. Proposal 1 allows for the preservation and promotion of Communicative Power. By allowing more transparency in what was deemed fake news, fact checkers can be held accountable to ensure that power is not abused on grounds of being non-mainstream, thereby maintaining a system to allow citizens to have the right of association. This is important as a body of fact checkers could largely hold mainstream views.