

Fake news: features of distribution and influence on public opinion

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In the recent “Pessimist’s Guide” by Bloomberg the prediction for 2028 is that “no one knows what is true and what is false on the Internet anymore”[4]. Although the media frame a fake news issue as a real threat, which we will face in the future, several researchers support an idea that disinformation does not affect the whole mediascape significantly [2], [3]. In this report, I identify three major barriers that influence the process of the fake news dissemination: features of media, types of audiences, the structure of social media platform. The general argument of the work is that with each barrier the “informational seed” lose its power and narrows its sphere of influence.

The choice of media for the fake news publishers defines how the information will move further in the mediascape. The following media features will play a major role: the reputation and recognition of the source, the level of trust towards it, the political orientation of the media, its core audience (their characteristics and position in the society).

Researchers describe two types of consumers, who would most likely believe in ideologically aligned articles: heavy media consumers and those who have segregated social networks [1]. These users are more likely to have friends with the same ideological affiliations in their news feed, protecting them from being exposed to counter opinions. The fake news will affect those who already have pre-existed opinions about the issue or political candidate in order to support their ideas.

The third barrier is connected to the effect. It consists of the options, provided by the social platform, to show reactions after the message is received. Fake news takes advantage of the interface model of audience interaction on a platform. The limited list of ready-reactions such as emoji or repost button facilitates the fake news dissemination or merely fake titles. The problem is that users see the reactions on the headline before they read an actual content of the post. Media strategy of shifting attention from a text to emotional aspects increases the speed of misinformation spread and establishes alternative facts.

Источники и литература

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