

Knowing that we know nothing: News, Information, Truth, & Knowledge

*Associate Professor Eugene KB Tan
School of Law
Singapore Management University*

**# Call to Action –
Fake News, Misinformation and Post-Truth
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Age of (Mis-)Information Bubbles

- **Paradox of increased awareness and prevalence of fake news**
- **Serious challenge that strikes at the core of representative democracy and meaning of knowledge**
- **Development of legislation against fake news e.g., Germany, Italy, South Africa, Singapore**

Free Speech & Regulation

- **Sustaining free speech and enhancing media literacy remains unchanged even in a so-called post-truth era**
- **Regulating speech, even in the public interest, involves legitimate concerns of potential intrusions to free speech**
- **Regulation must not weaken the ability of a society to discern and be resilient in the market place of ideas**

Working Definition

**Publication of intentionally or knowingly
false statements of fact**











- **designed for active mis- and disinformation,**
- **through appeals to passion,**
- **for profit and/or influence (rather than one's enlightened self-interest)**

Manifestations

- **Satire/parody**
- **Misleading content**
- **Imposter content**
- **Fabricated content**
- **False connection**
- **False context**
- **Manipulated content**

BEYOND 'FAKE NEWS'

10 TYPES OF MISLEADING NEWS

propaganda  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> adopted by governments, corporations and non-profits to manage attitudes, values and knowledge appeals to emotions can be beneficial or harmful 	partisan  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ideological and includes interpretation of facts but may claim to be impartial privileges facts that conform to the narrative whilst forgoing others emotional and passionate language 	IMPACT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> neutral low medium high MOTIVATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> money politics/power humour/fun passion (mis)inform
clickbait  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> eye catching, sensational headlines designed to distract often misleading and content may not reflect headline drives ad revenue 	conspiracy theory  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> tries to explain simply complex realities as response to fear or uncertainty not falsifiable and evidence that refutes the conspiracy is regarded as further proof of the conspiracy rejects experts and authority 	
sponsored content  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> advertising made to look like editorial potential conflict of interest for genuine news organisations consumers might not identify content as advertising if it is not clearly labeled 	pseudoscience  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> purveyors of greenwashing, miracle cures, anti-vaccination and climate change denial misrepresents real scientific studies with exaggerated or false claims often contradicts experts 	
satire and hoax  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> social commentary or humour varies widely in quality and intended meaning may not be apparent can embarrass people who confuse the content as true 	misinformation  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> includes a mix of factual, false or partly-false content intention may be to inform but author may not be aware that the content is false false attributions, doctored content and misleading headlines 	
error  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> established news organisations sometimes make mistakes mistakes can hurt the brand, offend or result in litigation reputable orgs publish apologies 	bogus  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> entirely fabricated content spread intentionally to disinform guerrilla marketing tactics; bots, comments and counterfeit branding motivated by ad revenue, political influence or both 	

DIG DEEPER...

false attribution Authentic images, video or quotes are attributed to the wrong events or person	misleading Content does not represent what the headline and captions suggest
counterfeit Websites and Twitter accounts that pose as a well-known brand or person	doctored content Content, such as statistics, graphs, photos and video have been modified or doctored

Platforms for Purveyors of Fake News

- **Echo chambers and incubation chambers**
- **Online swarms**
- **Bots**
- **A.I.-powered psychological profiling & targeted advertising**

Observations: A complex reality

- **Fake news is not new: “dark” art of persuasion**
- **Possesses sheer unflagging will (profit motive and/or social/political/economic influence)**
- **New intermediaries and platforms increasingly play a prominent filtering, gatekeeping, and influencer role**

Sharp Edge in Dissemination & Reception

- **Individuals as recipients and purveyors of fake news**
- **That news consumers may be concerned, in the main, with neither the truth nor falsity – the human appetite for distractions**
- **Illusionary effect of knowledge and understanding arising from having immediate and easy access to information**

Does good speech have the upper hand?

- **Facts, facts, and more facts? Providing people with more and better information and expert reports?**
- **Communal groupthink dominant, rather than individual rationality. Group loyalty too**
- **Pointing ignorance or incorrect understanding can backfire – futility of fact checking?**

Call to Action

- **A multi-stakeholder approach imperative**
- **Trust as a key attribute – The ‘how’ question**
- **Activist role of repositories of knowledge**

“The Place of the Cure of the Soul”

(inscription in the ancient library of Alexandria)

Reality of consuming (mis-)information

- **Consumption of news and information a relational experience**
 - **Which news/info accessed**
 - **How news/info processed**
 - **Relationship with content producers**
 - **Motivation to believe/disbelieve & to act**
 - **Cultural norms**
- **Truth and verification time consuming and expensive**

Action: “Learn it all” mindset

- **Critical thinking skills needed; to avoid throwing out good information with the bad**
- **How people interpret and act on information hinges on the human connection**
- **“Tools” needed to identify fake news**

HOW TO SPOT FAKE NEWS



CONSIDER THE SOURCE

Click away from the story to investigate the site, its mission and its contact info.



READ BEYOND

Headlines can be outrageous in an effort to get clicks. What's the whole story?



CHECK THE AUTHOR

Do a quick search on the author. Are they credible? Are they real?



SUPPORTING SOURCES?

Click on those links. Determine if the info given actually supports the story.



CHECK THE DATE

Reposting old news stories doesn't mean they're relevant to current events.



IS IT A JOKE?

If it is too outlandish, it might be satire. Research the site and author to be sure.



CHECK YOUR BIASES

Consider if your own beliefs could affect your judgement.



ASK THE EXPERTS

Ask a librarian, or consult a fact-checking site.

Conclusion

- **Regulation not the silver bullet**
- **Imperative to develop, share, and nurture media literacy skills**
- **Activist mindset needed**

The duty of man who investigates the writings of scientists, if learning the truth is his goal, is to make himself an enemy of all that he reads and ... attack it from every side. He should also suspect himself as he performs his critical examination of it, so that he may avoid falling into either prejudice or leniency.

– Ibn al-Haytham (965-1040 CE)