Fake News as a "Rhetorical Device"

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Abstract: Intentionality in fake news production is central in many academic definitions and needs to be considered. Fake news is not well-defined concept and still the current approaches and definitions are not unidimensional. Frequent use of the term for political purposes in recent times has become a label to discredit legacy news media. Labeling mainstream media discourses as fake news in rhetorical facet means a doubt on a certain story and is next step further to undermine trust in information and also shake trust in media system as a whole.

Keywords: fake news, misinformation, disinformation, rhetorical device, fake app

Introduction

Fake news is a popularized and politicized expression in the wide spectrum of misinformation if we assume it identifies inaccurate news pieces. If the same kind of information is intentionally fabricated, among academics and in journalism practice general popularization of the term ranging from disinformation to propaganda warfare is perceived. For the complex reason of inflationary use, influence of technological progress, world leadership failure, facticity deceit and so on…, the phenomenon of fake news is not prominent for the uncertain definition, but for the fact that it has become a multifaceted concept. In the context of mediatized world based on mass self-communication online, this paper brings some light to the notion fake news to be denoted as a rhetorical device through several unprecedented and simplistic patterns, discussed in details below.

Methodology Framework: Reviewing and compiling variety of academic publications, theoretical theses and online sources. Analytical research on media practices. The goal in this paper is to offer theoretical background to frame for the fake news debate.

Broaden Scope and Duration in Differentiation Between Misinformation and Disinformation

The potential meaning of the term "Fake News" has most notably changed since the influential Collins Dictionary named it "Word of the Year 2017" in the array from fabricated news circulated by social media to a conduit for defensive strategy of presidential candidate and later U.S President Donald Trump to discredit "legacy" news media. Most academics agree using "fake news" as an indicated term is rather problematic. It is necessary to define it more precisely for scientific use as a polemic reaction to the rise of "fake news" expression in public debate. They are mostly focusing to primarily regard fake news somewhere in the middle of general differentiation between misinformation and disinformation – a subject that could be unintentionally false or deliberately false. Alcott and Gentzkow (2017) specifically define "fake news" as "news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false, and could misled readers" [1]. These authors focus on fake news articles that have political implications, but explicitly exclude from the long history of fake news notwithstanding unintentional reporting mistakes, rumors, conspiracy theories, misconstrued as factual satire and political false statements. In their research the interpretation of fake news as an intentionally fabricated news articles are in a focal attention. In similar context that fake news is concerned as much better conceptualized as (online) disinformation, Mark Deuze (2018) – a professor at the Department

of Media Studies of the University of Amsterdam stresses the importance that from our personal perspective media experience is simultaneously "not only a filter bubble, but also a global village" [2]. In deeper understanding, the mentioned author insists on thesis that from the Occupy Wall Street and Arab spring social movements to the Tea Party movement, via the election of Donald Trump and the British choice to leave the EU to the yellow vest protests across France (and elsewhere) – this consequence of devoted social energy illustrates "the fact that not only do people not agree on the same truths anymore – people actively act out on the basis of incomplete, erroneous or altogether manufactured facts" (Mark Deuze, 2018) [3]. In Wardle and Derakhshan's Council of Europe report (2017) [4]. Fake news concepts are related to existing media forms in a wider continuum of false or misleading information. For example, media expert and digital marketing speaker Frederic Filloux has detected and published in his Monday Note blog an issue about Content Recommendation Networks (CRNs), mentioned in mapping of misinformation [5]. As he implies, this selected content, provided at the bottom of web pages as recommendations, plays an essential role to weaken credibility of legitimate news, and furthermore, interfering with balanced editorial readings, trivializing "soft" fake news causes degradation of the information landscape. Bulgarian online publisher capital.bg also presents Monday Note author and blogger with the important notice that the best and only way to debunk false information is manual fact-checking [6]. The largest and deepest news aggregator Facebook has estimated about 5 million elements deserve some checking in the flow of roughly 100 million pieces of information that hit the World Wide Web. Globally, multiple fact-checking organizations aim at authenticating official sources parallel to civic and governmental attempts to counter and prevent fake news flourishing. Meanwhile, some academics regard fake news forms with contrasting meanings.

Fake News in Staged News Shows – satire- entertainment-oriented formats
Another contextual aspect for fake news to be identified in social media is entertainment - oriented formats on television or satire elements, included next to brand friendly content. Media scholars agree that fake news with mocking meaning appears through journalism in tendency to choose entertainment over dissemination of information. Predating the 2016 US elections fake news inflationary use, the same term was used as a more specific term for political satire in the form of staged news shows [7]. A poll by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press (2004) [8] reported that 21 percent of 18-34-year olds regularly learned about the 2014 presidential campaign from comedy programs, specifically Saturday Night Live and Comedy Central's The Daily show with Jon Stewart. The reasons why young people appear to be abandoning traditional news media and becoming more likely to identify late-night comedy as a source of political information is that entertainment and popular culture play important roles in young citizens' political development. Young adults appreciate the sarcasm, irony, parody and satire pervasive in popular culture. Being simultaneously amuse and informed, they use to make sense of political world. The Daily show with Jon Stewart (1999-2015) and now The Daily Show with Trevor Noah (2015-present) offers a satiric interpretation of politics and current events, in which host and faux anchor mocks those who both make and report the news. As a whole, entertainment-oriented talk shows are characterized as featuring easy questioning, a program that muddied boundary between news and entertainment like high and low art, mocking conventions of mainstream news. In contradiction, The Daily Show with Jon Stewart is given as an example for a show that not merely faking the news, instead program taped pieces are boldly manipulated for comic effect, in most cases, used techniques of parody, re-contextualization, editing are revealed as political commentary and media critique, but the program has had a recognition and legitimacy as a news source. Among politicians, The Daily Show is perceived as wielding considerable power [9]. For example, all nine Democratic presidential candidates visited The Daily Show during the 2004 primary season, with Senator

John Edwards actually announcing his candidacy on the program. (Host Jon Stewart promptly reminded Edwards that his is a fake news show, and that he might have to make the announcement again somewhere.) Today's generations have grown in a media world where the line between news and entertainment has never been clear and if it is not enough professional practice efforts put in distinguishing, more fake news definitions are amenable to reconsideration.

Politicized "Fake News" Expression and other Term Dimensions. Intentionality of fake news

Fake news cannot be defined with a unique meaning. When conceptualizing fake news as certain form of media content, observers can differentiate various forms of wrong, misguided, or fabricated news along several dimensions and aspects of transmitted information [10]. We can say that fake news are completely invented of modified news that are spread. At the basis of the fabrication "intentionality" is considered as the precise will to condition others' will [11]. The meaning of the term "fake news" is considerably involved in political discourse as it drives from confluence of political leaders events (Donald Trump media experience), due to the increasingly central role of social networks for the news consumption [12], the Russian propaganda effort in producing fake news to influence 2016 presidential campaign [13] and registered some political elites' inclination to legitimize fake news stories by passing them to their followers using social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter [14]. Empirical survey of 100 publications and news pieces through political discourse in digital media in Bulgaria demonstrated constructed forms of post-truth, fake news, brand messages and public relation press information. Media incorporated process of fact-checking is the useful prevention practice. Bulgarian online media companies use primarily official sources, political statements and authority press releases.). Both post-truth and fake news comprise uncertain communication when fast announcing prevails veracity [15].

Doctoring Images and Fake App

As noted by Frederic Filloux (2018, Monday Note) [16], technological progress is definitely on fake news side. He gives us an image example that shows how constructed factuality works "in the good old days of absolute communism in Russia. For details, see Fig. 1 below:

(No Photoshop, done by hand)

Fig № 1 – Doctoring images for propaganda warfare goals

This done by hand image is one more reasonable notion that fake news' topic is interesting because it is new and it is old at the same time. It is old because the dissemination of fake information has always been used by human beings, especially in politics and in wars. But it is a sure challenge to detect fake news as a rhetorical device in realistic audio-visual messages. The digital evolution started transformation through technological progress that suggests in providers' hands various communication devices.

"Deep Fake" as a Rhetorical Device – Fake App
"Deep Fake" is a specific expression for a manipulative iteration in audio-visual products shared by video platforms. And it is pointed out as a rhetorical device, because of the ability to make anyone saying anything in an altered video.
David Mack (April, 2018) [17], a deputy director of breaking news for Buzzfeed News posted audio-visual demonstration featuring the actor and director Jordan Peele. Using Fake App, the same tool used in the celebrity face-swapping videos, Buzzfeed took an old video of President Obama and swapped in Peele's mouth as he performed an impression of Obama.

This apparent illustration of "deepfakes" can be generated with free software. As the video soon reveals, the man speaking is not the former president Barack Obama, but rather Oscar-winning filmmaker Jordan Peele with a warning for viewers about trusting materials they encounter online. This live action is completely different from the photoshopping of the past. "DeepFake" is an artificial intelligence – an easy-to use, eventually seamless technological tool for manipulating perception and falsifying reality.

In the video above, Peele is acting via face-swapping software as a puppeteer for Obama's face. Technology evolved from transferring simple facial expressions and mouth movements to a software that can account for wide-ranging head and eye movements without much obvious distortion.

Buzzfeed has demonstrated this kind of experiment to report on what the future of fake news could look like. In this manipulative video, former president Barack Obama appears to be delivering an important message about fake news – "we are starting to see tech that allows people to put words into the mouths of public figures that look like they must be real because it's video and video doesn't lie" [18].

"Deepfakes", if not preliminary debunked, will cause immense damages if become mainstream in political campaigning.

The Chernobyl TV series – The Deep Truth for the Cost of Lies
Historically, allegations that media and the press are liars have been used as a rhetorical device by politicians and policy makers in autocratic regimes. The main goal of strategic control is to prevent publishing unfiltered information and opinion.

The Chernobyl drama television miniseries is audio-visual interpretation of historical circumstances for the devastating power that causes falsifying information. Five-part miniseries dramatized the story of the April 1986 nuclear plant disaster which occurred in the Ukranian Soviet Socialist Republic (Soviet Union), telling the stories of the people who cause the disaster and those who responded to it. The original script of the co-production between HBO and Sky UK, written by Craig Mazin, is based on Belarusian Nobel Svetlana Alexievich recollections in her book "Voices from Chernobyl". The creator Craig Mazin explains his film-making intentions by this political thriller, horror movie, a scientific inquiry, a courtroom drama as a greater cause to address "how we're struggling with the global war on the truth right now" [19]. The film has been launched in recent times when our culture reflects what is true. In the end of the same cited interview the existential question is fairly asked: "Does Chernobyl illustrate an unfortunate universal truth that no one ever wants to listen the person who knows what's really happening?" [20]. The drama focuses on the big point that the truth does not care. Another inspiration, intellectual curiosity, the fascinating story of this explosion and incredible personal stories of the human being who lived through it is that all people around the world know Chernobyl exploded but did not know why.

In a deep context, the created film tragedy explosion seems more human problem than political or scientific consequence. The question "What is the cost of lies?" echoes throughout the show, most prominent in the very first and last scenes of the show [21]. In wonderfully human terms, using the same usual political tactics of propaganda efforts to blur global scope of the disaster, within Soviet state at that time has been maintained a culture of lies. "The real danger is that if we hear enough lies, then we no longer recognize the truth at all", Valery Legasov (Jared Harris) says in a single episode.

One of the numerous influential and high dramatically echoed plot moments is the scene of children playing in radioactive ash. As the series proved, the cost of lies is too high.

Conclusion

Nor fake news, nor disinformation affects digital media environment harmfully, but as a consequent result- the growing disconnect between sections and reconciled authorities of society. Consciously, sowing seeds of doubt has happened basically between those who benefit from a globalized, technologized, fast-moving and constantly changing world and those who struggle to hold on.

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