Technology and the Fake News Phenomenon

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Fake news is a type of yellow journalism or propaganda that consists of deliberate misinformation or hoaxes spread via traditional print and broadcast news media or online social media.

Fake news is written and published with the intent to mislead in order to gain financially or politically, often with sensationalist, exaggerated, or patently false headlines that grab attention.

Intentionally misleading and deceptive fake news is different from obvious satire or parody which is intended to humor rather than mislead its audience.

Fake news often employs eye-catching headlines or entirely fabricated news stories to increase readership, online sharing and Internet click revenue.

In the latter case, it is similar to sensational online "clickbait" headlines and relies on advertising revenue generated from this activity, regardless of the veracity of the published stories.

Fake news also undermines serious media coverage and makes it more difficult for journalists to cover significant news stories.

To me FAKE NEWS is Yellow Journalism on Steroids!
Fake News is NOT NEW

Existed since the glorious days of Rome when Octavius used Fake News to get the Roman population of The Republic to despise Mark Antony - 44BC

In an article by Izabella Kaminska (Jan. 17th 2017), she recounts that “Octavian proved the shrewder propagandist, using short, sharp slogans upon coins in the style of archaic tweets.” Octavian called Mark Antony a womanizer, a philanderer and a drunk and so he was unfit to rule Rome and spent his time instead in the arms of Cleopatra.

While history says that many Romans thought this was Fake News, what Octavius’ campaign did was contaminate the character of Mark Antony as becoming more Egyptian. Marc Anthony was perceived to be a traitor to his countrymen. This is what perhaps led most to his loss in the Battle of Actium in 31BC.

And so the Republican System of Rome was hacked!
Let’s move forward to 1835 - Story published by The Sun founded in 1833 which was the first modern Newspaper (funded primarily by advertisers)

Giant man-bats that spent their days collecting fruit and holding animated conversations; goat-like creatures with blue skin; a temple made of polished sapphire. These were the astonishing sights witnessed by John Herschel, an eminent British astronomer, when, in 1835, he pointed a powerful telescope “of vast dimensions” towards the Moon from an observatory in South Africa. Or that, at least, was what readers of the New York Sun were told in a series of newspaper reports.

This caused a sensation. People flocked to buy each day’s edition of the Sun. The paper’s circulation shot up from 8,000 to over 19,000 copies, overtaking the Times of London to become the world’s bestselling daily newspaper. There was just one small hitch. The fantastical reports had in fact been concocted by Richard Adams Locke, the Sun’s editor. Herschel was conducting genuine astronomical observations in South Africa. But Locke knew it would take months for his deception to be revealed, because the only means of communication with the Cape was by letter.

The whole thing was a giant hoax - or, as we would say today, “fake news”. This classic of the genre illuminates the pros and cons of fake news as a commercial strategy - and helps explain why it has re-emerged in the internet era.
The Sun was soon exposed and other newspapers began to expose the truth and also become more involved in the Truth! Police reports, court reporting, human interest stories, obituaries, etc.

The Internet Era has allowed a return to the business model of fortunes from fake news!

**THE TRUE HISTORY OF FAKE NEWS**

The history of made-up stories explains why they have re-emerged in the internet era. Tom Standage delves into the archives.
Yellow journalism, or the yellow press, is a US term for a type of journalism that presents little or no legitimate well-researched news and instead uses eye-catching headlines to sell more newspapers.

Techniques may include exaggerations of news events, scandal-mongering or sensationalism. By extension, the term yellow journalism is used today as a pejorative to decry any journalism that treats news in an unprofessional or unethical fashion.

The term is chiefly used in the US. In the UK, a roughly equivalent term is tabloid journalism, meaning journalism characteristic of tabloid newspapers, even if found elsewhere (e.g. on television).
Frank Luther Mott identifies yellow journalism based on five characteristics:
1. scare headlines in huge print, often of minor news
2. lavish use of pictures, or imaginary drawings
3. use of faked interviews, misleading headlines, pseudoscience, and a parade of false learning from so-called experts
4. emphasis on full-color Sunday supplements, usually with comic strips
5. dramatic sympathy with the "underdog" against the system.


Claire Wardle of First Draft News identifies seven types of fake news:
1. satire or parody ("no intention to cause harm but has potential to fool")
2. false connection ("when headlines, visuals of captions don't support the content")
3. misleading content ("misleading use of information to frame an issue or an individual")
4. false content ("when genuine content is shared with false contextual information")
5. imposter content ("when genuine sources are impersonated" with false, made-up sources)
6. manipulated content ("when genuine information or imagery is manipulated to deceive", as with a "doctored" photo)
7. fabricated content ("new content is 100% false, designed to deceive and do harm")

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) published a summary in diagram form (pictured at right) to assist people to recognize fake news. Its main points are:

1. Consider the source (to understand its mission and purpose)
2. Read beyond the headline (to understand the whole story)
3. Check the authors (to see if they are real and credible)
4. Assess the supporting sources (to ensure they support the claims)
5. Check the date of publication (to see if the story is relevant and up to date)
6. Ask if it is a joke (to determine if it is meant to be satire)
7. Review your own biases (to see if they are affecting your judgement)
8. Ask experts (to get confirmation from independent people with knowledge).

We all know that the INFORMATION MODEL has CHANGED.
New media ecosystem

• Online communities discuss and extend the stories created by mainstream media.
• These communities also produce participatory journalism, grassroots reporting, annotative reporting, commentary and fact-checking, which the mainstream media feed upon, developing them as a pool of tips, sources and story ideas.
In the Caribbean our Oral Tradition has always pitted us against what is “Real” versus what is “Fake”

There is Wisdom in the Anansi Stories but the trickster is in every one of them.

In the village the news goes from neighbour to neighbour... house to house... to the street... to the next street .... To the entire village!
Culturally we live in a Word of Mouth society (Maco, Mauvelangue, Gossip)

We see it now with What’s App, Facebook and Instagram

Traffic reports... Reports of hold ups on car parks...
audio messages of a coup being planned...
warning of a cult who blinks their car lights at you...

As the messages go out to each individual’s network, each sender is
1. Warning friends and family
2. Awaiting a response on validation of the message

But the messages go viral with a “forward” click!
Newsrooms get these “tip-offs” and work to find the truth but there are two major challenges:

1. **TIME** - the time it takes to check the validity is longer than the time it takes for Fake News to spread

1. **RESOURCES** - a lack of resources in terms of personnel and access to information; Risk of legal liability that Journalists are subjected to versus Fake News reporters

Even though members of the public reach out to traditional media to get the Truth, the traditional media cannot respond fast enough, or cannot respond at all.

Thus Fake News Wins!

**Maintaining Legitimacy in the Digital Age becomes the real challenge for Traditional Media**
75% Fooled by News Headlines

83% “Major” Facebook Users Believed in Fake News
76% “Minor” Facebook Users Believed in Fake News
64% Believed in Fake News Without Facebook

Recent BuzzFeed Survey Results

CAN YOU BELIEVE
WHAT YOU READ?

With fake news leaving most Americans confused about even the basic facts, magazine media keeps it real. Whether in print, online, on mobile or video, people trust it to be expertly researched, written and fact-checked. No wonder magazine readers are more engaged and more likely to recommend advertised products.

Being real matters. That’s a fact.

http://www.magazine.org/magazine-media-better-believe-it

October 8th, 2017
TECHNOLOGY has made it Easy for Fake News

- It’s cheap to create “real-looking” videos and photos
- It’s easy to spread Fake News virally

CASE: MACEDONIA YOUTH’s Cottage Industry - FAKE NEWS

TECHNOLOGY CAN HELP SOLVE THE PROBLEM

- Establishment of Fact-checking sites (start Regionally for the Caribbean)
- Search Engine tools for filtering
- Anti-Fake News Sponsored Ads that appear on Fake News Feeds (algorithms or Anti-Trolls)

Facebook's Latest Attempt at Fighting Fake News Is to Provide Publisher Info

A new test feature provides more info on news publishers.

By Tom Huddleston, Jr. Oct 5th, 2017 6:02 PM ET

Facebook is trying curb the spread of fake news by providing it users more information about news publishers.
YouTube has changed its search algorithms to display more reliable and trustworthy sources after the violent attack in Las Vegas saw a spike in misinformation and hateful content appear on the site, reports The Wall Street Journal.

The paper reports that on Tuesday the fifth result shown when a user searches "Las Vegas shooting" showed a video that claimed there were multiple shooters involved (authorities had confirmed there was only one). The video, called "Proof Las Vegas Shooting Was a FALSE FLAG attack—Shooter on 4th Floor," had received 1.1 million views in 27 hours. YouTube removed the video on Wednesday.

A source familiar with YouTube told the WSJ the video streaming site is accelerating the rollout of planned changes to its search engine in response to criticism. YouTube began showing more reliable sources in search results on Wednesday, but hasn't revealed how it determines which sources are authoritative and which aren't.
IGNORANCE exists!
Case Examples in Trinidad & Tobago

Case 1: Late O’Clock News
At 6:00am a What’s App Message goes out to a Business Group about a court ruling
The sender was unaware that Late O’Clock News was a satire website with false stories

Case 2: Trump to ban Trini Visas
Another Fake News story that sent T&T into turmoil.
It was easy to get in touch with the PR Section of the US Embassy and clarify.
But between 8:00pm of the night it started to be circulated till 8:00am next morning
What confused the population even more was that some local radio news and talk shows said, “there is a rumour that ..... And we are awaiting confirmation from the US Embassy.” (Why talk about it if its still False and why use the word “confirmation” instead of “comment”)
We must be INNOVATIVE to be TRANSFORMATIVE

We are attempting to Change the Mentality of at least 2 Generations
How do we respond?  
Maybe we need to be Disruptors?  
Be Creative Disruptors!

- Better equipped Newsrooms
- Better Investigative Reporting
- More Responsive within strict timeframes
- Governments respecting Freedom of Information legislation and policies

- Understand the Psychographics of the Demographics
  - We live in an era where being glamorous and famous is measured by our fan base
  - Real News needs to be provocative and sexy
  - We need to distribute real news in the same cyberspace communities

- Perhaps we need to have “Real News” Ambassadors

- Or be part of the Digital Economy where we give digital money for arresting Fake News stories or for Sharing Real News

- Give Cash Awards for Real News video that debunks Fake News
  (Shattered Glass the Movie and Adam Penenberg)
QUESTIONS WE SHOULD CONSTANTLY ASK?

- The Policy is Great, but is it rigorous enough to achieve the Goals?
- Is there an Implementation Strategy that arrests the attention of the “most susceptible target audiences”?
- Is the Policy guided by the same Distribution and Viral Strategy of “Fake News” itself?
- Is there a Rapid Response Approach? Should there be one?
- Why is Macedonia a Hub? Can the youth there be employed to fight Fake News almost as a Crime Stoppers type initiative?
- After the Classroom and Libraries, what happens when they step out into the real world?

  It’s a Psychological Battle fuelled by Money!
  The vicious circle effect is that Gen Y & Gen Z is already growing or grown up with the internet as parents... if this continues then Fake News becomes Real News by perception and we cannot change it!
The Macaroni Bridge

Government

Academic Institutions

Media
We all want to go in the same direction so we should pool our resources, knowledge and insights; learn from each other and progress towards success.

Don’t wait on Government

Have a conversation with Private Enterprise

Form Strategic Alliances - In the same way that consolidation happens in a competitive economic environment, recognize that the Consolidation of Thoughts and Vision will enable structured objectives that as partners we can work towards.
Build our own Real News Ecosystem

Traditional Media Partners
(Local, Regional, Global)

Social Media Partners
Facebook / Google
(Local, Regional, Global)

MIL IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY TEAM
(Local, Regional, Global)

UNESCO - MIL

Schools / Libraries

Governments

Brand Ambassadors
Which Version of the Story do we Want?

Fox Eats us because of Fake News and Fear-mongering?

Happy ending where we are courageous, pick up the challenge of fact-finding and tell the Real Story?