

Use Follow-up News to Fight Against Social Media Fake News

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Author Note

This is my first time writing a formal English paper, I have tried my best to conform to the academic code and the APA Style, however, there might be some flaws regarding paper format. If needed, I can rewrite this paper to improve its quality, thank you for reading!

### Abstract

Fake news on social media is everywhere nowadays. We all know it harms our society and we have been trying to figure out an effective way to solve this problem. However, with several years of study, the influence caused by fake news on social media is counteracting the efforts which researchers have been done. One reason is that social media is penetrating on our daily life so quickly like a tornado and it is hard to control the accompanying fake news, another reason might be we have not got it right yet. In this paper, I propose that we use follow-up news collected by authoritative agencies to fight against the fake news on social media. Together with identifying and screening methods, we could control the spread of fake news on social media and mitigate the influence of it efficiently.

*Keywords:* follow-up news, fake news, social media, newspapers

## Use Follow-up News to Fight Against Social Media Fake News

News is the information about some events happened recently. Before the digital era, people usually get news from newspapers.

What is a newspaper? Usually, when people say newspapers, they are referring to some periodical publication which contains news, articles, and ads. The origin of the newspaper could date back to Ancient Rome where the earliest government announcement bulletins produced. The first modern type of newspapers could date back to the seventeenth century when the European Renaissance was at its ending period.

“It is the tribune of the people; it is the fourth estate; the Palladium of our civil liberties, etc”(Park, 1923, 275). We read news and newspapers because we think getting information about recent events important, it is also instinctive for us human being to access information from outside.

Modern newspapers now have got a history of around four centuries, the media agency of news has a few changes as nowadays there are more digital newspapers, people can also get news from social media. Although the essential form of all those news medium remains the same which is to provide information about recent events to the audience, something has changed. Nowadays, because of our fast-paced world and the rising of digital news, people are becoming more and more accustomed to getting news from Internet especially social media, podcasts and radio, Cable TV, rather than traditional

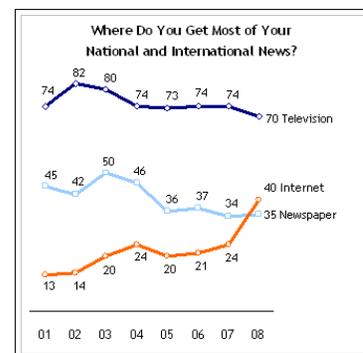


Figure 1. The platforms where people get most of news. (Kobut & Remez, 2008)

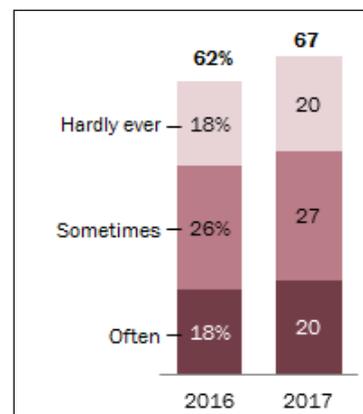


Figure 2. % of U.S. adults who get news from social media sites. (Shearer & Gottfried, 2017)

newspapers.

Take a look at figure 1 and figure 2 above, more and more people nowadays are getting news from Internet, Shearer & Gottfried (2017) even finds that “Two-thirds of Americans (67%) get at least some news on social media.”

Generally speaking, there are three essential elements in any news: new, truth, communication. I think the truth matters most. News on social media could be new and well communicated. However, comparing to traditional news agencies like newspapers press or TV/radio channel, news on social media is hard to regulate concerning truth. Thus, we should raise some concern for news on social media.

Winner (1980) claims artifacts have politics, which reminds me of the rise of social media fake news. Sometimes, the influence of social media fake news could be astonishing. Fortunately, some researchers have done great jobs in identifying and screening fake news on social media recently.

However, the thing is, if some fake news has already been posted on social media and people have read that, then if you delete the news and tell the audience that those are fake, they might think you are lying to them and trying to hide truth, some might doubt the authoritative, some would even spread the fake news to others.

A better solution would be not only identify and screen fake news on social media but also provide some validated news related to the deleted ones. By doing that, we can prevent the fake news from diffusing meanwhile mitigate the influence of the already happened misconception.

Because fake news on social media is a serious problem and the influence could not be stopped effectively from merely identifying and screening, we should fight against it also with collect and post validated and objective news related to those fake news organized by credible agencies.

### **News has politics**

Technology is improving from day to day, look at the concept of ubiquitous computing is coming to our real life so quickly. Other than being optimistic about our possible fabulous future, we should also consider how to avoid some underlying problems of the use of technology. Decades ago before the digital age, people get information about recent events of outside world or “news” just from newspapers, while nowadays, because of our advanced technology and ubiquitous computing, people could access news anytime and anywhere. Every coin has two sides, and the technology is no exception. As no one has predicted that fake news on social media could be such a hard case nowadays, it is likely that no one could predict how chaotic our world would become because of technology in the future.

Artifacts do have politics. In this case, social media and news have politics. Fake news is usually made up deliberately and well-designed, some are ridiculous at first glance; however, people will make a hit regardless. “California Governor Jerry Brown In the Middle of a Corruption Investigation”, “Clinton / Lynch Pilot Breaks His Silence on What Was Said”, “Obama and Michelle to Divorce”, these are all fake news; however, they can get millions of hits quickly, and they distort the facts, cause panic, even could lead to tragedy.

According to Pew Research Center, 88% of U.S. adults say fabricated news stories have caused a great deal of or some confusion about basic facts of current events. (Barthel, Mitchell, & Holcomb, 2016)



Figure 3. % of U.S. adults who get confusion from fake news. (Barthel, Mitchell, & Holcomb, 2016)

In that research, Barthel et al. find that nearly 30% of Americans say they have shared fake political news story online whether aware at the time or not.

We all noticed that sometimes fake news on social media could cause serious problems, and unlikely the traditional newspapers, it is tough to regulate the social media. After all, some guy who is thousands of miles away from you could generate dozens of fake news anonymously and use some robot accounts to spread that news quickly, the best thing you could do is identify and close the accounts. However, that guy could do it again right after your action, which makes all of your efforts meaningless.

We humans as social beings are inevitably prone to be affected by the outside world, especially when someone made some fake news deliberately for us, we cannot help to believe them.

It is hard to prevent those things from happening, but we can mitigate the influence by restraining the diffusion of fake news.

## **Research Overview**

There's an old Chinese saying, "The wise do not buy rumors." By using technology to detect and screen the diffusing of fake news on social media, we can stop them in some cases.

With more and more eyes on the fake news problem, some researchers have made some progress in this area. Conroy et al. (2015) have introduced the linguistic and network-based approaches to classifying tasks within limited domains with high accuracy results. Rubin et al. (2016) use algorithm to identify satirical news which could be helpful for minimizing the potential impact of fake news. Those methods have been trying to fight against the fake news problem just by identify and then screen that news. Sometimes those methods could be constructive, but what if some audience has been brainwashed with the fake news? After all, first impressions are firmly entrenched.

It is not enough to try to find fake news on social media then delete them and tell audience those are fake news, because some audience might think the government is in some conspiracy and make the problems worse. We must try to figure out other ways to deal with this problem.

### **Use follow-up news to fight against fake news on social media**

As we all know, there are three general ways to reduce the influence of noises:

- i. Prevent it from the beginning by controlling the source of noise.
- ii. Control the process how it diffuses.
- iii. Stop the noise from the receiver.

Back to the fake news case, there are the same three kinds of solutions to solve the problem. However, it is nearly impossible to prevent it from happening in the beginning, and it is not that much effective if we only choose to identify and screen the fake news because those fake news have already impressed the audience. So, the best way should be we not only try to stop it from diffusing but also change the viewpoint of the receivers.

Like what we have talked about above, the most crucial element of news is whether it is telling the truth. Thus, the news carriers should be responsible for the accuracy of all the news on their platforms. To change one's view of some information, the best way is not to tell them what is the right thing and what is wrong. Rather than that, we should present as much as possible objective and accurate information to them by authoritative agencies; then they can judge whether a piece of news is fake or not by themselves.

Follow-up news is a series of news related to some news which has been reported before, with enough follow-up news, one can have a comprehensive grasp of news events. Some news agencies have follow-up sections on specific news events which are typically top hits; however, they are not using it as a fixed tradition. Imagine, if the follow-up news sections exist, when you come across a suspect fake news on social media and you want to get to know the whole story of it to not be misguided by the fake news, you can check out any credible news agencies to know the truth.

Thus, here I propose we should build several feature columns of follow-up news about hot topics on some authoritative news agencies. By doing that, we could not only eliminate the already-caused confusion of some social media fake news victims but also we can prevent fake news from spreading everywhere effectively. Most importantly, it could improve the relationship between the masses and the government.

## **Conclusion**

Like the communities nowadays, social media in the future will be much more penetrated into our everyday life. Like many other problems, fake news on social media is becoming more and more severe and affecting our daily life, and sometimes it could cause mental problems to some. Therefore, it is our duty and responsibility to protect our future cyber community. It is not ideal to destroy the fake newsmaker, what we can do is to combine the tools of identifying, screening and use follow-up news to fight against the social media fake news to reduce the influence of it. Also, not only the publishers, the platforms and the governments but also everyone should fight against fake news, to recover the truth of news, to build a better future for ourselves.

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