

The background features a large blue circle on the right side. To its left is a purple circle. In the top left corner, there are two vertical teal lines. Below them is an orange square outline. In the top center, there is an orange L-shaped line. In the bottom left, there are several teal curved lines. In the top right, a teal circle is partially visible.

How
has the concept of 'fake news'
altered
the public discourse on
inequality?

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Agenda

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The emergence of fake news

2

Wide spread of fake news in global scale

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Fake news is...

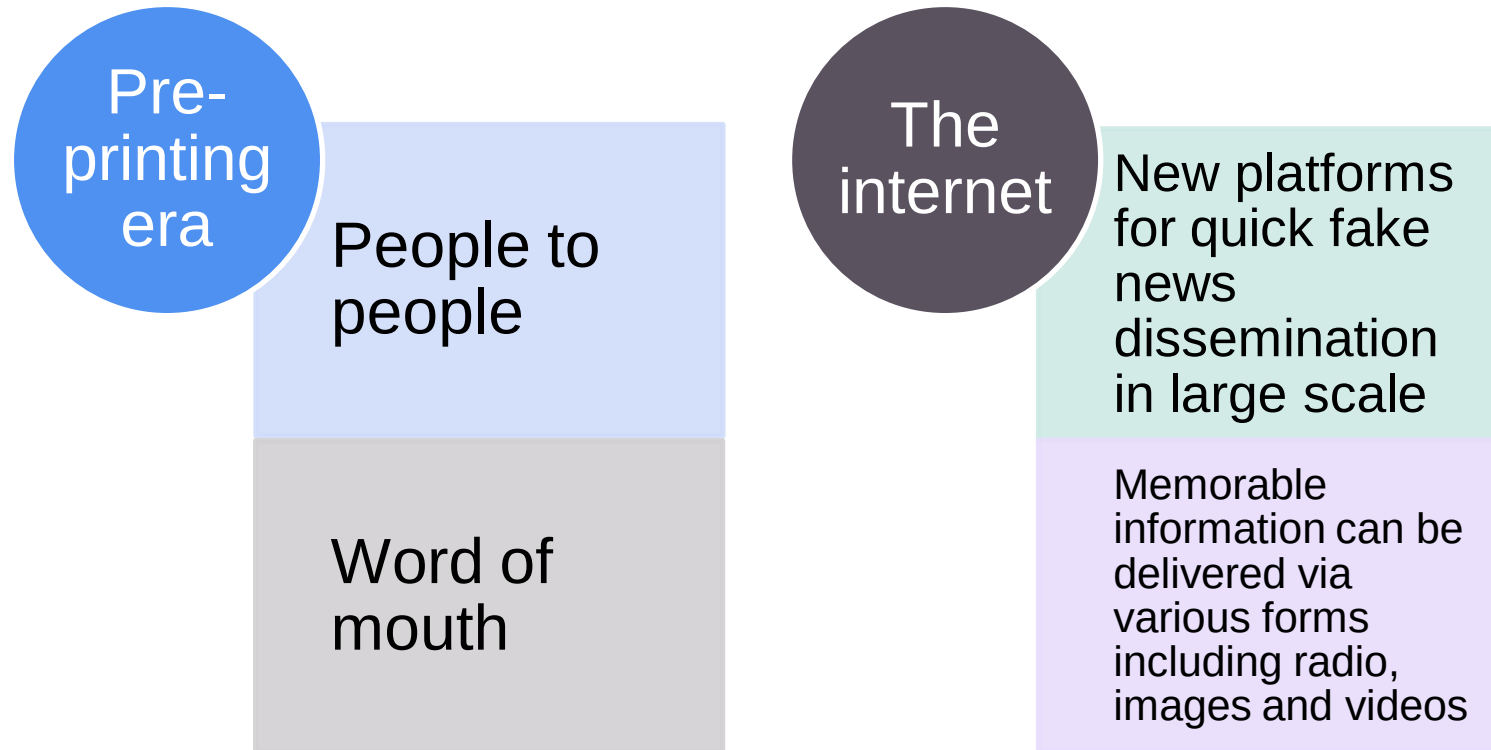
- 'A fictitious report relating to current events which is fabricated and often entitled misleadingly, with the deliberate purpose of deceiving users and motivating them to disseminate the report'.
- 'Spoof news items devised for satirical or comedic purposes (as in The Onion website).'

Chandler and Munday (2020) *A Dictionary of Media and Communication*, 3rd edn

Fake news is...

- Fake news has been around for a while if we trace back to history (Burkhardt, 2017).
- Emerged as an issue following the US Presidential election in 2016 (Pangrazio, 2018).
- “**Exploded**”: Since that year, there have been more research into fake news (Lewandowsky et al, 2017).

Production of rumour and false stories in groups of people where 'power matters'

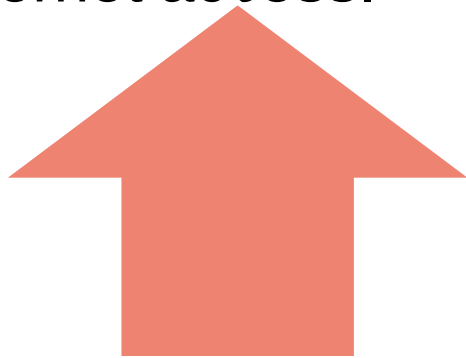


No matter in which era, to verify whether the stories are true or not - is a major challenge.

(Burkhardt, 2017; Durodolu and Ibenne, 2020)

Wide spread of fake news in global scale

- Information dissemination and consumption globally are boosted by technological advances, including social media. Example: News on Covid-19 vaccines can be circulated to people across the world who have internet access.



Sharing ideas, opinions, findings, etc.

Maintaining connectivity even with remote areas

Fostering freedom of choice and diverse viewpoints



The rise of fake news: Fake news exists in the same context as real news.

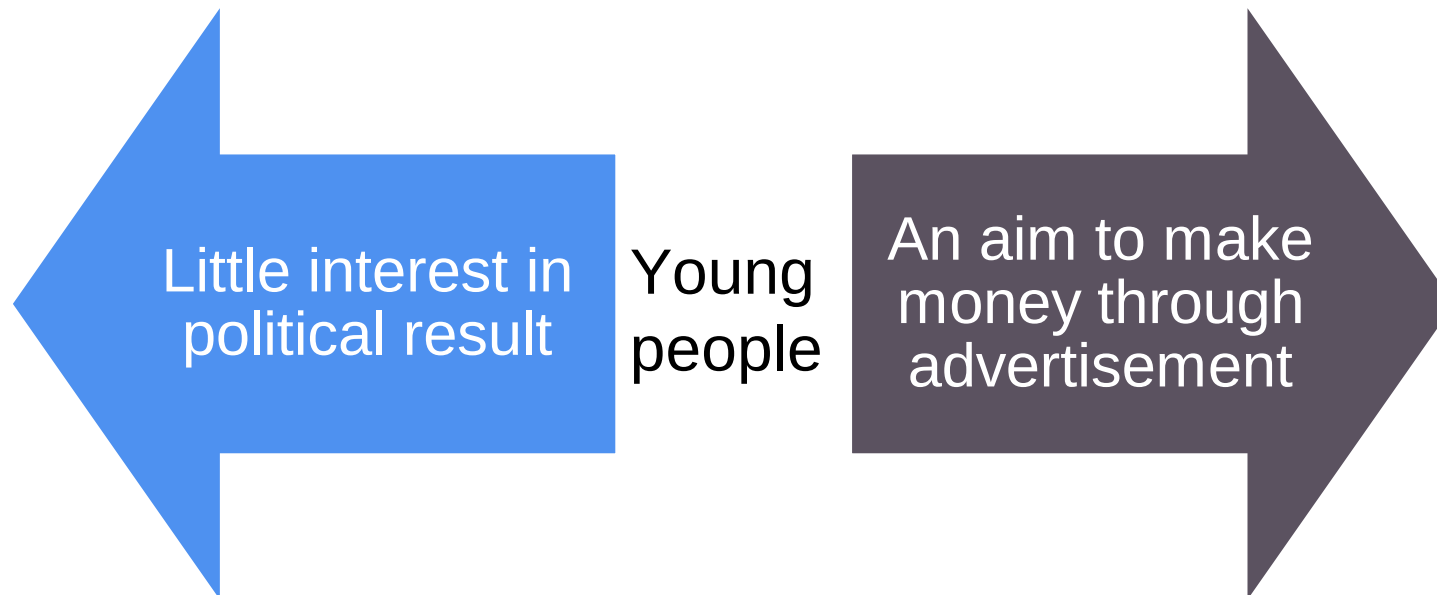
→ Difficult to tell the difference

Creating confusion and deception

(Burkhardt, 2017)

Motives?

- 'Inadvertent disinformation' (Mills et al. 2019, p.4).
- Veles, North Macedonia: the city of fake news (Pangrazio, 2018). It is reported to hosts over 100 US politics websites.



Motives?

To maintain or bolster their positions in social groups, or interact with other people: “part of their ‘identity work’”.

+ Aral (2018): Those who share ‘unknown information’ first on social media can grab public attention and fame.

→ Speed is key, rather than accuracy. People may share news without checking credibility, or be deceived due to sophisticated tricks.



*Song by US singer-songwriter Lana Del Rey
© 2014 Lana Del Rey, under exclusive licence to
Polydor Ltd. (UK)*

Impacts on major content of public discourse

Spike in 'exploitative disinformation' (Mills et al 2019, p.4):

- Primarily advertisers pump money into the internet amid a lack of regulation on platforms (Pangrazio, 2018; Burkhardt, 2017)

Fake political news

- is being spread more than news in other categories - at 35.71% (Dizikes, 2018)
- (2022 US mid-term elections [fake videos and photos](#) – Devlin and Sardarizadeh (2022))

'Incivility':

- Twitter promotes public discourse that is 'simple, impetuous, and denigrating and dehumanizing' and aims to have 'visceral responses' (Lewandowsky et al, 2017)
- Increasing number of websites whose contents focus on 'non-intellectual aspects of human nature' (Burkhardt, 2017).

Impacts on major content of public discourse on inequality

Misleading, negative reporting

- News on groups of people suffering from inequality may be reported, but in the form of 'sensational', 'negative', or 'suspicious' information, as a way to lure audiences (Burkhardt, 2017) (Example: political scandals, celebrities' life)

Two possibilities

- Inequality issues may not receive sufficient attention, or the public be fed with false news (misconceptions and myths)

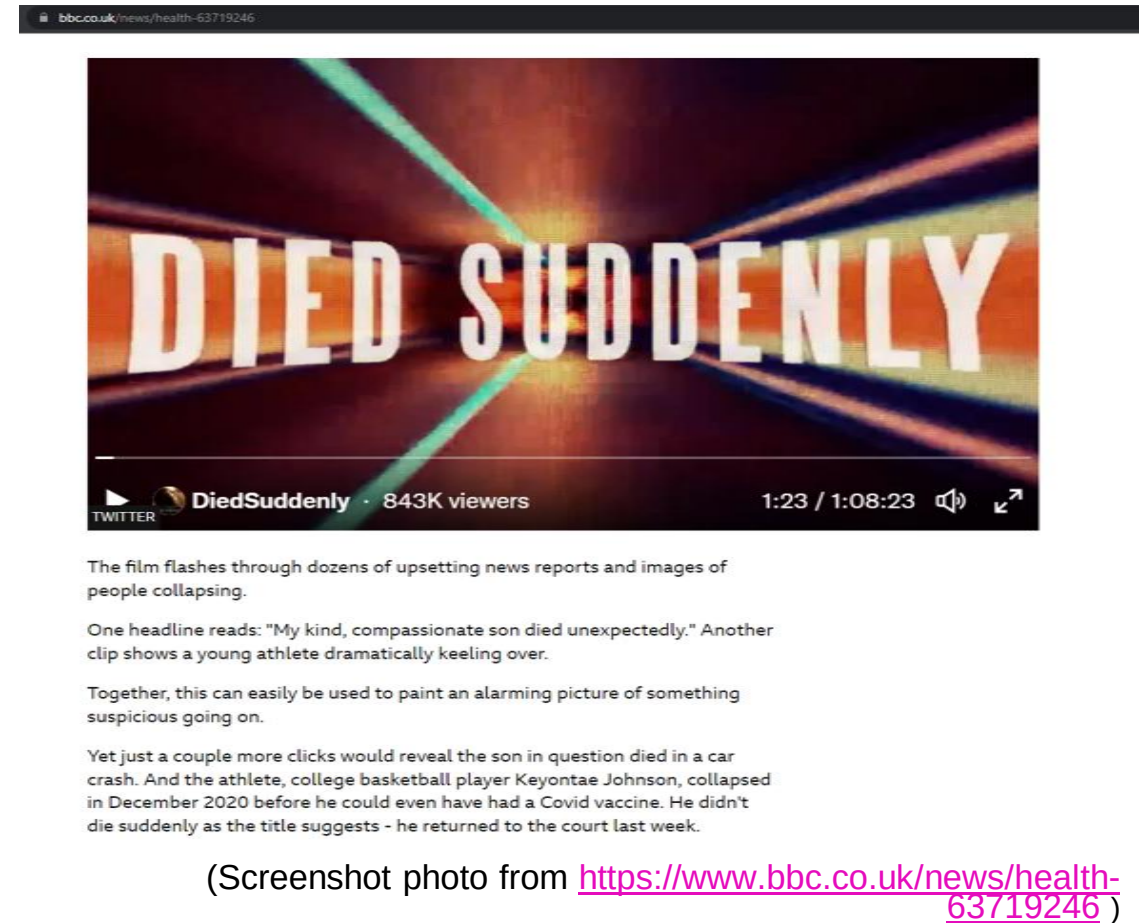
Impacts of fake news on public discourse on inequality

- Pieces of truths are distorted to support one's ideas or ideology

(Example: Anti-vax provoking video that uses bits of truth and distorts them to tell a misleading story (Schraer, 2022 - Photo →)

- The products often disguise as professional, credible reports (Durodolu and Ibenne, 2020)

→ The **autonomy** among a group of people affects the **right** to know the truth of the public: anyone can be at risk



Impacts of fake news on public discourse on inequality

“Knowledge is power” (Bacon, 1597)

Fake news increases imbalance between those who have power and the vulnerable

- There is a large number of fake news regarding gender issues (Gupta, 2022)
- Instances of false news:
 - - ‘Gay and bisexual women’ will not suffer from cervical cancer (NHS England, 2019);
 - - “Abortion is more dangerous than childbirth.” (Chakravarthy, 2020);
 - - Covid vaccines are a tracking device as ‘microchips’ will be injected into human bodies (Christie, 2021).

Groups of people who are more likely to fall prey to fake news

- The elderly;
- Hyper partisans;
- Media consumers
- (Guess et al., 2017; David Lazer et al., 2017; Rhode, 2022)
- → Possibilities of holding discrimination in age, gender, and sexual orientations

Impacts of fake news on public discourse on inequality



(Worrall, 2018)

- What could have been prevented, even with scientific evidence, may worsen and turn into a crisis.

For instance: healthcare or vaccination, choices in life, behaviours (Rapp and Donovan, 2017; Gerrig & Prentice, 1991; Rapp and Braasch, 2014).

- Increasing distrust and lack of empathy → brewing chances of opportunists/populists to attack on expert knowledge and mainstream media (Hameleers, 2022; Nicolaou & Giles, 2017)
- Negligence of basic universal values to fulfil material wealth demand (Kanišauskas, 2018)

Impacts of fake news on public discourse on inequality

- Fake news can spread far and wide, however, it may take longer time to correct false news which is not easily replaced (Rapp and Donovan, 2017; Lewandowsky et al, 2017)
- Defamation: fake news can impair real people's reputation (Pearson, 2017)
 - The internet is often assumed to offer space of fairness, but 'some voices remain unheard' (Economic and Political Weekly, 2019)
- Detrimental to the fight for justice and equity, particularly for women (fake news and defamation are most common ways to molest women online, plus gender prejudices (Gupta, 2022))

Internet users' behavioural tendency

Fake news is spread faster by humans than bots (Aral, 2018)

'Group think' approach

- Closeness with the individual who shared the information plays an important role (Rhodes, 2022).

'Homophily'

- Although they are inaccurate, fake news shared by 'friends' on social media platforms will obtain credibility (Pangrazio, 2018)

→ Fake news can be rapidly spread among people that share the same or similar beliefs and values (Rhodes, 2022; Lazer et al., 2017, p. 5).

Internet users' behavioural tendency

• The target to enhance 'level of personalisation' of digital platforms: **filter bubble** (Rapp and Donovan, 2017):

- Social media users are given mostly information aligning with their viewpoints and bias (Lewandowsky et al, 2017)
- **Confirmation bias:** Audiences strongly cling to their beliefs, citing evidence on such basis (Badke, 2018; Gwebu et al, 2021).

→ People might become more resistant to contrary information and difficult to believe in 'correction' after reading fake news (Rapp and Donovan, 2017; diSessa, 1993; Limon, 2002).

Is there anything we can do?

- Raise awareness of the operation of fake news campaigns;
Have people's voices heard for persuasion and tackling unjust norms and mindsets (Lewandowsky et al, 2017)
- Do not take everything at face value → bolster critical thinking
Many versions of 'fact' make people with little critical thinking and information literacy easily overwhelmed and confused (Durodolu and Ibenne, 2020)
- Bear in mind that social platforms are products by companies to make profits. (Economic and Political Weekly, 2019)

"Think before you retweet."
(Roy, 2018)

'Emotional stories' + 'official numbers' = persuasiveness?

Do people look into the sources and whether the figures are correctly reported?

(Schraer, 2022)

Relaxed and open disposition of users face higher risks of being exploited (Pangazio, 2018).

Is there anything we can do?

- . Content creators and audiences are called on to proliferate truth with support information (Rapp and Donovan, 2017; Danielson, Sinatra, & Kendeou, 2016; Guzzetti et al., 1993; Tippet, 2010).
- . More communication or information may make small impacts (Lewandowsky et al, 2017), but Brulle et al. (2012) suggest 'political mobilization' and 'public activism' will help better inform the public.



(Lopez, 2017)

Summary

- Information access has now been quick and wide, but we must be cautious over accuracy.
- Truth and fake news both can affect behaviours and choices, although false news is difficult to be overwritten.
- Inequality issues may not receive sufficient reporting, and fake news may create misconceptions, myths and amplify opposition.
- Challenge, check, confide → Audience needs to strengthen critique in content, sources and platforms.



(Eyler-Werve, 2017)



(Getty Images, No date)

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Thank you
for your
attention!

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