

Written Representation 116

Name: Yeo Chee Hian
Engineer

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FAKE NEWS

BACKGROUND

The physical world is duplicating itself in the digital world. Analogies are:- Human born through hospital vs Social media accounts created through Facebook & twitter, Location vs website, Shopping Centre vs e commerce platform, Bully vs Cyberbully, Robber vs Hackers, Road Access vs telecom access etc.

In the 90s, human brains can only access into this new world through computers. But with the emerging of smart phone technology, almost every brain is connected to this world 24/7, at the ease of fingertips. This technology leads to enormous speed & access of information. The physical world is now closely linked together without border or distance in the digital era.

This creates opportunities and obstacles. Opportunities are factories can link direct to consumer from any part of the world, Services (Payments, Queue & shopping etc.) can be done efficiently through digital platform. On the contrary, Obstacles like crime can commit from another country freely, eg Gambling, Hacking etc.

One of the issues we would discuss today is information. It is link in digital world without border, censorship, accountability nor control. If information is used responsibly, it would be great advantage to mankind. However, if being abused, it can give rise to social problems & issues.

CAUSE & EFFECT

Unlike new births being born & certified by hospital, new social accounts are created in the web without control. Moreover, anyone can have multiple accounts. Since these accounts identity is virtual and not tag to any physical individual, social media responsibility is hard to manage. This will give rise to many abuse or irresponsible behavior.

Fake News can be created in a digital article and planted easily in the social media to achieve its intents (either with purposes or ignorance). With the connectivity in the social media, this Fake News can be duplicated & spread at amazing speed & coverage – forwarding/sharing information to multiple friends with a click of a button.

Fake news can results in damaging reputation or cause panic/uncertainty within very short span of time. Due to this potential damages, it can cause chaotic in politics, products or behavior. If not resolved, it may cause mankind civilization to be stagnant or reversed.

SOLUTION

1. Verification

There must be endorsement for news credibility. Each government should task a special board to be responsible for verifying and endorsing on any article if requested. Decision to verify any article is left for creator or forwarder. He can choose to have it verified & endorsed by this board to show public its credibility. Reader behavior must also change to recognize news credibility through endorsed logos. This validation job is currently done by SPH. Only article publish by SPH carries very high credibility. But this validation task will be enormous if go into auditing upon public request.

2. Accountability

All news creators should be accountable for their article. By achieving this, we will have more responsible writers & articles in the social media. One way is to have all article identified with the creator name (for traceability). This should deter those from creating irresponsible news to achieve their objective. Again these accountability features are already found in SPH contribution column. We need a way to duplicate this accountability & responsibility into the digital world.

3. Virtual Identity

Each virtual account should be controlled by the government, like the hospitals. And all these must be updated into the birth certificates. Suggestion is that every citizen is given a basic account, phone number, along with their birth cert registration number & name. Rest of subsidiary accounts created can be treated like alias name. When this person die, all these accounts need to be erased (which the current social media don't do). This may face many objections from the democratic public. But without going back to this basic, it is like a country having new citizen without any identification & traceability. Back to the ancient times.

CONCLUSION

Many of these solutions had been implemented in physical world after thousands of years of civilization. We just need to duplicate into the virtual world.

With such massive scale & openness of social media, there would not be a one-time solution to resolve Fake news issues. Solutions need to be constantly evolves to handle new behavior or cover up loop holes. In fact, it may need the consensus effort of all countries, Legislation & Social Media Platform to resolve the current stage of Fake news issue.