

DISCERNING FAKE NEWS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF COMMUNICATION PROFESSIONALS

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Abstract

The study qualitative study sought to determine the methods of communication professional in discerning fake news. Purposive sampling was used to select 10 informants who have hands-on experiences in discerning news as they are working in different fields of media. The findings of the study reveal a set of method to discern news based on the lived experiences and the perspective of the informants. Thematic analysis was used to generate codes and themes to interpret the interview responses. The researchers recommend that the findings of the study be used by every individual to be aware on how to discern news especially students who are very attached to social media and that similar studies be conducted for future research considering other variables that were not included in this study.

Keywords: discerning news, media literacy, fake news

Unreliable news is defined by the netizens as fake news. Fake news is intentionally written to mislead readers to believe false information (Liu, Shu, Sliva, Tang, & Wang, 2016).

According to Pope Francis, fake news is satanic. “Dostoevsky’s observation is illuminating: “The man who lies to himself and listens to his own lies comes to such a pass that he cannot distinguish the truth within him, and so loses all respect for himself and for others.”

In the late 20th century, the internet provided new means for disseminating fake news on a vastly increased scale. When the internet was made publicly available, it was possible for

anyone who had a computer to access it. At the same time, innovations in computers made them affordable to the average person. Making information available on the internet became a new way to promote products as well as make information available to everyone almost instantly (Burkhardt, 2017).

Fake news proliferate during election time. Some studies show fake news in election time like in the 2016 US presidential election. Here in the Philippines, fake news is also disseminated during the national election period in 2016.

Misinformation and fake news have always been prevalent in society (Mcculloch, 2016). In our fast growing economies, internet is a part of our daily lives specially the use of social media as a source of information; thus, fake news can easily dominate these people who do not have much knowledge in discerning fake news.

It is much easier to influence somebody before they take a decision. This may also be the reason why people succumbed to fake news from social media. Social news can influence readers more because many people believe that everything they read is true and base on facts.

Social media as part of the mass media, is the cheapest way of advertising and disseminating news and information through the internet. But it has the power to give wrong information and to mislead readers.

This research paper aims to explore the ways on how communication professionals give possible solutions or give pre-cautions on how to determine fake news in social media.

Thus, the researchers, conducted a study and interviewed media personnel regarding their experiences in discerning fake news.

Review of Related Literature

Credibility in fake news. *Fake news* was not a term many people used 18 months ago, but it is now seen as one of the

greatest threats to democracy, free debate and the democratic order. Aside from being a favorite term of Donald Trump, it was also named 2017's word of the year, raising tensions between nations, leading to regulation of social media. And yet, nobody can agree on what it is, how much of a problem it is, and what to do about it (Carson, Titcomb, 2018).

First, fake news is intentionally written to mislead readers to believe false information, which makes it difficult and nontrivial to detect based on news content; therefore, we need to include auxiliary information, such as user social engagements on social media, to help make a determination. Second, exploiting this auxiliary information is challenging in and of itself as users' social engagements with fake news produce data that is big, incomplete, unstructured, and noisy.

It is very clear that in our times nowadays social media are one of the sources of information. These information include news information, general information and more. Information to all by the means of internet although information are most likely not been verified and can be considered as fake news. Thus, all news must be verified.

Bueno (2017) stated that battling the spread of 'fake news' is similar to fighting a hydra, the many-headed monster of Greek mythology: Once you cut off a head, another appears in its place. It implies that fake news is very hard to fight. It does not have an end. It is a continuous process, where it is the antagonist of the true and real news.

Bambauer, Bambauer, and Verstrate (2017) argued that fake news is often used to refer to several different phenomena. The lack of clarity around what exactly fake news makes understanding of the social harms that it creates and crafting solutions to these harms difficult.

Fake news on social media. The intentional spreading of false stories has been credited with swaying such monumental events, as last year's Brexit vote and U.S. presidential election. Understanding the unique epidemiology of fake news may be no less important. Unlike a typical virus, purveyors of falsehood

don't have to infect people at random. Indeed, social media with the power of internet is a very powerful source of information; whereas, it is the easiest and fastest way of gathering information.

They found that the most important catalyst of fake news was the precision with which the purveyor targeted an audience - a task that can easily be accomplished using the data that tech companies routinely gather and sell to advertisers. The key was to seed an initial cluster of believers, who would share or comment on the item, recommending it to others, through Twitter or Facebook. False stories spread farther when they were initially aimed at poorly informed people who had a hard time telling if a claim was true or false. This study is much related to our study.

Facebook, is an important source of not only genuine, but also fake news. (Jaere, 2017) But now, a new tool has been developed to expose the fakers. For example, the project has developed algorithms that, with the help of machine learning, are trained to reveal whether images have been manipulated, and to identify the source and context of text strings. The tools also analyze huge volumes of data in a very short time. They visualize and sort social media content into categories that provide journalists with a better overview of what is being shared on social networks. It can also be used for journalistic research.

In 2016, fake news stories dominated Facebook news-feeds, with some articles reaching over a million shares and likes. Similar to fake news articles, memes are popular ideas, images, and videos which also spread rapidly through social media, and as they are shared, users remake and repurpose them. Internet memes are used primarily for comedic entertainment; however, they also confront political and social issues (Nakamura, 2017).

For this project, it was found that memes either perpetuated fake news articles or furthered their spread. Like most meme subgenres, they do not contain a unifying subject matter; rather, they contain the same function of perpetuating subject matter for fake news or aiding the virility of a fake news article. In this article, the uses of memes are for comedic

entertainment only, but it is also now used for faking news. This means that not all of the things that we see on social media are considered true. Somehow it may lead us to believing in fake news and wrong information.

In 2016, media learned the hard way that journalism is in danger of being overwhelmed by rogue politics and a communications revolution that accelerates the spread of lies, misinformation, and dubious claims. It shows that having fake news creates a large amount of falling credibility on all the aspects of information (White, 2016).

A scarcity of deceptive news, available as corpora for predictive modeling, is a major stumbling block in this field of natural language processing (NLP) and deception detection. In this study, it states that the prediction of the chances that a particular news item is intentionally deceptive. This study aims to assist users in detecting and filtering out varieties of potentially deceptive news. This means that this study will help a lot in terms of finding and detecting fake news and information. In our study, we will also do this kind of strategy but we will do it in another way. In the present, we will find ways on how to determine fake news with the help of the lived experiences of the communication professionals.

Social network sites (SNSs) have revolutionized the way in which information is spread by allowing users to freely share content. As a consequence, SNSs are also increasingly used as Ds for the diffusion of misinformation and hoaxes. The nature of online news publication has changed, such that traditional fact checking and vetting from potential deception is impossible against the flood arising from content generators, as well as various formats and genres (Conroy, Chen, Ruben, 2015). This study is just the same just on the study they conducted to needed crap detectors. In methods for finding fake news are presented.

Fake news is intentionally written to mislead readers to believe false information, which makes it difficult and nontrivial to detect based on news content; therefore, we need to include auxiliary information, such as user social engagements on social media to help make a determination. As it is written

intentionally, this studies show that fake news is written in purpose either negative, seldom positive but more on negative side. In this study, it is said that fake news is intentionally written to mislead readers to believe false information.

Benner, Isaac, & Wingfield (2016) stated that two of the world's biggest internet companies have faced mounting criticism over how fake news on their sites may have influenced the presidential election's outcome. Those companies responded by making it clear that they would not tolerate such misinformation by taking pointed aim at fake news sites' revenue sources.

On the other hand, it enables the wide spread of fake news that is low quality news with intentionally false information. The extensive spread of fake news has the potential for extremely negative impacts on individuals and society. Therefore, fake news detection on social media has recently become an emerging research that is attracting tremendous attention. Fake news detection on social media presents unique characteristics and challenges that make existing detection algorithms from traditional news media infective or not applicable.

The Online News Association (2002) reports that 69% of journalists believed that online news sites did not meet the same standards as more traditional sources. Journalists also tended to rate online news sites lower in credibility than did the public (Lasica, 2002). The most commonly expressed concern is related to the high speed with which stories can be posted online. The competition to be the first to report breaking news stories is, according to Lasica (2002), heightened by the Internet and makes errors more common. The majority of journalists surveyed in a Pew Research Center (2004) study said that the Internet has increased the amount of incorrect information in news stories. Similarly, Arant and Anderson (2001) found that nearly half of online editors reported that less time was spent verifying information before a story was posted.

Fake News in the Politics

Mcculloch (2016) claimed that misinformation and 'fake news' has always been prevalent in society, but the degree to which it gained momentum during the US Presidential election on social media was alarming. We saw false stories that ranged from the outlandish and utterly preposterous to the benign and the credible. In some cases, it was deliberately designed to be indistinguishable from real news. In this study, it talks about who is responsible in fake news.

According to many observers, two major stories – Brexit and the election of Donald Trump – signal a moment of peril for the press, and media around the world are deeply alarmed. The free circulation of malicious lies, the ineffectiveness of fact-checking, the resilience of populist propaganda, racism and sexism and the emergence of the so-called post-truth era appear to challenge a fundamental cornerstone of ethical journalism – that facts matter for democracy and that people want to be well-informed when called upon to make potentially life-changing decisions. In the last months of 2016, media executives and leading journalists, policy-makers, and media academics have been scratching their heads to explain what has gone wrong.

Some have rushed to blame technology and the bottom-line priorities of internet and social media giants such as Google, Facebook, and Twitter. Others point to the media's own failures – a deeply-flawed and politicized press and broadcast system stuck in a metropolitan bubble, itself part of the establishment elite, and unable to properly connect with the frustration and anger of people and communities. But singling out convenient scapegoats does little to explain why, in the face of evidence to the contrary, a major section of the public, both in the United Kingdom and United States.

Despite a relatively vast amount of existing literature on the topic, a general lack of conceptual coherence and a rapidly changing news eco-system hinder the development of effective strategies to tackle the issue. Leveraging on four strands of research in the existing scholarship, the paper introduces a

radically new model aimed at describing the process through which misleading information spreads within the hybrid media system in the post-truth era.

The function of “fake” memes is extremely important for internet users to understand, because spotting “fake” memes can help users more easily differentiate between factual information and fake news. Understanding “fake” memes helps users see how fake news is spread and the part memes play in its propagation. Spreading fake news becomes standard practice for governments across the world (Timberg, 2017).

Campaigns to manipulate public opinion through false or misleading social media postings have become standard political practice across much of the world, with information ministries, specialized military units and political operatives shaping the flow of information in dozens of countries. These propaganda efforts exploit every social media platform, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and beyond and rely on human users and computerized “bots” that can dramatically amplify the power of disinformation campaigns by automating the process of preparing and delivering posts.

The researchers, led by Dr. Diego Fregolente Mendes de Oliveira, found social media users were struggling “to cope with the information overload caused by the messages that flood our screens” and did not question information sources or whether it had been verified by reputable organizations.

Many assume that because young people are fluent in social media, they are equally savvy about what they find there. A professional appearance and polished “About” section could easily persuade students that a site was neutral and authoritative, the study found, and young people tended to credulously accept information as presented even without supporting evidence or citations (Domonoske, 2016).

According to Selvaraj (2015), students spend more time on social media than they do using personnel email. Even though there is loss of privacy and safety, social media provides opportunities for connecting with friends, classmates, and people

with shared interest. However, many students rely on the accessibility of information on social media. In this case, this would never be accurate in terms of accessibility of information on social media such as information about certain issues that is happening. It is a given that social media gives the opportunity to everyone who needed to be connected to one another and to get information.

Concluding all of the related literatures and studies. determining fake news is not that easy to do, by just proofing several news and information we encounter in our daily lives. Just like what our finding in other studies said that fake news is intentionally written to mislead readers to believe false information. This means that fake news is unstoppable. It is created to be a source of false information to mislead people that will eventually create some faction that can be concluded either positive or negative effects on people’s lives.

Statement of the Problem

The study aims to find out how communication professionals discern fake news on social media. Specifically, the study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. How do selected communication professionals discern fake news?
2. What are the factors that affect the communication professionals on discerning fake news?

Methods

Research Design

In order to answer the research questions, a qualitative content analysis was conducted. According to Wildemuth and Zhang (2009), “As one of today’s most extensively employed analytical tools, content analysis has been used fruitfully in a wide variety of research applications in information and library science (ILS)” (p. 1).

Qualitative research consists of three categories (Wolcott, 1994). These are description, analysis, and interpretation. Description is the observations employed in the research. Analysis is the process used when determining the relationships of different texts and their context. Finally, interpretation is the process of categorizing analysis into overall qualitative themes through discovery (Wolcott, 1994). Qualitative content analysis is much more inductive than deductive (Wildemuth & Zhang, 2009).

Participants and Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling was used in selecting the 10 participants in the study who were working in various media companies across the country. The criteria considered were they should be a communication professional with firsthand experience on discerning fake news and they must be currently working in different media companies and fields. The selected participants were mostly in GMA and ABS-CBN and also in DZME 1530 and DZRJ. Included are a radio reporter, a back pack producer, video editor, graphic artist, senior social media producer public affair social media team, advertising coordinator and researcher.

Instruments

The instrument used in this study is an interview schedule. Interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant's experiences. Interview can pursue in-depth information around the topic. It may be useful as follow-up to certain respondents (McNamara, 1999).

Data Gathering Procedure

A camera and a voice recorder were set up during the interview. The camera recorded the whole interview visually and the voice recorder recorded the whole interview in audio only. After interviewing the 10 selected informants, the recorded data was transcribed verbatim. Transcribing the data can help the researcher for closer study. Transcribing appears to be a straight - forward technical task, but in fact involves judgments about

what level of details to choose, data interpretation, and data representation.

Data Analysis

The researcher analyzed the data through a content analysis. Each chapter of the data probed the answers of the informants. Based on the data in each chapter, the research question can be answered. After analyzing the data, answers, conclusions and recommendation were formed. The content analysis is composed of description, analysis, and interpretation. The content analysis of the study is based from the experiences of the communication professionals in discerning news. Researchers observed the answers of the informants on how they discern news based in their experiences.

Results and Discussions

Verification

From the answers of the 10 informants, verification is the most answered method in discerning news. Each of the communication professionals explained why verification is a must in discerning news. Verification varies in different ways; it can be determined using many aspects. It can be by checking the author, checking the sources, and by checking it on the news trusted sites.

According to Ms. Aliyah Laurente, video editor from ABS – CBN, she stated that, *“Ahmm siguro, wag lang basta basta scroll ng scroll sa facebook. ahmm kailangan siguro manood din ng news talaga tapos yun yung usual na yung mga basic na source of news diba news paper, tapos television, radio ganyan. Tapos yung mga trusted sites.”* She defined verification as checking the news only in the trusted sites and a like news papers, television, and radio. As per Ms. Julie Baiza, radio news writer in DZME 1530, she stated that, *“Siguro sa lahat ng pagkakataon lagit lagi kailangan nating maging kritikal. Ahmm Hindi lang siguro dun sa mga news site lalong lalo na din siguro sa social media dahil ito na ang bagong media ngayon diba*

napaka accessible, napakabilis ng impormasyon pero tingnan mo kanino ba nanggaling yung information and yung mismong information na binabasa mo ah for you ba kapanipaniwala ba to? Kasi kung parang napaka imposible diba dapat magduda ka na you have to be critical talaga.”

She said that in the platform of social media, news can be also deceiving. She said that verification must be critical. The news must be checked and verified critically. According to the study of (Nicholson, 2017), fake news, hoaxes, and outright lies are spreading on social media because users are inundated with posts from dubious sources and are not paying enough attention to question their truthfulness, according to a study.

This is also the reason verification is needed before believing anything. In the statement of Ms. Nichole Peña, back producer of Star Cinema, ABS – CBN, she says that, *“Diba tas pag nakakita ka ng news search ka pa kasi one, two is not enough para masabi mong totoo yung news.”* In her statement it is clear that verification is also her way of discerning real news. Ms. Wenvy Ann Salcedo, radio reporter from DZRJ, also gave support to Ms. Peña’s answer. She stated that, *“Okay, so first, you double check, you triple check everything, you go to different sources if you’ve seen something I don’t know from Facebook or a site you check different source mga uhhh news organization or even makikita naman lahat sa internet eh kahit nga yung sa mga dyaryo you check everything yung ibat ibang sources bago ka mag mag uhm mag accept ng news as factual, yes so yun yung isa sa mga parameter and also when I was on radio we call the person, we call them, we interview them, and then we asked thoroughly kung tama ba yung information na natanggap naming. Yeah, we do it with ourselves so yun. Kasi sobrang importante talaga na na yung reputation mo talaga and then ah yung reputation din nung tao na sasabihin mo you could be swed, for that so its really important.”*

All informants agree that received information must be verified. In Ms. Salcedo’s answer, she gives the meaning of verification by sight news only on trusted news sites, specially since not all of the information on the internet are true. As fake

news is intentionally written to mislead readers to believe false information, which makes it difficult and nontrivial to detect based on news content, we need to include auxiliary information, such as user social engagements on social media, to help make a determination (Liu, Shu, Sliva, Tang, & Wang, 2016).

“Talagang dapat sa pagbabasa ng news article kailangan talaga yung main stream media yung chinecheck ang lagi nating chinecheck. For example Abs cb yung news.abscbn.com ano pa ba, mga Inquirer, Manila Bulletin, like that so wag tayong magbebase lang sa mga maliliit na online for example yung mga blog spot, wag tayong magbebase sa mga ganung articles kasi kadalasan dun may mga ganung mga klaseng tao sa loob ng mga blogspots na yun na ang tanging gusto nila ay makapanira lamang ng tao and gumagawa ng mga story para sirain yung tao na yun.” From the statement of Mr. Lazaro, in his own perspective, verification can be checking the news only on trusted sites. Just like the answer of the first four informants, their ways of discerning fake news are similar.

Verification of news in social media is not just simply checking the news in the trusted news portals. There are different strategy of dissemination of fake news in the internet, like photos, memes, and quote poster. The function of “fake” memes is extremely important for internet users to understand because spotting “fake” memes can help users more easily differentiate between factual information and fake news. Understanding “fake” memes helps users see how fake news is spread and the part memes play in its propagation. Spreading fake news becomes standard practice for governments across the world (Timberg, 2017).

From the statement of Mr. Gerald Frista, senior social media producer public affairs social media team at GMA 7, he stated the other forms of fake news in the internet must be verified before believing in it. *“Ako personally may nakita na ko before. It’s about a statement ng mga pari noong Marawi siege na parang... mayroong “quote-poster” na sinabi raw ng CBCP na parang mali daw na pinapatay ng mga sundalo yung mga nasa Marawi since pinaglalaban lang naman daw nila*

yung karapatan nila sa lugar. Pero parang ang dating e pinamumukha nila na suporters ang mga pari ng mga rebel groups. Unfortunately, fake news siya. Kasi chineck ko yung CBCP na Facebook page may statement sila na parang dini-disproove nga nila itong statement na 'to na walang such interview o parang sought yung mga priest about it, tungkol do'n sa Marawi siege. Actually parang sinu-support pa nga nila yung mga troops natin na parang suportahan natin sila kasi nagbubuwis sila ng buhay para ipagtanggol yung kalayaan natin."

From Mr. Frista's statement, he coined the term *quote-poster* as a material to disseminate fake news in the internet. Based on his answer, he stated that verification by checking the source is another way. The source is the backbone of news. From the source itself, it must be verified though checking it, if it is legitimate enough to be trusted. Also in his statement, he checked the side of the victim of fake news, and he discovers that the news from the quote-poster that has been posted in the internet, specifically in social media is not true. This way of verification by Gerald Frista is supported by Benedict Rallama, graphic artist from GMA 7. Being a graphic artist, Mr. Rallama has his method on how he can determine if the picture is true or not. Based on his working experiences as a graphic artist, his verification expertise is at discerning fake photos. *"Ah, paiba-iba eh, pero usually pagka nakita ko na na hindi na sya kapani paniwala lalo na kapag alam mo sya kung paano gawin, iyon yun. Kaya nalalaman ko na fake. Kasi kung kaya ko sya gawin, malalaman mo yan sa ano sa yung edge ng photo nung halimbawa ako, yung edge ko, kapag soft yan yung edge nya, malamang yan photoshopped yon. Kasi mayroon naman paraan na ganoon talaga. Madami na akong ginawang ganoon, tapos bawasan ko opacity, multo na yon."*

Based from his answer on how he discerns fake news in the form of fake photos, Mr. Gerald Frista has also a way on how to check if the photo is real or not. *"You can also use yung Google reverse search, may ganoon kasi yung Google parang click mo yung parang camera na icon pwede kang mag-upload doon ng photo tapos Google will search it. Makikita niya kung*

saan mga photos or website na lumabas yung photo na ito, so mave-verify mo kung totoo nga bang ito ay sundalo sa Marawi or sundalo sa ibang bansa kasi di ba minsan ang isa kasing bagay na in-upload mo online mayroon yang digital foot print eh, so malamang mayroong pinagkuhanan yung kung sino mang taong ito ng original source. For example, nga si ASEC Mocha kumuha siya ng isang photo ng isang random soldier for sure mayroon website siya na pinagkuhanan non dahil hindi niya naman actual. So kapag sinearch mo siya sa Google basta naka-database sya sa Google makikita mo kung saan saang website na sya lumabas so mate-trace mo pa actually kung saan sya original na na-post. Marami pa yan, may mga apps din na iba kang pwedeng gamitin pero yun lang yung parang pinakamabilis na paraan para makita mo." On Mr. Frista's answer, he says his way to verify the photo if it is true or not is by using the google application. It is very accessible and easy to use. This shows, as a communication professional they have knowledge on how to discern news based on their professions and field of work in the media.

"Kaya dapat yung mga tao ngayon na nasa internet lang lagi wag kayong basta basta maniwala, at least siguro sana mga sampung fact check ang dapat gawin nyo bago kayo maniwala lalo na yung mga ano tungkol sa ano, sa tungkol sa ano man, sa kahit na ano kahit sa simpleng bagay. Double check nyo kasi nandyan na sa internet lahat." Verifying in the perspective of Mr. Benedict Rallama is to do fact check, not only in an article but also the content itself, plus the photo added on it to give spice to the article.

Fake news is also used to earn money. The example of it is click baits, in the statement of Ms. Jexie Reyes, advertising coordinator in ABS-CBN. She stated that, *"so sana yung mga tito, tita natin at yung mga nagsheshare ng fake news, na naniniwala ay mas tingnan pa nila yung sources. Yung iba naman kase nagsheshare lang kase click baits lang. I mean, shineshare nila without reading the article tapos yung title naman ng article is click baits lang like sobrang maeentice ka dun sa title kase sobrang intriguing. So yon, mas maganda kung una, titingnan talaga nila tung source at pangalawa, kung babasahin talaga*

nia yung article.” In the perspective of Ms. Jexie Reyes, verification is by checking the sources. She also mentioned the other way of fake news in the internet, which is click baits. This type of fake news propagation strategy has money involvement. According to her, it is best to check the sources first and verify it. This is supported by Ms. Jica Gula, back pack producer at Star Cinema, ABS – CBN 2, when she said. *“As I said kanina nga, parang sa social media first nila icheck yung name mismo at kung taga san yung nagpost, tingnan nila yung profile and tingnan nila yung previous post nila kung troll lang ba to o credible source ba talaga to. And then, pag may nakita silang news from one source, they should not rely on that source dapat magresearch din sila. Tapos kung makahanap sila ng maraming credible sources na same ng news na sinasabi nila, edi yun malalaman mo talaga na credible yung news na yun and tingnan din yung mga comments ng mga tao.”* Based on the statement of Ms. Gula, her way to verify news is by the checking the source. Her answer is similar to the answer of the other informants about verification through checking the sources.

As per Mr. Mark Gene Makalalad, radio reporter from DZBB, GMA 7, *“Okay ahm, i think you know this already pero I will reiterate this always. Do your research, okay. We as a journalist, we always do our research. The first thing we do in the morning, we read news. We call our sources. For us to make an accurate news and delivery to the public noh, hindi pwede yung ah kami yung journalist, ay di namin alam kung ano yung binabalita at kung ano yung nilalagay namin. Same thing with people as a citizen so, naka lipat sya we only have the responsibility to check the news especially right now, ang dami ring mga fake news sites, so ikaw, right now meron tayong mga established media outfits. okay, to name a few, sa TV nandyan ang GMA, ABS, TV5, radio DZBB, ah Radio Inquirer, and for print, Philippine Star, Inquirer, Manila Bulletin, Manila Times, standard. So this are legit media outfits. So ikaw what will happen if we went shift, sorry ah pero diba meron tayong mga blogging ngayon, blogging sites. Im not discounting them, actually thats good. We’re democratic country. They can try whatever they want to ask but to the point na pinapakealaman nila yung news eh at yung mga marami silang ah ah marami*

silang followers noh somehow naapektuhan din yung follower nila kasi bloggers are great influencers talaga. Na ano yun malaki ang impluwensya ng blogger to the point na yung mga followers nila nakakagalit nila. Okay, so ikaw bilang, estudyante, bilang normal na mamamayan iweigh nyo, iweigh nyo yung facts. Ano yung paniniwalaan ko? Itong media outfit or itong news sites na to diba. Yung journalist or yung blogger? always weigh the facts, and ah and what like Ive said kanina noh ahm pag naresearch nyo kasi tong mga bagay na to, pag naresearch nyo yung tao, nagkakaroon kasi ng ano eh accountability yung tao eh. Kaming mga journalist pag kami nagkamali either masuspende or matanggal kami sa serbisyo, pero ano ba ang accountability ng blogger? Ano ba yung accountability nung news site na pinagkuhanan mo ng istorya mo siguro wala. Siguro hihingi ng public apology and all, so so ayun, yun yung talagang pinaka effective way to combat or to fight fake yung news is to do your research okay.

In the broad perspective of Mr. Makalalad, his way of verifying the news is just like the same with others, but he gives detailed answers on how to verify. Just like the answer of the other informants, it is best to verify the news by checking it on legit media outfits. Also, Mr. Makalalad said he verifies news by weighing the facts. Fact checking is also verification. By weighing the facts, whether it is true or not, is a best way on how to discern news.

Just like Mr. Benedict Rallama and Mr. Gerlad Frista, the use of photo as to disseminate fake news is also mentioned by Mr. Makalalad. He stated that *“ah welcome to Philippines, Province of China, meron syang picture na ah, meron syang nilapitan yung nagtatanggal ewan ko kung nakita mo to eh yung nag viral, tinatanggal nya yung ano yung tarpaulin. Pinicturan nya yung reporter, Jao Manlapaz yung reporter, tapos ah ang akala nung mga netizen yung reporter yung nagkabit; nakita mo yun? Kasama ko sya sa work dati, so nabiktima sya ng fake news. Ang dami nyang bash na natanggap nung araw na yun to the point na gumawa ng official media statement yung estasyon namin.”* From his statement, it is clear photo is being used to propagate unreal news. Mr. Frista and Mr. Rallama has a way to

determine if the photo is real or not. Also Mr. Makalalad has a method on how to discern photo. It is by simply verifying the source. The source of the photo would answer what the real story behind the photo was.

Overall, the answers of the 10 informants are similar to each other. Each communication professional has his/her own perspective in discerning news, based on their different fields of work and also in their different media companies. In their own perspective, it is clear that the general way or method in discerning fake news in the internet is verification. Knowing the parts on how to verify a news can give the public on to react, and to accept a certain news.

The levels of credibility are also shown here. As the communication professional's perspective in discerning news, they somehow use the levels of credibility. In verification, the level of credibility used is authority. Verifying if the author of the article is credible enough is the main point of the informants by answering to check the source. Mainly, the source is the head of the news and the author is the one who will write the news. By verifying the authority of the author, it can give a precaution to the readers specially the netizens to discern news properly. Reminder from Mr. Gerald Frista, *So ayun lang, maging maingat, magbasa and then matutong mag verify kasi simpleng simple lang yon. Sa mundo natin ngayon napakadali lang mag-verify.*

Conduct further research

Conducting further research is also another way of discerning fake news. Doing research about the article can help in discerning fake news. In doing research, one method is checking the headlines. *“Read beyond the headline, okay. Ah when I say beyond the headline, tingnan mo ba baka mamaya yung headline na yun para lang makakuha ng ng ano weh, alam mo yung mga click baits sa social media? Okay, kung halimbawa yung headline nila masyadong enticing, masyadong attractive yung headlines nila, ang tendency ng mga tao pagnakita yun online (cough) excuse me, kiniclick agad, binabasa. Pero kung*

minsan babasahin mo, yung content naman wala dun. Wala wala yung sinasabi nung headline dun sa content. Always remember na dapat yung headline, it consists of yung mga important, most important details of your story. Okay, na once the reader na ah nabasa nya yun, okay na caught yung attention ng reader pag pinasadhan nya dapat yung istorya mo, kung ano yung nasa headline mo, mababasa nya yun either sa introduction or the content or sa middle sa body nung istorya diba. Pag sinabi natin kasing headline, nandun na yung lahat ng element, so masasabi mo syang fake news halimbawa yung headline eh masyadong sensationalized to the point na pagka binasa mo yung istorya wala dun, walang laman, walang laman, okay. Kumbaga, parang ano ka lang - parang nabiktima ka lang nya para mabuksan mo yung headline nya pero wala talaga dun yung istorya.” – Mark Gene Makalalad.

From the statement of Mr. Makalalad, he gave broad answers and understanding based on his perspective on how to discern news. Checking the headline is a part of doing research. Once you research, you will notice the headline if it is applicable enough to the article you are reading. The headline says it all. From the headline itself, what was inside the article can be visualized. So from the answer of Mr. Makalalad it is important to do research by checking and analyzing the headlines.

Supporting the answer of Mr. Makalalad, Mr. Gerald Frista, he said, *“If an article sounds too good to be true na parang “Leni Robredo sinabi ng nandaya sya sa eleksyon” from the title itself sina-suggest na nya na nandaya si Leni and i-trace mo back in history wala naman umamin na nandaya sila sa eleksyon or parang aaminin ko na nagnakaw ako sa kaban ng bayan. Kapag ganoon yung mga headlines, magbasa tayo ng mabuti, alamin natin kung ito bang source na ito ay reliable saka yun nga mag-fact check tayo marami naman kasing available sources.”*

From the answer of Mr. Frista, he stated that researching by analyzing the headline is a way to discern news. His answers support the answer of Mr. Makalalad. The rest of the informants also answered that doing further research is the best way to

discern news. From the answer of Ms. Aliyah Laurente, “*So parang yun nga yung maghanap pa ng ah mas yung mga source yung tamang source kung saan mo kukunin yung totoong news.*” From her statement, she stated to do further research in discerning news. Also concern with their answers the answer of Mr. Mark Arvin Lazaro, and Ms. Julie Baiza, “*Ang hirap sabihin na maging mindfull eh kasi lalong lalo na di naman lahat ng tao educated about this certain topic lalo na yung fake news, so ang tanging masasabi ko lang sa kanila ay ahmm una muna alamin nila muna kung ano nga ba yung mga dapat nilang basahin*” – Mark Arvin Lazaro. Mr. Lazaro stated that not all of the people has the knowledge on how to discern news, that’s why doing further research is a good way to discern news in the internet. From Ms. Baiza’s answers, she stated that, “*Siguro sa lahat ng pagkakataon lagi kailangan nating maging kritikal. Ahhmm Hindi lang siguro dun sa mga news site lalong lalo na din siguro sa social media dahil ito na ang bagong media ngayon diba napaka accessible, napakabilis ng impormasyon pero tingnan mo kanino ba nanggaling yung information and yung mismong information na binabasa mo. Ah for you ba kapanipaniwala ba to? Kasi kung parang napaka imposible diba dapat magduda ka na you have to be critical talaga.*” Be critical in discerning news is just like to do research in the news. Being critical in discerning news has the capacity to check every detail of the article. Just like when doing a research, you must be critical in it.

Checking the biases is another way of discerning news based on the perspective of the communication professionals. Checking the biases is like checking the credibility of a news, and also the author itself. From the 10 informants, most of them checked the biases by simply answering it to check the content.

By checking the content of the news article, it can be seen if the author and the written article has biases. News with biases is technically considered as fake news, because a biased news only shows one side of the story news. According to Mr. Mark Gene Makalalad, “*so always check your source diba baka mamaya yung source mo ba baka mayroon na syang history ng fake news. Check nyo din yung biases, okay. Baka mamaya naman is may sariling interest din sya, like like what Ive said*

earlier noh na gusto nya ipromote yung ganitong klaseng tao na in a way pinopromote nya yung ganitong tao dinidiscout naman nya yung isang tao.” In Mr. Makalalad’s statement, he cleared out that the source can have biases. Check the biases of the article, because some of the authors have biases in terms of news writing. When the news have biases, it is technically considered fake news. Because biased news is a kind of unfair news, unfair in terms of just focusing on just one side of the story.

Ms. Jica Gula stated, “*Tapos kung makahanap sila ng maraming credible sources na same ng news na sinasabi nila, edi yun malalaman mo talaga na credible yung news na yun and tingnan din yung mga comments ng mga tao. Basta reseach lang.*” Researching is her way of discerning news. Just like the answer also of Mr. Benedict Rallama “*So ayon nga, kailangan mas mapang-uri ka lalo na ngayon nasa internet age yung mga tao. Kasi kami dati, library lang kami, research.*” He also stated to do further research in discerning news.

Based on the answers of the 10 informants, to do further research in different ways like checking the whole article if it has biases, is a good way of discerning news. Again, the answers of the informants are similar to each other. Their perspective in discerning news shows a concrete and firm way on how to discern news, and one of this is to do research. Doing research is a broad way of discerning news in social media. As the social media is the source of information in our time now, unlike traditional information sources, the information available through social media is created and shared by interested users. Because it undergoes little scrutiny, the quality of the information gained from social media varies widely. The prevalent use of social media, despite quality concerns, has triggered a debate over whether or not the critical evaluation of social media sources should form an important part of information literacy (Kim, Kyung-Sun, Sin, Sei-Ching, & Yoo-Lee, 2014).

As the social media become the public source of information, it is best to do research in everything that we can see in the internet. “*kasi it is a free app na na-aaccess ng lahat ng tao and hindi kasi lahat nagbabasa, so that’s one, ang*

pinakamabilis ay magbasa tayo.” – Mr. Gerald Frista. In Mr. Frista’s statement, it is a free app, pointing to the social media, that’s why it is easy to access. But not all of the information written in the internet are based on facts. That is why it is very important to do research. As Mr. Mark Makalalad says *“and ah always do your research talaga, always do your research specially if its a big story talaga noh.”* Do research and it will be a good way to discern news. Another way to do research is by using application that is provided in the internet, according to Mr. Gerald Frista. There are partnership in the internet on how to lessen the massive birth of fake news in the social media. He stated that *“kapag may sumulat ng fake news about that fake article pwede siyang i-grade or i-rate ng rappler or ng Vera files na fake news ito. Ngayon kapag dumaan yung specific article na iyon sa news feed mo, magkakaroon sya ng notification na magkakaroon ka ng parang suggested articles na may nagsabi na fake ito, pwede mong basahin itong related articles, so that’s one”* his statement it is broadened by the study of Benner, Isaac, Wingfield (2016) stating that two of the world’s biggest internet companies have faced mounting criticism over how fake news on their sites may have influenced the presidential election’s outcome. Those companies responded by making it clear that they would not tolerate such misinformation by taking aim at fake news sites’ revenue sources.

Google kicked off the action on Monday afternoon when the Silicon Valley search giant said it would ban websites that peddle fake news from using its online advertising service. This is also connected on determining the fake news. The internet is the cheapest advertising that we can have. The use of advertising propagates and scatters fake news about a certain issue. The Google strategy uses website ban as their strategy to lessen fake news integration in their website.

Also the answers of the 10 informants is supported by the study of Liu, Shu, Sliva, Tang, and Wang (2016). Bots interact with human users and also with other bots. Though most social media platforms are designed and run by corporations based in the United States, the platforms are infiltrated almost immediately upon their release to the public by a range of

international actors skilled at using information to advance political agendas, within their own countries and beyond, said the researchers from Oxford University’s Computational Propaganda Research Project.

Doing research in discerning is also the means to establish the levels of credibility where currency and relevancy occur. From the answers of the informants, the levels of credibility is evident if the article is current or if it has the currency that fits in the time table of the story. If the article is relevant enough to be read, and to be published, then it is credible.

In conclusion, further research by checking the biases is a concrete way to discern fake news through the perspectives of the communication professionals in different field of works, and media companies. Also the levels of credibility are used by the communication professionals, specifically the objectivity. Objectivity talks about the objectives of the author. In this level of credibility, it asks the article to do research about the author’s objectives, whether if it has biases or not.

Grammar Checking

Grammar checking is one of way to discern fake news. Having a good quality of news is also based on the content itself. And in order for the content to be of good in quality, it must be grammatically correct. According to Mr. Mark Gene Makalalad, *“and kung yung construct ay maigi, isa pa usually yung mga fake news mali yung grammar. Mali yung grammar usually ng fake news. Always remember na sa amin sa ano sa media merong mga editors na tinatawag. Meron kaming desk editors so yung istorya na pinapasa namin ineedit nya bago ma publish to make sure na yung grammar namin correct and for sure sa blogger wala naman nagchecheck nyan eh, nagsulat ka ipublish mo diba, okay. So ayun and bilang tao, tayo vulnerable tayo sa mistake diba. We’re not excused sa paggawa ng mali specially sa grammar. Lalo na native tounge natin Filipino eh English yung istorya mo minsan na nga Tagalog na, Filipino na nagkakamali pa tayo diba. Yun check nyo din yung grammar pag nabasa nyo ng may*

mali tong article na to baka fake news.” Based on the answer of Mr. Makalalad, correctness of grammar is a very good way to check if the news is credible enough. He mentioned that in the media, it has a process wherein an article is being checked by the editors for language editing. Basically, the news we have read in any form of media, whether it is written in English or Filipino, it undergoes language editing.

In the statement of Ms. Julie Baiza, she said she checks the news in terms of grammar, *“Ayun siguro ahmm first, ichochop chop mo talaga titingnan mong mabuti yung bawat information at laman ng article kung papano ang pagkakasulat nito and ako bilang araw araw din naman na nakakapagbasa ako ng balita kahit papano maalam ako dun sa mga lumalabas na news so kung meron isang impormasyon dun na duda ako pagdududahan ko na yung credibility nung buong ahmm buong artikulo.”* From her statement it is clear that in discerning news, we must be critical especially by doing grammar checking.

We are vulnerable for having a mistake, that’s why we need to discern news using different ways. *“So ayun and bilang tao, tayo vulnerable tayo sa mistake diba we’re not excuse sa paggawa ng mali specially sa grammar lalo na native tounge natin Filipino eh English yung istorya mo minsan na nga Tagalog na Filipino na nagkakamali pa tayo diba.”* – Mr. Mark Gene Makalalad.

A news article that is grammatically correct is a good quality news. (Bambauer, Bambauer, Verstrate, 2017). Fake news is often used to refer to several different phenomena. The lack of clarity around what exactly fake news is makes understanding the social harms, that it creates and crafting solutions to these harms difficult.

Concluding all of the answers of the communication professionals in their perspective in discerning fake news, they have different ways of answering the question, but they have the same thought on how to discern news in social media based on their experiences as a communication professional in different fields of work and in different media companies.

It is clear that communication professionals have their own way to discern news based on their own perspective. Problem number one on how the selected communication professionals discern news on social media is answered in detail. This is done through Verification, doing further research, and grammar checking. Those answers are filtered by analyzing all of the answers of the 10 informants. The answers remained the top answers of the informants.

Also the statement of the problem about the factors affecting the communication professionals in discerning news based on their experiences, the answer is the perception of the netizens on how they accept the news they have read. The other factor is the source. Sometimes the news have many errors. That’s why it is very relevant to verify, to do further research and to do grammar checking on the news article but also the author.

The levels of credibility are also recommended in the study, for it is also used by the communication professionals on how to discern news. But also the levels of credibility are a concrete material to use in discerning news, but these levels of credibility are still a subject for testing and approval.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study the researchers concluded that communication professionals exercise good judgment in discerning fake news.

In the same way, the public must be taught to discern fake news though verification, further research, and grammar checking. There are many ways to verify news in different platforms. The use of fake photos, poster-quotes and to verifying the source legitimacy is under the umbrella of verification. In verification, there are many criteria that can be used to determine if the news is real or not. In the article, the source should be verified by asking the credibility of the source and by being more critical about the article.

For the fake photos, the Google reverse is an application that Google produces, that once you upload the picture, it will

automatically be searched by Google and will give you the answer about the real source of photos. Lastly, the poster-quote can be discerned by verifying the meaning of the quotes and verifying the information posted in it by simply going to trusted media outlets only.

Even if the communication professionals has their own method and ways on how to discern news in social media, there are also factors that can affect the communication professionals in discerning news. The factors that affect the communication professional in discerning news are the mentality of the person reading the news or the people's perception of the news. The second is the source.

People's perception affects how they regard a news article. People make decisions if they will believe in certain news or not. Technically, people who are not that knowledgeable in discerning news can be easily deceived by false information that have been disseminated in the internet.

Second is the source. Getting information from legit sources is the best way to not be victimized by fake news. But from the answers of the communication professionals, it is clear that sometimes, the news they get from legit sources are also fake. As people are vulnerable to making mistakes, it is best to apply the method on how to discern news in very critical way.

Recommendations

It is recommended that future researchers look into another aspect of this study and that similar studies be conducted considering other variables that were not included in this study.

It is also highly recommended that future researchers explore public awareness, or attitudes towards, fake news in the internet. For example, empowering the public through equipping them with the skills to discern news and informing the public about self – management in discerning fake news.

It is also recommended that people in the community be informed on how to discern fake news using the result of the study.

In view of this study, knowing the truth in the virtual world can lead us to a peaceful life. Through the use of the information, on how the communication professionals discern news, and with the recommendation of the usage of the levels of credibility, this will lead us to know the truth beneath the bed of lies of fake news in the social media. It is beneficial for us to know the truth. Knowing the truth provides us the stimulus to respond positively in every situation, such as encountering fake news in our daily lives.

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