Editorial Essay

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Creation, curation and correction of misinformation and global communication

As a review of misinformation research in the past decade (Ha et al. 2021) shows, misinformation has become a topic of high interdisciplinary interest and increasingly important in this digital age when an online post can be easily disseminated to the whole world within seconds. Remarkably, the communication field is the most prolific contributor to this subject.

Misinformation comes in different shapes and forms. If based on intent, misinformation mainly refers to unintentional false information creation and dissemination while disinformation is intentionally created and disseminated to mislead people (Fallis 2015). However, when intention is unknown, all incorrect information will be counted as misinformation. Fake news has become a generic term for any news we do not believe is true (Meeks 2020; Nielsen and Graves 2018) or fabricated information disguised as news (Lazer et al. 2018), which is vastly different from its original use as parody and news satire (Day and Thompson 2012). Infodemic is a term using the virus metaphor to describe the fast and wide spread of misinformation during the pandemic (Simon and Camargo 2021). Conspiracy theory is a type of misinformation that involves a speculative explanation for an event accusing those in power secretly colluding for their own benefit at the expense of public interest (Konkes and Lester 2017). In this highly polarized political environment and a new pandemic crisis such as COVID-19, misinformation can consist of political content such as conspiracy theories, health misinformation such as COVID-19 vaccine, etc. The harm to society caused by misinformation does not only affect the Global South, but also the Global North.

Our themed issue on misinformation and global communication aimed to collect original research in both the Global North and the Global South on the topic of misinformation. In our journal launch ceremony on March 12, 2022 in Shanghai, we held an online symposium on misinformation and global communication. Some of the articles in this issue came from revised full papers of that symposium

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after peer review. Some other articles came from open submissions. The resulting themed issue consists of papers from China Hong Kong, Brazil, Spain, and the U.S., covering the three Cs of Misinformation: Creation, Curation and Correction of Misinformation. Creation includes the tactics used to misinform people. Curation is the collection and spreading of misinformation. Correction is to change the belief in misinformation with accurate information as a solution to combat misinformation such as fact-checks. The articles cover the responses to misinformation strategies used in health news postings, responses to faith-based misinformation correction, machine learning model comparison to detect sentiments in responses of correction information, curation and sharing of misinformation in WhatsApp groups by the elderly, mediation of comments' credibility on misperception and sharing of misinformation, and funding and presentation of fact-checks by fact-checking services in Portugal and Brazil, and how active information use and trust in former administrations increase the belief in conspiracy theory against current administration.

1 Highlights of the articles

We begin our themed issue with two papers on COVID-19 vaccination misinformation which has become a highly polarized heath issue in many countries and people of different faiths. Stephanie Tsang's article "Biased, not Lazy: Assessing the effect of covid-19 misinformation tactics on perceptions of inaccuracy and fakeness" is an experiment of a representative sample of Hong Kong people conducted at the peak of COVID-19 in Hong Kong during March, 2022. It shows that people's belief in inaccuracy and fakeness of vaccine information is not due to their laziness in processing information as previous research posited, but their biased beliefs on the danger of vaccination. Misinformation tactics of using quotes of researchers or scientific evidence made no difference to the participants' perception of inaccuracy.

Md Enamul Kabir's article, "Topic and Sentiment Analysis of Responses to Muslim Clerics' Misinformation Correction about COVID-19 Vaccine: Comparison of Three Machine Learning Models," is the first study on responses to faith-based misinformation correction by Muslim clerics on COVID-19 vaccine on YouTube. While it shows most comments toward misinformation correction videos of Muslim Clerics are negative, the most vocal commenters are neither Muslim-related nor influential opinion leaders on others based on their networks. The study also provides methodological contribution by comparing the accuracy of three machine learning models in detecting sentiments toward counter-vaccine misinformation. The Balanced Random Forest Model was found to have the highest accuracy in detecting the valence of the sentiments of the comments.

Apart from public health misinformation, political misinformation is also prevalent. One type of political misinformation is the conspiracy theories of certain domestic and international policy issues. "A Duality of Belief in Conspiracy Theories Amplification: How Active Communicative Actions Work Differently by Trust in the Trump and Biden Administrations" by Hyelim Lee, Loarre Andreu Perez and Jeong-Nam Kim is a national survey of US people explaining why belief in three different anti-Biden conspiracy theories increases during the U.S. Biden administration is due to their trust in the Trump administration and having high communicative action behavior such as information seeking online, information sharing and information forefending. However, there is no difference between international issues and domestic issues in the belief in conspiracy theories.

Juan Liu, Carrie Reif-Stice, and Bruce Getz, Jr.'s article, "The Mediating Role of Comments' Credibility in Influencing Cancer Cure Misperceptions and Social Sharing," is an online experiment. They found that the comments' credibility, rather than the original post's credibility, acts as a mediator between the effects of exposure to misperception of cancer cure and sharing of misinformation. Their findings indicate that healthcare professionals and organizations must respond to harmful misinformation posted on social media to curb the sharing of misinformation.

Qualitative approach can yield important insights to under-studied groups in the use and spread of misinformation. Turning to Brazil in South America, "Can Older People Stop Sharing? An Ethnographic Study on Fake News and Active Aging In Brazil" by Marilia Duque and Luiz Peres-Neto is an ethnography study dispelling the myth that old people are the culprits of spreading fake news and health misinformation and why sharing news in Whatsapp groups is an important activity for active aging. They found that the elderly people try to vet the information they received online with warm experts (doctor friends or trusted friends) before they share with other people, rather than "curating" misinformation without thinking.

"Fact-checking Initiatives in Portuguese Language Countries: Checking Methods and Financing Strategies" by Lucas Durr Missau and Laura Strelow Storch examines the fact-checking initiatives in nine Portuguese language countries using content analysis and institutional analysis. However, during their study period, fact-checking agencies that were active could be found in Brazil and Portugal only. They found that most of the fact-checking outlets are tied to traditional news media in terms of its organizational and institutional business model. The fact checks showed that false information was circulated mainly in texts, while false contexts were mainly circulated in videos and images led to more manipulated content. A large volume of political posts were verified only using sources with press offices of political offices.

Our review essay on online media and global communication research this issue is from Nigeria. Eserinune McCarty Mojaye and Oludare Ebenezer Ogunyombo examined communication research articles published in two leading communication journals in Nigeria since 2015 and found Nigeria scholars frequently published collaboratively, but not much with non-Nigerians. Nigerian scholars shows moderately high interest in online media research, but low interest in global or international media issues. The lack of funding for research is identified as a major hurdle for rigorous communication research in Nigeria.

For the Gem from the Global South, we translated a review article titled, "Disinformation, hoaxes, curation and verification. Review of studies in Iberoamerica 2017–2020," by Javier Guallar, Lluís Codina, Pere Freixa, Mario Pérez-Montoro which was originally published in the Venezuelan communication journal, *Telos*. This translated article complements our latest original research articles in the themed issue and shows what our colleagues in Ibero-America had done on the topic of misinformation in their countries.

Happy Reading!

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