Fake News and Russia Ukraine War: The Online Abuse of Messages

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Abstract
Fake news is a fabricated or false news deliberately meant to deceive people. This type of news has become common especially on social media. This study investigates the online abuse of messages and its effects on message delivery in war time. The purpose of the study is to find the ways fake news affect message credibility and determine how it affectspeople's perception of news in war time. The study employed literature review approach. The Uses and Gratification(U&G) theory formed the anchor of the study. Three research questions guided the study: What is the level of perception of message credibility in the social media in the period of war? What are the various ways the people use to identify fake? What are the effects of social media fake news on supports for countries at war? Results of the study show that fake news mislead people and countries to support one nation against the other based on sentiment occasioned byfake news; fake news could change the way people respond to true news and the widespread of fake news could break the trustworthiness of entire news ecosystem. The study recommends that it is important to detect fake news on both social media and traditional media before taking side in a war period. It also recommends the introduction of digital literacy to educate people on fake news and war propaganda;laws against fake news should be enacted and enforced to curtail the spread of fake news at all times and discourage fake news war propaganda.
Keywords: *Social media, message credibility, fake news, believability, propaganda, false news.*

I.   Introduction

Fake news, whether from the social media or the traditional media thrives when countries are at war. The Russia – Ukraine war has just revealed how dangerous fake news can be in war situation.   News reporting is traditionally based upon facts. However, with the development of the Internet and social media, "alternative" narratives appeared (Albright, 2017). There has been a trend towards dwindling confidence in the mainstream media (Bharali & Gowami, 2018) as well as the new media represented by online news on social media. This is sometimes due to propaganda-laced stories, which occupy a large portion of its content (Bharali & Gowami, 2018). This development has affected peoples' perception of message source credibility and message credibility. This paper is concerned with message credibility – a less studied dimension of media credibility, especially in a war situationThis arises as a result of the inability of the news audiences to separate message credibility from the source. Separating message credibility and the medium can enhance the clarity and the credibility of news (Appelman & Sundar, 2016). This is because developing trends in the dissemination of news now make it difficult to sustain the axiom that the medium is the message as trusted media outfits could as well carry fake news especially in the period of war.

False news otherwise called fake news and news distortion is not something new. By the 19th century, modern newspapers came on the scene with touting scoops and exposes, and used fake stories to increase circulation. Sensationalism always sold well. The *New York Sun's*"Great Moon Hoax" of 1835 claimed that there was an alien civilization on the moon, and established the *SunNewspaper*as a leading profitable newspaper (Soll, 2016).On August 25, 1835, the first in a series of six articles announcing the supposed discovery of life on the moon appeared in the *New York Sun* newspaper. This was known collectively as "The Great Moon Hoax," written by Dr. Andrew Grant, described as a colleague of Sir John Herschel, a famous astronomer of the day (Hisory.com Editors, 2020). Herschel had travelled to Cape town, South Africa, in January 1834 to set up an observatory with a powerful new telescope. The story alleged that Herschel had built the biggest telescope in existence to study the stars and that with this instrument, he had solved or corrected nearly every leading problem of mathematical astronomy, firmly established a new theory of cometary phenomena,and discovered life on the Moon (Meg, n.d).

As Grant described it, Herschel had found evidence of life forms on the moon, including such fantastic animals as unicorns, two-legged beavers and furry, winged humanoids resembling bats (Goel, Raj and Ravichandran).The articles also offered vivid description of the moon'sgeography, complete with massive

craters, enormous amethyst crystals, rushing rivers and lush vegetation (Hisory.com Editors, 2020). From the day the first moon hoax article was released, sales of the paper shot up considerably. It was exciting stuff, and readers lapped it up. The only problem was that none of it was true (Wending, 2018).

There are many examples of false news throughout history. It was used by Nazi propaganda machines to build anti-Semantic fervour. It played a role in catalising the Enlightenment, when the Catholic Church's false explanation of the 1755 Lisbon Earthquake prompted Voltaire to speak out against religious dominance(Chen, Conroy & Rubin, 2015). In the 1880s in the US, racist sentiment led to the publication of false stories about African Americans supposed deficiencies and crimes (Chen, Conroy & Rubin, 2015). The phrase "fake news" was used repeatedly by President Donald Trump of the United States of America during the 2016 presidential elections.

In the 1890s, rival newspaper publisher Joseph Pulitzer and William Hearst competed over the audience through sensationalism and reporting rumours as though they were facts, a practice that became known as 'yellow journalism' (Hisory.com Editors, 2020). Their incredulous news played a role in leading the US into the Spanish-American War of 1898. Eventually, there was a backlash against the lack of journalistic integrity: the public demanded more objective and reliable news sources, which created a niche that *The New York Times* was established to fill in the beginning of 20th century (Chen, Conroy & Rubin, 2015). In 2022, Russia President Vladimir Putin and the president of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky are using fake news to canvass for support from the allied and none allied countries of the world. This has left those outside the two countries in a state of confusion over whose claims to believe.

One of the motivations for 1890s newspapers engaging in yellow journalism is the same as for fake news creators today: Exaggerated news with shocking headlines gets attention and sells papers (or prompts mouse-clicks), promoting the sale of advertising. In the form of traditional news media, most people have learned better than to take outrageous news articles as seriously as they did at the height of the yellow journalism(Hisory.com Editors, 2020). More recently, tabloid newspapers like *The National Enquirer* and *The New York Sun* and Fad magazines like *The Freak* and *The Wet Dog* are generally known as false news sources(Hisory.com Editors, 2020). Similarly, people recognise that the parody news productions on the web and TV feature satire are ironic, but unreal accounts of events (Wending, 2018).

According to Gallup polls, only 40 per cent of Americans trust their mass media sources as "fully, accurately and fairly" (Riffkin, 2015). A similar survey in the UK has shown that the most read newspapers were also the least-trusted at times (Reilly & Nye, 2012). This kind of study predicts that the generation has shifted from conventional mainstream media to social media, which includes blogs and other social media content, as a means to escape the perceived bias and unreliability of mainstream news (Tsfati, 2010) and for quick and easy information services (Bharali & Gowami, 2018). Unfortunately, the social media have become the major source of fake news, hence the public is now left in dilemma, not knowing which medium or media – traditional or new media to trust for factual news. In fact, the mid-21st century that ushered in the rise of web-based news brought fake news back in full force. However, these transitions have further reinforced participatory journalism, that banks on collaborative or collective nature of news production facilitated by users' active engagement with news through comment sections, discussion forums, recommendation systems, social media, and personal blogs (Singer, Hermida, Domingo, Heinonen, Paulussen and Quandt 2011). People nowadays tend to seek out and consume news from social media rather than traditional news organisations (Shu, Liu & Wang, 2017). For example, 62% of U.S. adults got news on social media in 2016, while in 2012, only 49 percent reported seeing news on social media (Abbasi & Liu, 2013). However, social media for news consumption is a double-edged sword. The quality of news on social media is much lower than traditional news organisations (Shu, Liu & Wang, 2017). Large volumes of "fake news", i.e., those news articles with intentionally false information, are produced online for a variety of purposes, such as financial and political gain (Klein and Wueller 2017; Allcott and Gentzkow 2017). In a war time, online fake news is used to win over unsuspecting countries to support unjust cause just as it is also used to gain support of just cause. Such supports are products of confusions created by fake news. Fake news, in this context, is defined as deliberate misinformation spread by traditional or social media (Hussain, Kilagwa, Zaali & Wok, 2019). In the case of Nigeria, fake news is now an everyday experience. Politicians, agitators with secessionist agenda and even the government engage in fake news in the form of outright lies, deceptions, satire and half-truth to gain support from the unsuspecting and undiscerning publics. For instance, the reference to the president of Nigeria as Jubril of Sudan has left many people in doubt about the identity of the president and some people believe this to be true while others consider it as fake news. The trend of fake news generation has taken the global media scenario by storm as there involves a lot of effort to distinguish a fake news from a genuine one (Metro, 2017 as cited in Bharali & Gowami, 2018). It is against this background that this study is set to investigate the influence of fake news on news credibility in the context of social media(Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, etc.) and the traditional media such as newspaper, radio and television with focus on war times.

Statement of the Problem

The increasing dependence of the reading, viewing and listening public on the significance of news from traditional and online media for credible new has become a complex problem. News audiences now find themselves in a fix, not knowing which medium and which news to rely on for facts about developing issues around the globe. The prevalence of social media usage, and its circulation of unverified but at times critical information is a major concern, most especially when the issue circulated borders on political stability, security, health and other matters of life and death. Scholarly articles have been written on uses of social media in recent years for social marketing and mobilisation (Brown, Guskin, and Mitchell 2012), especially after the Arab Spring or mass demonstrations, the world saw in several countries of the Middle East and North Africa, from Tunisia to Egypt's Tahrir Square between 2010 to 2012 and now the war between Russia and Ukraine. There is the challenge among users in discerning which piece of information is credible and which is not. Most social media users do not have ways of assessing the credibility of information (Edogor, Jonah & Ojo 2015). More often than not, the source of the information is not indicated for the user, especially in the case of information shared repeatedly via a chain of networks through social media. The potential for intentional misuse of social media to spread misinformation, rumours and even fake news is also a concern (Brown, Guskin, and Amy Mitchel, 2012).

Previous studies on fake news and media credibility abund (e.g. Pehlivanoglu, Tian, Deceus, Heemskerk, Natalie & Brian, 2021; Chan-Olmsted & Qin, 2020; Bharali & Gowami, 2018; George and Raja, 2017, Tsfati, 2010)), but studies on message credibility and fake news are few. Morris, Counts, Roseway, Hoff, and Schwarz, (2012) investigated the user perception of tweet credibility and identified features that impact user assessment of tweet credibility. Bidin and Mustafa (2012) presented findings related to youth's perception of the credibility of blogs. Karlsson, Clerwall, and Bord (2014) researched on the effects of transparency on source and message credibility. These studies, however, outdates the war in Ukraine that makes the 2022 news headline for all news stations and channels all over the world. This present study is undertaken to fill this gap in knowledge.

II.   Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to find out the influence of fake news on the credibility of social media and traditional media messages in a war period. The specific objectives are to:

determine the level of perception of message credibility in the social and traditional media in time of war.
ascertain the fake news verification behaviour of the people in time of war.
analyse the effect of social media fake news on the credibility of traditional media news in time of war.

Research Questions

1.To what extent do people perceive social and traditional medianews to be fake in time of war?
2.What are the various ways people use to detect fake news in time of war?
3. What are the effect of social media fake news on the credibility of traditional media news in time of war?

III.   Method

Qualitative research method will be applied to explore the extant literature in the area under investigation. This will be done by undertaking a scoping review of peer reviewed articles on Fake news in war times. A scoping review approach was considered the best way to examine state of the arts literature that cover a wide range of literature on fake news in war time. Although a scoping review has its own limitations such as the limited opportunity to provide details for practice, it has an overwhelming advantage of providing practical examples of how fake news is employed by warring countries to gain international supports. With such practical examples, unsuspecting countries and individuals can learn to rethink before taking decision to take side in any war that does not involve them directly.

Conceptualisation of Fake News

Fake news as a concept is not new. The Centre for the Study of Media, Communication and Power, King's College London's submission to Consultation on Fake News has interesting observations in their report (Bharali & Gowami, 2018). It states, "The production of fake news – for political or financial gain, or for drama or satire – is centuries old. The difference between this and the current phenomenon of fake news is chiefly with respect to its extent, its dissemination, and its effects" (Moore, 2016, p. 5). From the "Great Moon Hoax" of 1835 in the New York Times, fake news continues to be a part of news industry (Bharali & Gowami, 2018).

Fake news is not an easy term to define. Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) define "fake news" as news articles that are purposefully and verifiably false, and could misinform readers. For the purposes of their research, they rule out related "concepts" to fake news from their definition. These related concepts are unintentional mistakes made during reporting, rumours that do not have a particular source of reference, conspiracy theories, satires, false statements by politicians, and reports that are biased or misleading but not

outright false. Rini (2017) offers a similar but more inclusive definition. The author states that fake news is not just false information being reported, but false information reported intentionally to deceive. Rini (2017) continues to elaborate that fake news is also meant to be shared and shared again and that the intentions behind such fabrication are more complicated. These intentions are mostly financially motivated. Rini (2017) defines a fake news story as one that alleges to describe happenings in the actual world, characteristically by imitating the methods of traditional media reporting, yet is known by its inventers to be false, and is communicated with the two goals of being disseminated extensively and of misleading at least some of its audience. Similarly, Humprecht (2018) defines online disinformation as the intentional publication of false statements of facts for strategic purposes and spread for social influence or profit. Other researchers write that fake news is synonymous with "satirical news", "humorous political messages", "fictitious news", "negative jokes", "inconsistencies of news", "contradictory information", "unrealistic", "pre-generic", "strategic and negative presentation of politicians", and so on, including a much broader range (Balmas, 2014). Tandoc, Lim, and Ling (2017) contend that scholarly definitions may be studied along their variations in facticity and deception.

Shu, Liu & Wang (2017) define fake news as a news article that is intentionally and verifiably false. "Fake news is defined as fabricated information that mimics news media content in form but not in organisational process or intent (Lazer, Baum, Benkler, Berinsky, Kelly et al. 2018). The authors states that fake-news outlets, in turn, lack the news media's editorial norms and processes for ensuring the accuracy and credibility of information. Fake news overlaps with other information disorders, such as misinformation (false or misleading information) and disinformation (false information that is purposely spread to deceive people) (Lazer, Baum, Benkler, Berinsky, Kelly et al. 2018).

Broadly, the term fake news has been referred to as propaganda, deception, manipulation, fabrication, news satire and news parody (Khaldarova & Pantti, 2016; Marchi, 2012; Tandoc Jr, Lim, & Ling, 2017). More specifically, this study adopts the definition by Bakir and McStay (2017, p. 1) that fake news is news that is "either wholly false or containing deliberately misleading elements incorporated within its content or context." That is, for the purposes of this research, fake news is simply defined as deliberate misinformation spread by the traditional or social media. In most cases, it is circulated online and has a specific objective of using emotion to generate attention. Fake news uses divisive themes; image tarnishing; and intimidating the press, shutting down and silencing dissent (Rampersad, & Althiyabi, 2020). While political marketers have long used the language of fear and persuasion in their messaging, the attention placed on fake news is increasing in intensity throughout the world, from the Arab Spring to the 2016 United States Elections (Rampersad & Althiyabi, 2020) to the Russia/Ukraine war of 2022.

Fake news has primarily drawn recent attention in a political context but it also has been documented in information promoting such topics as vaccination, nutrition, and stock values. It is particularly pernicious in that it is parasitic on standard news outlets, simultaneously benefiting from and undermining their credibility (Lazer, Baum, Benkler, Berinsky, Kelly et al. 2018). Some—notably First Draft and Facebook— favour the term "false news" because of the use of fake news as a political weapon (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). This study retains the term fake news because of its value as a scientific construct, and because its political salience draws attention to an important subject.

In an interesting effort, Russell Frank considers certain kinds of fake news as a genre of digital folklore and attempts to sort out the differences among fake news: hoaxes, pranks, satires and parodies. It offers examples of each and every news story and shows how fake news functions as folk political commentary or folk media criticism (Frank, 2015). Frank (2015) is worried for "fake news about fake news", which are more dangerous tradition of our time. Cohen (2017) talks about what happens when the truth can be changed. Fake news, of late challenges existing journalism pedagogy and created a tussle between re-establishing credibility, truth and perception of people and then, with the community (Richardson, 2017 as cited in Bharali & Gowami 2018).

Of late, the concept of "fake news" came to light during the 2016 US presidential election and the latest is now fake news in Russia and Ukraine war. With the Russia's aggression in Ukraine and the Fake news that surrounds the killings of soldiers from both sides and the destruction of lives, war arsenals and properties in the war, fake news has gather greater momentum.

The widespread use of the term fake news as well as the fear of it has caused a distrust with American media, (Chan-Olmsted & Qin, 2020) and by extension the global media. Every media outfit claims to be reporting the facts about the face-off between Russia and Ukraine, yet there are evidences that many of such reports are fake news that cannot be verified. This distrust has led to an all-time low of confidence in the credibility of the news media as a whole.

While fake news is certainly not a new occurrence—e.g., tabloid magazines have been around for nearly a century (Murray, 2013)—its prominence in and impact on our culture has been growing (Pehlivanoglu, Tian, Deceus, Heemskerk, Natalie & Brian, 2021).This is also related to enhanced global connectedness and broader use of online media platforms in modern society which have drastically increased access to news and also increased distribution of misinformation, and or fake news (Pehlivanoglu, Tian, Deceus, Heemskerk, Natalie &

Brian, 2021).As recently as 2018, a study carried out by Stewart (2020) determined that Americans struggle to distinguish between fact and opinion when presented as news. The study reports that Americans consumed twice as much dubious news in 2020 as they did in 2019.In another study, as many as three in every four Americans were shown to believe that traditional news sources report fake news. The increasingly ubiquitous use of social media has accelerated this trend (Pehlivanoglu, Tian, Deceus, Heemskerk, Natalie & Brian, 2021). In the war between Russia and Ukraine, the world has become infested with fake news about the war.

Message Credibility

Media credibility is a complex and multidimensional concept (Castillo, Mendoza and Poblete, 2011). Research in media credibility has mostly been either on source credibility or on the credibility of the medium. Golan (2010) explains each, clearly stating that research on source credibility focuses on the characteristics of the message (speaker, organisation, media outlet) while that on medium credibility focuses on the medium of the message delivered (newspaper, television, new media). Early interpretations of credibility define it as the believability of a source, and mostly depend on perceptions of the trustworthiness and expertise of the source as understood by the receiver (Metzger & Flanagin, 2013). This definition steers research on credibility in psychology and communication, which largely focuses on source credibility, usually conceptualised as the believability of a speaker.

However, researchers suggest that credibility of media messages may be influenced by non-source aspects, such as the medium or structure of the messages themselves (Appleman & Sundar, 2016). In line with this, this study focuses on the credibility of news spread through social media networks and traditional media. Over 20 years ago, Fogg and Tseng (1999) described credibility as a perceived quality composed of multiple dimensions. In this paper we use credibility in the sense of believability: offering reasonable grounds for being believed. (Naaman, Boase and Lai, 2010). In this context we define social media credibility as the aspect of information credibility that can be assessed using only the information available in a social media platform while traditional media credibility is used in this study to mean the authenticity of information from radio, television and newspaper based on verifiable facts. Thus, the study uses the definition proposed by Appelman and Sundar (2016) who define message credibility in the context of news obtained from the media as an individual's judgment of the "veracity" of the content of communication.

In this modern era, news is readily available online and media conglomerates are no longer the main source of news. In the past few decades, the online digital 'alternative' media has shifted from being supplementary sources of news to the traditional newspapers and television to becoming the main source of information (Wilson, Leong, Nge, & Hong, 2011). Researchers report that newspapers, books and television verify their news before publicizing; however, in the Internet this is not necessarily true. Online information providers are not bound by editorial and gatekeeping regulations like in the traditional media (Wilson, Leong, Nge, & Hong, 2011). Therefore, with the influx of information online and offline, the issue of message credibility is crucial.

Russia and Ukraine Misinformation: The Online War and Fake News

The Russian invasion in Ukraine has escalated the stakes of online disinformation and misinformation (Diepeveen, Borodyna & Tindall (2022). Media reports suggest that we are facing a 'TikTok war' or 'the first social media war'. From TikTok to Telegram, information about the frontlines of the war seems simultaneously more authentic and more uncertain, more controlled and more open to channels that might bypass state-controlled information (Diepeveen, Borodyna, & Tindall, 2022).The Russia-Ukraine war has been called "the world's first TikTok war" as users spread information in real time, including on the "WarTok" discover channel (Brown, 2022).While some accounts are real, there is also widespread concern about disinformation on the app. A recent investigation found new users are exposed to disinformation within 40 minutes of joining the networking service (Brown, 2022). Recognising the importance of the platform, the White House briefed TikTok influencers in early March, 2022 about the conflict.

According to Brown (2022), the war has taken a vast human toll, with the United Nations estimating more than 1,400 Ukrainian civilians have been killed and more than 4 million people have fled the country as of April 2. It is also taking place in a world where social media is ubiquitous, video and images can be quickly uploaded and shared worldwide, and both sides are using social media to rally support and spread information and disinformation.

Zelenskyy, the president of Ukraine is using traditional, social, and encrypted media to spread information;Mykhailo Fedorov, Ukraine's minister of digital transformation, has "declared World Cyberwar I," as he focuses on digital elements of the war, For example, he used Twitter to contact Chinese drone compassny DJI and convince the company to create a geofence preventing its technology from working inside Ukraine (Brown, 2022).

Nearly two weeks after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the flow of false or misleading information about the war has not let up and now there are some outlandish theories being shared online (Sardarizadeh and Olga,

2022). The authors state that some have begun to circulate claims that the war is a hoax, a media fabrication, or has been exaggerated by the West in terms of its scale. A video of a young woman and a young man having fake blood applied to their faces has racked up millions of views on multiple platforms. It is shared as supposed evidence that the war in Ukraine is a hoax and civilian victims are actually "crisis actors" - people hired to act out scenes from an attack (Sardarizadeh and Olga, 2022). In what seems like a moving corpse, a video of a news reporter in front of multiple body bags has gone viral on several major social networks, and has been spread widely by pro-Kremlin accounts (Sardarizadeh and Olga, 2022). Seconds into the clip, one of the body bags starts moving, a man removes the cover and is attended to by a photographer (Sardarizadeh and Olga, 2022). Social media posts claim the video was shot in Ukraine and proves the war is either a hoax or manufactured by "Western propaganda."But to claim that the war in Ukraine is a hoax is to be guilty of fake information. Even before Russia launched its assault on Ukraine, false claims and misleading rumours had been circulating online (Holroyd, 2022). So, it cannot be said that fake news surrounding Russia's invasion of Ukraine makes the war a hoax. Even as Russian forces have advanced further into Ukraine, the amount of online misinformation has skyrocketed (Holroyd, 2022)..The authors opine that both Moscow and Kyiv have been guilty of spreading misinformation amid the online information war of propaganda. But individual social media users have also fallen victim to false rumours and amplified unfounded allegations (Holroyd, 2022).

In times of conflict and crisis, when people are hungry for details about the war in Ukraine, misinformation can be equally as viral as verified facts. Holroyd (2022) provides evidence of some false claims that had been widely circulating and have since been debunked by fact-checkers: within hours of Russia launching its invasion, misleading videos of unrelated explosions had been seen by thousands of people.One of the first videos that appeared on Twitter under the hashtag #нетвойне (#NoWar) falsely claimed to show a powerful blast in a Ukrainian city. The video has received more than 112,000 views.But the footage actually dates from August 2015 and shows a deadly explosion at a storage facility in Tianjin, China.Another misleading video -- shared widely on Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok -- shows footage of the fatal explosion at Beirut port in August 2020.Users had falsely claimed that the video showed "Ukrainian headquarters" being bombed by Russian forces (Holroyd, 2022).

Also, a false tweet - seemingly sent by CNN's verified Twitter account - claims US actor Steven Seagal, who is a dual US-Russian national, has been spotted "among Russian special forces" near Ukraine's capital of Kyiv. (Sardarizadeh and Olga, 2022). Along with ordinary users, the tweet has been picked up by influential accounts with huge followings, including US podcast host Joe Rogan, who shared it with his 14 million followers on Instagram. The author provides another evidence of claiming that a Russian diplomat has shared screenshots showing a fabricated story about a journalist being killed in Ukraine during the Russian invasion.

But to claim that there is one social media war is misleading. The role and impact of disinformation – false information that is deliberately spread to cause harm – depends on both its context and intended audience (Diepeveen, Borodyna, and Tindall, 2022). It may take different forms depending on whether it is aimed at domestic Russian audiences, Ukrainians or a global audience. Each of these contexts provides a distinct set of experiences and potentially very different insights into how and why disinformation matters to the dynamics of war. Russian disinformation domestically has very different implications compared to the disinformation that circulates to western audiences (Diepeveen, Borodyna, and Tindall, 2022).

Social media allows any user to create, edit and share content, giving way to widespread, individual contributions to mis or disinformation. At the same time, Russian disinformation campaigns remain a central point of contention in debates about an 'information war' alongside the invasion. Across broadcast and social media, Russian disinformation generates widespread concerns, within Russia, Ukraine, and for audiences globally.

The reasons for these concerns, however, are different depending on the wider information landscape and people's agency to critically assess information from different sources. In Russia, for example, contemporary propaganda about the war signals an amplification of a longer-term stream of propagandistic narratives about Ukrainian Nazis, within a tightening domestic media landscape which is increasingly shutting out any independent sources.

In contrast, from the perspective of Ukrainian and global audiences, some media reports have even argued that Putin is losing the information war (Diepeveen, Borodyna, and Tindall, 2022). Disinformation campaigns appear to hold little weight in the context of a constant stream of content from the frontlines, and strong political and public condemnation of the invasion among western states and western-based companies (Diepeveen, Borodyna, and Tindall, 2022). The authors argue that it is too simplistic to view Russian disinformation on the Russia-Ukraine war as one side versus the other. Doing so risks presenting a misleading picture of how disinformation is contributing to public perspectives of the war, resulting in either an unjustified sense of optimism or pessimism about the extent to which disinformation has clouded the information landscape.

Effects of Fake News on News Credibility and Individual Perception of News

The issue of fake news is a major concern at the local and global levels. Dozens of news articles worldwide (Ashford, 2017; Dodds, 2017; Greensdale, 2016; Ike & Smets, 2017) have report on the spread of fake news in the political, social, economic and entertainment arenas. A reporter wrote that we are currently living in a "post-truth" society where it is extremely challenging to correct falsehoods spread swiftly and indiscriminately through the Internet (Greensdale, 2016).

Lazer, Baum, Benkler, Berinsky, Kelly et al. (2018) state that we do know that, as with legitimate news, fake news stories have gone viral on social media. However, knowing how many individuals encountered or shared a piece of fake news is not the same as knowing how many people read or were affected by it ((Lazer, Baum, Benkler, Berinsky, Kelly et al. 2018). The authors note that evaluation of the medium-to-long–run impact on political behaviour of exposure to fake news (for example, whether and how to vote) are essentially nonexistent in the literature. The impact might be small—evidence suggests that efforts by political campaigns to persuade individuals may have limited effects (Kalla & Broockman, 2018). However, mediation of much fake news via social media might accentuate its effect because of the implicit endorsement that comes with sharing. Beyond electoral impacts, what we know about the effects of media more generally suggests many potential pathways of influence, from increasing cynicism and apathy to encouraging extremism (Kalla & Broockman, 2018). There exists little evaluation of the impacts of fake news in these regards. Fake news can have detrimental effects on individuals and the society. First, people may be misled by fake news and accept false beliefs (Nyhan and Reifler 2010; Paul and Matthews 2016). Second, fake news could change the way people respond to true news. Third, the widespread of fake news could break the trustworthiness of entire news ecosystem. Thus, it is important to detect fake news on social media.

Approaches to Fake News Detection

Fake news is intentionally written to mislead consumers, which makes it nontrivial to detect simply based on news content. Thus, it is necessary to explore auxiliary information to improve detection. Baum, Metzger, Menczer & Pennycook (2021) provide interventions which they argue might be effective at stemming the flow and influence of fake news. The authors identify two categories of interventions: (i) those aimed at empowering individuals to evaluate the fake news they encounter, and (ii) structural changes aimed at preventing exposure of individuals to fake news in the first instance. Fact checking could be done using fake news fact detecting Apps. Websites that evaluate factual claims of news reports, such as PolitiFact and Snopes, to evaluations of news reports by credible news media, such as the Washington Post, to contextual information regarding content inserted by intermediaries, such as those used by Facebook could be employed to check fake news. However, the problem here is that "Individuals tend not to question the credibility of information unless it violates their preconceptions or they are incentivized to do so. Otherwise, they may accept information uncritically. People also tend to align their beliefs with the values of their community" (Baum, Metzger, Menczer & Pennycook, 2021). Also, people prefer information that confirms their preexisting attitudes (selective exposure), view information consistent with their preexisting beliefs as more persuasive than dissonant information (confirmation bias), and are inclined to accept information that pleases them (desirability bias). Prior partisan and ideological beliefs might prevent acceptance of fact checking of a given fake news story. (Baum, Metzger, Menczer & Pennycook, 2021). Fact checking might even be counterproductive under certain circumstances. Research on fluency—the ease of information recall—and familiarity bias in politics shows that people tend to remember information, or how they feel about it, while forgetting the context within which they encountered it. Moreover, they are more likely to accept familiar information as true (Swire, et al., 2017).

With regard to structural changes, a long-run approach which seeks to improve individual evaluation of the quality of information sources through education might be helpful. There has been a proliferation of efforts to inject training of critical-information skills in primary and secondary schools (Jones, 2017). However, it is uncertain whether such efforts improve assessments of information credibility or if any such effects will persist over time (Baum, Metzger, Menczer & Pennycook, 2018). An emphasis on fake news might also have the unintended consequence of reducing the perceived credibility of real-news outlets (Baum, Metzger, Menczer & Pennycook, 2021). In addition, several style-based approaches try to capture the deceptive manipulators originated from the particular writing style of fake news (Rubin and Lukoianova 2015; Potthast, Kiesel, Reinartz, Bevendorff & Stein, 2017). Previous approaches try to aggregate users' responses from relevant social engagements to infer the veracity of original news (Castillo, Mendoza & Poblete 2011; Gupta, Zhao, and Han 2012).

The news ecosystem on social media involves three basic entities, i.e., news publisher, news and social media users. News publishers engage in publishing false information for personal gains. This is mostly found among publishers on social media platforms. In addition, users with similar interests can also form social links. The tri-relationship among publisher, news, and social engagements contains additional information to help detect fake news. First, sociological studies on journalism have theorized the correlation between the partisan

bias of publisher and news contents veracity (Gentzkow, Shapiro, and Stone 2014; Entman 2007), where partisan means the perceived bias of the publisher in the selection of how news is reported and covered to support their own partisan. Such people have high degree to report fake news while mainstream news publishers have least partisan bias, and has lower degree to manipulate original news events, and is more likely to write true news (Shu, Liu & Wang, 2017). Thus, exploiting publisher partisan information can bring additional benefits to predict fake news.

Furthermore, minding user engagements on social media towards the news also help fake news detection. Different users have different credibility levels on social media, and news topic. The credibility of a user can be used to eliminate the ambiguities between fake news and related concepts (Shu, Liu & Wang, 2017).

Empirical Review

Faraon, Jaff & Nepomuceno (2020) examined 'Fake News and Aggregated Credibility: Conceptualizing a Co-Creative Medium for Evaluation of Sources Online'. The authors argue that the accelerated spread of fake news via the internet and social media such as Facebook and Twitter have created a debate concerning the credibility of sources online. The study applied the concept-driven design research methodology to address the research question, which consisted of seven activities that unify design and theory. The result of the study proposed concept that aims to support the assessment of the credibility of sources online using crowdsourcing as an approach for evaluation. The practical implications of the proposed concept could be to constrain the spread of fake news, strengthen online democratic discourse, and potentially improve the quality of online information. The study concludes that the assessment of the credibility of sources online is a complex process because of the multitude of sources embedded in a large number of layers disseminated online (Sundar, 2008). Although previously mentioned methods and tools have improved political discourse and democratic accountability by guiding citizens to carefully examine the claims that appear in news stories and highlight which story is credible or not (Hameleers and van der Meer, 2019; Nyhan & Reifler, 2015), it is increasingly challenging for editorial teams to examine the majority of contents that are continually being created, uploaded, and shared online. Hussain, Kilagwa, Zaali and Wok (2019) investigated 'The Effect of Message Credibility on Media Use and Perception of Fake News among Students'. The authors note that fake news is a major concern globally. The study aims to determine students' perception of fake news in the context of their media usage and message credibility. Specifically, it aims to determine the relationship between media use, message credibility and perception of fake news; and to analyse the mediating effect of message credibility on media use and the perception of fake news. The research utilised the Media Dependency Theory in explaining the relationship between the audiences, media and the larger social system. It employs a quantitative research design using the survey method. 237 students from the Department of Communication, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) participated in the study. Findings show that there are significant relationships among media use, message credibility and fake news. The Media Dependency Theory is supported in this study.

Rampersad, & Althiyabi (2020) studied Fake news: Acceptance by demographics and culture on social media. The study observes that fake news has trumped up attention across cultures from the United States Elections to the Arab Spring and the impact has been intensified by social media. The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of demographics and culture on the spread of fake news via social media. Quantitative method was used. A group of Saudi Arabian students studying overseas, on a social media platform, WhatsApp were asked to complete an online questionnaire on their demographics and culture and their views on fake news. A total of 107 respondents completed the questionnaire out of the 250 persons invited, representing countries. The study found that culture has the most significant impact on the spread of fake news. Results shows that age and not gender or education has a greater influence on the acceptance of fake news in particular cultures. The study made no recommendations either in the form of conclusion or otherwise.

Pehlivanoglu, Tian, Deceus, Heemskerk, Natalie & Brian (2021) investigated 'The role of analytical reasoning and source credibility on the evaluation of real and fake full-length news articles'. The project considers both accuracy and perceived credibility ratings as outcome variables, thus qualifying previous work focused solely on news detection accuracy. The study adopts a two-study approach. The researchers conducted two parallel but independent studies to systematically test in Study 1 and replicate with a large sample in Study 2 the research hypotheses. In both studies, participants viewed 12 full-length news articles (6 real, 6 fake), followed by prompts to evaluate each article's veracity and credibility and complete the Cognitive Refection Test as well as short demographic questions. Findings where consistent across both studies, higher analytical reasoning was associated with greater fake news accuracy, while analytical reasoning was not associated with real news accuracy. In addition, in both studies, higher analytical reasoning was associated with lower perceived credibility for fake news, while analytical reasoning was not associated with perceived credibility for real news.

Furthermore, lower analytical reasoning was associated with greater accuracy for real (but not fake) news from credible compared to non-credible sources. The results extend previous findings that analytical reasoning contributes to fake news detection to full-length news articles. Furthermore, news related cues such as the credibility of the news source systematically affected discrimination ability between real and fake news.

Bryanov & Vziatysheva (2021) explored "Determinants of individuals' belief in fake news: A scoping review determinants of belief in fake news". The study argued that the proliferation of misinformation in digital news environments can harm society in a number of ways, but its dangers are most acute when citizens believe that false news is factually accurate. The study employed a scoping review methodology based on a synthetic analysis of 26 scholarly articles. The sample included experimental studies that test factors influencing users' ability to recognise fake news, their likelihood to trust it or intention to engage with such content. The study found that there are three broad groups of factors contributing to individuals' belief in fake news. Firstly, message characteristics—such as belief consistency and presentation cues—can drive people's belief in misinformation. Secondly, susceptibility to fake news can be determined by individual factors including people's cognitive styles, predispositions, and differences in news and information literacy. Finally, accuracy-promoting interventions such as warnings or nudges priming individuals to think about information veracity can impact judgements about fake news credibility. The study suggests that inoculation-type interventions can be both scalable and effective and recommends examining digital platforms.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Uses and Gratification theory. (U & G). What mass communication scholars today refer to as the uses and gratifications approach is generally recognised to be a sub tradition of media effects research (McQuail, 1994). Early in the history of communications research, an approach was developed to study the gratifications that attract and hold audiences to the kinds of media and the types of content that satisfy their social and psychological needs (Cantril, 1942). Other media effects research sought to discover motives and selection patterns of audiences for the new mass media. (Ruggiero, 2000). This latter focus of research, conducted in a social-psychological mode, and audience based, crystallized into the U&G approach (McQuail, 1994). Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch pioneered the Uses and Gratification Theory in 1974. But according to McQuail (2010), the theory could be traced from the early 1940's when researchers started investigating why people listen to popular radio programmes and why they read newspapers daily. Therefore, the theory emerged in response to the needs of explanation to why people use certain media and the benefit they get from them. (Aisar, Mohd & Nur, 2015). Mass communication researchers are using the U & G theory to examine, explain, and provide answers to why people use certain media and what benefits or gratifications they get after that. The basic assumption of this theory is that people use mass media for different reasons and seek to derive various gratifications (Gallion, 2010; Wimmer and Dominick, cited in Asemah, 2011).

However, the emergence of social media technologies changes the way people use mass media as they differ in forms and context. (Aisar, Mohd & Nur, 2015). Therefore, people who use social networks and other computer mediated communications are quite different from the mainstream media audiences who relied on specific media contents (Li, 2005). Social media audiences have the advantage and freedom to actively seek for information and many messages that are of interest and benefit to them. New media technologies did not only alter the way information is gathered and distributed but also changes the existing relationship between mass media and their audiences. Li (2005) state that people use social media to satisfy their needs which include cognitive needs, affective needs, personal integrative needs, social integrative needs, tension release needs, and medium appeal needs. For this, social media become a fertile research field demonstrating the direct relevance of the U & G theory and its participants (Matei, 2010).

Uses and Gratification theory has contributed a lot to our understanding of how media contributes its quota in the lives of those that use it, i.e. its audience. Research categorized under this theory has continued to enrich our understanding of the choice and utilization of media content by the general audience. (Wada, 2018). In 1969 Jay Blumler and Denis McQuail studied the United Kingdom 1964 election and categorized people's motives for watching certain political programs on television Blumler & McQuail 1969). These audience motivations formed the foundation for their research in 1972 and led to active audience theories, better known later as Uses and Gratification Theory, UGT. The theory stresses the basic premise that audiences are not passive consumers of media content. The selectivity aspect as a branch of active listener's theory helps us analyze what audiences seek from the media, and for what reason they seek it; selective exposure. (Wada, 2018). How they choose (select) content, including their psychological processing of that choice probed under selective perception, and what they seek to process and retain mentally, selective retention, and finally how they store such information mentally and use it in their lives whenever the opportunity for application arises. (Wada, 2018).

IV.   Discussion of Findings

With regard to research question one, the study found that the peopledo not trust news from social media platforms. This is because social media are everybody media. This makes every individual who has the digital apparatus like smartphone to access social media and cue in messages or share those from others. Most of the social media users do not verify the authenticity of the information they come across before sharing it to

others. In support of the finding, Lazer, Baum, Benkler, Berinsky, Kelly et al. (2018) study reveals that fake news stories have gone viral on social media. By implication, majority of the respondents do not believe that social media news is credible. In addition, studies have shown that dozens of news articles worldwide (e.g. Ashford, 2017; Dodds, 2017; Greensdale, 2016; Ike & Smets, 2017) have reported on the spread of fake news in the political, social, economic and entertainment arenas. Countries at war use social media and traditional media for propaganda to deceive both their supporters and their enemies.

In relation to research question two, we found that majority of the peoplethat use social media donot cross check to know whether the news they read or listen to on social media is false or true. This is because they do not check the source of the news to help them determine the credibility of the story. If the source of information is not credible, it is possible that the information will also not be credible. The finding is similar to the study by Wada (2018) on 'Professional versus Social Media: News Credibility and Impact, which reveals that on issues of perception of credibility, people of all ages hardly check the source of information retrieved from social media, and cannot ascertain credibility.

Furthermore, we found fake news disseminated through social media affect the credibility of news spread by the traditional media. This finding is similar to the findings of the study by Lazer, Baum, Benkler, Berinsky, Kelly et al. (2018) that fake news is particularly pernicious in that it is parasitic on standard news outlets, simultaneously benefiting from undermining their credibility (Lazer, Baum, Benkler, Berinsky, Kelly et al. 2018). The traditional media news these days are becoming deficient in credibility of the information they spread. This could be because of the dependence of the traditional media on the new media such as Twitter, Facebook, etc. for breaking news. In support of this finding, Wada (2018) study reveals that fake news could change the way people respond to true news; the widespread of fake news could break the trustworthiness of entire news ecosystem.Also, Richardson (2017) as cited in Bharali & Gowami (2018) notes that fake news, of late challenges existing journalism pedagogy and created a tussle between re-establishing credibility, truth and perception of people and then, with the community.

V. Implications of the Findings

Fake news can have detrimental effects on individuals and the society. First, people may be misled by fake news and accept false beliefs (Nyhan and Reifler 2010; Paul and Matthews 2016). Second, fake news could change the way people respond to true news. Third, the widespread of fake news could break the trustworthiness of entire news ecosystem. Thus, it is important to detect fake news on social media (Paul & Matthews, 2016). The effectiveness of social media in social mobilisation and marketing (Rogers et al. 2017) has already been established by many studies and demonstrated in history (Eltantawy and Weist 2011) mainly by the Arab Spring. In the mass revolts, the world witnessed people spontaneously mobilized for protest through the messages they shared amongst themselves on social media platforms. With that in mind, the implications for attaching credibility to non-credible news should be of concern to any nation. Misleading health information can cause disease and death, misleading social information can cause upheavals and chaos; misleading economic information can cause misjudgments in investment decisions, buying, spending etc. Wada (2018) notes that when it comes to sharing unsubstantiated news, 68% of the respondents in his study did that without minding the implications. The author also states that when it comes to using or acting on the information more, than 30% of the respondents admit to using health advice from social media (mostly WhatsApp groups), to forwarding and further spreading critical news and information that impacts security, political stability, etc.Professional media, sometimes referred to as traditional media has gradually become just a part of the general media world. Multimedia content provision is now the norm while social media practically invaded the media domain, providing information and media content to anyone willing to read, listen or watch. Soon traditional media establishments including conglomerates began to lose their audiences to internet users, while most joined the trend by operating blogs and incorporating social media in their live interactive programmess. Scholars have studied various aspects of such relationships including its effect on programming content, delivery method and quality of what is served to the audience ultimately (Girard 2003). Some see positive impact (Pavlik 2001) when radio is converged with social media for interactivity during broadcasts, while others add that social media has consistently outscored traditional media in breaking news (Bosch 2010). Bosch further added that social media has changed ways in which news are generated and accessed. In Africa (Pavlik 2001) see only the rising impact of the internet and social media, just as the tools that provide consumers with such services continue to improve and multiply in number

VI. Conclusion

The spread of misinformation online presents both a scientific puzzle and a practical challenge. The research synthesized in this study shows that the common narrative, whereby failing to differentiate false or misleading news from truth is making people to lose confidence in both the news on social media and the traditional media of communication.Both facts and fake news about the Russian invasion of Ukraine are spread

on social media (Lachman, 2022). It means that we now live in a 'post-truth' world, is not an appropriate characterisation. Some news is the fact of events. People do preferentially believe news that aligns with their politics and this makes people not to check whether the news is fake or not.

However, the inability of people to distinguish between fake news and factual news impacts negatively on the credibility of not only the social media news but also on the traditional news channels and their consumers. It has got to a point where people doubt the authenticity and credibility of any news from the media, social or traditional media. In fact, fake news is about destroying the dependence of media users on mass communication channels as sources of knowing what is happening around the world.

VII. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

More awareness should be created on the existence of fake news pushers and fake news on social and traditional media. This can be achieved through public enlightenments.

There should be more emphasis on digital literacy to enable people know how to detect fake news when they see it.

Laws against the spreading of fake news should be made and enforced globally. This will make it possible to punish those who spread it on social media and any traditional media that publishes or broadcast fake news.

Platform owners should check and remove any fake news before they are shared to the unsuspecting consumers of mass media news.

People should avoid circulation or sharing any unverified news for public consumption.

Platforms could provide consumers with signals of source quality that could be incorporated into the algorithmic rankings of content (Baum, Metzger, Menczer & Pennycook, 2018).

Platforms could minimise the personalisation of political information relative to other types of contents (reducing the creation of "echo chambers"). (Baum, Metzger, Menczer & Pennycook, 2018).

Countries at war should relay factual news to help negotiators engage meaningfully with the factions.

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