

An Ethical View on use of Social media in India for the spreading lies, misinformation and dubious Claims in the year 2016

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Abstract

In recent years, there has been common concern that lies, misinformation and dubious claims on social media and also provided by our print and digital media, is damaging general society and government democratic institutions. In response to this, particularly social media channels have announced actions / remedies to limit the spread of false con-

tent with the use of Social media. But in the ethical point of view this actions/remedies are seen as after effects which are totally wrong and it has been observed that, Social media channels needs to set parameters/ measures to check the content of posts before spreading to the masses. While writing this paper we have measured several misinformation and rumors which was spread during the

year 2016 with the help of social media channels. It is also observed that the common user interactions with these false content rose steadily on social media channels through till the end of 2018, but we would particularly like to discuss the two events in the year 2016, which have strong/intense impact to the nation in general and those were spread like a havoc in social media channels, print media (later effect). The Media supposed to be neutral and eye opener of government and its officials, and for this print media and Digital news Media channels have editorial boards but after social Media emergence era, media is now in hand of people. Where there is a very less monitoring and no editorial board to control the content and check actual facts. This is visible that prominently on social media channel is prominently spreading lies news, by saying BREAKING, which is negative in the general sense of humanity. There are so many incidents happened which are development in science, technology, humanity has get lesser importance when it comes to get coverage by Social media channels.

This somehow alarming situation for media person and Media in general that, the reputation of a reporter is also getting down by these practices. Our paper is focusing on selected two events, which nationwide effect and for spreading those media has a vital role.

For preparing this paper we

refereed all data available you tube (by media channels itself), e-paper of big newspaper houses, and also considered magazines like outlook etc for fact finding

Key words

Media Ethics, Social Media, Fake News

Introduction

It has been seen in the year 2016 India media learned that the use of Social media to spread of lies, misinformation and dubious claims, which enabling Indian Journalism is in a very tough spot. It has been observed that, it's being overwhelmed and controlled by the rogue money power business and political alliances which accelerates to control the peoples mind on social media.

In India, a nation according to government statistics with 355 million Internet users, false news stories on social media channels have become regular propaganda which affects everyday life of a common man, affecting matters of public health by circulating fake news on Food products, exacerbating weather crises and spreading public panic on government actions.

In the year 2016, newspapers here carried full-page advertisements by the social media giants like Facebook explaining how to spot false news.

There are two biggest examples of misleading information spread on

social media causes the public outrage and damaging the image of company in one case and government in the other one; First one is a rumor, about salt shortages last November, prompted a rush on salt in heartland of Indian states , Second one is related to the Government famous decision of Demonetization; in the month of November there is one message which was circulating on social media namely whatsapp, saying that a newly released 2,000 rupee bank note by the government of India would contain a GPS tracking nano-chip that could locate bank notes hidden as far as longer range around 390 feet underground approximately.

Normally, it has been observed that as a soft target people blames on the heavy use of technology for this situation, but I would like to state that it is a failure because of deeply flawed news source identification process and not maintained ethical standards by Social media channel owners.

Ethics is a branch of philosophy that involves recommendations on right and wrong conduct. Media ethics is a topic for discussion for nearly a century. As the influence, impact and existence of media have become widespread its moral stance and adherence to ethical codes have become important issues. Ralph. E Hanson¹ (2015) has stated that media ethics is a complex topic because it deals with an institution that must do things that ordinary people in ordi-

nary circumstances would not do. Media ethics deals with the specific ethical principles and moral Standards of all forms of media including print, broadcast, film, theatre, advertising and the internet.

In this project work, our main research area is to analyze the ethical point of view on fake news spread on social media mentioned in the research paper, during the year 2016.

Research Objective

The aim of this study is to assess Social media impact from spreading the news categorically Chip in Rs. 2000 note in the period of implementation of decision of Demonetization by the Government of India and rumor of salt shortages and its repercussion of 4 India States. And also state the lack of ethical point of view by the Social media channel owners on these matters.

Scope of Study

The study focused on Impact two identified rumors, fake news circulated through social media. This study investigated how ethical standards are flawed and neglected in respect to the particular news has been published and prominently circulated amongst the people.

Literature Review

The caution signs of authentication crisis have been blinking for several times in the past couple of years. As I want to state one of the

instances, a government ministry launched an inquiry after one of the social media channel pointed out that an image it had used in a report to show floodlights on India's border, but later it was found that, actually those pictures are from the Spanish-Moroccan border. Within a day Social media channel backed down, reinstated the photo and promised to discuss the matter with the respective publishers. On the appearance of it this was a lonely incidence over the use of just one picture, but it actually laid a hand on untreated effects in journalism and News contents. It certainly focuses on the increasing controversy over the evident control of internet companies over the large common people community in India and the risk they pose to the future by failing to control the fake news circulation on Social media channels.

Regarding Fake News on Salt News –

WhatsApp messages of a salt shortage (despite a 7,517 km coastline) in November 2016 triggered panic buying at markets past midnight, and caused a four-fold price-rise in some parts of the country. Western Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Maharashtra and Hyderabad were particularly affected by this bit of fake news, said news reports. The subsequent chaos to stock up on the essential commodity led to the death of a woman in Kanpur, while police baton-charged crowds and stopped mobs

from looting grocery shops, according to this India Today report.

The government issued a clarification denying any shortage of the commodity. “We monitor the prices of 22 essential commodities on daily basis. As per the prices reported by centers from across the country, there has been no increase in price of salt whatsoever,” the department of consumer affairs said in a statement, as quoted in this Times of India report.

After Effects –



With the reference from the news of leading all the news papers, rumors of no salt stocks in Uttar Pradesh triggered a major law and order situation, leading to the death of a woman in Kanpur, police said on Saturday. In the panic buying around midnight, when the rumors spread like wildfire in Bakarganj Bazaar in

Kanpur, rushed to buy some salt. In the melee she was pushed around and slipped into a drain, dying on the spot, the police said.

The police had to resort to cane charge at many places as the panic-stricken gathered in long queues outside grocery shops and retail outlets. Similar situation was witnessed in Meerut where the mob tried to loot grocery shops at Shyamnagar, Lisadhi gate and Samar Garden.

Eleven persons were arrested in Ghaziabad for hoarding large stocks of salt and trying to sell them at inflated rates. Police and Food and Civil Supply officers were rush to many places in Lucknow, Allahabad, Etawah, Mainpuri, Agra, Meerut, Muzaffarnagar and Ghazipur to control the horde.

One person each was arrested in Firozabad, Mainpuri and Gorakhpur while trying to illegally stock salt packets. Tension was reported from places like Rampur, Bareilly and Moradabad where salt sold at a whopping Rs 500 a kilo. The police intervened and forced the shops to close.

Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh state Mr. Akhilesh Yadav in a late Friday night statement asked people not to pay heed to rumors of salt shortage and assured that there was adequate stock.

Regarding Ethical Standards Not Followed –

The Code ethics of journalism the not followed during the publishing above news;

- 1) Seeking the actual truth and report about it,
- B) is this News creates harm to the social community,
- c) Before spreading the news check the information and Act independent-ly while publishing it and
- d) Be accountable and transparent while publishing any news.
- e)

Regarding Fake News on Chip in Rs. 2000 Currency Note

News –

As per the News and fake propaganda on social media Channel, a nano geo-positioning system (GPS) tracking device embedded in the new Rs 2,000 notes gained traction. It further states that, this chip, the messages said, would alert authorities if black money was hoarded and the nano-GPS chip does not need any power source, it only acts as a signal reflector. When a Satellite sends a signal requesting location the NGC reflects back the signal from the location, giving precise location coordinates, and the serial number of the currency back to the satellite, this way every chip-embedded currency can be easily tracked & located even if it is kept 120 meters below ground level. The NGC can't be tampered with or removed without damaging the currency note.



It was almost believed by the common people about this rumor and then Reserve Bank of India issued RBI issues Rs.2000 note in new series pic.twitter.com/7Ob2j1t6Ab — ReserveBankOfIndia (@RBI) 8 November 2016

Speaking at an event in Goa, PM Modi claimed the fake news was being circulated by “vested interests hurt by demonetization”, according to this IANS report. The prime minister’s claim is unverified.

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Research Methodology and Data Analysis

It is a major concern amongst the Social media Channel how to grow rich by using technology

advancements and change the source of news publishing from traditional news media to social media channels. But with the above stated examples we can pertinent to note that, they have become powerful by taking advantages of news through use of stealth technology, but they have little if any understanding or regard for the Ethics of Mass media particularly while publishing any news.

It is also observed that aftermath of fake news spread during the November in 2016 it has created panic and chaos amongst the government machinery and media circles. It is seen that, after for few weeks fake social media handlers created false and hoax news stories circulated freely across their news feeds.

It is even observed that politically motivated groups creates these kind of contents to questions the role of government decision and also spread misinformation , so they can create panic against the decision taken by the government.

Although the notion that extremely biased websites and accounts holders on social media channels is spreading false and misleading and fake information regarding the shortage of food item or interfering government orders, social media channels have the tools to shut them down or take down their fake news within hour. The problem of all the social media channels is they refuses to recognize that the use of algorithms to monitor and edit materi-

al is no replacement for employing people to edit and prepare news for publication and, secondly, refuses to acknowledge that it is a publisher. The row over the false currency note and shortage of Salt how sentient human beings are still needed to analyze, to apply context and to make nuanced decision over what gets published. While teaching journalism subject there is proverb which always taught by the teacher which says, not all nudity is indecent, not all images of violence are damaging and not all hateful words unacceptable. This is all depends upon the peoples mind their motive and context which they have created. Before publishing, these contents editorial decisions like News media have to be taken by the separate editorial board of the Social medial channels individually. And these people's on Editorial boards needs to be experts in the ethics and of the framework of values in which journalism works. Studies show that these days more than 40% of people get their news from social media channels according to according to the ANI Research Center.

It has been observed normally in the case of news media, the lack of transparency in the way social media channels work makes it hard for them to be held accountable. This raises a question over who is held accountable for the company's treatment of news. All that is certain is that Social media channels are creating a platform that will attract advertisers. It appears to

have no interest in building a reputation in the news business. And they are not transparent and responsible for behavior and pattern of advertisement publishing. Sometimes social media channels had ended up “altering history, and altering the truth”. Which is also resembles in the above mentioned cases. And it is a threat to democracy and free flow of information.

A major concern remains that false or misleading news can spread like wildfire on social networks because of confirmation bias, the use of “likes” and sharing with our friends. This exploits an element of human psychology that makes us more likely to accept information that conforms to our existing world views. This process is encouraged by the financial model used by Social media channels. For example, A YouTube user can earn a tiny fraction of cash income per-click on the advertising on his social media channel, therefore it is observed that many young generations in India found that the best way to generate traffic to their stories on social media channel is to use sensational material and target the famous personality supporters and even the best way to generate shares on any social media channels is to publish false content.

But it is also been seen that the problem for traditional news channels is rise of the social media users and the impact of technology. The crisis they face is unfashionable, and

media business no longer makes money out of news. Therefore even they are part of the some of the circulation of fake news to get the financial benefit. This communications revolution provides people with different ways to access information and they create their own filters for information as per they like or don't like about the particular incident. For many years newspapers controlled news and advertising markets, but digital technology has changed everything.

News gathering has become a very much slothful process. Nowadays, there is a very less money spent on investigative journalism and on Human intelligence which resulted into, media increasingly follow the agenda and streaming information published on Social media channels. This may explain in part why most of the mainstream media have become disconnected from their audience and totally depends upon the digitally created content. The information crisis is one that touches on the prospects for democracy. The rise of fake news and created propaganda, with an objective to threatens the democracy within country.

Conclusion

Any news channel have to act independently not only for the sake of maintaining ethical standards but for zealously guarding their freedom and their constitutional rights but it has to be also noted that any content created

by the user needs to checks by the editors to maintain the harmony and stability in community. News portal, social or traditional play a vital role in providing the information to the public. Therefore it has been pertinent to state that, ethically they need to remain sensitive to issues such as transparency, accountability and accuracy. Users continuously checked before publishing content with ethical questions throughout different stages of their publishing contents and have to be justifying their views to the social media editors. Normally it is known that, the ethical way of accomplishing the news publication on traditional news media is tougher, but all the users need to follow the same ethical standards on social media channels to maintain the standards of the news and protect the sanctity of their media.

But it is also a fact that the presence of the sensational news content and its followers on social media poses a challenge of greater challenge to the traditional mass media. The speed of news circulation on the social media channel is mentioned in the above paper which also resembles the impacts of the same which the traditional media cannot compete. The traditional mass media would be compelled to use the facilities offered by the social media channels for information gathering and assembling widening the information acquisition platform. But the traditional mass media need to be careful while select-

ing the information sources or circulating any specific item because information and contents on social media channel re not examined by the editors or published by following ethical norms like traditional news channels. The presence of a masses on social media channels would facilitate the users of social media channels to start the news and circulate to larger audience, it would be a challenge for traditional news media to counteract the advantages of the social media channel and make themselves viable to larger readers/audience. The news in the social media channel would be somewhat unrestrained and widespread as there would no editor physically present or virtually created to check the content matter. Moreover continuous inflow of new senders and receivers would mean absence of regulation and unrestrained information exchange amongst the users. The journalistic code of ethics calling on accuracy of facts, minimizing harm to sources and subjects, resolve to act independently and freely whatever the circumstances and determination to remain transparent would be the mast-bearer for the conventional media and it is totally absent as per the concerned with social media channels.

Since the Last few years, world renowned Social media channels have decided to crack down on fake news there were many things they are planning to do such as; policy regarding advertising on sites that show misleading or illegal content, Ban online

advertising regarding which effects on common people community, these decisions are a clear signal that internet publishers are waking up to the dangers of misinformation online. Social media channels users should follow some simple ground rules to before publishing stories online;

- **Use fact-checking web sites.** - Traditionally news media double-check everything that arrives on news media but for social media news channels needs to check what contents they have received or going to write must be check online fact checkers websites. Such as <https://factchecker.in/>

Watch out for websites with odd names - Strange domain names or sites that end in “.com.co” for instance are often fake versions of real news sources.

Check the “About Us” box on the website - Worry if there isn’t one and check the provider with Wikipedia.

Beware of stories not being reported elsewhere - A shocking, outrageous or surprising event will have another source. If it doesn’t, be suspicious.

Be wary if there is no attribution for an author or source - That’s sometimes justified, but should be explained and, if not, don’t trust it.

Check the date. - One favorite trick of news fakers is to repackage old stories. They may have been accurate but used out of time and out of context they may become

malicious falsehoods.

- Finally, remember that there’s such a thing as satire. Not all fakery is malicious. It can even be entertaining and may come from reputable sources of journalism. For instance, has done some great fact-based investigative journalism alongside occasionally amusing spoof editorial content, but found itself on a list of “fake-news” sites circulated when the misinformation panic set in after the demonetization.

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