

The Proliferation of Fake News in Network Communication and The Reconstruction of Media Credibility

Yisitie Lin, Shitao Zhang

School of Network Communication, Zhejiang Yuexiu University, Shaoxing 312000, China

Abstract: *The network provides new communication technologies and modes for the dissemination of news, and enriches the diversity of news dissemination. In network communication, the information market environment is highly competitive, the profit drive the truth change, and due to the lack of news control consciousness in network communication, it is possible to produce fake news in every link of news production. By analyzing the fake news reports of Yuan Longping's death, this paper explores the typical characteristics of fake news in network communication and the harm caused, and how to reconstruct the credibility of the media by dealing with the phenomenon of the proliferation of fake news in network communication.*

Keywords: *Network communication, Fake news, Media credibility, News authenticity*

1. Overview of Fake News and Media Credibility

The environment of network news dissemination is ever-changing, and the dissemination of ecological environment affects the way news is disseminated. From the traditional media to the media era, everyone is from the media era today, the main body of the media identity diversification, the mainstream media through the two micro-end to expand their influence, news dissemination methods and channels diversification, leading to the proliferation of fake news.

"Fake news" mainly refers to news reports that cover a part of the untruthful information in the course of news reporting and do not fully reveal the true situation of the event. Truth is the life of news, in the era of website traffic for the king, the media in order to seize the exclusive right, the first right, the pursuit of timeliness, click-through rate, the lack of awareness of the customs, resulting in fake news, media breach of trust.¹

The so-called credibility generally refers to the media in the long-term news dissemination practice in the formation and accumulation of the community and the general audience of the degree or ability. In today's increasingly fierce media competition, credibility as an intangible asset has become an important weight of media competition. The publication and dissemination of fake news seriously damage the credibility of the media, reduce the trust of information recipients, indirectly or directly affect the survival and development of the media. Therefore, it is very necessary to reconstruct the credibility of media.^{2,3}

2. Mainstream Media CGTN Released Fake news about Yuan Longping's Death, Causing Public Opinion Turmoil

On May 22, 2021, at 10:48 a.m., CGTN tweeted on Sina Weibo and Twitter that Yuan Longping, the "father of hybrid rice", had died, followed by reprints by state media such as the Beijing News, China Television News and self-media. Immediately caused a national and even worldwide sensation, netizens on various platforms to remember Yuan Longping.

On May 22nd, at 11:16 p.m., the news media, including The News, published news of the death of

¹ Buddy. An analysis of the legal mechanism of fake news [J]. Journal of Journalism Research. 2017,8(01)

² Shen Zhengfu. The reconstruction of the communication power, guidance, influence and credibility of news public opinion in the new media era [J]. Modern communication (Journal of China Media University). 2016, 38(05)

³ Yu Wenbin. Credibility—An important weight of media competition [J]. News front. 2002,(05)

Secretary Yuan Longping, CGTN issued a microblog at 11:57 p.m. apologizing for accidentally reporting the news of Yuan Longping's death, and at 13:41 p.m., Xinhua news agency reported that Yuan Longping had died at 13:07 p.m. in Changsha, Hunan Province, at the age of 91.

This is a "news grab" wrong Wulong incident. CGTN, as China's top international news organization, represents the highest authority of China's external information release. But this "advance report" on Yuan Lao's death violates the most basic principle of news - news authenticity.

In the current mainstream media and market media, and even with the network users of the time-sensitive competition, CGTN as the mainstream media in the unverified situation issued news reports, caused a heated debate of public opinion. Moreover, the people of the news event are famous Yuan Longping, who is very influential in the whole country and even all over the world. In the first time news reports issued by the majority of the media have been directly reproduced, this is due to the media between the belief that the mainstream media blindly forward the phenomenon, and lack of awareness of the news. Netizens also expressed their remembrance of Yuan Longping's death on various online platforms, sparking outrage when they learned it was fake news. And in the follow-up news of Yuan Longping's death, people questioned it.

After this false report, the message under the CGTN microblog was abusive, as the mainstream media accumulated over the years the credibility of the instant zero. It is believed that this incident has taught CGTN a profound lesson and sounded the alarm for other media keen on "grabbing the news".

3. Analysis of the Characteristics of the Universality of Fake News

Based on the typical case of the death of Yuan Longping published by the mainstream media CGTN on the network platform, this paper analyzes the characteristics of the spread of fake news through the network platform.

3.1 Over-Focus on Click-Through Rates and Subjectively Concoct Fake News

From the production process of news, the media in order to improve click-through rate, growth performance, the news content of subjective speculation. In the new media age, the time standard of news dissemination has been accelerated time and time. Compared with the past paper media "next day" reports, as well as the era of live television "timely" reports, in the current mainstream media and market media, and even with the network users of the time-sensitive competition, "grab the news" wrong Wulong incident repeatedly staged.

For possible, predictable news events, the act of writing press releases in advance is itself justified and can improve the efficiency of media operations, which has a certain rationality in media operations. "News authenticity" means that every specific fact in a news report must be objective and realistic, i.e. the time, place, person, thing, cause and course of the news report can stand the check. Although Yuan Lao died around 13 p.m., CGTN's news release before doctors gave a death notice was a "fake news".

3.2 News Content is Closely Related to Social Hot Spots

From the content of the news, the content of this fake news is closely related to social hot spots. CGTN reported that the object is Yuan Longping, Yuan Longping as the "father of hybrid rice", has a strong influence in the world, and his news will certainly arouse widespread public concern.

Keeping a close eye on social hot spots can make fake news quickly become the focus of public opinion, while rich topicality can make its own meaning infinitely enlarged and sublimated. Because of the openness, sharing and interactivity of social media, many audiences with unknown truths are unwittingly involved, and these discussions and controversies, premised on default facts, end up being accomplices to the spread of fake news.⁴

3.3 The Lack of Awareness of "Gate Clearance" and the Emergence of Fake News "Resonance Phenomenon"

Regarding news sources, scholar Chen Lidan has also stressed: "Verification is the premise of

⁴ Yao Yanan. New Features and Countermeasures of Fake News in the Age of Social Media [J]. News enthusiasts. 2016,(08)

reprinting, any added material must have a real news source, and by indicating the source to regulate their professional behavior, the most reliable way is through their own interviews to confirm the facts ... For transponders, the idea that the mainstream media should not be used as the sole source of information should be involved in verifying news facts.”⁵

In the network environment, the main body of customs clearance has become diversified, and there have been some changes in the way of customs clearance. Before CGTN published the fake news about Yuan Longping's death, it was unable to verify the news in advance to ensure its authenticity. In the process of information dissemination, other media for CGTN, such as authoritative mainstream media, ignored the information diffusion link of the customs awareness. The inter-media agenda is set to the power of fake news, and the "resonance" phenomenon of fake news has been made, which enhances the credibility of fake news.

3.4 With the Characteristics of Network Communication, Fake News Spreads Fast and Covers a Wide Range of Applications

Judging from the way this fake news is disseminated, it is not another way. CGTN's tweets have spread across the country with the help of new media platforms. CGTN's report on Yuan Longping's death in just one hour triggered the domestic and foreign people's heated discussion and remembrance, a circle of friends by Yuan Longping's death of the news brush screen. And an hour later the media came out to dispel the rumors.

After this false report, the message under the CGTN microblog was abusive, as the mainstream media accumulated over the years the credibility of the instant zero. It is believed that this incident has taught CGTN a profound lesson and sounded the alarm for other media keen on "grabbing the news".

4. Harm Caused by Fake News

The prevalence of fake news has caused great harm to the ecological environment of network news, damaged the credibility of the media, destroyed the social order, and even caused social unrest and so on.

4.1 Infringes the Rights and Interests of the Parties

Fake news reports are false, in the first degree of infringement of the rights and interests of the parties, resulting in its economic, psychological, reputational and other harm. The fake news of Yuan Longping's death caused psychological and mental secondary harm to relatives and friends closely related to him.

4.2 Endangering the Credibility of the Media

The proliferation and dissemination of fake news weakens the authenticity and seriousness of news. Users receive all kinds of news every day, in the information market mixed era, the proliferation of fake news contrary to the first meaning of news: true. The media has played an "indispensable" role in the concocting and dissemination of fake news, which has severed the relationship between users and the media and reduced the trust in the media. For example, CGTN as an authoritative state media, after reporting on the death of Yuan Longping fake news, users under the CGTN's microblog to make vicious comments, resulting in the CGTN still shut down the microblog comment function, the user's trust in CGTN can be said to be after a false news report fell to a nadir.

4.3 Causes the Wrong Direction of Public Opinion

After the media's concocting and dissemination of fake news, it may lead to the wrong direction of public opinion. After the fake news of Yuan Longping's death reported by CGTN, people remember Yuan Lao in the first time, but after the afternoon again clearly reported Yuan Lao's death, the user chose not to believe for the first time, subjectively thinking that the "wolf is coming" incident may be repeated, turning the inner grief into anger at the media false reports.

⁵Chen Lidan. Verify the facts, do not use the news without a source - Kra canal fake news to form a chain analysis [J].News and writing,2015(7): 46-49.

5. Reconstruct Media Credibility

Facing the phenomenon of the proliferation of fake news in network communication, the media itself, industry and country should make a difference, avoid the proliferation of fake news, and reconstruct the credibility of the media is imperative.

5.1 The Mainstream Media Adhere to the Professionalism of Journalism, and Report More Deeply on Less Fast Food News

The first meaning of the so-called new mainstream media is that we cannot avoid the core problems facing this era and society, but have the courage to face up to the list of problems of the times and provide wisdom and direction in line with the interests of society. In the complex network environment, professional media are facing great challenges, the mainstream media as a professional news media, should adhere to good journalism. In the production process of news, news professionalism runs through the whole process, the mainstream media should have a high sense of self-standardization, in the face of click-through rate, performance can not forget to adhere to the news professionalism.⁶

At the same time play the strengths of the mainstream media, do more in-depth reporting, moderate sacrifice of timeliness. The social significance of in-depth reporting is conducive to increasing the user's trust and recognition of the media, thereby enhancing the credibility of the media. Mainstream media and new media can play their own advantages, in two steps, and jointly create a clear network news ecological environment.

5.2 Strengthen the Control Mechanism in Network News Dissemination

Traditional media for news communication has a relatively perfect mechanism, but because of the complexity and particularity of network communication, the network to a certain extent weakens the news "gate" consciousness, the subject of the control becomes diversified, the way of control has also undergone changes, the control link has become difficult, so it is very important to strengthen the network communication link in the control mechanism.

5.3 Establish Media Accountability and Strengthen Regulations for the Dissemination of Information

Law is the moral bottom line, the establishment of media accountability system, through laws and regulations to establish the last line of defense of the true norms of news, can largely avoid the release and dissemination of fake news. The effect of media self-restraint alone is limited and minimal. In the era of network communication, the communication environment is complicated and diverse, many media by such a specific background to do what they want, through the establishment of media accountability, from the release and dissemination of news to regulate the media. When the media know that the concocting of fake news and unverified dissemination of fake news will bear the corresponding legal responsibility, to a certain extent, can strengthen the media's coverage of the truth of the news. Through the relevant regulations, especially for the new media has a better constraint, purifying the cyberspace environment, can improve the credibility of the media as a whole.

6. Conclusion

Fake news is widely disseminated with the help of the network spread fast, wide coverage and so on, which has great harm to the credibility of the media, including not only authoritative mainstream media but also new media. The proliferation of fake news has sintered the relationship and trust between the information recipient and the media, caused a lot of harm, and caused the whole network news ecological environment to become bad. Resisting fake news and reconstructing the credibility of the media is something that requires the media, industry and the state to work together.

Adhering to the professionalism of news, strengthening the control mechanism in network communication, and establishing the media accountability system can all help the media to reconstruct its credibility to a certain extent, abide by the principle of the authenticity of news, avoid the

⁶ Zhu Chunyang, Liu Xinyi, Yang Hai. How to shape the new mainstream media and modern communication system in the era of media fusion? [J]. Journalism University. 2014,(06)

publication and dissemination of fake news, and build a clear network news ecological environment.

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