

Chapter 5

Authentication by Humans

ABSTRACT

The present chapter investigates the involvement of the human factor in news evaluation procedures. Indeed, the “wise” crowd is an essential component of the verification practices, although there are continuously arising automated processes in the related research field (digital forensics). The idea of validating events using individuals’ advantages (rational judgment, criticism, physical presence) is not new, since audience has always influenced the published stories regarding their formulation and perception. It is no coincidence that the term “collective intelligence” has been used for many years. Furthermore, this section of the book attempts to provide an overview of the fact-checking procedures, while utilizing the capabilities of Semantic Web and the developed initiatives around the world regarding authentication. The utmost goal of the chapter is to highlight that people hold a crucial role in the dissemination of misleading information, but also in detecting, flagging, and debunking.

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, Journalism has constantly included verification processes; for that reason, reporters always had an obligation to crosscheck the stories they published (Kolodzy, 2012). Many may argue that journalists must adapt their traditional work practices to the new digital environment, but things are not quite straightforward. The current digital environment has different characteristics from the media landscape of the 20th century. Speed is an essential factor that dominates the journalistic work, and the variety of contemporary information sources makes the evaluation process very demanding for every media organization (Veglis & Pomportsis, 2014; 2016). The news is produced from various sources in a 24-hour cycle, and all data must be consumed fresh otherwise, they lose their value (Veglis, 2012). This transforming media landscape has positioned media in an extremely vulnerable position.

Due to the need for endless content production, reporters, to succeed the highest “number of clicks”, utilize Social Networking Sites (SNSs) as an important information source, in which a significant amount of data is not valid. Considering that every internet user can create and disseminate news items, which can become “viral” (image, video, hashtag, etc.) and lead to coverage from mainstream media (Marwick & Lewis, 2017), anything published online should be questioned. Organizations around the world study the problem by focusing on specific areas or by covering the entire field to reduce misinformation and continuous radicalization, as well as to increase trust in mainstream media. The present chapter aims to point out the need for digital literacy enhancement and to highlight that even, algorithmic and mechanically assisted, solutions must be human-centered, understandable and user-friendly. Data verification and authentication practices, debunking sites and crowdsourcing methodologies are the topics which are discussed.

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