Chapter 30: Digital Corporate Communication & Disinformation:

The role of social media management strategy in organizations

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Abstract:

In the current scenario characterized by the Covid-19 pandemic, the use of digital channels such as social media platforms to retrieve information has grown exponentially and, consequently, disinformation is spreading more easily. For organizations, the disinformation phenomenon should be a concern, as it could undermine the relationship of trust between users and organizations with serious damage to them, so much so that organizations can lose the control of their digital and social media management strategies. The aim of this chapter is to address the topic of disinformation and explore the role of digital corporate communication to counter the spread of this dangerous phenomenon affecting organizations. Many organizations, including European Union institutions which are analysed in this chapter, have understood the importance of digital communication to tackle disinformation. Through communications on social media and on dedicated websites, organizations face this challenge daily . Although social media are digital spaces in which disinformation thrives, they also are a means for organizations to address stakeholders' concerns through effective digital communication aimed at creating and strengthening relationships of trust with stakeholders.

Introduction

Disinformation in the form of half-truths, false information, and deliberative lies has always existed (Lewandowsky & van der Linden, 2021). Although there is nothing new in this phenomenon, the novelty is in the speed with which disinformation spreads in the information environment, as technological development, and in particular social media, has allowed a more rapid spread of news (Bovet & Makse, 2019). In other words, digitalization is a key aspect that has allowed and contributed to making disinformation a topical concern among policy makers, organizations, scholars and institutions. According to some authors, digitalization allows fake news to propagate more rapidly than it ever has before (Mills et al., 2019). Social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, have been blamed because of fake news dissemination in virtual spaces (Jang & Kim, 2018; Spohr, 2017). This is due to their structure: on these platforms, content can be shared among users with no third-party filtering, fact-checking or editorial judgement (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017), which facilitates the spread of fake news .

Nowadays, in the scenario characterized by, for example, the Covid-19 pandemic, the use of digital channels to retrieve information has grown exponentially and, consequently, disinformation has spread more easily, so much so that the World Health Organization has coined the term "infodemic". For instance, according to a recent Statista study (2020), 60% of young people between the ages of 16 and 24 have recently used social media to acquire information on the Coronavirus, and 59% have found fake news related to that topic.

Indeed, the phenomenon of fake news affects not only society in general, but also organizations. In this context, digital corporate communication, understood as "an organization's strategic management of digital technologies, digital infrastructures and digitalization processes to improve communication with internal and external stakeholders and more broadly within society for the maintenance of organizational intangible assets" (Badham & Luoma-aho, 2023, p. XXX), could be compromised by the spread of fake

news (Fulgoni & Lipsman, 2017). More specifically, scholars demonstrate that fake news influences consumers' attitudes towards businesses (Di Domenico et al., 2021), conveys misleading beliefs (Lewandowsky et al., 2012), and creates confusion about past experiences with brands (Rapp & Salovich, 2018). Scholars have also found that corporate reputation could be strongly compromised by fake news (Berthon & Pitt, 2018), to the point of being subject to product boycotts for no reason (Obada, 2019).

The aim of this chapter is to address the topic of disinformation and explore the role of digital corporate communication to counter the spread of this dangerous phenomenon. The first part of the chapter consists of a conceptual framework of the disinformation phenomenon: definitions, theories and dimensions are analysed and compared. The chapter then focuses on what is changing as a result of digitalisation (i.e. fake news spreading in the communicative overcrowding scenario) and yet what remains the same (i.e. the old threat of disinformation). The risks that disinformation causes for organizations is also discussed. An illustration of how the European Union tackled disinformation surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic is presented. The chapter concludes with implications for practitioners and future research directions regarding this topic.

Definitions of disinformation and previous studies

Disinformation has been extensively examined from different perspectives in academic literature, including communication studies. Disinformation includes "deceptive advertising (in business and in politics), government propaganda, doctored photographs, forged documents, fake maps, internet frauds, fake websites, and manipulated Wikipedia entries" (Fallis, 2015, p. 401). Scholars do not always refer to the phenomenon in the same way. In fact, the literature has identified various types of false information and authors have provided different definitions of the topic over the years.

Historically, the concept of disinformation has been associated with that of propaganda and, therefore, with communication strategies implemented in the political field. However, according to Lanoszka (2019), although the concepts of disinformation and propaganda partially overlap, they have different meanings and objectives. Indeed, while the purpose of propaganda is linked to persuading an individual with respect to a privileged point of view in order to reach political interests (Cull et al., 2003),

the aim of disinformation is "to manipulate beliefs in order to take advantage of erroneous inferences" (Ettinger & Jeheil, 2010, p. 1).

Generally, a discussion of disinformation suffers from inaccurate definitions (Karlova & Lee, 2011). For example, the terms disinformation and misinformation are used interchangeably by various scholars (Losee, 1997), while at other times the two terms refer to variations of each other (Zhou & Zhang, 2007). Also according to the recent study by la Cour (2020), the phenomenon of disinformation can manifest in different forms and can be used by different actors. La Cour (2020) identifies three most frequent prototypes of disinformation, which are (1) a "disinformation story", that is a singular false news in an information system; (2) a "disinformation campaign", that is a campaign which collects multiple false stories related to the same topic; and (3) a "disinformation operation", that is a "long-term effort to systematically deceive a foreign public" (La Cour, 2020, p. 708).

Table 1 shows various definitions of disinformation offered in academic literature.

Table 1. Definitions from academic studies about disinformation.

Category	Definition	Author(s)
Disinformation	"Disinformation is widely understood as content produced to generate profits, pursue political goals, or maliciously mislead, such as in the form of hoaxes"	Nielsen & Graves (2017)
	"Disinformation means that false information is strategically shared to cause harm"	Wardle & Derakhshan (2017)
	"It is widely understood as misleading content produced to generate profits, pursue political goals, or maliciously deceive"	Humprecht et al (2020)

	"Any form of manifestly false information or content, which is originally uttered or written with the intent to do harm and subsequently disseminated"	La Cour (2020)
	"False, incomplete or misleading information that is passed, fed, or confirmed to a targeted individual, group, or country"	Shultz & Godson (1984)
	"Intentional falsehoods spread as new stories or simulated documentary formats to advance political goals'"	Bennett & Livingston (2018)
	"Information that is intentionally created and uploaded on various websites, and thereafter disseminated via social media either for profit or for social influence"	Humprecht (2018, 1975)
Misinformation	"Unintentional publication of false or misleading information"	Wardle & Derakhshan (2017)
	"A category of claim for which there is at least substantial disagreement (or even consensus rejection) when judged as to truth value among the widest feasible range of observers"	Southwell et al. (2018)

	"Misinformation refers to claims that – unlike information – are not supported by the majority of societally accepted evidence adjudicators, and reflects content that may be inaccurate, uncertain, vague, or ambiguous"	Karlova & Fisher (2013)
Malinformation	"Malinformation occurs when genuine information is shared to cause harm, for example, by disclosing private information to the public"	Wardle & Derakhshan (2017)

Source: Authors' own elaboration

Since the 2016 US presidential election (Guess et al., 2019), the disinformation phenomenon has been extensively studied and fake news, as invented information which imitates media contents in form but not in processes or organizational intentions (Lazer et al., 2018), have begun to enter the academic debate. For example, Tandoc et al. (2017) conducted a literature review of the fake news topic and found only 34 academic articles which used the term "fake news" between 2003 and 2017. First, the authors raised the question of what is meant by the term "news" and what is meant by "fake". N*ews* is defined as "information or reports about recent events", "recent information about people you know", "a printed or broadcast report of information about important events in the world, the country or the local area", according to the Cambridge Dictionary. Academics refer to this word as a new piece of information, an account of a recent and interesting event, one that has a significant impact on people (Paschen, 2019; Tandoc et al., 2017). It is considered an output of journalism, so it is expected to be reliable, independent and accurate, given that it is responsibility of journalism to report objective and true information in what it produces. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, *fake* is something "that is made to look real or valuable in order to deceive people" or that "is not what or who they claim to be"; "not real, but made to look or seem real', 'something that is intended to look like and be mistaken for something else". Thus, fake characterizes something that is not genuine, an imitation, something false, counterfeit or fraudulent. Tandoc et al. (2017) offered a categorization of fake news, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Different types of fake news (Tandoc et al., 2017).

Fake news type	Description
Fabricated news	Information with no factual basis rendered in the style of news articles to create legitimacy
Satire and parody	Content that doesn't have the intention to harm but the possibility to fool. According to Wardle (2019), if effective and intelligent they could be considered forms of art
Materials manipulation	The contents (e.g. photographs, videos) are digitally altered or extracted from their original context (intentionally or unintentionally) to represent a different meaning
Advertorial	It seems to be a genuine news with content featuring statistics, sources, interviews, etc. but in fact it is an ad. Taking the format of news, it misleads in believing it is authentic, hiding its one-sided claim
Propaganda	It is a news story which is created by a political entity with the intent to influence public opinion, especially on a political and ideological level, to benefit one side, and often discredit another. The aim is to persuade, rather than inform, with information, opinions, ideas of only one part

Source: Authors' own elaboration

From a review of the literature on disinformation and fake news, it emerges that there are different types of disinformation and fake news contents which, consequently, also have different objectives and contexts. For example, the intentions of the source change, which can be of two types (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017): economic and/or ideological. On the one hand, economic reasons push organizations to spread fake news with the aim of increasing traffic on a specific website by generating clicks. Political organizations, on the other hand, spread fake news for propaganda purposes.

Generally, some elements of the definition of fake news are agreed among academics. For example, fake news is intentionally false but realistic information, fabricated with the intent to deceive and be taken as truth. Further, it needs the look and feel of real news (e.g., how websites look, how articles are written, and how photos include attribution). Hiding under a veneer of legitimacy, it takes on some form of credibility by trying to appear as real news.

Tandoc et al. (2018) suggest the expression 'fake news' can be considered an oxymoron, since news is supposed to be true and reliable, so in its definition it excludes the concept of falsity. Furthermore, they point out another problem in the definition of fake news: it is hard to affirm what is real and what is fake since news is socially constructed. Inadvertently, willing or not, journalists make a subjective judgement when they choose to include or exclude parts of the information and who they report it to. News is vulnerable not only to the preferences of journalists, but also to government and political institutions, advertisers and market forces. However, in all cases, it is expected to be accurate information based on truth. There are also opinion pieces in which authors explicitly say what they think, so they are not interpreted as fake news (Paschen, 2019).

Moreover, fake news can be categorized according to two dimensions: 'facticity' and 'intention to deceive' (Tandoc et al., 2018). *Facticity* means 'being a fact' and indicates the degree to which fake news relies on actual elements. If facticity is high, then the news is reliable and accurate. But if it is low, it means it is fictitious. *Intention to deceive* refers to the creator's or author's goal to cheat and misinform people, and that can be for many reasons, such as for profit or ideology.

What is changing?

It is now widely accepted that the concept of fake news gained prominence in the public's consciousness during the 2016 US presidential election campaign (Guess et al., 2018). During this election, social media played a key role as a vehicle to spread news and build consensus, reaching as many users as possible for politic purposes. This phenomenon brought scholarly and wider public attention to the causes and effects of fake news. Frequently, in the case of a diffusion campaign of fake news, behind these fake contents is the contribution of organizations capable of creating damage to people, such as political opponents, institutions, or companies. As a result, the world of social media is radically changing the paradigms of information use. On the one hand, social media favours the spread of so-called "counter-information" (Colombo, 2014). On the other hand, social media increases the spread of false information (Howell, 2013).

With the rapid diffusion of social media, the phenomenon of disinformation has grown exponentially. According to a recent study by Statista (2020), among the sources of trustworthy news by medium, social media ranks last and is preceded by digital and printed newspapers, blogs, television and online news websites. Organizations are not immune to these type of developments. They need to be alert and ready to tackle untrue information being disseminated about them on social media.

Disinformation is facilitated by a plurality of touchpoints, both online and offline, available to users to seek information and therefore is characterized by communicative overcrowding. A large quantity of news born and spread quickly without being verified in advance risks generating social alarm, distorted visions of reality and orientations and behaviours which can have negative consequences on individuals and entire communities. These risks are even more evident in the case of scientific news, which are difficult to interpret and have repercussions on collective behaviours. Indeed, a study by (Jennings et al., 2021) has shown that those who receive information from social media sources, such as YouTube, develop conspiratorial beliefs, and believe less in institutional sources.

In this uncertain scenario, social media plays a key role and often amplifies the spread of ambiguous content and fake news, which organizations need to be aware of (Berthon et al., 2018). For example, research by Media Matters (2021) has shown that the TikTok algorithm frequently amplifies false news about Covid-19 and vaccines. The algorithm of TikTok, as well as that of many other social

media such as Instagram, allows users to customize their feed so that they receive similar content based on the preferences and likes of users. Research by Media Matters has shown that, after liking some fake news content, a user's feed will be filled almost exclusively with similar content and therefore with fake news.

What remains the same?

Internet users have moved away from traditional media and increasingly use social media channels not only to seek new information, but also opinions about organizations, brands, and products. This popularity of social media communication among organizations depends on the viral dissemination of information via the Internet and the greater ability to reach audiences than traditional media. Organizations are now aware of the imminent need to focus on developing bilateral personal relationships with consumers and to foster interactions.

Thus, the advent of social media has democratized content and made information sharing quicker via digital channels, inevitably also favouring the diffusion of distorted content (Fulgoni & Lipsman, 2017). According to Burkhardt (2017), the first fake news dates back to the invention of the printing press: the spread of literacy made it possible to disseminate information rapidly and in this period the phenomenon has become more visible. In 1844, the American author Allan Poe wrote a hoax newspaper article saying that a balloonist crossed the Atlantic in just three days. Due to the details used by Allan Poe in the storytelling, many readers believed the news, which later turned out to be false only when journalists failed to contact the balloonist. Therefore, fake news has existed for a long time and the motivations that prompted the authors to write fake news are different. Some authors probably had good intentions, but others intended to harm something or someone (Burkhardt, 2017).

Critical examination

There are many risks of the fake news phenomenon for organizations. For example, as reputation is a resource on which organizations can capitalize, fake news represent a form of "pollution", a toxin that risks compromising organizations' reputation-building strategies (Fulgoni & Lipsman, 2017). In this

regard, Nyilasy (2019, p. 338) considers fake news a risk factor and an obstacle to building corporate reputation: "fake news are not just media content - their intention is to influence consumers of a particular persuasion goal. It is undeniable that this is sponsored messaging that spreads through the media channels and with persuasive intent". In fact, as also highlighted by Kwon (2019), communication flows have always had a significant impact on the identity of organizations and their reputation.

In this vein, the impact of fake news on the reputation and other intangible assets of a company is accentuated by the wide accessibility that users have to the Internet and the role they have acquired in the management of communication flows. Indeed, due to the low barriers to entry on the web, producers of fake news are driven by economic reasons to create deceptive content: sensational headlines easily generate clicks and traffic that increase advertising volume and, by extension, revenue (Ormond et al., 2016). As a result, organizations can lose control of their communication messages, strategies and practices (Mills & Robson, 2019). According to a recent study by Jahng (2021), the increase in the circulation of fake news in the digital environment represents a challenge for crisis communication on social media. This challenge not only affects the reputation of organizations, but also undermines the relationship with the target audience. However, according to Jahng (2021), the awareness of users about the dangers of fake news and the knowledge of the characteristics of these contents could alleviate reputational damage to organizations. Currently, a study by Castellani and Berton (2017) reports that several companies have begun to implement strategies aimed at limiting the spread of fake news to avoid reputational damage, linked to credibility and trust or in terms of sales. According to this study, organizations affected by fake news have promoted communication campaigns with the aim of transmitting timely and transparent information through different channels, online and offline.

Illustrative example: The Covid-19 'infodemic'

Censis research reveals that the web remains the privileged environment in which disinformation and fake news are produced and developed. Almost 30 million Italians declared that during the health emergency situation related to Covid-19, they discovered news that turned out to be false or wrong on the Internet. Indeed, the circulation of fake news tends to intensify in periods dominated by great uncertainty.

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In the face of the health emergency caused by Covid-19, for example, the spread of disinformation increased exponentially, so much so that the World Health Organization coined the term "infodemic". As a result, health organizations and authorities around the world became increasingly aware of the damage disinformation can cause people. At the base of this phenomenon is the expectation of receiving reassuring news during tough times, and this increases the number of people willing to believe truthful news that apparently reassures and that appears plausible for the wide propagation of false news. According to Statista (2021), in May 2020 up to 6% of all news and online posts related to Covid-19 were false or inaccurate. As can be seen in Figure 1, the peak in the dissemination of fake news was recorded in the initial phase of the pandemic (at the end of January 2020), with 7.3% of the fake news information related to Covid-19.

Figure 1. Share of online fake news related to Covid-19 in the period January-May 2020
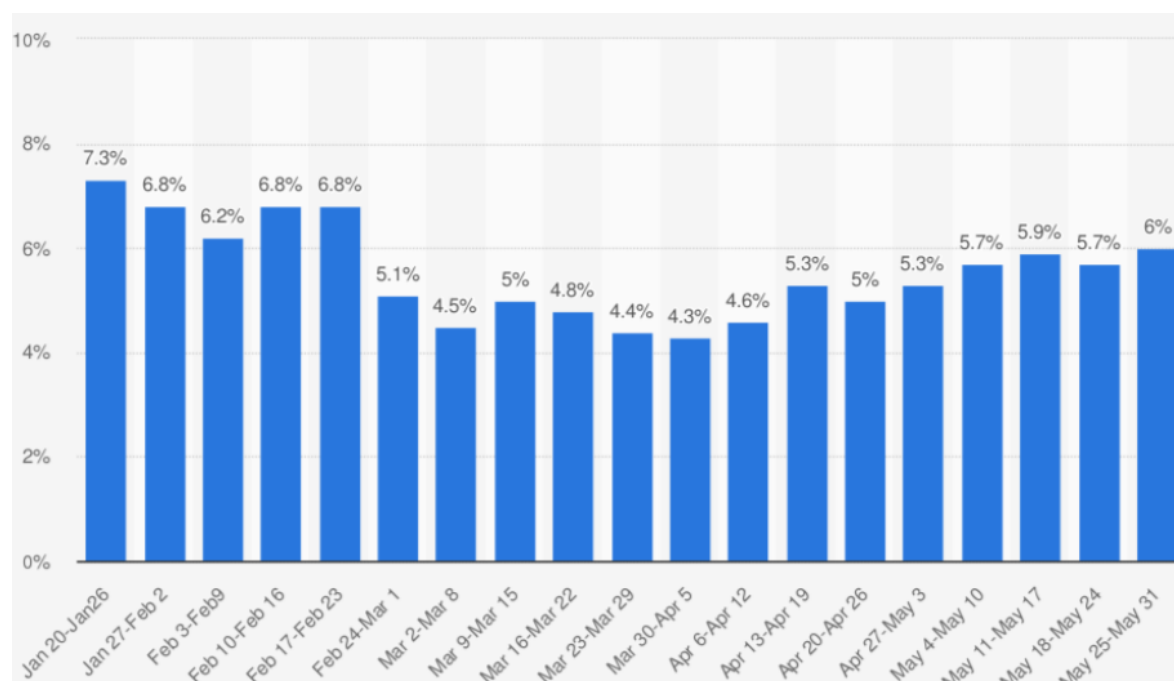
Source: Statista, 2021

The European Union's response to disinformation

On 10 June 2020 the European Commission Vice President stated (The European Commission Vice President Jourová, 10 June 2020

"The Coronavirus pandemic is also an infodemic. It is accompanied by a huge wave of disinformation and consumer hoaxes. It really showed that disinformation does not only harm the health of our democracies, it also harms the health of our citizens. It can negatively impact the economy and undermine the response of the public authorities and therefore weaken the health measures."

Communicators in the European Union are becoming increasingly aware of a variety of disinformation tactics and processes (see e.g., EUvsdisinfo.eu). Disinformation is seen to fuel general anxiety, contribute to polarization, and to question science and experts. Furthermore, dis- and misinformation have for example been perceived to feed into vaccine hesitancy (Eurofound, 2021). The EU has several means in place to tackle disinformation, and these actions and tools have been increasingly developed and strengthened during the past couple of years. As outlined in Table 3 (below), there are several institutions, organizations, and stakeholders tackling disinformation in the European Union, which poses both challenges and opportunities to the EU. On the one hand, the more there are players on the ground spotting and reviewing disinformation, the less disinformation goes unnoticed. On the other hand, due to the number of organizations and their communication professionals dealing with disinformation in the EU, creating effective and coordinated solutions to disinformation can be demanding.

Table 3 The EU's policy framework and instruments for tackling disinformation

Tool	Overseen by	Implication
EUvsDisinfo site Weekly disinformation reviews	- The EEAS (European External Action Service) Strategic Communication Division the East StratCom Task Forces Unit (ESCTF)	- Combines monitoring, analysis, public diplomacy, and strategic communications

	- Holds a coordinating position within the EU when it comes to tackling disinformation by foreign actors, involves 140 EU delegations around the world	- Implements the Action Plan Against Disinformation and the Rapid Alert System - ESCTF monitors, identifies, and debunks pro-Kremlin disinformation e.g., on EUvsDisinfo site and - ESCTF also aims to build resilience against disinformation in the Western Balkans and the Southern neighbourhood
The Rapid Alert System	- The EEAS coordinates the system in collaboration with the EU Member States - Coordinates with the G-7 Rapid Response Mechanism and NATO	- Facilitates information sharing - Exposes disinformation in real-time
The Code of Practice on Disinformation (CoPD)	- Coordinated by the European Commission	- An experiment for the technology industry to voluntary self-regulate - CoPD agreement made with major social media companies
The European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO)	- EDMO	- Coordinates the network of fact-checking organizations, researchers and media practitioners, teachers with technological platforms and public authorities - Aimed to strengthen the media

		- Offers funding for research tackling disinformation
The European Democracy Action Plan (EDAP) and the Digital Services Act (DSA)	- European Council, European Commission, European Parliament	- Proposes legally binding tools especially regarding the accountability and transparency of digital platforms, and enhances the EU's democratic resilience - EDAP offers an opportunity to strengthen the Code of Practice - The DSA aims to develop rules for the online environment

Source: Table elaborated by the authors and adapted from Colomina et al. (2021).

The EU's response to a Covid-19 vaccine disinformation campaign

Both the European Medicine Agency (EMA) and the World Health Organization (WHO) became targets of Kremlin disinformation in March 2021. The disinformation story claimed that the EMA and WHO did not approve the Sputnik Covid-19 vaccine by deliberately ignoring its success. Sputnik V demanded a public apology from the chair of the EMA management board on Twitter after the EMA had discouraged the EU Member States from approving the vaccine (EUvsDisinfo, 2021a).

In reality, the health regulators had not received enough information to review and prove the Sputnik V vaccine was safe for people to use. Neither EMA nor WHO had received the requested data from Russia, and some legal procedures to Russia were also still pending. EMA had earlier, in February 2021, announced that they would approve the vaccine if it met the applied standards (EMA, 2021). In October 2021, WHO did inform that data from Russian authorities was still pending. The vaccine disinformation campaign was proved by the European External Action Service (EEAS) Strategic Communication Division to be disinformation, and this was announced on the EUvsDisinfo website

(EUvsDisinfo, 2021b). According to the EEAS Strategic Communication Division, the disinformation campaign was connected to a pro-Kremlin narrative that had been circulating since the launch of Sputnik V. It included a claim that the EU was not accepting Russia's primacy, and the EU did not approve of the Sputnik vaccine due to political reasons. (EUvsDisinfo, 2021b)

It seems that only the EEAS EU Strategic Communication task force reacted to the disinformation publicly. The EUvsDinsfo published an article and a tweet on their website and Twitter account stating that "Pro-Kremlin disinformation seeks to portray Sputnik V and Russia as unfairly treated by the West and the EU" (EUvsDisinfo, 2021c). Interestingly, it appears that the EMA did not respond to the specific disinformation on their social media channels, even though they had earlier published a press release clarifying their vaccine approval process earlier in February 2022. They stated that EMA would discuss next steps with the Sputnik V producing company as well as confirmed that they apply the same approach to every vaccine application (EMA, 2021).

The response to disinformation, in this case, appears to be institutionally coordinated: the EEAS East Strategic Communication task forces called out the false claims against the EMA's vaccine approval process. The benefit of this approach ensures that disinformation for example related to the Covid-19 vaccines stays aligned and accurate within the EU. A decentralised approach, however, would give more responsibility to the EU institution or organization to tackle disinformation based on the case at hand (Pamment, 2020). However, a faster response could potentially prevent false information from disseminating to larger audiences.

The challenge for the EU is that the producers of disinformation are not often bound by legal restrictions or the burden of bureaucracy the same way as the EU is, and their aim is to harass the climate of debate and undermine trust in institutions and organizations. Moreover, they touch upon local concerns that can be used to strengthen support for the harmful goals, and with the use of advanced technologies and means to raise attention. The adversaries may use sophisticated techniques, established networks, and narratives to reach their objectives (Pamment, 2020). It requires special attention for the EU to not compromise its fundamental values when finding solutions in addressing disinformation - intertwining public diplomacy and disinformation is not an option for the EU (Vériter et al., 2020). Hence, defining

disinformation in the European Union law is a tricky task which has become evident in the recent

discussions on the content of the Digital Services Act. There are doubts whether the regulation will

address the definition of disinformation - in other words, content that can be harmful but not *per se* illegal

(Shattock, 2021). This is because it could allegedly undermine freedom of expression (Shattock, 2021).

Therefore, the discussion on expression of fundamental freedoms and legislating disinformation is likely

to continue (Helm & Nasu, 2021; Osetti & Bontcheva, 2020), and creating an ethical response to

disinformation will continue to lie at the heart of the matter.

Conclusion and future directions

In recent years, the phenomenon of disinformation, and in particular the propagation of fake news

in the digital environment and on social media platforms, has assumed a key role in the academic debate

of corporate communication (Lazer et al., 2018; Di Domenico et al., 2021). In addition, tackling it is

likely to remain a priority of policy makers, organizations, and institutions. Indeed, although fake news is

not a new phenomenon, social media platforms have facilitated their spread. On the one hand, this has

become evident in compromising the right of users to be correctly informed, and on the other hand, by

threatening and attacking the organizations based on fake content that undermine both their credibility

and reputation.

It is not always easy to distinguish the true from the false on these digital platforms. In the era of

the Covid-19 pandemic, during which the use of digital channels exploded around the world, fake content

spread rapidly, decisively influencing behaviour and the choices of individuals. Many news items are

inaccurate, deliberately distorted or completely unfounded. Oftentimes untrue information heavily affects

users' perception of reality, alternating the tendency to underestimate the problem with feelings of panic.

For organizations, combatting the spread of false news represents one of the arduous challenges

to be faced in this complex scenario. The number of channels and spaces in which to interact with

stakeholders has multiplied. Digital corporate communication, therefore, plays a central role in combating

disinformation in the online environment. Many institutions and organizations, including European Union

institutions analysed in this chapter, have understood the importance of digital communication to tackle

this phenomenon. Through communications on social media and on dedicated websites, organizations daily try to face this challenge. According to the literature (e.g., Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017), among the intentions of the sources that disseminate fake news on social media there is not only the economic aspect, but also social and political issues that push fake news disseminators to carry out these polluting actions on the web.

Therefore, although social media are digital spaces in which fake news thrive, these channels represent a means for organizations to address the concerns of users and create and strengthen relationships of trust with stakeholders with effective digital corporate communication. This is evident, for example, in the EU; the European Union institutions have created policies, tools, and communication practices to tackle disinformation.

Hence, organizations nowadays seem to have gained awareness of the phenomenon of disinformation and that anyone can become a target of disinformation. This is demonstrated by the communication studies that have been developing around the topic of fake news in recent years (e.g., Bethon et al., 2018; Di Domenico et al., 2021; Obada, 2019).

Future reflections on this issue could concern the means of how organizations can effectively address disinformation targeted at them. In addition, discussion of ethical approaches to prevent the spread of disinformation from becoming uncontrolled by polluting the web would be of importance. In particular, the perception of users regarding the reliability of the source could be worthy of further analysis by scholars and professionals.

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