ANALYZING THE IMPACT OF SPREADING FAKE NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND STRATEGIES FOR PROTECTING AGAINST DISINFORMATION

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Abstract: This paper analyzes the swift spread of news across social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, emphasizing the staggering amount of information exchanged within a mere one-minute interval. It underscores the critical necessity of differentiating between credible information and misinformation, particularly concerning the sources that propagate erroneous narratives online. The analysis delves into the complexities associated with relying on external fact-checkers to validate public postings in real-time, illuminating the pressures these platforms encounter from influential commercial and political entities intent on disseminating misleading content for self-serving purposes. Furthermore, the paper scrutinizes the phenomenon of sensationalized content creation aimed at maximizing attention and engagement, further obscuring the boundaries between factual accuracy and distortion. It also evaluates a range of strategic responses to the challenge of false news on social media, ensuring that such measures do not infringe upon the fundamental internet freedoms intrinsic to its framework. The discussion encapsulates both technological advancements and human-focused methodologies intended to alleviate the consequences of misinformation, striving for approaches that safeguard users and foster an environment oriented towards truth in online discourse. (Meese and Hurcombe, 2021) (Guess and Lyons2020)(Verstraete et al., 2022)

Keywords: fake news; misinformation; internet; social media; fact-checking; technology development, users, society.

Introduction

Over the years, social media outlets have been extensively used due to their strong influence on society and their capability to affect human daily life. Additionally, social media applications enable people to generate and share news in their social groups. This direct and fast news reporting culture is mainly in contrast with traditional journalism, which takes time for a story to proceed through the stages of serious review and censorship before reaching the reader. The fact that ordinary people, using their social media platforms, can share news leads to the rapid proliferation and spreading of small news stories to all social groups. The exponentially increased amount of news has determined the different nature of the information shared on web-based applications.

3. Main Text

Humans have transmitted information and messages through verbal and written language for thousands of years. This capacity to communicate information underpins and thus enables enlightened global communities to grow and act in unison. There are widespread social, cultural, and historical repercussions related to how information and messages are used, spread, broadcast, and accepted in the process of collective sense-making. The relative transparency and collective sharing of social media platforms' structure allow the public to visualize how the social fabric of society produces, consumes, and interprets messages. However, this transparency also provides information about techniques used to influence users and provides a pathway that can be abused to intentionally increase divisiveness and promote misleading or false information. The fabric under discussion is a complex system operating in a globalized world; it interacts with the emerging behaviors of everything and everyone from which large-scale effects of the digital age are experienced, affecting society and public opinion. Manifestly, social media introduces a

disruptive transition for personal and social interaction norms ever since coffee houses. Findings have been reported about the potential of micro-targeting political advertisements in swing states from social media platforms that already skew the national conversation among voters, more intensively during presidential election times. With increasing disquiet, concerns prompting mechanisms are being called for which help to realign the digital social dynamics based on societal interests. In particular, there is increasing awareness of the potentially deleterious effects of wide data sharing on humans.

The analysis reveals that news organizations across various countries have adapted their social media strategies in response to Facebook's algorithm changes, which have prioritized personal interactions over content from pages. Despite efforts to diversify their social media presence, these organizations continue to rely heavily on Facebook for driving traffic and engagement, highlighting its critical role in their digital subscription strategies, as noted in the study by Cornia et al. at the Oxford Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. People get news not from websites, they read news from social media platforms. The primary concern for influencers and bloggers regarding monetization often leads to a neglect of fact-checking, resulting in the dissemination of inaccurate information. This highlights the tension between financial incentives and the responsibility to provide reliable content. That's why we call it online disinformation. Online misinformation has evolved into a significant and perilous issue that necessitates the development of policy frameworks aimed at promoting positive online behavior while penalizing false information. Addressing this challenge will require sustained leadership and dedication from various stakeholders, including digital platforms, political leaders, and media organizations. Nowadays, users of social media platforms are decreasing by hours. Analysis by the team Kepios shows there were 5.17 billion social media users around the world at the start of July 2024, equating to 63.7 percent of the global total. The total population is 8.17 billion. So, nearly 7 out of 10 people use social media.
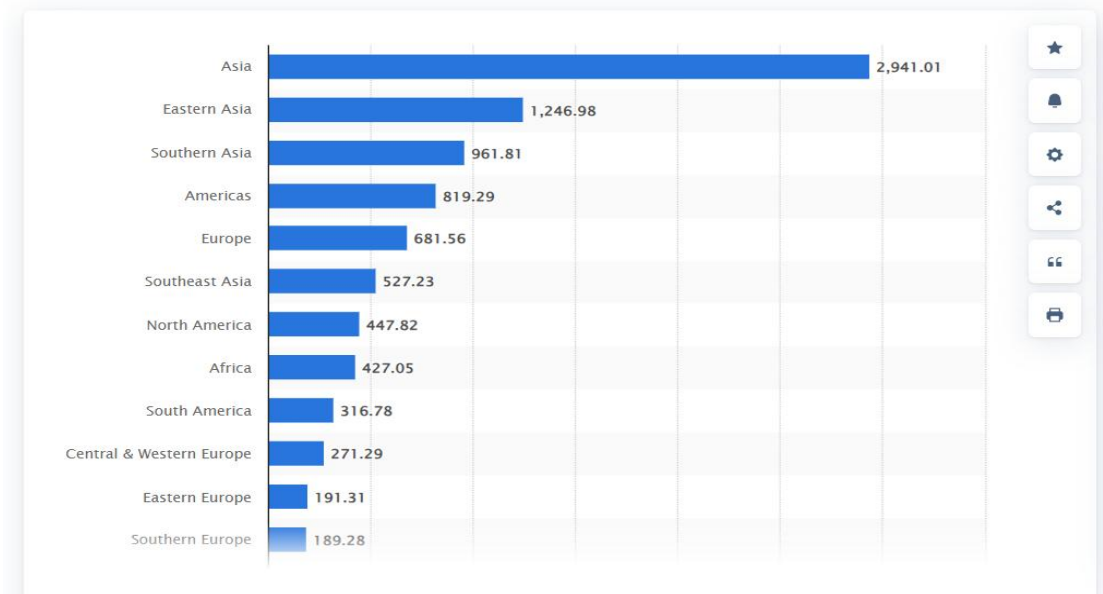

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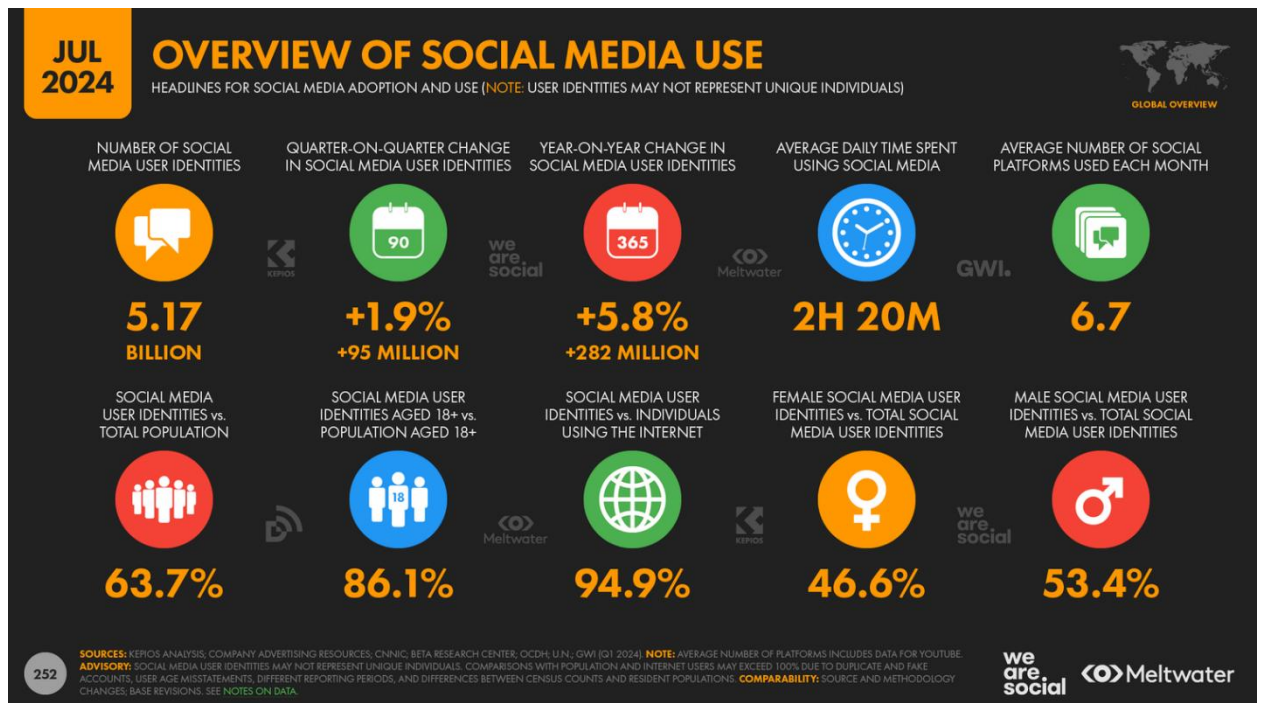
Research by Statista shows a large number of users are Asian people. Unfortunately, most of them can not fact-check. In our country, there are only 3 websites that work actively. These teams have been working for nearly 1–2 years.

1.   Factchecknet.uz
2.   Factcheker.uz
3.   Faccheck.uz

Internet > Social Media & User-Generated Content

Number of social network users worldwide as of January 2023 *(in millions)*

Region	Users (millions)
Asia	2,941.01
Eastern Asia	1,246.98
Southern Asia	961.81
Americas	819.29
Europe	681.56
Southeast Asia	527.23
North America	447.82
Africa	427.05
South America	316.78
Central & Western Europe	271.29
Eastern Europe	191.31
Southern Europe	189.28

Additionally, they are not as readable as news websites. The majority of Uzbek people are not interested in following news platforms, even celebrities. This is because they prefer to follow social media influencers, who are seen as more accessible and relatable. Uzbekistan was home to 8.70 million social media users in January 2024, equating to **24.6 percent** of the total population. Social media influencers play a pivotal role in information dissemination in Uzbekistan. Mainly, They have the power to shape public opinion and spread information rapidly due to their large and engaged follower bases. This influence often surpasses that of traditional news outlets, making influencers key players in the landscape of modern communication. To improve fact-checking, these influencers could be educated and encouraged to share verified information with their followers. Collaborating with fact-checking organizations to create engaging, easy-to-understand content could also help bridge the gap between social media consumption and accurate information dissemination. For example, some influencers have partnered with fact-checking organizations to create videos in which they debunk popular myths, or in which they explain the importance of verifying information before sharing it.

The analysis reveals that news organizations across various countries have adapted their social media strategies in response to Facebook's algorithm changes in January 2018, which favored personal interactions over content from pages. Despite the risks associated with reliance on a single platform, Facebook remains the dominant source of social media traffic and audience engagement for these organizations, prompting them to allocate significant resources to it while also seeking to diversify their presence on other platforms like Twitter and Instagram.

4.   **Conclusion**

The analysis underscores the critical importance of addressing the complexities of information distribution on social media, particularly through collaboration with influencers and fact-checking organizations, to enhance credibility and foster responsible online discourse. Promoting a more informed public is paramount in the ongoing fight against misinformation. In summary, as of early 2024, social media platforms exhibit varying user engagement in Uzbekistan, with Instagram leading significantly at 8.70 million users, followed by Tik Tok with 3.12 million users, Facebook with 2.15 million users, and LinkedIn with 630,000 members, highlighting the diverse landscape of digital connectivity in the country.

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