Researchers design simulator to help stop the spread of 'fake news'

April 27 2021

Coronavirus has made 2011 movie, 'Contagion,' a hot rental on Amazon Prime, iTunes

Made in 2011 by director Steven Soderbergh with an all-star cast, 'Contagion' is scary but packs a vital message about importance of precautions.

41,989 people liked or shared this

Share   Like   Fact Check   Hint   Skip

Credit: NYU Abu Dhabi

As people around the world increasingly get their news from social media, online misinformation has emerged as an area of great concern. To improve news literacy and reduce the spread of misinformation, NYUAD Center for Cybersecurity researcher and lead author Nicholas Micallef is part of a team that designed 'Fakey', a game that emulates a social media news feed and prompts players to use available signals to recognize and scrutinize suspicious content and focus on credible information. Players can share, like, or fact-check individual articles.

In a new study, "Fakey: A Game Intervention to Improve News Literacy on Social Media," published in the ACM Digital Library, Micallef and his colleagues Mihai Avram, Filippo Menczer, and Sameer Patil from the Luddy School of Informatics, Computing, and Engineering, Indiana University, present the analysis of interactions with Fakey, which was released to the general public as a web and mobile app with data procured after 19 months of use. Interviews were conducted to verify player understanding of the game elements. The researchers found that the more players interacted with articles in the game, the better their skills at spotting credible content became. However, playing the game did not affect players' ability to recognize questionable content. Further research will help determine how much gameplay would be necessary to be able to distinguish between legitimate and questionable content.

Games like Fakey, which was designed and developed by researchers at Indiana University, could be offered as a tool to social media users. For example, social media platforms could conduct regular exercises (akin to 'phishing drills' used in organizations for employee security training) wherein users practice identifying questionable articles. Or, the researchers say, such games could be integrated into media literacy curricula in schools. "The impact of misinformation could be substantially reduced if people were given tools to help them recognize and ignore such content," said Micallef. "The principles and mechanisms used by Fakey can inform the design of social media functionality in a

way that empowers people to distinguish between credible and fake content in their news feeds and increase their digital literacy."

How to Play

Inspect each article in the feed just as you would in your favorite social media. Look at the image, headline, and description to decide whether it's credible, in which case, you may **share** or **like** it. Select **fact-check** to indicate that you don't trust the article.

| Share | Like | Fact-Check | Hint | Skip |

These actions are just simulations and will not affect your social media profile. Select **hint** or **skip** if you are not sure.

(Previous)   (Next)

Credit: NYU Abu Dhabi

More information: Fakey: A Game Intervention to Improve News Literacy on Social Media: dl.acm.org/doi/pdf/10.1145/3449080

Provided by New York University