

# Crowd-sourced fact-checking fights misinformation in Taiwan

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New Cornell University research finds while journalists and professional fact-checkers struggle to keep up with the deluge of misinformation online, sites that rely on loosely coordinated contributions from volunteers, such as Wikipedia, can help fill the gaps.

In the [study](#), researchers compared professional fact-checking articles to posts on Cofacts, a community-sourced fact-checking platform in Taiwan. They found the crowdsourced site often responded to queries more rapidly than professionals and handled a different range of issues across platforms.

"Fact-checking is a core component of being able to use our information ecosystem in a way that supports trustworthy information," said senior author Mor Naaman, professor of [information science](#). "Places of knowledge production, like Wikipedia and Cofacts, have proved so far to be the most robust to misinformation campaigns."

Andy Zhao, a doctoral candidate in information science, used [natural language](#) processing to match up responses posted on Cofacts with articles addressing the same questions on two professional fact-checking sites. He looked at how quickly the sites posted responses to queries, the accuracy and persuasiveness of the responses, and the range of topics covered.

He found the Cofacts users often responded faster than journalists, but mostly because they could "stand on the shoulders of giants" and repurpose existing articles from professionals. In this way, Cofacts acts as a distributor of information.

Importantly, Zhao found that the Cofacts posts were just as accurate as the professional sources. According to seven native Taiwanese graduate students who acted as raters, articles by journalists were more persuasive, but Cofacts posts often were clearer.

Further analysis showed the crowdsourced site covered a slightly different range of topics compared with those addressed by professionals. Posts on Cofacts were more likely to address recent and local issues—such as regional politics and small-time scams—while

journalists were more likely to write about topics requiring expertise, including health claims and international affairs.

"We can leverage the power of the crowds to counter misinformation," Zhao concluded. "Misinformation comes from everywhere, and we need this battle to happen in all corners."

Despite the success of Cofacts in Taiwan, Zhao and Naaman caution that the same approach may not transfer to other countries. "Cofacts has built on the user habits, the cultures, the background, and political and social structures of Taiwan, which is how they succeed," Zhao said.

However, understanding Cofacts' success may assist in the design of other fact-checking systems, especially in regions that don't speak English, and have access to few, if any, [fact-checking](#) resources.

The findings are [published](#) in the *Journal of Online Trust and Safety*.

**More information:** Andy Zhao et al, Insights from a Comparative Study on the Variety, Velocity, Veracity, and Viability of Crowdsourced and Professional Fact-Checking Services, *Journal of Online Trust and Safety* (2023). [DOI: 10.54501/jots.v2i1.118](https://doi.org/10.54501/jots.v2i1.118)

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