RUDN Journal of Public Administration ISSN 2312-8313 (print), ISSN 2411-1228 (online)

2022 Том 9 No 3 262-273

http://journals.rudn.ru/ publicadministrationy

Вестник РУДН. Серия: ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОЕ И МУНИЦИПАЛЬНОЕ УПРАВЛЕНИЕ

УПРАВЛЕНИЕ ИНФОРМАЦИОННОЙ ПОЛИТИКОЙ INFORMATION POLICY MANAGEMENT

DOI: 10.22363/2312-8313-2022-9-3-262-273

Научная статья / Research article

Fake News in Contemporary Communication Processes

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Abstract. The article focuses on the phenomenon of fake news in contemporary communication processes. The article analyzes the characteristic features of fake news in terms of disinformation, interference by foreign actors, manipulation, media messages aimed at increasing demand. Fake news is considered from the standpoint of mediating society and the emergence of the concept of "media democracy". The author concludes that the phenomenon of "fake news" becomes a structural concept in modern media, which is associated with the peculiarities of media and social psychology. This phenomenon fits into the peculiarity of modern society, which the French philosopher J. Baudrillard designated as a simulacrum.

Keywords: fake news, factoid, mediatization, contemporary media field, modern media communications, reactance, communications management

Conflicts of interest: The author declared no conflicts of interest.

Article history:

The article was submitted on 04.06.2022. The article was accepted on 01.08.2022.

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For citation:

Shults E.E. Fake News in Contemporary Communication Processes. *RUDN Journal of Public Administration*. 2022;9(3):262–273. https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-8313-2022-9-3-262-273

The concept of "fake news" steadily appeared in the American public environment in 2016 and was associated with the US presidential election [1. P. 1; 2. P. 122; 3. P. 138; 4. P. 167–191; 5. P. 327]. The concepts of "fake" in relation to the media environment and "fake news" were encountered before 2016, but did not become widespread [6. P. 125; 7. P. 112-123]). In 2016 they were called commercials and messages of a certain nature: there were links in social networks that were translated to certain thematic messages — for example, to memorable events in the history of this day in the United States, in which there will be a story about a murdered African American, the extermination of Indians, acts of racism and segregation, murders, well-known scandalous events, migrant problems, unseemly deeds the American government, etc. Such fake news included the organization of protest actions through social networks and the "cheating" of views, likes and comments [4; 5]. The amount of money paid, for example, to Facebook for these advertising messages was calculated and a conclusion was made about the amounts paid for fake news. But this approach definitely cannot be considered correct, otherwise any advertising messages should be attributed to fake news.

Studies (and first of all, American ones) after the 2016 elections showed that what was called "fake news" was used against both candidates, and not only against Democrats. American studies of 2019–2022 already indicate that the flow of fake news was about the same against both candidates; perhaps we can say cautiously that it was slightly more against the Democratic candidate [2. P. 124]. Researchers began to note that the influence of fake news on the results of the 2016 elections In America, they are not given, are not justified and are not proved, but only demonstrate that fake news was especially widespread during this period, when the average American adult encountered fake news en masse [2. P. 124].

A number of authors began to interpret fake news exclusively as "interference by foreign actors" [5. P. 344]. The influence of Russian information (disinformation) on elections in other countries that preceded the American 2016 began to be viewed as fake news retrospectively: for

example, some researchers attributed the 2007 elections in Estonia and 2008 in Georgia, during the accession of Crimea to Russia, as well as the political confrontation with D. Trump after his election victories [2. P. 124; 4. P. 167, 171–173; 8. P. 288–328].

The genetic connection with the events of 2016 and certain actions persists, but over time, the binding of the concept to a certain point in time and very specific conditions and actions prevents the full use of the concept, which leads to its expansion and "unbinding" from specific conditions of occurrence.

Already in 2019, American researchers had to admit that modern definitions of fake news vary greatly and include a wide range of meanings [4. P. 169]. Almost immediately, American studies began to remind us of the possibility of talking about fake news in the American press of the XIX century: certain newspapers used such techniques to increase audience interest and increase sales of the publication [1. P. 42; 4. P. 168; 9; 10]. Then the question arises sharply: what should be attributed to fake news

Fake news is a media mystification associated with the pursuit of sensation and demand [7. Pp. 113, 116-117]; false information, fake news reports distributed in the media under the guise of news [11. P. 416]; a journalistic message published in the media containing unreliable and unverified information that does not correspond to real facts and empirical reality [12]. The key problem here is the question: fake news is unreliable publications created without malicious intent [13], any unreliable information [14. P. 154] or fabricated news materials that purposefully mislead [15. P. 148; 16. P. 48; 17. P. 143–169; 18. P. 213]? Some researchers and experts consider fake news to be the deliberate dissemination of disinformation in the media (both traditional and new media) for the purpose of misleading, for financial or political gain [19. P. 140; 20. P. 298-299]. Moreover, many researchers focus in the definition of fake news on the orientation of information stuffing with a provocative and resonant character [21. P. 44; 22. P. 40]. "Fakes are tricks, tricks, psychological techniques, sociotechnics; management of false premises, ambiguities and impressions" [23. P. 375]. A number of researchers believe that fake news is only that false information that purposefully aims to mislead the audience [3. P. 140]. Some authors separate fakes from disinformation, since the former may accidentally mislead, and the latter is deliberately constructed [24. P. 178].

The question of manipulation is very controversial, because almost any information is manipulative. Even one that does not seem to be designed to manipulate consciousness. For example: the largest oak tree has grown in Moscow. Looking for: is there such a fact? There is. Is this information manipulative. I don't think so. But some recipients will perceive it differently: why are you talking about the biggest oak tree in Moscow? Are you saying that the biggest oak tree can't grow anywhere else? Can big oaks be born only in Moscow due to some qualities and characteristics? Do you single out Moscow and Russia in this way as opposed to the existing negativity? Are you luring to Moscow to see this attraction? etc. And this is on a very short and almost toneless message.

Thus, almost any information is manipulative, or at least the recipient of the message can perceive it that way.

Let's turn to such a concept as the reactance effect [25. P. 69] — this is when the consumer believes that the message is being deliberately imposed on him for the purpose of manipulation and coercion to certain actions. In this case, the consumer has a rejection of such information and a negative. Hence the existing attitude to advertising, statements of politicians, slogans of election campaigns, etc.

This effect can be viewed from another angle. For example, back in the middle of the 20th century, the effect of almost unconditional trust of the American consumer in TV messages was noted. Until the 2000s, the American consumer showed a very high level of trust in their political elites (despite the Kennedy assassination, Watergate and other scandals that regularly manifest themselves). However, the story of the recount of votes in the 2000 elections (Bush-Gore), then with the US presidential elections in 2016 and 2020. and the American voter was divided into several groups. And fundamentally, there is not only a division into Trump and anti-TRUMP, but into those who have become distrustful or distrustful of the reports of American elites and the media.

In Russia, this effect is more obvious: initially, all official statements, statements of politicians and the media are more skeptical here. The level of such skepticism and distrust increases and decreases depending on the historical periods in the 20th and 21st century, but we can observe it even without special research. This is a historical process, which is caused by various waves and the need to build trusting relationships. The United

States is now, as far as can be judged, at the stage of losing trusting relations between the authorities, elites, the media and the people. Such historical waves are quite objective and quite regular.

All this brings us back to the problem of the applicability of the concept of "fake news" based on the assessment of manipulative influence [26]: how to evaluate and apply if the attitude to manipulative influence is formed exclusively in the consumer's head? This is a subjective perception that does not allow us to give an objective criterion [27; 28]. Even if we conduct a sociological survey on the perception of this or that information as fake, at the output we will get the attitude of certain groups, even large ones, but limited by territory, socio-demographic characteristics, etc. There may be a problem of interpretations of certain events, and not a problem of false information.

Many authors believe that the problem of fake news lies in modern mediatization [29. P. 231]. The position is as follows: if the materials were written by professional editors, professional journalists who have a moral, ethical and professional code, who obey the laws on mass media, then fake news would practically not exist [2. P. 124; 12; 30. P. 100; 31. P. 152]. Here, perhaps, we can agree with only one thing, that there would be fewer of them.

The fact that fake news is a feature of all media and up to the modern information society is obvious, and there is no point in discussing it here. The fact that today a large proportion of society is engaged in media technologies both in traditional media and in new media, and the fact that most of these people are not professionally trained for journalistic activities is also a fact.

As the reasons for the appearance or increased manifestation of fake messages in modern times, researchers call: 1) the media consumer's tendency to negativity, 2) the decline in journalistic standards, 3) the growing mediatization of society [23. P. 376; 32. P. 177–201].

Western researchers have begun to apply the concept of "media democracies" to modern Western societies, where democratic functions increasingly rely on the infrastructure of mass communications, in which democratic functions increasingly rely on the infrastructure of mass communications. The media is no longer a neutral intermediary between the state and citizens, but becomes an active player who transforms politics, acting in accordance with their own judgments and rules [23. P. 376; 33. P. 720–727; 34. P. 247–261]. In this sense, "mediated reality becomes more important than actual reality, in the sense that it is an indirect reality that people have access to and react to" [35. P. 238].

Fake news, therefore, fits perfectly into the feature of modern society, which the French philosopher Baudrillard designated as a simulacrum. A certain simulacrum is being created, and we live in this simulacrum. The classic work on this topic is "The tail is wagging the dog". To raise the rating of the US president, political strategists invent a war in Albania. An American pilot was shot down over Albania, the society is consolidating around the president in the campaign for the release of this pilot; a whole legend is being invented: at school he had the nickname "Slipper", the whole country puts on old shoes, throws shoes on trees in support of his hero, demands an attack by US aviation on Albania. I.e. the entire American population believes that there is a war with Albania. Albania submits notes of diplomatic protest, its representatives appear in the media with protests and bewilderment that Albania did not shoot down any plane, there is no pilot in captivity, there is no war with the United States either. However, it does not matter at all, because most of the US population believes in these events — these people live in a created simulacrum.

Here we come to another concept called "factoid". A factoid is an event that becomes a fact in connection with its publication in the media. That is, appearing in the media space, the factoid becomes a fact for everyone or for many [36. P. 128]. The population believes that this is reality and begins to act based on the fact.

For three months of late 2021 — early 2022, the media wrote and talked about Russia's attack on Ukraine. As a result, it ceased to matter whether Russia would attack Ukraine, because this topic was played out as much as possible in the information space: The media and politicians made ratings and citations, half of the world lived in the full sense that Russia had either already attacked Ukraine, or was about to attack. Further actions of the party about which they write, in principle, do not play any role. Whatever this side does, in the media space it can be turned as you like. But each side will have its own experts with their own position.

Here is an example from everyday life and the world of sports. In 2019, there were reports that Real Madrid is interested in Manchester United player Paul Pogba: Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane really wants to see this player in his team. References are given to some insider information. At the same time, there are no statements by the leadership of Real Madrid and Zinedine Zidane. The media is overflowing with this message. The transfer

window arrives, but the transfer does not happen. The media play it in such a way that there was some misunderstanding between the club's coach and the management, and the player was not acquired during this transfer window. In the next transfer window, the player is not taken again. Media reaction: yes, it happened, but it does not contradict our information in any way, since the price of Paul Pogba is high, but due to the end of the contract it will drop sharply in the next transfer window, when Real Madrid will buy him. However, the transfer does not take place again in the next transfer window. Media: Zidane and the club still want to get the player but decided to take him for free when the contract ends in the next transfer window or in one. Zinedine Zidane leaves Real Madrid, but now the president of the club continues to want to get the player. In the following transfer windows, Paul Pogba never gets to Real Madrid and ends up in a completely different club. This is justified by the changed situation, new goals, etc. We do not know how real this whole story is, but the created simulacrum allowed both traditional and new media to make money from this story for two or three years: visits, reading, likes, comments, reposts, etc. — i.e., the advertising volume sold.

So, the created simulacrum brings informational satisfaction to some and financial dividends to others in the "media consumer" system. And this is the daily life of modern media.

Thus, fake news is a phenomenon that has spread more in our time in connection with the mediatization of society, and this has a great basis. However, the understanding of fakes as exclusively false information in social networks [5. P. 327; 19. P. 139–152; 37. P. 1–17] or "mystifying practices in new media" [7. P. 120–121], or "a competitive understanding of the news that came with the social media" [24. P. 48] causes a lot of questions. It can also be argued that with the advent of journalism and advertising, which are observed in Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome, fakes and fake news appeared, which can arise purposefully and accidentally. Modernity brought the mediatization of society, which led to large-scale quantitative growth, led to qualitative changes, but did not "invent" the phenomenon.

Modern events show the possibility of creating millions of fake news quickly. Mass character overcomes quality. Probably, this is a feature of modern mass consciousness. The creation of a mass of poorly prepared fakes, which will disintegrate very quickly, prevails over the creation of well-founded piece fakes. Another feature is based on clip thinking. The information is valid for a very

limited amount of time, then it is thrown away. For example, a few years ago, the so-called "Panama Dossier", which "revealed" foreign accounts with huge deposits by representatives of the leadership of various countries. According to this dossier, the Russian leadership had accounts with huge amounts, but after the announcement of sanctions in 2022 and the arrest of the accounts, these accounts were not found. At the same time, 99 % of the population no longer remembers how the leadership was accused and hotly debated on this topic back in 2016 and does not perceive the directly opposite information that has surfaced as conflicting with the previous one.

Fake news is becoming a structural concept in modern media, so the question of defining this concept carries serious difficulties. Fake news, or materials close to this concept, are strongly woven into modern communication processes, which makes it difficult to combat this phenomenon. It is not by chance that the legislation concentrates on such false information that has public dissemination, which is obviously false, socially significant, and has entailed grave consequences [38; 39; 40].

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Фейковые новости в современных коммуникационных процессах

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Аннотация. Рассмотрено явление фейковых новостей в современных коммуникационных процессах. Анализируются характерные особенности фейковых новостей с точки зрения дезинформации, вмешательства иностранных акторов, манипуляции, медийных сообщений, направленных на повышение спроса. Фейковые новости рассматриваются с позиции медиатизации общества и появления понятия «медиадемократия». Автор приходит к выводу, что явление «фейковая новость» становится структурным понятием в современных медиа, что связано с особенностями медиа и социальной психологии, и это явление вписывается в ту особенность современного общества, которую французский философ Ж. Бодрийяр обозначил как симулякр.

Ключевые слова: фейк-ньюс, фейковые новости, fake-news, фактоид, медиатизация, современное медийное поле, современные медиакоммуникации, эффект реактенса, управление коммуникациями

Заявление о конфликте интересов: Автор заявляет об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

История статьи:

Статья поступила в редакцию: 04.06.2022. Статья принята к публикации: 01.08.2022.

Для цитирования:

Шульи Э.Э. Фейковые новости в современных коммуникационных процессах // Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Серия: Государственное и муниципальное управление. 2022. Т. 9. № 273. С. 262–273. https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-8313-2022-9-3-262-273