

FAKE NEWS PHENOMENON: SOCIAL MEDIA SURVEY

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This work reveals the reasons behind the problem of prevalence and popularity of fake news. Analyzed information is reinforced by the data, received from the created for the sake of the research online poll. Novelty is in highlighting the current importance of fake news phenomenon and peculiarities of its perception by the people of different age both globally and locally.

Key words: fake news; fakeries; social media; social phenomenon: Internet survey.

The rise of fake news as a social phenomenon has become evident. The president of the United States of America Donald Trump used the word «fake» at least 656 times during 12-month period in tweets and public appearances, sometimes more than once in the same sentence. The term first came to prominence during the 2016 US presidential election campaign. But the problem of deliberately falsified news articles, masquerading as properly-researched journalism, goes back centuries. The Collins dictionary named ‘fake news’ the official word of the year 2017 [1]. The Cambridge dictionary gives the following definition of fake news: «False stories that appear to be news, spread on the internet or using other media, usually created to influence political views or as a joke» [2].

While talking about fake news, there is always one question that pops up to everyone’s head: why is it only now when we started to recognize the problem, if this kind of deception has been around for decades? In order to answer this question, to figure out the reasons behind the fake news’ relevance today and to get an understanding as to how fake news is perceived in the modern society, we have created and published fake news’ poll using Google forms. It consisted of three questions for people to answer. Eventually 336 respondents took part in it.

The aim of this study is to investigate the attitude of society towards the present-day problem of fake news globally and locally. To this end, **the research question** is as follows: What is the perception of the problem of fake news in society these days?

The respondents were divided into the age groups. Having analyzed the results, we have identified several interconnections between the replies of the respondents within those groups.

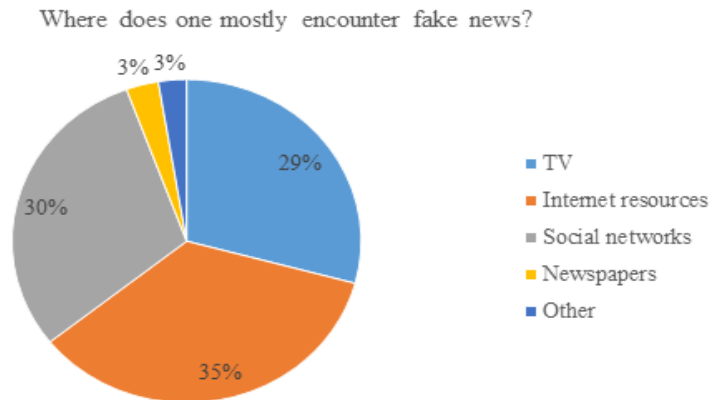


Fig. 1.

The first question sounds as follows: «Where does one mostly encounter fake news? ». Most respondents were prone to regard Internet resources as the areas where fake news is widespread, for it has a leading position with 35 % of all of the answers. Nevertheless, what matters is the understanding of such a negative relation towards Internet. As we started digging in, we have come to a conclusion that before the Internet, it was much more expensive to distribute information, building up trust took ages, and there were much simpler definitions of what constituted news and media, making regulation or self-regulation easier [3].

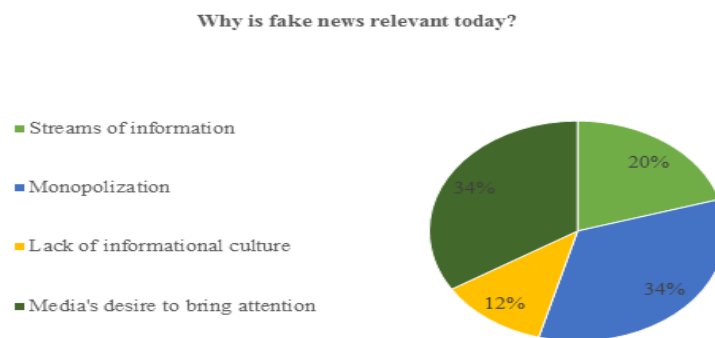


Fig. 2.

The second picture shows the responds to the question «Why is fake news relevant today? ». The distribution of answers is quite even, with two dominant opinions – Mass media monopolization and mass media desire to portray the occurrence in a certain way. The desire of mass media to widen the audience and attract more attention by providing certain biased information is a regular wish of many news resources, which a lot of people understand;

hence, this option has 34 % of the responds. The same number of respondents considers mass media monopolization to be the actual reason; therefore this option shares the first place with the latter respond with the same 34 %.

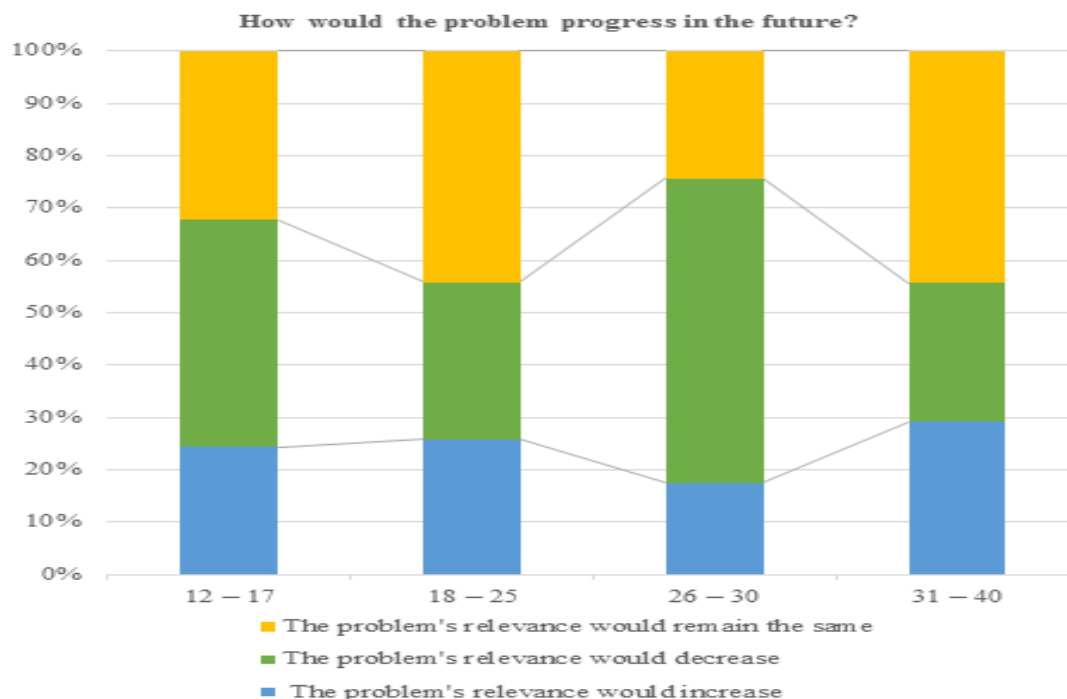


Fig. 3.

The third graph demonstrates the correlation between the age of the respondents and their opinion on how the problem would progress in the future. Our analysis shows that the older audience is more skeptical about the problem while the younger audience is prone to believe that the relevance of the problem will increase or at least stay on the same level as it is now.

What becomes apparent from this research is that:

- fake news is currently a hot topic globally and locally and affects to a certain degree almost everyone;
- Internet is viewed, according to our findings, as a main source for wide circulation of fake news and popularity of the term;
- mass media monopolization makes fake news an important part of our life;
- both younger and older audiences of the poll under research think that the role of fake news will not diminish in the near future.

Our survey is an attempt to add to the understanding of fake news perception as a social phenomenon that cannot be ignored today and that needs further research.

References

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