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THE FAKE NEWS ISSUE: THE IMPORTANCE OF REPUTATION IN BUSINESS

Our paper is an analysis of the issue of fake news which is widespread among all nations. Our research was conducted by the using of survey method and analysis of secondary data. Looking through the topic, it is noticeable that in 21st century media sources use their right to familiarize users with the information for their personal gain. The aim of this paper is to reveal how the yellow press influences the business and how to protect reputation in a competitive world where the level of rivalry is extremely high. Our tasks are to determine the level of anxiety in the world about fake news, and explore how the Belarusian students relate specifically to this issue. What is more, research was

conducted with an analyzing the data from the movie “Shattered Glass” which is a biographical crime drama film written and directed by Billy Ray. The subject of the paper is to designate the importance of the company's reputation and suggest methods for protecting it in the modern information arena. It is important to define the object of the paper which is understanding the structure of the yellow press influence on public opinion. This problem is a global trend and remains insufficiently studied in our time, therefore, is promising in the study. Thorough research may be applicable in the case of the development of the Belarusian companies. In the future, we will study the problem of preserving reputation in the business sphere and how to avoid unnecessary slander.

Several key definitions exist in this particular sphere. The question is how to recognize fake news and to identify which instruments are used to spread false information. Firstly, the key term “fake news” means an inaccurate, sometimes sensational report that is created in order to attract attention, mislead, deceive or damage reputation. Unlike misinformation, which is inaccurate because the reporter has confused the facts, fake news is created with the goal of manipulating someone or something. Fake news can quickly spread if they provide misinformation that matches the viewpoint of the audience, since such content is unlikely to be questioned or impaired [1]. Secondly, looking through the instruments of fake news distribution, people face with different types of tools which can be destructive for business reputation. For instance, clickbait is an abusive term for web content, the main purpose of which is to force users to click on a link to go to a specific web page. Clickbait headers are usually aimed at attracting attention, presenting enough information to arouse interest among readers, but not enough to leave them satisfied without following links to related content [2]. In addition, there are other terms which have the impact in this sphere. A hoax is a lie, intentionally generated to seem true. It is worth mentioning the notion of “yellow journalism” or “yellow press”. It is a low-grade periodical journalism that publishes scandalous messages, misinformation, inaccurate materials in pursuit of sensation. These tools were introduced in order to manipulate peoples’ minds. The awareness of the meanings of these definitions is the first step how to discern truth from falsehood.

Turning into the business case, it is crucial to mention that all the companies should be aware of the damage which these specific tackles may provide. Nowadays, the term ‘fake news’ first came to prominence during the 2016 US presidential election campaign. 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 president of the United States of America, Donald Trump, used the word “fake” at least 656 times a year in his tweets and public speeches, sometimes more than once in one sentence. It was done in order to give an emotional color to his words and to convince people of their honesty and dishonesty of the yellow press and the second presidential candidate, Hilary Clinton. In business sphere, global companies have been confronted with the problems of false information for many years. A typical method of spreading fake news can be easily described in the following way. The source, which can be both a serious propagandist, and just a hacker, acting irrationally, places deliberately false information on a website, which can look like well-known media. It is important to note that often the URL of such a site is very slightly different from its original form. The ability to create websites and articles in hidden form without a signature or under a fictitious name has become a significant issue in the case of identifying the misinformation. It greatly complicates the legitimate calculation of such resources for disinformation or slander. The news is gaining popularity among an unlimited number of bots in social networks, and its further distribution is provided by live users who believe in the provocative quote or sensational headline and want to share the link with their subscribers. The prevalence of news is growing and the algorithm of social networks allows such materials to be in the top.

Do you know what the term "fake news" means?

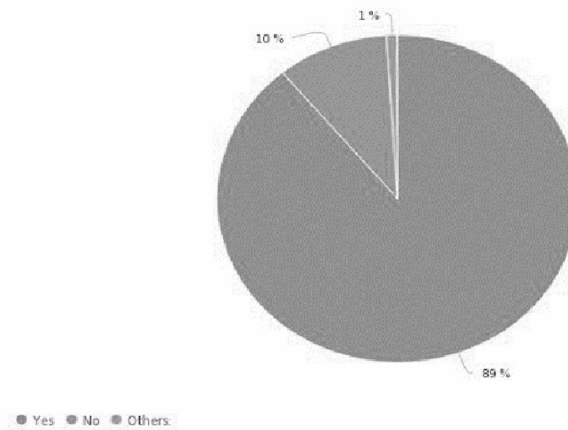


Fig. 1. Do you know what the term «fake news» means?

Firstly, our research was conducted among the different age groups. The focus group is students preferably from 18 to 21 years old. This diagram shows the scale of the research and identifies peoples’ awareness of the fake news issue. Target group makes this survey more specific because it covers mostly the students and their knowledge about the topic.

Taking into consideration the fact that people are not really aware of the problem of fake news and how it influences the company’s reputation, survey includes a question affecting the knowledge of the respondent on this particular subject. It shows that students mostly know about the issue. Nevertheless, it should be certainly admitted that the Cambridge Dictionary gives one of the most understandable definitions: «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» [3].

Where is fake news most common?

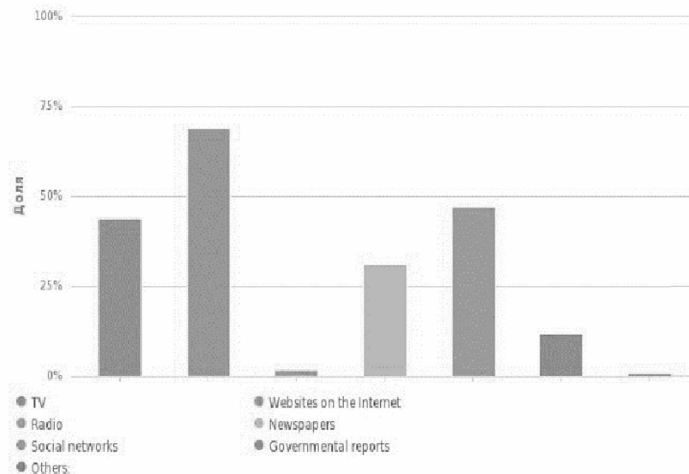


Fig. 2. Where is fake news most common?

Turning back to the reputation issue, there was no assurance that students know about the occurrences when the company’s image was ruined due to the yellow press and the false information which they provided to press readers. One of the respondents mentioned the case which happened with Nestlé when American press started blaming the company for the production of breast milk, which facilitates to the sudden death and suffering of children, especially among the Third World countries [4]. The Nestlé boycott damaged the company’s reputation and the problem has raised its relevance to the international level. Even nowadays, Company practices are monitored by the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN).

Fake news is common among the mass media sources of information. Respondents had to mark the sources which are the most common for fake news distribution. The majority of people (approx. 75 percent) voted for the websites on the Internet. It surely makes sense because in our present day there are no websites where you cannot meet with advertising and false information. Social networks and TV took 2nd and 3rd places respectively. These results may happen because the focus group is rarely seen with other types of media. Basically, this questionnaire shows that all types of information resources are involved in the distribution of the fake news.

The next question was asked in order to understand people's opinions about the improvement of company's reputation. If the company possess such politics it will protect it from spurious information. Following the guidelines of PR-management and establishing strong public position are the key features to protect the image of the organization. According to the survey, social responsibility became the most needed ethic framework which states that the company should work for the benefit of society. It is crucial issue nowadays due to the fact that it has become popular among young generation. In spite of this fact, social responsibility sets a new vector of the development of business organizations.

Nowadays, people face the problem of information security every single day. It is impossible to surf the Internet without tracking by outside observers. Four main violators of the personal technical-informational life were suggested to the respondents in order to determine who is the most influential distributor. Survey shows that press influences the public significantly more than the government, hackers and transnational corporations. Perhaps, it mostly concerns yellow press. Their aim is to catch the viewers' attention. Since the press appeared on the Internet, it has become the most influential for users, especially the youth.

Overall, survey which was conducted gives an opportunity to identify the focus group and what they know about the fake news issue.

The world's leading media managed to discuss the topic of fake news, but most authors focus on the political consequences of this phenomenon. But even if your business is far from politics, this issue is worth paying attention to and drawing conclusions. Pre-planned news that does not correspond to reality can be organized by competitors who want to undermine the reputation of an opponent in the market, or by people offended by the brand or the owner of the company.

In the past, before the gloriousness of the Internet, companies could control what was being said about their brand. But now anyone with the computer can made their voices to be heard. What is online reputation and what does it entail? Anything said about your business online on forums, it also includes how companies respond to comments reviews or social media conversation.

Businesses, that are engaging with the Internet and social media, are putting themselves at the risk of negative attention and potential disaster. The rapid spread of fake news shows us that not only small, unstable businesses are suffered, but also huge companies like Amazon.

In March 2018, US President Donald Trump tweeted that Amazon practically did not pay either local or state taxes. After that, Amazon shares showed the worst monthly performance over the past two years. Later it turned out that Trump was wrong, and the shares rose in price to the previous level. However, this case reminded everyone of a serious problem: companies are not protected from misinformation spread on social networks.

It seems that not only outsiders bring fake news in case to ruin a business. It turns out that companies strategically implement fake information that strengthen their reputation based on fake reviews, because the better the reviews the more we trust a business. There is an entire industry devoted to helping businesses mislead you!

Shattered Glass is a documental movie which was released in 2003. It tells the story of one young reporter whose name is Stephen Glass and his incredibly quick career success at The New Republic.

Suddenly, the secret of his success was revealed – fabricating fake news. Simultaneously, it shows another story about how Stephen Glass taught a lesson, telling about the basics of journalism, and notes that students are not very attentive. He says: *I understand this is not very interesting for you. Would you like to know how to become a popular journalist?* It is probably kind of hint which implies that fake information is used by reporters to raise their credibility and authority.

Summarizing the data and coming to the closing remarks, conclusion approaches by itself. Currently, the world is a place where everyone competes with each other and sometimes it leads to the situation which are not ethic enough. Companies produce fake news in order to improve the company's reputation and the yellow press tries to find the easiest way to be the most popular on the market, usually using unfair methods. The conflict raises between two sides with similar ideas. The proposal is to create a win-win situation by collaborating the forces. The press can gain popularity at the expense of companies that want to increase their earnings and reputation. It is the basis of negotiations and mutual understanding in any interaction of interested parties. This method can be implemented in the Belarusian reality. Belarusian businesses face the problem of the market which is difficult to enter. Producing innocuous fake news may become a breakthrough on the way of your company's development. It is a field of the new research which is connected to marketing and PR-man agent but is not well researched. Therefore, in order to sum the idea of the research up, we would like to produce a short quotation by Piero Scaruffi: «The cure to eliminate fake news is that people stop reading 140-character tweets and start reading 600-page books» [5].

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