Chapter 4
Misinformation via Tampered Multimedia Content

ABSTRACT

The present chapter investigates the use of multiple resources/modalities (text, audio, images, video, etc.) as evidence in journalism (i.e., documenting the associated articles). Indeed, multimedia assets are essential components of the professional news coverage, considering their ability to captivate enormous and complex amounts of data more rapidly (than reading the elongated plain text). Hence, the narration becomes vivid, representative, and attractive, while answering all the involved "questions" that surround a report (i.e., who, what, where, when, why, the so-called five Ws of journalism). However, their proofing attributes can be used in the reverse order (i.e., for applying content tampering), thus creating falsified documents to support and propagate untrue stories. Nowadays, user-friendly tools facilitate textual and audiovisual editing operations, easing the forgery processes even for the average user. This chapter analyzes the role of rich media in engaging infotainment services and their side effects in misinformation propagation.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-5592-6.ch004

INTRODUCTION

Journalism is and has been theorized, researched, studied and criticized worldwide by people coming from a wide variety of disciplines. (Deuze, 2005, p. 2)

The divergences between modern forms of Journalism and the other genres of public communication are gradually vanishing, due to the dominance of the Internet and Social Networking Sites (SNSs) in the new media landscape (Deuze, 2008). In this context, multimedia resources have claimed and gained a key role along the end-to-end chain of informing, favoring audience engagement through more vivid, representative and attractive storytelling, while also serving proof evidence in supporting the truthfulness of the presented stories. On the other hand, the availability of digital information processing tools, offered through user-friendly software, web and/or Cloud Computing (CC) services, have facilitated the editing of textual and audiovisual modalities, even by the non-experts or through everyday used mobile devices, like smartphones and tablets (Dimoulas, Veglis, & Kalliris, 2014, 2015, 2018; Katsaounidou & Dimoulas, 2018). Hence, content tampering can be easily deployed as part of intentional falsification and forgery attempts. The epidemic effects of disinformation are considered among the latest adverse reactions of the ongoing media ecosystem transformation, where Internet alters everything. In a related report, the World Economic Forum has stated that the "massive digital misinformation" is one of the foremost dangers for the present civilization (Howell, 2013). Purposing on producing articles about events, facts and people, journalists utilize all the applicable assets, which may be people (witnesses, experts), press issues (newspapers, magazines, etc.) or other records that provide related insights. However, besides the genuine use of the data surrounding a publication, ambiguous journalistic coverage with doctored images or other falsified documents is always possible. Therefore, being informed by reliable sources is not such self-evident and becomes more challenging in present days, since fake-news and their consequences arise a lot of disputes. Correspondingly, news and media organizations are judged on the truthfulness and credibility of the disseminated information, which must be accurately-sourced, checked and verified, transparent and unmistakable, strengthened by convincing proofs and arguments (Brewer, 2017).