

Chapter 8

Combating Misinformation, Disinformation, and Fake News: A Comparative Study of the USA, UK, and India

Pallav Pallav

 <http://orcid.org/0009-0005-1753-9891>


The West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences, India

S. M. Aamir Ali

 <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8686-0217>

*Symbiosis Law School Pune, Symbiosis International University, Maharashtra,
India*

Anuttama Ghose

 <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7210-4074>

School of Law, Dr. Vishwanath Karad MIT World Peace University, Pune, India

ABSTRACT

The role of digital media in disseminating information has attained a prominent position in society. Though social media and other platforms promise a democratic space, in reality, it has been an easy ground for powerful entities with resources to sow the seeds of propaganda with the help of manipulated information. The dominance of incorrect information in the form of misinformation, disinformation, and fake news is evident. This chapter analyses the scenario of the UK and the USA in

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brief, with a primary focus on India, which has been the nucleus of the informational crisis, palpable during elections, COVID-19, and in general. Further, the paper attempts to identify the factors that flare up the menace of misinformation, disinformation and fake news on social media. Finally, it delves into the scope of its regulation and attempts to produce possible effective countermeasures to tackle incorrect information on social media.

INTRODUCTION

“Trust what you see” has become obsolete in the current era of information manipulation. One of the elements of free speech is the attainment of truth, which is a fulcrum of societal growth. Neutral and genuine information has unparalleled value in a representative democracy. Democratic values and rights are incomplete without access to genuine information. Technological advances fill the communication void between the masses and the government. Tim Berners-Lee, the creator of the World Wide Web, would not have thought of the possibilities and the unprecedented transformation in which humans communicate. The public's dependency on the internet today is incredible. The internet influences every aspect of human life, whether shopping, travelling, education, etc. Social networking sites are one of the most famous outcomes of internet connectivity, and they are popularly known as social media. It may be defined as a means of communication (such as social networking websites and microblogging) via which people create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (WordPress, 2020). It can also be defined as a set of internet-based apps built on the conceptual and technological foundations of Web 2.0, enabling the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Further, we may understand “Web 2.0” as an internet platform that enables interactive user participation (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). A wide range of social media exists, like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and X, that facilitate communication and interactive user participation. On the other hand, instant messengers like WhatsApp and Telegram enable mass messaging.

As more and more individuals use these platforms to voice their thoughts and acquire news, the social media arena has emerged as a new forum for public discussion of political and social concerns, with many people engaging in vehement debates. Though social media was initially structured to connect people with increased user participation and a vast audience, it has become an information-dissemination tool. It has become a significant medium for gathering information for the public. Even government bodies and political leaders have turned to social media sites like X to broadcast information. Social media fosters free speech and allows individuals unrestricted power to speak their thoughts, which traditional media lacked. It

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