The Spread of Fake news and Information on The Internet

People in twenty-first century can get a lot of information on the internet allowing him or her to study, work, and address personal issues. The internet is also similar to a post office, which lets people send and receive emails. The internet has brought about a paperless age and has also increased the speed through one's access or ability to spreads information. There are various search engines that one can use to get information in a few minutes. By comparing it to print media such a book, the web is superior as it saves the time required for studying or working. Even though the internet has brought a lot of conveniences in the human society, it also has also introduced some disadvantages that cannot be ignored. Therefore, it is significant to inform internet users about the reasons and the effect of the spread of fake news because the misinformation can mislead internet users to trust specific websites; On the other hand, if the phenomenon cannot be solved, the user of internet will no longer trust the information available on the web.

1.   Fake News Has Been Existence since Ancient Era to the Internet Era

Fake or biased news has existed since the beginning of human history. The people that control the flow of information can create fake stories to influence the public perspectives or regulate the treatment of a specific group in the community. According to the book, *Influencing Machine*, the author Brooke Gladstone describes the ancient Chinese society. She asserts that there were no journalists in every place for written language emerging in accient China, only Scribes that she describes as Publicists (Gladstone 3,4). Thousands of years ago, people wrote on different materials, such as bones, stones, or clay. Originally, they used the slates to record daily events and historical accounts. The scribes were treated with respect, and they amassed wealth

and gained a positive reputation because they had the right to control the content in the texts. They controlled the rights to get knowledge, information and the approaches of expression in the community. For instance, in the article, "Combating Fake News in the Digital Age", Joanna Burkhardt assets that, "Some of the information that has survived, carved in stone or baked on tablets or drawn in pictograms, extolled the wonder and power of the leaders. Often these messages were reminders to the common people that the leader controlled their lives" (Burkhardt 5). Through using the messages, leaders in the past expressed the information that would promote respect among the public and allow them to perform their duties smoothly. The people had limited information about their lives and believed that the information carved in the stone or baked on tablets was correct without verifying it. It shows that people in the past created biased information to exert public rule.

Before the internet came into existence, the various forms of media that were predominantly employed for disseminating the fake news were newspapers, magazines, television and radio. As noted, ancient media also had its way of allowing supplements and advertisements as the methods of paving the way for masking of real news. By the mid-1950s, television was the phenomena gluing and gathering people before the media box, and the fake content was telecasted at a time when millions of audiences would get access to the aired content. The fantasy reality shows would later bridge the gap between what was real and staged. The modern world has seen an evolution where the untrue information is published by seemingly professional websites, while programming of search engines as well as social media have proved to be the most effective platforms for creating the influential news.

Therefore, while modern society has been exposed to the immense information access that they may need, they often do not verify whether it is true or not. Without verification, there

is more fake news spreading mainly through the internet. According to the article "Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election," Hunt Allcott and Matthew Gentzkow provide a list that reveals that more and more people get news from social media. The article shows that 62 percent of US adults get news on social media, the most popular fake news stories were more widely shared on Facebook than the most popular mainstream news stories and that many people who see fake news stories report that they believe them (Allcott and Gentzkow 234).

The data shows that 62 percent of people were more likely to read new about 2016 election from online sources, and they deemed the news as credible. Then, they shared the news with friends or family. However, many people responded that they wanted to share the link because it is interesting, but do not consider whether what they spread is fake or biased. That influences people's perspectives concerning a specific agenda or issue. Gladstone mentions that, "And now internet can act, easily, even influence how those stories end" (Gladstone 154). It is true that because of the convenience of the internet, everyone plays a role in the spread of fake news and can unknowingly influence various consequences. No matter the kind of media a person subscribes to, he or she does not want to convey information confusing people's perspectives.   In the video, "The Danger of A Single Story," Chimamanda Adichie, A Nigerian short stories, nonfiction and novel's writer claims that if people express their information inaccurately, it can lead to negative consequences for their lives. Adichie establishes that many people have a misunderstanding about Africans' lives, even some renowned authors. She gets a quote from the writings of a London merchant called John Lok who says that "Africans are also people without heads, having their mouth and eyes in their breasts" (Adichie 3). People hear different impressions on a specific issue and make the judgments depend on what they hear and see. Lok doesn't reveal the true characteristics of Africans but instead expresses a wrong

message to mislead people's perspectives. This biased information is created because Lok doesn't have an accurate depiction of the continent and just writes based on his imagination. He subjectively thinks that Africa is a place of negatives, of difference, and of darkness. if he, doesn't convey the information accurately, those who do not carry out fact-checking are more likely to be misguided.

This phenomenon mentioned above also happenns on the internet. Ricegum is a ten million subscribers Asian American YouTuber and a lot of young people follow him. He made a very disrespectful video about China, and he conveyed a fake information which is that even he treated Chinese people disrespectfully, they didn't revolt at all. Ricegum was disrespectful to the local people since he forced an old man who doesn't speak English to eat the food that he left even the man said no. Additionally, he touched strangers' hand on the elevator, and he deemed that was funny. After Ricegum released this video, many people comment that he was so disrespectful, but there are still small proportion people thought that making fun of Chinese is really cool because Chinese don't know the language. Because he is a ten million subscribers YouTuber, the bias information that he conveyed will affect the subcribers' thoughts. Therefore, His impolite behavior might lead young people's imitation.

A research shows that on the internet whereby people tend to believe the personalities whom they follow or subscribe to on social media. According David Pogue in "How to Stamp Out Fake News," On social media sites, one decides whose posts you want to read. On Facebook, they're your friends; on Twitter, they're people you choose to follow. In both cases, you're following like-minded people, whose opinions on prefers (Pogue 3). Because social media users can choose like-minded people, they agree to other views, what they write and what they think based not only on their knowledge in a specific field but also on their personality, appearance,

tone, and so on. The situation reveals that social media users choose not only the theme of new they want to read but also select what they wish to read. One of such cases is revealed in an interview with my mother. She says that she has similar behavior when using WeChat, a popular social networking site in China. I interviewed her and asked why she believes the people that she follows on WeChat. She answered:

> I subscribe to a channel that gives a lot of information about health life. Also, the manners and style of the owner of the channel push me to believe that she is a reliable person. Furthermore, getting information about the health on the internet is much easier than visiting a doctor. If I don't feel well, the first choice will be searching on Google because there are many websites that can tell me what to do to address the health issue (Luo).

From my mother's perspective on social media and the internet, I discover that she believes the people that she follows because she feels that they are credible people by looking at their appearances and manners. However, she does not bother checking on their careers, jobs and whether they belong to a reputable organization. Furthermore, she thinks that the internet is the fastest and most efficient way to solve all her problems regardless of their nature. She never doubts the people's credibility. Furthermore, because of the convenience of the internet, she assumes that she doesn't need to wait in line for hours to see the doctor. I understand that using the internet is a fast and easy way to get information, and we use it every day. However, as ordinary people, we sometimes don't know to judge if the quality of information is good or bad.

<p align="center">2.Why and How Fake News is Created</p>

Fake news articles are created by several kinds of websites. For instance, some websites and social media sties intentionally post fake articles to mislead people while some establish materials that might be mixed true and fake massages. Allcott and Gentzkow mention that, "Still other sites, such as endingthefed.com, often with a partisan slant, along with some false articles. Websites supplying fake news tend to be short-lived, and many that were important in the run-up to the 2016 election no longer exist. (Alcott and Gentzkow 217). As Allcott and Gentzkow mentions, these types of websites write biased articles. People find it difficult to find such type of publishing company as it has not existed for a long time. After spreading the fake news, they run away to other cities or countries to continue spreading information that harms other communities (Alcott and Gentzkow 218).

The authors add that one of the most important motivations for publishing companies when creating fake news is money "The news articles that go viral on social media can draw significant advertising revenue when users click to the original site. This appears to have been the main motivation for most of the producers whose identities have been revealed" (217). They collaborate with advertising sponsors to promote the sale of specific goods and services by misleading the consumer's judgment. For example, to attract a customer to buy a house, an agent can establish that if people don't buy a house now, the future prices will go extremely high and make it unaffordable. If consumer reads the heading, they might think that it might be a good time to buy now before regretting in the future. To crate high click rates and get advertising revenue, internet media violate the principle of journalism, whose responsibility is to reveal the true side of information.

While fake news does not translate to outright lying but somewhat misleading or biased information that is gently crafted. This information is carefully fabricated and properly

customized to mimic genuine news so that the content looks appealing in line with the preexisting preferences of the audience (Kucharski 523). The hoaxes have been recording a colossal impact especially with technological evolution and the opinion as well as the agendas of the fakers well proliferated. Due to the volatility of the fake news, news media that permeate false content are very particular with their topic choices. They mostly major on politics, gossip and scandals when manipulating information. This guarantees them of multiplied profits, and it is for that reason that they accompany segments of their unapproved content with sponsored content and authentic advertisements. Therefore, because of social media's nature, the material it publishes is left unmediated as compared to traditional journalism that indulged in fact-checking discouraging thriving of fake news.

Internet media can use "big data," a computer program that can collect and analyze how people use the internet, and what people share and click to understand what kind of product consumers would like to purchase. It traces a person's hobbies and interests with the aim of selling products to them. For instance, if a person like photography, he/she searches for a tutorial on how to take a good self-portrait on some video websites. After watching the tutorial videos, the computer program gets the data that he/she watches some videos related to photography, and then the program might send some products available via email and pop-up advertisements on the website. Companies that can access "big data" use the information collected to influence the people's buying behavior.

As a consumer, one of the reasons we don't receive high-quality news is analysts can get advertising money for each click and earn several thousands of dollars per month. To create an attractive heading to get more money, an analyst often exaggerates or distorts the facts. When I was in college in China, I read a heading from social media that Chinese Students, Who Just

Graduated from College Earned Only Three Thousand RMB [one US dollar equals to seven RMB] a month, so they can only buy a house when they are eighty-years old". Because many graduates in China didn't have a highly-paying job in the first year that they start working, they felt pressured whether they would be able to purchase a car or a house in an urban center. Because I was a graduate and got paid about three thousand RMB a month from my work, the news article grabbed my attention, and I felt anxious and worried about my future. Furthermore, the report was partially true since graduates could earn more money if they work hard and learn more skills for their occupation. For instance, I worked in a factory that produces caps and hats. In the second year, I got over four thousand Yuan a month because I was able to have more clients and deal with orders from different countries. Therefore, journalists should not write articles to attract people's attention only, but need to report news based on facts.

Overall, in this section, I have established that to get more profit from a sponsor, publishers push biased news and advertisements, and they don't execute their principles as professional journalists. With the rapid development of science and technology, we can get news from the internet at any time, but the quality of news cannot yet be guaranteed.

In the digital age, information spread has been faster and on a wider scale than ever before. Because of the development of the internet, readers can get information easily; however, some people utilize computer programs and social media to spread misinformation to mislead buyers through false advertising. It is difficult to distinguish if the online information is reliable. Therefore, as readers, we might not have too much power to change the future of internet media, but we can be vigilant in increasing the credibility of various articles by verifying them. We should be careful before sharing links with other friends or followers especially on social media. Even though it is difficult to stop the spread altogether, we should each play a role in checking

for factual information and spreading the spread of fake news. We must be able to differentiate

between facts and misinformation to become smart readers.

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