The Growth of Fake News on Social Media During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Xinlei He

Shanghai Guanghua Middle School, Shanghai, 201105, China, he_xinlei30@sina.com
Corresponding author. Email: he_xinlei30@sina.com

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic is going viral in the world these days and there are more and more fake news that are being made by people. This paper discuss the reason why this phenomena happens. This work will talk about this theme in several different aspects including the thoughts of the internet users and the thoughts of the official organizations. In addition, this work can also help people to prevent the presence of fake news and rumor during the COVID-19 period.

Keywords: COVID-19, pandemic, fake news, rumor

1. INTRODUCTION

The 2019 pandemic is the worse health crisis in the world, it affects every aspect of people's life.[1] With the eruption of the pandemic, many social media has been used to spread information about the pandemic. A lot of false and fake news have caused the confusion of people's thoughts and we need to know the accurate information about the Covid-19. Social media like Instagram, Wechat and Twitter created easy access for people to communicate. Therefore, the information can be easily spread throughout the world. However, there are some fake news among these information and it can be misleading in people's life.

As the pandemic take place all around the world there are more and more internet users since people are required to be isolated independently at home and most of the people will spend time on their phone and computers. [2]They can use the computer and phones to do all kinds of things including chatting with their friends and knowing and participate in the world through the internet by reading news or watching videos on media platforms like YouTube and Instagram. This phenomena also increase the effect of the fake news as there are much more people that are influenced by the fake news.

Another thing that can greatly motivate fake news maker to make fake news is because the benefit of making the fake news increased rapidly. To be more specific, people deliver a video or news with a very surprising title and this can lure many people to look at the information inside.

In addition, if people know about the truth of the event about the epidemic, there will also be people that can refute the rumors. However, in the real world, the transportation industry is being severely damaged by the COVID-19 because the government force the citizens to wear masks and do a lot of checking process in order to travel around the world. [3]This can definitely keep the truth apart from the normal citizens as most of them do not want to go to other places since it will be very troublesome. In this way, normal people will not know the truth of many events and there will be less people to point out the mistake of the information.

Another factor that cause the increase of the number of the fake news is that there are less authorities that can help people to identify weather the news are true or false. This is mainly because that there are too much fake news that the authorities do not have the time to deal with all these kind of things and therefore making the spread of the fake news even more viral.
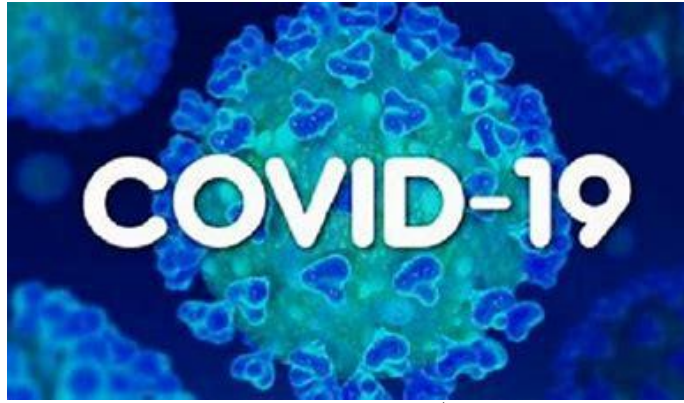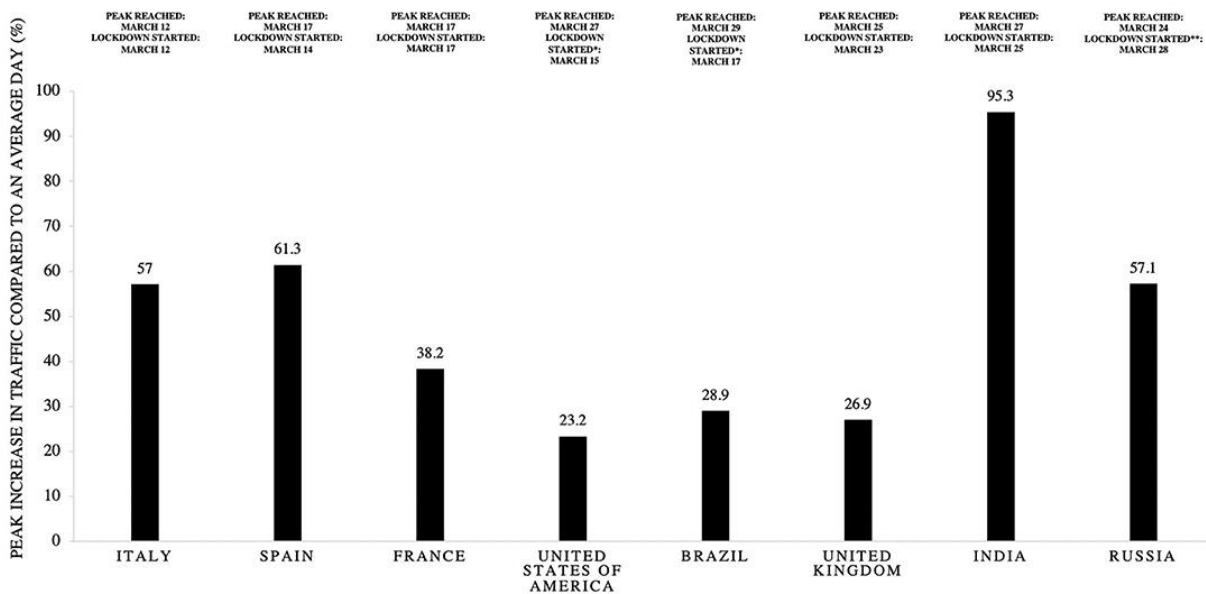
Figure 1 COVID-19[4]

Figure 2 The Increase of internet users[5]

As the COVID-19 take place in the world, the Internet plays a critical support role for businesses, education, entertainment, and social interactions. It is also estimated by people that during the pandemic the traffic on the internet is increase beyond 200%.[6] Therefore there are much more internet users on the internet during the period of the pandemic. This is mainly because that the government are implementing the stay-at-home policy that force people to stay at home.[7] This policy helps people to protect themselves as well as protecting others from being infected. However, this policy cause people to be very boring because they cannot communicate to the outside unless they use the internet, and that cause the increase of the internet users.

Nowadays, people are more relied on the internet, because the world is developing and people are doing things that need to use the internet.[8] For instance, they use the internet to communicate with other people they use it to help them do their jobs and sometimes buy important things that are necessary in our daily life.

Therefore, internet is a very important part of our life and we can live without the internet.

In addition, the COVID-19 is a severe pandemic during 2020 and 2021. So people need to take some actions to prevent themselves from being infected by other people. In order to achieve this goal, many governments implement the policy of not contacting to other people or to stay at home. In this way, the policy makes a further effort to stimulate people to use internet since people cannot talk to other people unless they use the internet. By contrast, if there is not a epidemic, some people prefer to talk to other people face-to-face because they think it will be much more efficient and they can know others emotion so it would be better. In addition, most of the company would require staff to go to the office in the company to work as the workers and to spectated by other people. However, when it comes to the pandemic, people cannot communicate face-to-face and some of the company will allow employees to work at home, so they will use their computer to contact to their

colleagues online. In this way there will be more internet users during the pandemic.

When the users of the internet increase to a certain number of numbers, the effect of the false news will rapidly increase as more and more people use internet every day. More internet uses means that more people will know the fake news and they will be affected by the fake news more frequently because they use the internet more frequently. As a result, people might spread this fake news even though they did not mean to do it and this action can increase the effect of the fake news even worse.

2. THE BENEFITS OF MAKING FAKE NEWS

As the epidemic take place around the world, there are some benefits when people make fake news since the internet users are increasing during the pandemic. In addition, there are fewer risks to make fake news during the COVID-19 as people cannot know the truth of the events and there are less authorities that can point out the misleading information a fake news makes.

It is known that in some media platform, the income of videos makers depends on the amount of people who have seen the video. This is an effective thing that can motivate people to make fake news since people are often attracted by the title, which are shocking sometimes, of the video and therefore there are many people that watch the video. In addition, there are more internet users during the pandemic so the income of fake news maker will be enlarged.

Although sometimes people do not want to watch the videos with a shocking title, they still wanted to see what the video is talking about. [9] This is one of the main reasons why there are so many people who have seen the videos including fake news.

In addition, the transportation during the pandemic is affect too, since many governments require people to do a lot of check like the nucleic acid test and many people do not want to do these kinds of things so they just stay at home instead of going to different places. As a result, there are less people knowing the real situation of the society because they do not have the access to know the truth. By contrast, when there was no pandemic, people can travel around the world very conveniently and they can get access to know whether the news is true or false as they can go to the real place and see if the information is correct or not.

Another thing that can affect the production of the fake news is that there are less authorities to point out the false information included in the fake news. This is mainly because the authorities cannot know the truth as well as normal citizens since the COIVD-19 is an unknown thing. In addition, the amount of fake news that are being produced have rapidly increased as there are a lot of benefits when making fake news so the authorities do not have the time to deal with them. By contrast, when there are no pandemic, the authorities can identify whether the news are true or false by putting a little effort on it. In addition, there are less fake news when there are no pandemic.

3. THE WAYS TO PREVENT THE PRESENCE OF FAKE NEWS

Due to the increase of fake news during the pandemic, it is proposed that people should do some effective measures to prevent the productivity of the fake news. In section 3, I discussed about the benefit of making fake news, so we can think of some ways to stop the productivity of rumors. It is true that the video platforms like Tiktok and Youtube pays money to the producer of the fake news because there are a lot of users that watches the video and the video platform can get benefits from it because they can collect the data of users. Therefore, it is proposed that when the video is uploaded, the video platform should first examine the information that is included in the video and decide whether the video could be a rumor or not. In addition, the video platform can add some tags like"Disputed" or "Rated false" tag which can lower its perceived accuracy.[10]

It is mentioned in section 3 that one of the aspects that promote people to produce fake news is that there are little risks since there are no authorities that can really refute the rumor as the COVID-19 is a unknown thing. Therefore, it would be better for the authorities to fact-check the information and refute the rumor so that the public will not be misled by the false information.

4. CONCLUSION

During the pandemic, there are a lot of things that affected the increase of the number of the fake news. In this essay I discussed about how the increase of the internet users cause the increase of the fake news and how the benefits of making fake news that motivate people to make fake news.

The COVID-19 cause the increase of internet users and therefore influence the number of the fake news. In addition, these phenomena also influence the effect of fake news among the public. Furthermore, the policy of the government that make the people to stay at home greatly affect the users of network.

The network and the benefits of making fake news also motivates people to make fake news since there are a lot of benefits. This is mainly due to the money that is given to video maker on social platforms. In addition, there are very low risks to make fake news as there are too many fake news and the COVID-19 is an unknown thing so that the authorities do not have the ability to point out the rumor.

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