

Online misinformation as a designed user experience

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Lavinia Marin - Online Misinformation as a Designed User Experience

The ongoing flood of misinformation in online social media is a pervasive feature of digital communications. However, the current conceptualisations of misinformation are not nuanced enough to deal with the online medium by treating online misinformation as the same species of offline misinformation. Because of this lack of differentiation between kinds of misinformation, we are missing out on a chance to clarify what is the epistemic role of the technological medium in turning information or misinformation into belief. This presentation consists of two parts: the first part criticises the classical approaches to online misinformation which are based on the semantic view of information as "well-formed meaningful data" (Floridi, 2010). Following this perspective, misinformation would be just false meaningful data. Since the truth and falsity of the data does not hinge on the medium as such, this approach to misinformation is not robust enough to differentiate between examples of online from offline misinformation. I will show several shortcomings of this approach illustrating with some cases of online misinformation. In the second part of the presentation, I will propose a new conceptualisation of misinformation as the experience of unfounded belief which is promoted by certain informational environments, and show that this particular experience can be designed alongside other types of user experience; I will show examples of how certain user interface design choices prime their users for seeking and propagating misinformation. By shifting the attention from the semantic content of the information to the design features of the online informational environment, this presentation proposes to shift the weight from the epistemic concept of misinformation to an approach more based on philosophy of technology and mediation theory.