

Fake news: the dangerous double-edged sword of indignation

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There are quite a few users on social networks who share news without even having read it. They feel comfortable with just the headline; and the worst thing is that much of this information is fake.

A recent study carried out by researchers from several American universities and published in the prestigious journal *Science* reveals that *“disinformation exploits outrage to be spread online.”*

According to the summary of the aforementioned research, outrage is very attractive and does not need to be accurate to achieve its communicative goals, which makes it an attractive signal to incorporate into disinformation.

The analysts conducted eight studies that used American data from Facebook (1,063,298 links) and from the now called social network X, formerly Twitter (44,529 tweets, 24,007 users) and also carried out two behavioral experiments with 1,475 participants.

They thus arrived at three valuable conclusions: *“disinformation sources evoke more outrage than reliable sources; outrage facilitates the sharing of disinformation at least as strongly as the sharing of reliable news; and users are more willing to share outrage-evoking disinformation without reading it first.*

“Consequently, outrage-evoking disinformation may be difficult to mitigate with interventions that assume that users want to share accurate information,” they emphasize.

They focused in particular on the role of outrage – understood as a mix of anger and disgust triggered by perceiving moral transgressions – and confirmed that users were motivated to share content that provoked outrage. And they did so without first reading it to discern its veracity.

They found that social media posts containing false information provoke more outrage than those that include reliable information. And precisely that emotion encourages the spread of so-called fake news.

Cuba is the target of a media war that is spreading a lot of fake news related to the reality of the country, and it is regrettable, if not also outrageous, that some people spread it without even reading it or trying to check if it is a lie.

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