



Truthfulness of Journalism in the Post-truth Era under Immanuel Kant's Theory

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Abstract

The article delves into the presence of 'truthfulness' in the post-truth era, based on Immanuel Kant's theory on the presence of 'truthfulness' in the news. In the post-truth era, digital technology and the plethora of communication channels have increased the prevalence of "fake news" in the political realm. Political interference has had a significant impact on post-truth journalism. Particularly regarding news communication in Western democracies, where fake news has gradually eroded the democratic system, and social media has become a big platform in the political realm resulting in the loss of "gatekeepers" for journalism and causing mass communication chaos. To prevent social platforms from becoming instruments for political opinion, platforms should tighten their monitoring of material release and build a reliable truth-seeking method. Modern technology should be used to conduct efficient information authenticity. The post-truth phenomena in journalism should be countered by enhancing mass communication, promoting social media communication, and employing technology to restore truth to the news.

Keywords

Truth, fake news, Immanuel Kant, journalism, post-truth

Introduction

This age was defined as the "Post-truth era" from the perspective of journalism and communication. "Post-truth" was entered in the Oxford dictionary in 2016 and was described as "Relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief" (Condello & Andina, 2019, p.3). The definition describes a situation whereby "Post-truth," more than truth, is emotionally connected (Condello & Andina, 2019, p. 3). Emotions contribute to the formation of "post-truth." Still, intense emotions could disturb the actual judgment of people for truth when people judge with strong emotions, where a lack of objectivity could cause bias (Condello & Andina, 2019, p. 3). However, strong emotions are the most efficient way to persuade others to accept this post-truth viewpoint (Condello and Andina, 2019, p. 3).

People rely on their innate senses to perceive and receive information, and have a unique mental shape molded by factors such as living environment and educational background. Those factors affect people collecting information by self-emotion as subjective judgment. Meanwhile, people associate the concept of post-truth with forms of communication, which also seen as a political and social condition in which citizens and politicians no longer respect the truth but choose what they believe to be true and feel. And as digital media communication technology increasingly permeates the lives of the masses, while this technology has increased the qualities of the media message, such as its spread and timeliness, on the other hand, it has also brought about inevitable confusion.

1. New and truth in the post-truth era

Is there truth in our world? It is a controversial and divergent question in philosophy. Immanuel Kant put forward this theoretical concept in his book "Groundwork for Metaphysics of Morals." His ideology diverges from the traditional framework that has long argued that knowledge is dominant (Condello & Andina, 2019, pp. 7-8). Kant researched perceptual and intellectual knowledge form and related it to humans (Condello & Andina, 2019, pp. 7-8). According to the concept, it can be understood there is a limit to the things we know and that exceeding these limits would result in negative intuitions that overshadow the meaning of truth by a sensibility that is closer to the facts (Condello & Andina, 2019, pp. 7-8).

Also, a viewpoint mentioned in Kant's book "Groundwork for Metaphysics of Morals" is "now, being and maybe existing a more real truth than we term phenomenal truth" (Condello & Andina, 2019, pp. 7-8). So, Kant based on "the object itself" as a boundary for set a limitation for reason, is only more reasonable to describe a reason and unreason (emotion, belief) in the human moral world (Condello & Andina, 2019, pp. 7-8). Essentially, he introduced a concept of truth: "this truth is restricted to the manmade sensory realm; therefore, the truth is their reality but does not constitute the absolute truth" (Condello & Andina, 2019, pp. 7-8). Humans do not have access to truth in the world of metaphysics. Hans Valhingers developed a whole set of "fictional" ideas based on Kant's theory (Rider et al., 2018). It stands for post-truth sensibility and argues that philosophy seems to be the most post-truthful of all these fields, where 'reality' is a movement between the poles of fiction and hypothesis and never has a strong sense of truth (Rider et al., 2018).

From a philosophical perspective, we use our five senses to perceive the phenomenon, such as voice and image. Then when we get the sensation, we sum up and analyze the information through a rational and logical pathway with elements of personal bias and positioning. Post-truth implies subjectivity guided by human thought rather than objectivity as the basis of perception (Rider et al., 2018). And the values of human subjectivity can easily be consensual, owing to modern technology.

In the past, from the perspective of mass media transmission, the production of knowledge by a small group gave the truth an imposing power. The information and knowledge could be linked, the truth consensus coincided, and its veracity universally recognized. In the electronic era, the information available to people is always rife with inaccuracies, or a blanket of facts obscures the true truth. Determining the "truth" might require time, effort, and money. As a result, people rely on their emotions and habits to interpret information in various ways due to the rapid evolution of digital technology.

In the West, media communication in the post-truth era has become the primary means of political propaganda from a political standpoint. Expert systems and elite organizations constructing a false image with the use of media communication, deceitful language, and incendiary speeches have caused mass communication disorientation and an uprising against authority among the people. Immanuel Kant, who allows for subjectivist interpretations of the truth and 'dares to know the truth,' urges humanity to destroy its dependency on authoritative sources and to trust oneself perceptions (Wight, 2018). The present hurdle stems from an authoritarian rejection of objective truth. According to Hannah Arendt, the ideal subject of totalitarian authority is a person for whom there is no longer a line between truth and falsity (Wight, 2018). As a result, the populace relies on subjective value judgments to evaluate information, which diminishes trust in social authority and mainstream media ideals.

2. Digital Transmission - Fake news

Under the post-truth era, the digitalization of media is omnipresent, an increasing number of people choose social media as their first news source. The rise of many social media companies has forged news into a political tool as they create fake news to sway public opinion. For example, the CEO of Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg, said, "they used fake news to impact the election of the U.S. in 2016" (Kovach, 2017). Social media mode makes any user a load of information. In a world of massive data dissemination at enormous speed, people don't care about the truth of information, and their thinking is limited to the imagination constructed by the media.

Post-truth marks a change in the way the public domain is constituted as well as in the way the political media field primarily behaves (Corner, 2017). And fake news is a fashionable identifier for a deceptive media product (Corner, 2017). According to Silvio Waisbord, the phenomenon of fake news is a dynamic shaped by news organizations' competing consciousness and beliefs (Waisbord, 2018). The modern press has lost its supervision and control over disseminating information so that the opposite states of information and misinformation, truth and lies, scientific-

ic and non-scientific knowledge, fact and fiction, all co-exist together (Waisbord, 2018). The multi-layered news and communication environment, the active role of the public in the production and dissemination of news, and the dynamics of news and information that are not controlled by the press all reflect the chaos of public communication (Waisbord, 2018).

2.1 Driving the online economy of fake news

Substantial financial profits make fake news as a social media and capital market 'tool' that allows social media and creators to earn significant advertising revenue when people open fake news sites and click on content. According to the Interactive Advertising Bureau, Google and Facebook absolutely dominate, with digital advertising revenues growing to \$72.5 billion in 2016, up 22% from the previous year (How fake news is creating profits). And separate investigations by BuzzFeed and The Guardian revealed that in the Macedonian town of Veles, more than 100 websites publishing fake news, all run by teenagers and that they made tens of thousands of dollars in profits because of fake news about Clinton and Trump (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017).

2.2 Fake news as a political propaganda tool

Trump was the most successful candidate in the 2016 presidential election and benefited from fake news (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). 62% of U.S. adults obtain their news from social media, and as the most popular fake news articles are shared more widely on Facebook than the most popular mainstream news items, a significant portion of those who read false news choose to believe it (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). From there, the most discussed fake news stories tend to be about Trump rather than Hillary (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). People trust these news pieces because they are presented in a simplified and appealing format on social media (Condello & Andina, 2019, pp. 62-63). Additionally, it spreads rapidly and returns to the user through numerous sources, familiarizing individuals with the message (Condello & Andina, 2019, pp. 62-63). A second point is the public's widespread acceptance of the information, which allows politicians to use this strategy to undertake propaganda operations to garner support (Condello & Andina, 2019, pp. 62-63).

McNair has painted the media as "direct political actors," the media defines political facts by presenting the results to the audience in a journalism, giving coverage to the critical parts of political events, and conveying the meaning of politics (McNair, 2018, p. 79). The mainstream media of western countries cannot inherently disconnect from the government, and the media is formed with the beliefs and values of the society in which it operates. Therefore, the political intervention significantly influences the news in the post-truth period. In Western democracies, journalists occupy a central position through the generation and regulated dissemination of information and externally as a politically neutral "observer" (Carlson, 2018). But according to Schudson, journalism becomes involved in politics when this balance is disrupted. And led to the appearance of fake news, which is not only deceptive news but also a metaphor for politicians and pundits to denounce and criticize news organizations (Carlson, 2018). For instance, Trump posted the hashtag #FraudNewsNetwork on Twitter to satirize the news organization CNN. This is a form of violence against media organizations and reduces public trust in news organizations (Carlson, 2018).

3. The dilemma of journalism in the post-truth era

3.1 Fake news gradually disrupts the democratic system

Fake news destroys the journalistic fairness, objectivity, and truthfulness of the news, and the use of people's emotions to sway the truth in exchange for their "votes" gives a political orientation to media communication. The "post-truth" comes from the political sphere, where the prominence of political tendencies led to fake news striking at the very foundations of the democratic system. Democracies worldwide face a deep-rooted crisis as fake news, alternative facts, and misinformation begin to dominate the public sphere (Farkas & Schou, 2020). Disinformation and deception make people caught in a trap that saps their trust in the social system. As the traditional gatekeepers of truth, the elite gradually lose their monopoly on public issues (Farkas & Schou, 2020). People are torn between truth and deception and eventually abandon reason to trust their own instincts until this falsehood destroys democracy and shakes people's trust in the existing political system.

3.2 Social media occupy the dominant that journalism to lose the gatekeeper

Internet tech changed their life; portable electronics being a main message source for people. An individual replace reporter, professional journalism agent, and content creator identify. Much information rapidly gushes toward

people by networks. Large volumes of information without any basis or expert oversight impair people's reasoning ability. As a result, people select only the parts that they are interested in and subjective, thereby forming the information cocoon. People only focus on the subject area that interests them, a certain knowledge constraint is created and a lack of comprehension of the world beyond their own focus areas. When a person is solely subjective, they receive information without any sense of criticality. For individuals, social media can employ algorithmic techniques to produce and disseminate correct content, allowing for faster and more direct access to information of interest, which exerts adverse effects on the public agenda.

This informational cocoon may, with time, result in the establishment of a network community, which is the worst social media ecosystem. When people restrict their own access to information, they reject and even doubt the public media's agenda for current events, which results in an echo effect in which individuals listen solely to similar opinions within media communication, thereby disguising reality. The fractured communication system and amateur news-producing capabilities of social media cannot replace the mass communication agenda. In addition, information cocoons can result in an echo effect, which frequently leads to cognitive biases and imbalances among audiences, hence sparking the post-truth phenomena.

3.3 Social media as a tool for politicians' ambitions

Social media can be an effective tool in politics and facilitate democratic control of the political process. Politicians can affect the political process by setting the public agenda and placing it at the center of public opinion. From Barack Obama's success in social media in 2008 and 2012 to the 2016 US presidential election, Trump and Hillary have used social media to control the public discourse. Social media has become an overused medium of communication in the US and other democracies to disseminate negative, conflicting, and offensive content. This has led to the gradual destruction of public agenda-setting, the distortion of social consensus on values, and the creation of "identity politics" class conflicts; identity politics is loyal to the group and abandons any objectivity about the facts (Wight, 2018). When some people cannot identify with the dominant view of society or perceive a conflict, they choose to present the facts from a post-truth perspective and fight against the existing framework of truth leading to the chaos of mass communication.

4. The innovation of journalism in the post-truth era

4.1 Reclaiming the foundations of journalistic values

Journalism's most important characteristics are truthfulness and objectivity. Traditional media should not be replaced by social media, and abandoning the most fundamental value beliefs of journalism for the sake of heat and flow. It should give play to its professionalism and authority, use background investigation, in-depth inquiry, professional data collection, and analysis to bring the truth to the audience. Emphasize journalistic professionalism, guide correct public opinion through professional content production methods, arouse public trust in authoritative media, and regain the credibility and discourse of media news reporting. Furthermore, journalists should dexterously expand the new media sphere with content creation that is more visual and relevant to users and they should obviate the influence of 'de-professionalization' and 'professional-like groups' in mass communication, and restore the authority of professional media.

4.2 Effective improvement of social media fact fragmentation and mass communication latency

Social media is a platform devoid of gatekeepers, where the network facilitates the free expression of thoughts and enhances their political potential. The vast majority of content on social media is disorganized and unstructured, offering only fragmentary facts; it is not a narrative description of an event, but rather a near-diffuse transmission of new clues. This type of communication only supplies the public with information quickly, resulting in confusion in public communication due to contradicting content and uncertainty. On the other hand, traditional mass communication tends to convey facts in reverse, with the truth being based on the structural framework of the media narrative and the truth being transmitted with a certain time lag. The news coverage is filtered and given value based on this spacing. However, the delayed nature of mass communication contradicts the timeliness of its aspects when compared to the pace of social media communication. The news media must use the benefits of social media and mass communication to immediately check the veracity of released material, and compile and analyze it so that the public can quickly comprehend it. The platform's timeliness can be utilized to ensure the timeliness of news content releases. In addition, platforms must tighten the monitoring of social media material and screening social media content. The

platform should become a new generation of "gatekeepers" to construct a flawless news-seeking mechanism, reject deceptive, false rumor content, establish a healthy and harmonious online public opinion environment, and avoid becoming a public opinion manipulation instrument for politicians.

4.3 Using technology to help restore truth in journalism

Technology has shortened the spatial and temporal gap in interpersonal communication. The technical dimension facilitates the organization of this speech space without boundaries into virtual communities on a global scale. For mass communication, however, the dissemination of popular voices in unrestricted virtual communities must be clarified. Platforms should implement content screening and auditing to verify the content's origin and prevent the propagation of fictitious organizations and fraudulent information. Professional media should be used as a reference for sharing information on the platform, and information dissemination should be slowed until the truth has been validated. Algorithmic techniques should be improved to recommend diverse information and prevent forming information cocoons. At this stage of technological development, professional media can use AI intelligence appropriately to assist in the production of content and create a "human co-creation" model, where AI technology can reduce the time spent on data collection and in-depth analysis to improve efficiency. Furthermore, embedding different scenarios can renew people's desire to find out the truth in the news. The content would be presented more objectively, allowing professional media to accelerate the pace of truth analysis and steer social media opinion before it deteriorates, so ameliorating the "post-truth" phenomena and reducing the confusion of mass communication.

5. Conclusion

The confusion of public communication and the involvement of political factors, people are more likely to be guided by their own opinions and emotions, so the "truth" they reach is not certain to be true. Like Kant's argument, human truths are only a phenomenon and cannot be called real. The truth has not disappeared in the emotionally charged 'post-truth' era—only the path to finding it has deviated. In the era of post-truth, we must regain the ideals of journalism, emphasize the professionalism and authority of the mainstream news media, adhere to the neutrality of journalism, and convey accurate and reliable information to the public. Journalists should assume their responsibilities to monitor governmental institutions, pre-screen news content, avoid false information, rebuild the trust structure of public communication, and emphasize mass communication's authority. Improve the fragmentation of social media facts and the time lag of mass communication, combine their respective benefits, and develop a news dissemination communication model that is legitimate and efficient. To prevent social platforms from becoming instruments for political opinion, platforms should tighten their monitoring of material release and build a reliable truth-seeking method. Modern technology should be used to conduct efficient information authenticity screening and filtering, maintain the objectivity of the content, and assist professional journalists in creating content. Moreover, existing algorithmic technology should be enhanced to broaden the range of information available to the public and avoid the 'information cocoon' phenomenon in communities to alleviate the confusing and distorted effects of mass communication in the post-truth era and to establish a properly oriented public communication environment for truth seeking.

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