

Review of: "When did post-truth begin? From climate change denial to war-mongering nationalism"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Dear Editor,

I have now read the article. I consider the title and the direction of the article as timely and relevant. In this era of post-truth where fake news, misinformation, and disinformation and other information disorder are thriving, this topic could not have come at a better time. The paper is also applauded on the strength of argument. However, there are some areas of argument the authors need to strengthen, offer greater elucidation, and clarify, as noted below:

The author argues that "while fake news become more widespread, can its recipients, or those who convey them and are complicit in their diffusion, be either individually or collectively trusted? In particular, can they be entrusted with the means of choosing government? Should we attend to the choices of people who are systematically fed with misinformation? How can these people's judgement, however distorted, still orientate, or even become a basis of, effective government?" (pp.2-3). One truth about misinformation is that there are those we consider as media literates but deliberately circulate fake news and misinformation either for episodic economic or political gains. Hence, the fact that these individuals are partisan in certain areas, does not mean they cannot be trusted in other areas, especially if such areas do not conflict with their economic, social or political interest. If they cannot be trusted in the area of climate change information due to the above reasons, they may be trusted in other areas, except if there are findings from studies to support these claims. If there are not, the authors need to offer more explanations.

I quite agree with the assertion that lies travel faster than it used to be before the pre-social media era, but it should equally be established that lies have shorter lifespan as a result of social media too. The social media which make lies travel faster is ironically instrumental for the short lifespan of lies. Before the emergence of social media, lies travel at slower pace, but lies circulated usually remain uncontested and established for years, as there were fewer alternatives to discovering the truth. The author should therefore balance this argument, by bring out the merits of social media in democratizing the public space. This is because, in many countries, especially developing countries, government institutions deliberately deprive its citizens relevant information. This was going on before the emergence of social media. Such atmosphere undoubtedly breeds misinformation.

One thing is not clearly established in the paper. For instance, is the author in anyway arguing that post-truth began at the wake of climate denial in 2000s? Different studies have revealed the waning influence of science, expert opinion and trust, is not as a result internet phenomenon, even though new technologies such as the Internet and social media have amplified their scope of influence. Before the climate denial in 2000s, were there not claims about climate change that

were initially held in high esteem but were later dismissed as hoaxes and lies? Were the traditional media accomplices of climate change misinformation through ideologically biased contents? The author has not been able to clearly establish or trace the history of post-truth as it relates to the politics of climate change. If diffusion of fake news and post-truth only began at the wake of climate denial in the 2000s, does that suggest that prior to this time, there were no random misinformation and fake news about climate change? The author can strengthen their argument offering deeper explanation to the above concerns.