Deceptive Journalism

Characteristics of untrustworthy news items

Charlotte Govaert, Luuk Lagerwerf and Céline Klemm

Background

Trustworthiness, source fabrication and detection of deception

- Aennackers et al.
- Trust intermediaries now act as part-time activists (Wahl-Jorgensen et al., 2016).
- To negate the建成的, untruthfulness, the usability of facts and sources is critical. Deception is devastating.
- How can editors review, besides fact-check policies, detect deceptive news items before they are published?
- Deception is severe.
- Making up stories even come to the extent of changing facts and using quotes.
- Source fabrication: most occurring type of deception (Laursen and Daal, 2017a), next is fact fabrication and plagiarism.
- News characteristics
- Invented news contains more (stereotypically described) (secondarily defined) sources, longer direct citations, referring to self.
- Source characteristics
- Invented news contains more (stereotypically described) (secondarily defined) sources, longer direct citations, referring to self.
- More stereotypes and ethnical descriptions of sources are additionally unprofitable in deception.

Example


Grootvader Habib echter voelt de film als verraad. Perdiep Ramesar

His parents feared that Hicham Hassani would go and riot after having seen Geert Wilder’s film ‘Itvitsa’. But Hicham thinks the film is a joke. Grandfather Habib, however, experiences the film as betrayal.

Method

Design
- Dutch journalist’s articles identified as deceptive (sources untraceable according to research committee Trouw).
- Journalist, paired in date and length.
- Corpus of deceptive news items: no. of words & = 775 (31), Q = 539.33).
- Corpus of 126 terms by same journalist, paired in date and length (N = 628 SB, N = 431 CA; corpus of 126 items by other journalist, paired in date, length and topic (N = 599 DC, N = 559 SB). 

Source characteristics
- Number of sources (number of direct citations: length of citations: self references (locally within citations). 
- Primary definers: spokespersons, politicians, CEOs, celebrities, sports professionals; if not: secondary (victim, witness, police, eye-witness, use pop).
- Use of addressing descriptions of sources (attributive or predicative adjectives): reference to addressee.
- Style characteristics
- Use of negation terms (never, not, nobody).
- Krippendorff’s alpha between: 79 and 99.

Data analysis
- Frequency counts and also ratios (number of variable divided by number of words).
- Comparisons of counts between corpora with non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis tests (Epsilon-squared effect size) and Dunn-Bonferroni post hoc pairwise comparisons.

Results

- For all the above diagrams the pairwise differences were significant between deceptive journalist’s news and his sincere news, deceptive journalist’s news and the other journalist’s, but not between the sincere journalist and others (Dunn-Bonferroni post hoc tests).
- Except for no. of sources: Only a significant difference between deceptive and sincere journalist.
- Effect sizes (P) ranged between .02 and .27.

Conclusion

- News characteristics
- Invented news contains more secondarily defined sources, who are more stereotyped, with more ethnic associations, using longer direct citations and more self-references.
- Most frequently self-references.
- Invented news contains more embedded quotes and negation terms.
- Deception especially with respect to source characteristics, fact checking departments may look for secondarily defined sources with elaborate direct citations, described stereotypically with ethnic references, to detect news that needs checking.
- In terms of automated analysis, negation terms seems to be a stable indicator of deception. Q is genre specific.

Discussion

- Invented news presents a more coherent whole (Dalekis, Laursen and Lewis, 2009).
- More stereotypical and ethnical descriptions of sources are additionally unfavourable in deception.
- Negativity of deceptive news might also deceive by emotional distraction (fake news, clickbait).
- Automated analysis is possible, but results will always be contest and genre specific.
- Deceptive news is written to look like proper journalism; fake news is written without care for credibility.
- Nevertheless: Future research of test characteristics of clickbait and fake news would be interesting.

References