Chapter 13

The Rise of Professional Facebook Content Generators in Vietnam: A Fake News Campaign Against the Betibuti Founder

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ABSTRACT

This case study is empirical research. It highlights the fact that the dynamic and complex Facebook content generators involve actively in the formulation and dissemination of fake news in Vietnam. Professional Facebook content generators include not only the paid online commentators, being hired by the government or business sector but also the professional journalists, who can earn for their living by promoting certain ideas and products on Facebook. As journalism functions as a tool for propaganda in Vietnam, even some governmental officers engage in the formulation of fake news, as long as the fake news serves the propaganda purposes. Through the analysis of the engagement of each group of Facebook content generators in fake news, this chapter contributes to the identification and elimination of fake news, and therefore, it is especially significant for journalists in reflexive truth-seeking practice.

INTRODUCTION

The media landscape in Vietnam during 2014-2019 has witnessed a rise of professional content generators on Facebook, including journalists and paid online commentators. The pre-mature legal system can be the reason for this phenomenon. Legal framework for social media management in Vietnam has not yet fully developed. In addition, Vietnamese does not have law for doing lobbying. As the consequences, using media, particularly the prominent social media platform, Facebook, to promote ideas and policies becomes a common practice. Doing propaganda is a norm for Vietnamese journalism. Thus, authorities can sometimes prioritise shaping the public viewpoints, rather than truth seeking and verification. This DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-8535-0.ch013
The Rise of Professional Facebook Content Generators in Vietnam

This section explores the rise of professional Facebook content generators in Vietnam from 2014 to 2019. It identifies the measles outbreak in April 2014 as the beginning of using Facebook for public-opinion expression and manipulation. Following this change in the media landscape, a shift has occurred among state-controlled journalists from publishing on mainstream media to publishing on Facebook. Notably, journalists stopped working for the state-run media house and started earning by posting advertorial contents on Facebook, marking the formation of a new media system on Facebook parallel to that of the mainstream media system. Besides journalists, paid online commentators are joining the network generating Facebook contents. Although posting on Facebook was becoming a highly organised profes-
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