

Analyzing the Efficiency of Initiatives Taken against Disinformation during Election Campaigns: Case Study of Young Voters

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Abstract : Social media platforms have been actively working on solutions and combined their efforts with media, policy makers, educators and researchers to protect citizens and prevent interferences in information, political discourses and elections. Facebook, for instance, deleted fake accounts, implemented fake accounts and fake content detection algorithms, partnered with news agencies to manually fact check content and changed its newsfeeds display. Twitter and Instagram regularly communicate on their efforts and notify their users of improvements and safety guidelines. More funds have been allocated to media literacy programs to empower citizens in prevision of the coming elections. This paper investigates the efficiency of these initiatives and analyzes the metrics to measure their success or failure. The objective is also to determine the segments of population more prone to fall in disinformation traps during the elections despite the measures taken over the last four years. This study will also examine the groups who were positively impacted by these measures. This paper relies on both desk and field methodologies. For this study, a survey was administered to French students aged between 17 and 29 years old. Semi-guided interviews were conducted on a similar audience. The analysis of the survey and of the interviews show that respondents were exposed to the initiatives described above and are aware of the existence of disinformation issues. However, they do not understand what disinformation really entails or means. For instance, for most of them, disinformation is synonymous of the opposite point of view without taking into account the truthfulness of the content. Besides, they still consume and believe the information shared by their friends and family, with little questioning about the ways their closed ones get informed.

Keywords : democratic elections, disinformation, foreign interference, social media, success metrics

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