

Review

A Working Definition of Fake News

João Pedro Baptista ^{1,2,*}  and Anabela Gradim ^{1,2}

¹ Department of Communication, Philosophy and Politics, University of Beira Interior (UBI), 6201-001 Covilhã, Portugal; agradim@ubi.pt

² Labcom—Communication and Arts, University of Beira Interior (UBI), 6201-001 Covilhã, Portugal

* Correspondence: joao.pedro.baptista@ubi.pt

Abstract: Current literature on fake news is rather abundant and mainly focused on history, variety, and types, rather than processes. This review draws on current literature to build a working definition of fake news focused on its present relevance to journalism and political communication contemporary debate, distinguishing it from non-pertinent conceptual varieties and contributing to a much-needed clarification on the subject. We performed a qualitative analysis of the literature published between 2016 and 2020. Data were extracted from Web of Science and Scopus. We define fake news as a type of online disinformation with misleading and/or false statements that may or may not be associated with real events, intentionally designed to mislead and/or manipulate a specific or imagined public through the appearance of a news format with an opportunistic structure (title, image, content) to attract the reader's attention in order to obtain more clicks and shares and, therefore, greater advertising revenue and/or ideological gain.

Keywords: fake news; disinformation; post-truth



Citation: Baptista, J.P.; Gradim, A. A Working Definition of Fake News. *Encyclopedia* **2022**, *2*, 632–645. <https://doi.org/10.3390/encyclopedia2010043>

Academic Editor: Sandro Serpa

Received: 1 February 2022

Accepted: 16 March 2022

Published: 21 March 2022

Publisher's Note: MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Copyright: © 2022 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

The post-truth era (as the value of truth has become less relevant from a sociopolitical point of view) has given rise to a series of collective and equivalent concepts, with overlapping and similar meanings that share an extensive semantic field. “Misinformation” and “disinformation” [1], “fake news” [2,3], “post-truth” [4], “bullshit” [5–7], “information pollution” [8], or “information disorder” [9,10] are some of the concepts that—within the scope of contemporary debate in the field of journalism and political communication—seek to define the types, elements, and different phases of false information. In fact, this mixture of discursive genres, launched by the literature, has promoted a semantic confusion that makes the study of the topic and the identification, detection, and fight against fake news itself difficult. This extension of the semantic field made these concepts, especially the term fake news, more equivocal, non-empirical, and the target of opinions and arguments. It is the definition of the concept of “fake news” that has generated greater discussion among journalists and the academic community. In fact, the concepts “information pollution” and “information disorder” emerged with the aim of finding a comprehensive term, such as a hypernym, that would combine the various approaches of a fragmented media ecosystem [8,10,11].

Thus, several authors have rejected the validity and use of the term fake news because it has an “unstable” and “absurd” meaning [12] that is overloaded and polysemic, with a strong political connotation to delegitimize the media [13]. A better approach is to use more comprehensive and not so complex terms. A group of experts from the European Commission, precisely because of its polysemic nature, chose to use the term disinformation instead of “fake news” [14]; Meel and Vishwakarma [8] opted for the terminology “information pollution”, while Wardle and Derakhshan [10] opted for “information disorder” and Kapantai et al. [11] preferred the use of the terminology “false information”.

However, for other authors, the concept of fake news continues to deserve to be used, even if the complexity of its meaning is recognized and a common definition is incessantly sought, albeit without great success [2,6,15–20]. With the popularity that the term has reached, several academics have focused on the topic, namely with attempts to create a univocal definition. These exercises increased its semantic field, for example, considering satirical and parody news, propaganda, or publicity as types of fake news [3].

Therefore, the main objective of this review is to propose a working definition of fake news, making the concept clear and univocal, eliminating its association with other meanings and contexts that made it generic and polysemic. Aware of the complexity of the concept, by the discursive forms it presents not only as a label used by political actors to criticize the media and journalists, but also in the form of genre [21], we intend to find an operative definition appropriate for media studies based on the interpretation of three strongly contested dimensions: (1) creator/producer intent; (2) the degree of falsity of the content, and (3) the format of presentation of fake news. We aim to achieve a focused and narrow definition that excludes several categories (bullshit, advertising, jokes, inaccurate reports, bad journalism, satirical news) to which its meaning is associated, but also a definition that justifies their exclusion. However, the academic debate around the definition of fake news goes far beyond this categorization into types or genres and would benefit from being refocused through a vision that considers these processes.

2. Methods

The aim of this study is to find a narrow, clear, and precise definition of fake news that will contribute to studies in the area of communication. Therefore, it is intended to find out to what extent (1) the intention of the producer, (2) the degree of falsity of the content, and (3) the presentation format are important for the formulation of a precise definition. In order to obtain a working definition of fake news, we performed a systematic review of the literature published between 2016 and 2020.

In methodological terms, the documents analyzed in this section were extracted from two bibliographic databases: Web of Science and Scopus. We considered every “type of document” in “all languages” to be important for our research, after filtering based on the relevance of the document, which resulted in a corpus of 63 articles (41—Web of Science; 22—Scopus) (see Figure 1). We selected all the articles that we considered relevant to our research, meaning those which directly or indirectly discussed the concept/phenomenon of fake news. Articles that did not contribute in any way to the discussion of the definition of the concept were excluded.

It should be noted that a total of 1205 documents were analyzed from both databases, of which 249 documents were filtered for a more detailed analysis of the content for our investigation. After qualitative evaluation, we reduced our analysis from 249 to 63 documents. We consider these documents to be crucial to formulate not only an operative definition of fake news, but also to understand the universe of false information. The formulation of a working definition of fake news is divided into several moments. First, we addressed the problem of defining fake news as a discursive genre, exposing the various theories of literature; afterwards, we analyzed what defines the concept of fake news in comparison with other terms with similar meanings, considering the three dimensions initially proposed: (1) intention, (2) degree of falsehood, and (3) format.

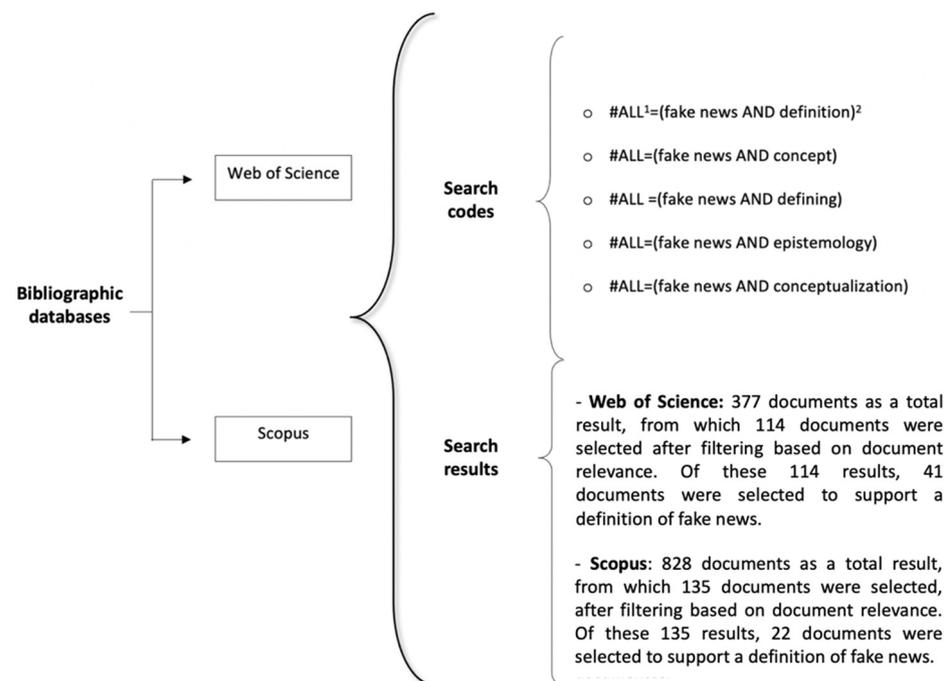


Figure 1. Methodological design to conceptualize fake news. Note: ¹ All languages, key terms searched in all documents, titles, abstracts, and keywords; ² Scopus results were limited to social sciences. The documents from the Scopus database were consulted later, which implied that some results had already been considered in a first analysis of the Web of Science database.

3. Defining Fake News: A Current Problem

The phenomenon of fake news has become a social problem. As we mentioned earlier, finding a common meaning is one of the greatest challenges in recent literature. There are several reasons to justify the difficulty in defining this concept. First, it is an expression with a changing meaning, since, before 2016, it referred only to satirical news, with the intention of entertaining the audience through humor and satire [22,23], later acquiring different meanings, intentions, and productions that threaten journalism [24,25] and democracy itself [26,27]. Second, the expression fake news has become a buzzword [3,12,28–30], an empty word, recurrently associated with something bad or simply false [19], with a “floating” meaning that is sensitive to various contexts [31]. Third, the political burden that the term entails, in the sense that the expression is recurrently used in the discourse of political actors mainly to discredit opposing ideas or parties, as a kind of weapon in the battlefield of contemporary political debate [32,33], has been one of the major obstacles to its definition, as well as serving as an argument for other authors to refute the validity of the concept (see [12,34]).

In fact, several studies, e.g., [31,32], have found that the term is often used as a linguistic element that supports an argument through the accusation and discrediting of opposing political opinions, in the sense of labeling statements of the opposition (even if they are true) as being false. The value that the term acquired as a negative and derogatory label not only of the work of the media or journalists, but also, for example, of a political leader, moved away from the fake news concept of the genre, which is assumed, of online disinformation [21,28,29].

Molina et al. [29] identified seven different types of online content that are associated or labeled as fake news such as false news, polarized content, satire, misreporting, commentary, persuasive information, citizen journalism. Farkas and Schou [31] also identified three different contexts in which the expression fake news is used: as a critique of digital capitalism; as a critique of right-wing policies; and as a critique of liberal and mainstream journalism. It should also be noted that journalists themselves, insofar as they use the term, may have contributed to generating more confusion around its meaning, since the way in

which journalists use the concept also changes over time, especially given its relationship as an “attack” on the media, rather than presenting it as a threat of online disinformation [28].

When defining the concept of fake news, it is important to take into account its meaning as a genre and political label. In this working definition we consider only the genre of fake news as a kind or a form (one of many) of disinformation. McNair [35] (p. 17) made very clear the need to not confuse fake news (as “news” with content proven to be false or misleading) with other fake news that “is merely contested by various political and social actors, usually because it is at odds with a particular ideology or worldview”.

3.1. *The Concept of Fake News: A Three-Dimensional Approach*

3.1.1. The Importance of Intention

Heuer [36] (p. 25) mentioned that “a lie cannot exist without the truth” and that the lie assumes itself as a “parasite of the truth”, revealing to be not only its opposite, but also its partner. This reflection by the author raises a fundamental question as a starting point for finding a definition of fake news, in which he suggests that only by being aware of the truth can one truly lie and verify its inauthenticity. Several authors [37–39] consider, as relevant for the definition of fake news, the fact that its content is demonstrably false; that is, that false information can be verified and denied by presenting true facts. On the other hand, Heuer’s [36] reflection on lying takes into account another factor—mentioned by these authors and by most of the literature—which is the awareness of the truth in the act of lying, which we can call the deliberate intention to deceive. The intention to deceive or manipulate has been, in recent years, the most discussed element in the construction of the definition of fake news. In addition, it is also one of the most accepted aspects and is considered essential to define the concept [1–3,15,37,40–44].

If we look at the meaning of the word “fake” (in fake news), its meaning, whether in the nominal or verbal condition, leads us to forgery, fraud, imitation, replica, or pretense [45]. The term “fake” suggests that fake news should not be equated with false news, that is, that it is not only false information, but also content that was manufactured with the intention of deceiving and falsifying the journalistic industry [42]. False news can be a journalistic work (composed partially of falsehoods), which resulted from a journalistic error [18]. Either from a lack of experience, or because sources were not verified, or from plain irresponsibility, in all these cases, the journalist did not intend to deceive or hide the truth from the reader. The literature has considered the producer’s intention, in the field of information philosophy, as one of the main distinguishing elements between disinformation and misinformation [1,46,47]. It should be noted that either one or the other includes false content, but in the case of misinformation, this falsehood is accidental. The Oxford English Dictionary also makes this distinction between terms. Allcott and Gentzkow [37] considered that (1) unintentional reporting errors, (2) rumours, (3) conspiracy theories, (4) satire, and (5) false statements by politicians should not be considered as being fake news, even though they share part of its semantic field.

However, other authors, e.g., [6,20,48], have argued that it is not necessary for the creator to intend to deceive for fake news to emerge. One of the biggest problems associated with the mandatory integration of intent into the definition of fake news is related to the difficulty in deciphering the creator’s intent at the time of writing [6,7,16,17]. Is the producer acting honestly, because he believes the content to be true or because he intends to deceive? To what extent is it possible to assess or measure your intent? These are some of the questions that have raised many doubts regarding the obligation to include intent in the definition. Molina et al. [29] argued that this “impossibility” can serve as an obstacle to the automated detection of fake news. Giglietto et al. [49], Grundmann [50], and Dentith [16] criticized the epistemic view based on the producer, in the sense that they ignore the role of the consumer. Giglietto et al. [49] proposed to go beyond the initial stage (producer) through an interdisciplinary approach, in which the dynamic processes of propagators and consumers are integrated, stating that what is informative for one person may not be informative for another. Grundmann [50] also underlined the subjectivity of what may

or may not be considered misleading, and highlighted the importance of determining the group to whom the message or news is addressed, along with the effect it may have. Dentith [16] (p. 31) argues that fake news has a target audience from which the creator's intention can be verified: "not everyone in a certain demographic is presumably the target of some piece of fake news. Rather, it all depends on the nature of the fake news itself". From the perspective of Dentith [16], it is important to highlight the way in which Rochlin [43] defined fake news, considering that, more than a matter of facts or defamation, they intend to attack the pre-existing beliefs of the public.

On the other hand, there are several authors who have argued that fake news is disseminated or created by "publishers" who simply do not care about the truth. Jaster and Lanius [6] did not consider that the intention to deceive is the only way to provoke deception and to transmit falsehoods, stating that many creators, such as the young Macedonians who produced fake news during the US campaign, were not interested in deceiving, but that they simply "didn't care" to convey the truth. Young people were only interested in producing content that would be widely shared, thus earning advertising revenue. This argument has led several authors [6,7,17,41] to add the bullshit concept, coined by Frankfurt [5], to the semantic field of fake news. Frankfurt [5] defined bullshit as statements that do not care about the truth, stressing that the truth is indifferent to their creator. This distinguishes the liar from the person reporting bullshit (from the bullshitter), as the liar seeks to convince the recipient that the falsehood is true. The bullshit dimension eliminates the centrality that the intention to deceive occupies in fake news. In addition to the argument that young Macedonians did not intend to deceive (but did not care about the truth to achieve their goals) [51], Jaster and Lanius [6] also compared Donald Trump's tweets, which they considered mostly absurd and false, but with no intention of the former president of the United States to deceive. Therefore, Mukerji [7] defines fake news as a kind of bullshit news.

Walters [48] argued that the separation of intentions from the definition of fake news would be the best way to obtain a concept. According to the author, considering the intentions for the definition requires us to evaluate each case individually. To justify his argument, he took as an example the action of artificial intelligence in the creation and dissemination of fake news, done through bots. In this case, he argued that it becomes "highly problematic" to pretend that the creator of fake news, the electronic bot, has any kind of intention. Pepp et al. [20] completely neglected the role of deceptive intentions and argued that fake news is not real news because it was simply not created according to journalistic standards. The authors refuted some known definitions of fake news, such as those of Rini [42] and Gelfert [2], using examples such as the Pizzagate case (see [52]) and the issue related to production supported by artificial intelligence, arguing that, in the first case, there was a pre-existing true belief in what was false and, in the second case, that one cannot attribute "blame" to a programmed bot.

3.1.2. Format Similar to News

It may be through the format of the presentation of fake news that it is possible to distinguish between fake news and the aforementioned genres [2,15,53]. In fact, the similarity to the news format, which fake news presents, also serves as an element of distinction from other types of disinformation genres [44]. Fallis and Mathiesen [41] argued that fake news should be studied as counterfeit news, a fake or counterfeit news that imitates genuine news in its form. Without taking into account what characterizes news, which refers to the deontology and values of journalism, counterfeit news intends to manipulate and deceive, pretending to be "true". As with a fake painting that imitates an original painting, or like a counterfeit coin, fake news is not true news either [2].

We understand that news refers to a report of a certain real and recent event, of general interest [54,55], which somehow affects society and transmits something new to its audience [56]. News is a product that comes from the creation of journalists who, by the basic principles of journalism, obey the principles of verification and independence to

report the facts [25,29]. Therefore, the concept of fake news, in the strict sense of the word, is contradictory. It is an oxymoron [3,57], as news is by nature true and not false.

Most authors agree that fake news is composed of articles that mimic the format of a news or report, with false statements or information that were created with a malicious intent to deceive or manipulate the reader [1–3,37,42] (see Table 1).

Table 1. Main proposals for the definition of fake news in the literature. Caption: (1) Completely or partially false statements; (2) there must be intent to mislead; (3) only in news format.

Main Definitions	1	2	3	References
“Fake news is news that is fabricated, and deliberately intended to mislead or deceive, typically appears on sites that masquerade as genuine news sites”.	✓	✓	✓	[58] (p. 214)
“news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false, and could mislead readers”.	✓	✓	✓	[37] (p. 213)
“Fake news appropriates the look and feel of real news the creator of fake news intends to mislead are low in facticity and high in the immediate intention to deceive”.	✓	✓	✓	[3] (pp. 147–148)
“Fake news is best defined as the deliberate presentation of (typically) false or misleading claims as news, where the claims are misleading by design”.	✓	✓	✓	[2] (pp. 85–86)
“A fake news story is one that purports to describe events in the real world, typically by mimicking the conventions of traditional media reportage, yet is known by its creators to be significantly false, and is transmitted with the two goals of being widely re-transmitted and of deceiving at least some of its audience.”	✓	✓	✓	[42] (p. 45)
“as news that does mischief with the truth in that it exhibits both (a) a lack of truth and (b) a lack of truthfulness. It exhibits a lack of truth in the sense that it is either false or misleading. It exhibits a lack of truthfulness in the sense that it is propagated with the intention to deceive or in the manner of bullshit.”	✓		✓	[6] (p. 1)
“fake news is counterfeit news, a story is fake news if and only if it is not genuine news, but is presented as genuine news, with the intention and propensity to deceive”.	✓	✓	✓	[41] (p. 8)
“fabricated information that mimics news media content in form but not in organizational process or intent”.	✓	✓	✓	[1] (p. 1094)
“Fake news is the broad spread of stories treated by those who spread them as having been produced by standard journalistic practices, but that have not in fact been produced by such practices. Our definition does not require any intentions to deceive or mislead on the part of those who originate or spread fake news.”	✓		✓	[20] (pp. 69–71)
“complete or partly false information, (often) appearing as news, and typically expressed as textual, visual or graphical content with an intention to mislead or confuse users”.	✓	✓		[59] (p. 6)
“definition which has three core subcomponents: (a) content holding itself out as a news piece (b) that makes objectively false assertions that given events have occurred (c) in a materially false manner. By design, this definition avoids any requirement of intent because improper intent is not a necessary requirement for a piece to be fake news”.	✓		✓	[48] (p. 120)
“Fake news is defined as deliberately false information. It is written with the intent to mislead in order to gain financially or politically. It is factually incorrect and usually has sensational with headlines designed to grab attention. One of the problems with discussing fake news is that it appears in multiple forms”.	✓	✓		[60] (p. 1)

Fake news intends to imitate the presentation of news and reports in order to acquire credibility and legitimacy [1,3,15,61]. However, it is important to note that fake news is not limited to obtaining the appearance of the news. Fake news seeks to imitate journalistic writing, the way a news article includes a photograph, and the way a credible news site presents itself [3,62]. One of the most popular fake stories in the United States was published on a fake website (abcnews.com.co) that closely resembles the ABC News website (abcnews.go.com), not only in format but also in name, in the logo, and in the network address (URL) [62,63]. The similarity of fake news with the journalistic news reports enhances the seriousness of this menace regarding the other elements of disinformation. The reach or popularity that fake news achieves is intrinsically related to the way it is presented, since, under the guise of news, it obtains a public perception that gives it credibility.

Furthermore, fake news often takes the same format that news presents when shared, especially on social networks, such as in the news feed (in the case of Facebook) or as a tweet (in the case of Twitter), which reinforces this perception. Just like a journalistic piece, a fake news appears on social media with title, image, signature/source (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. Presentation of news (A) and fake news (B) on Facebook. Note: The fake news format presented was adapted from the Portuguese fact-checking website, Polígrafo. Available on: <https://bit.ly/3b8TzXz> (accessed on 3 March 2022).

Dentith [16] stated that, by itself, the malicious intent to deceive is not enough to consider certain content as fake news if it is not presented as news. In fact, this is one of the criteria that makes it possible not to consider political discourse as fake news, although it can be news. In this sense, Gelfert [2] argued that fake news presents false and misleading statements by design: wanting to refer to the processes of production and presentation of false statements as a whole, from the sources to the way they are propagated, manipulating the cognitive processes of the public. Fake news also seeks to be always present, as with the news, through the creation of a network of fake websites [3]. Mourão and Robertson [64] argued that fake news combines a set of characteristics that are inherent to the news, although not so related to the model followed by professional journalism, as is the case of sensationalism or clickbait. In this line of thought, Robertson and Mourão [65] argued that fake news sites can emerge as a kind of alternative journalism. These authors argue that the way these sites present their “news” defies the standard and practices of conventional media, looking for a community of strong partisan and ideological beliefs, unhappy with the traditional media. Robertson and Mourão [65] considered that fake news openly exposes prejudice, ignoring the importance of objectivity and truth to attract the public disillusioned with traditional media.

3.1.3. Level of Falsehood

Most of the time, fake news editors seek to report or describe the reality or events that happened, but through false statements and the distortion of facts, in a mixture of totally fabricated content with truths or half-truths [2,42,61,64]. Most authors agree that fake news does not simply imply a completely invented false story, although there are some authors who defend this argument [58,66]. Fake news uses media-mediated subjects, which are of public interest, to distort and manipulate information according to their goals, propagating falsehoods through the formulation of exaggerated, outrageous, and controversial stories in order to appeal to stereotypes and social prejudices, provoking different types of strong emotions in the reader [15,43,64]. This type of approach helps fake news to go viral easily and quickly, as it is content that is more likely to be widely shared [67–71]. Fake news is dependent on its popularity. Rini [42] argued that fake news “presupposes a collective deception” and that the size of the lie is crucial for the sustainability of the lie, whether for ideological or financial gain. Fake news is strategically designed to explore all aspects that capture the reader’s attention in order to make your story popular [15] so that, as with a virus, it is constantly transmitted.

However, is falsehood a necessary element for the definition of fake news? Some authors [6,7,17] have argued that a report or news item can be misleading, containing statements that are literally true. Like the scale proposed by Wardle [72], in which false context is assumed as a preponderant element of the various levels of disinformation, Jaster and Lanus [6] underline the importance of the way content is presented, stating that true information, presented in a certain context or in a certain order, may convey something false. While in news, “what is said” and “what is transmitted” is true, in fake news, although what is said may be true, what is transmitted is misleading [7,17,61].

4. Framing and Analysis of the Semantic Field of Fake News

The similarities between these concepts exist. Wittgenstein [73] called “family resemblance” to the interconnection of concepts that share identity in some aspects, but not all, allowing for some analogies or kinship. As he explained in the *Philosophical Investigations* about language games: “(...) we see a complicated network of similarities that intersect and overlap one another. Resemblances of ensemble and detail. I cannot better characterize these similarities than with the expression “family resemblances”; because the diverse similarities between the members of a family overlap and intersect in the same way” [73] (pp. 66–67). The case applies to propaganda or satire: they may have some resemblance to fake news, but they are not the same. We thus justify the exclusion of the ‘types of fake news’ most mentioned in the literature: satire/parody news, advertising, and propaganda from the operative definition of fake news that we use in this work.

4.1. Propaganda vs. Fake News

Like fake news, propaganda is usually based on real events and deliberately and consciously seeks to attract people’s attention [44,59,60]. However, unlike fake news, propaganda always follows an ideological or partisan agenda, promoting positive or negative aspects of a particular party, government, or politician. Fake news creators can do the same, but they do not have to follow a certain ideology, nor have the motivation to manipulate attitudes or challenge beliefs, as is required by propaganda [74]. We know that, many times, the goal of creators is exclusively to earn money through digital advertising [40,75,76], or even for fun and approval in a certain social media [77–79]. Furthermore, although in both cases the content was created deliberately and consciously, the intention of the advertisement is to “persuade” [80], while fake news is mainly intended to “deceive”. Propaganda also aims to exclusively serve the interests of politicians, which is not always the case with fake news. Fake news also presents itself as news, imitating its process and format, unlike advertising, which is not mandatory.

4.2. *Satire/Parody News vs. Fake News*

Many authors consider satire or parody news as a type of fake news [72,81,82]. Before 2016, the literature began by analyzing fake news in this sense. However, with the transformations of the media system, this meaning has evolved. The clear objective of satire is to entertain, resorting to the use of humor, enjoyment, exaggeration [83,84]. Furthermore, the programs they are associated with (e.g., Saturday Night Live or The Daily Show) can mimic the format of a news program, with the figure of a pivot reading the news, but this is not in order to make that content “false” or “satirical” more credible and legitimate. This format essentially serves to criticize politicians and journalists, with the presenter or journalist being “genuinely ironic” and using humor to describe a fiction [85]. Although the themes or issues addressed are the same as those on the agenda of a legitimate news organization, there is a comedic intent [86]. Some authors consider that a part of the readers may not understand the joke or not be aware of the context in which the statement is made, causing confusion and “deceiving” the reader [82,87]. However, this is not enough to categorize satire news as a type of fake news, because satire seeks to entertain rather than inform, and its protagonists are artists and comedians [3].

4.3. *Advertising vs. Fake News*

A recent definition considers advertising as “brand-initiated communication intent on impacting people” [88] (p. 334). These authors decided to disregard “persuasion” and “action” from the definition of the concept, considering the “impact” or “effect”. Furthermore, they did not refer to the promotion of a brand through a report or news format, but through other formats: banners, websites, video, research, social networks. As with propaganda, advertising is based on facts, but does not consider our prejudices or beliefs, nor does it aim to influence politically [59]. Advertising also does not have to have part of its content false, nor is it intended to deceive, such as fake news. Even in the case of misleading advertising, Gelfert [2] shows us that, despite the deliberate intention to deceive being common in both concepts, the difference lies in the format of the presentation. We also know that fake news is not spread using, for example, billboard ads.

5. A Working Definition of Fake News

We define fake news as “a type of online disinformation (1), with (2) misleading and/or false statements that may or may not be associated with real events, (3) intentionally created to mislead and/or manipulate a public (4) specific or imagined, (5) through the appearance of a news format with an opportunistic structure (title, image, content) to attract the reader’s attention, in order to obtain more clicks and shares and, therefore, greater advertising revenue and/or ideological gain”.

We believe that these five features are particularly relevant to limit the concept of fake news. First, we approach the concept of contemporary fake news, that is, in an (1) online context. This implies that the study of the phenomenon focuses on the digital universe, in which it is possible to understand the model of production, distribution, and consumption of contemporary fake news. Speed, scale, and proliferation are the main elements, understood through the online context that allows us to distinguish contemporary fake news from those that have always existed. If we consider the current state of COVID-19 pandemic, we can easily understand the speed with which fake news spreads in an online context. Given the seriousness of the spread of fake news about COVID-19, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), said that the world “is not just fighting an epidemic; we are fighting an infodemic” [89]. The neologism (information + epidemic = infodemic) refers precisely to the speed with which disinformation spreads, similar to a virus.

Second, our definition recognizes that fake news is more than just false information. We purposely chose (2) “misleading statements” for our definition of fake news because it does not limit the concept to the single need for completely or partially false information, allowing it to encompass misrepresentations and distortions of fact or the intentional con-

cealment of information. “Misleading” arises to the extent that the producer intentionally seeks to induce, even in some cases with literally true statements, deception in the reader, still exploring his prejudices and generating false beliefs. We suggest as an example the following title “Woman dies after taking the COVID-19 vaccine”. Assuming that this article does not support any more relevant information and that most readers limit themselves to reading the titles of the articles without clicking on the link that gives access to the complete news [90,91], this headline suggests that the COVID-19 vaccine killed the woman who took it, even if the woman could have died after being vaccinated, for example, by being run over while crossing the road. This misleading title (literally true), disseminated in a pandemic context in which there was strong skepticism about the viability of the vaccine [92], can provoke several strong feelings in the reader, such as fear, panic, or anxiety. Furthermore, this type of (5) “opportunistic” title of fake news serves to exemplify the way in which its producers skillfully adapt their agenda to different contexts and play with the controversies of reality [84]. Fake news also uses fear and panic either to make money from digital advertising or to confuse and promote prejudices or ideologies, opportunistically, in specific and peculiar situations.

For example, Humprecht [93] found that the narrative of fake news in European countries (such as Germany) was strongly affected by the refugee crisis, and essentially explored stereotypes and prejudices associated with Islamic culture. In southern Europe, in Portugal, fake news producers opportunely used an anti-corruption, anti-EU, and nationalist discourse, considering that the country had recently gone through an economic crisis, which had resulted in increased unemployment and salary cuts [94,95]. Even in the United States, several studies [96–98] have indicated that fake news, during the 2016 elections, was created for a specific audience (alt-right/radical populist right), which sees itself in a nationalist position, defending white supremacy and rejecting traditional media. In the face of US political instability and the crisis of EU integration policy, Russia has timely used disinformation campaigns to attack and destabilize US policy and the European Union [99].

Fake news discourse exploits readers’ fear and panic, as well as their prejudices, and the COVID-19 pandemic has become a crucial asset for fake news producers. Despite its verity being scientifically proven, fake news and disinformation in general continue to feed deniers with the argument that COVID-19 is a hoax [100,101] or to present miracle cures and instill panic and fear in populations [102].

Furthermore, impressive information combined with a provocative structure, with shocking or outrageous images, contribute to its rapid dissemination, especially through users who find themselves in possession of unprecedented and relevant information. The user feels his social reputation reinforced, showing to his interaction nucleus (friends, private and public groups) that he is “informed”, thus he seeks to transmit the news as quickly as possible [103–105]. However, it is important to emphasize that not every reader will be deceived or will be anxious to serve as a witness to the “information”. Therefore, from the beginning of fabrication, the producer of fake news seeks that the deception reaches at least one (4) part of the audience and, if possible, as many people as possible. In this way, his goals can be achieved more effectively and quickly, regardless of whether they are financial or ideological. The audience the producer intends to reach is determined based on the content and its goals. The audience can be social media users in general, as well as users who seek to reinforce their political or ideological convictions. In a journalistic investigation, Sydell [106] interviewed a fake news producer. The subject highlighted the great desire of the US alt-right to consume pro-Trump fake news, saying that the content was successful because it referred to what “the people wanted to hear”.

Thirdly, it is important to point out that the different approaches to the definition of fake news necessarily imply a continuous allusion to the intentionality of the creator or producer. One of the biggest problems is related to the difficulty in deciphering the creator’s intention at the time of writing [6,7,16,17]. In our working definition, (3) intentionality plays a key role because it allows us to distinguish fake news from other similar terms

(for example, satirical news or parody, journalistic errors, advertising, or propaganda), considering it as a kind of disinformation. As mentioned earlier, some authors state the production of fake news by young Macedonians as an example that there is not always a malicious intent to deceive, but only an intention to obtain clicks to increase advertising revenue. In addition, some authors [20,48] argue that it is impossible to assess the intention of a programmed bot that can also produce and disseminate fake news. Regarding the issue of young Macedonians, we argue that their fake news is intentionally malicious because it is faked and simulated for financial gain. In other words, it is important to note that their content was strategically designed and selected to attract more clicks and maximize the reach of each publication. We know that their fake news, which do not intend to obtain ideological gain, seek to obtain advertising revenue by exploiting the most promising elements to their popularity [15]. Goals continue to be achieved through the intention to deceive people, whether through shocking and impressive images or provocative (clickbait) headlines that stimulate strong positive or negative feelings. Although in this case, spreading false information is not the only or the main objective, lying and financial gain are co-dependent; that is, the financial income will be higher and achieved faster if false, hyperbolic, and scandalous information is chosen [67,71,107]. Regarding the fact that fake news can be produced through artificial intelligence or programmed bots, intent does not lie in the automation of the process, but with the bot's programmer: the intent to disseminate fake news is his.

Finally, we consider that this review presents a useful proposal to solve the existing problem around a consensual definition of fake news. We found a working definition of the concept of fake news that contributes to the scientific field of communication sciences. This proposal resulted from the understanding of the contemporary fake news phenomenon.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, J.P.B. and A.G.; methodology, J.P.B.; writing—original draft preparation, J.P.B.; writing—review and editing, A.G. and J.P.B.; supervision, A.G. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research was funded by FUNDAÇÃO PARA A CIÊNCIA E A TECNOLOGIA, grant number SFRH/BD/145497/2019.

Acknowledgments: João Pedro Baptista is grateful to FCT (Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia) for the PhD grant (SFRH/BD/145497/2019).

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

1. Lazer, D.M.J.; Baum, M.A.; Benkler, Y.; Berinsky, A.J.; Greenhill, K.M.; Menczer, F.; Metzger, M.J.; Nyhan, B.; Pennycook, G.; Rothschild, D.; et al. The science of fake news. *Science* **2018**, *359*, 1094–1096. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
2. Gelfert, A. Fake news: A definition. *Informal Log.* **2018**, *38*, 84–117. [CrossRef]
3. Tandoc, E.C.; Lim, Z.W.; Ling, R. Defining “Fake News”: A typology of scholarly definitions. *Digit. J.* **2018**, *6*, 137–153. [CrossRef]
4. McIntyre, L. *Post-Truth*; MIT Press: Cambridge, UK, 2018; pp. 1–17.
5. Frankfurt, H.G. *On Bullshit*; Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ, USA, 2005.
6. Jaster, R.; Lanius, D. What is fake news? *Versus* **2018**, *47*, 207–224. Available online: <https://www.rivisteweb.it/doi/10.14649/01352> (accessed on 26 May 2021).
7. Mukerji, N. What is Fake News? *Ergo Open Access J. Philos.* **2018**, *5*, 923–946. Available online: <https://philpapers.org/rec/MUKWIF> (accessed on 26 May 2021).
8. Meel, P.; Vishwakarma, D.K. Fake news, rumor, information pollution in social media and web: A contemporary survey of state-of-the-arts, challenges and opportunities. *Expert Syst. Appl.* **2020**, *153*, 112986. [CrossRef]
9. Del-Fresno-García, M. Information disorders: Overexposed and under informed in the post-truth era | Desórdenes informativos: Sobreexposados e infrainformados en la era de la posverdad. *Prof. Inf.* **2019**, *28*, 1–11.
10. Wardle, C.; Derakhshan, H. *Information Disorder: Toward an Interdisciplinary Framework for Research and Policy Making*; Council of Europe Report; 2017; p. 27. Available online: <https://tverezo.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/PREMS-162317-GBR-2018-Report-desinformation-A4-BAT.pdf> (accessed on 3 March 2021).
11. Kapantai, E.; Christopoulou, A.; Berberidis, C.; Peristeras, V. A systematic literature review on disinformation: Toward a unified taxonomical framework. *New Media Soc.* **2020**, *23*, 1301–1325. [CrossRef]
12. Habgood-Coote, J. Stop talking about fake news! *Inquiry* **2019**, *62*, 1033–1065. [CrossRef]

13. Freelon, D.; Wells, C. Disinformation as Political Communication. *Political Commun.* **2020**, *37*, 145–156. [CrossRef]
14. De Cock Buning, M. *A Multi-Dimensional Approach to Disinformation: Report of the Independent High Level Group on Fake News and Online Disinformation*; Publications Office of the European Union: Luxembourg, 2018.
15. Baptista, J.P.; Gradim, A. Understanding fake news consumption: A review. *Soc. Sci.* **2020**, *9*, 185. [CrossRef]
16. Dentith, M.R.X. What is fake news? *Univ. Buchar. Rev. Lit. Cult. Stud. Ser.* **2018**, *8*, 24–34. Available online: <https://philarchive.org/rec/DENWIF> (accessed on 26 May 2021).
17. Jaster, R.; Lanius, D. Speaking of Fake News: Definitions and Dimensions. In *The Epistemology of Fake News*; Bernecker, S., Flowerree, A., Grundmann, T., Eds.; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 2019; pp. 19–45.
18. Meneses, J.P. On the need to conceptualize the phenomenon of fake news | Sobre a necessidade de conceptualizar o fenómeno das fake news. *Observatório* **2018**, *12*, 37–53.
19. Pepp, J.; Michaelson, E.; Sterken, R. Why we should keep talking about fake news. *Inquiry* **2019**, 1–17. [CrossRef]
20. Pepp, J.; Michaelson, E.; Sterken, R.K. What's New about Fake News. *J. Ethics Soc. Phil.* **2019**, *16*, 67.
21. Egelhofer, J.L.; Lecheler, S. Fake news as a two-dimensional phenomenon: A framework and research agenda. *Ann. Int. Commun. Assoc.* **2019**, *43*, 97–116. [CrossRef]
22. Balmas, M. When fake news becomes real: Combined exposure to multiple news sources and political attitudes of inefficacy, alienation, and cynicism. *Commun. Res.* **2014**, *41*, 430–454. [CrossRef]
23. Holbert, R.L. A typology for the study of entertainment television and politics. *Am. Behav. Sci.* **2005**, *49*, 436–453. [CrossRef]
24. Carlson, M. The information politics of journalism in a post-truth age. *J. Stud.* **2018**, *19*, 1879–1888. [CrossRef]
25. Waisbord, S. Truth is what happens to news: On journalism, fake news, and post-truth. *J. Stud.* **2018**, *19*, 1866–1878. [CrossRef]
26. McKay, S.; Tenove, C. Disinformation as a Threat to Deliberative Democracy. *Political Res. Q.* **2020**, *74*, 703–717. [CrossRef]
27. Tenove, C. Protecting Democracy from Disinformation: Normative Threats and Policy Responses. *Int. J. Press/Politics* **2020**, *25*, 517–537. [CrossRef]
28. Egelhofer, J.L.; Aaldering, L.; Eberl, J.-M.; Galyga, S.; Lecheler, S. From Novelty to Normalization? How Journalists Use the Term “Fake News” in their Reporting. *J. Stud.* **2020**, *21*, 1323–1343. [CrossRef]
29. Molina, M.D.; Sundar, S.S.; Le, T.; Lee, D. “Fake News” Is Not Simply False Information: A Concept Explication and Taxonomy of Online Content. *Am. Behav. Sci.* **2019**, *65*, 180–212. [CrossRef]
30. Nielsen, R.K.; Graves, L. “News You Don’t Believe”: Audience Perspectives on Fake News; Factsheet; Oxford Internet Institute: Oxford, UK, 2017. Available online: <http://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/our-research/news-you-dont-believe-audience-perspectives-fake-news> (accessed on 20 May 2020).
31. Farkas, J.; Schou, J. Fake news as a floating signifier: Hegemony, antagonism and the politics of falsehood. *Javn. Public* **2018**, *25*, 298–314. [CrossRef]
32. Brummette, J.; DiStaso, M.; Vafeiadis, M.; Messner, M. Read All About It: The Politicization of “Fake News” on Twitter. *J. Mass Commun. Q.* **2018**, *95*, 497–517. [CrossRef]
33. Farhall, K.; Carson, A.; Wright, S.; Gibbons, A.; Lukamto, W. Political Elites’ Use of Fake News Discourse Across Communications Platforms. *Int. J. Commun.* **2019**, *13*, 4353–4375.
34. Talisse, R. There’s No Such Thing as Fake News (And That’s Bad News). 3:AM Magazine, 9 June 2018. Available online: <https://www.3ammagazine.com/3am/theres-no-such-thing-as-fake-news-and-thats-bad-news/> (accessed on 15 May 2020).
35. McNair, B. *Fake News: Falsehood, Fabrication and Fantasy in Journalism*; Routledge Focus: New York, NY, USA, 2018.
36. Heuer, W. The Temptations of Lying. *Russ. Sociol. Rev.* **2018**, *17*, 25–36.
37. Allcott, H.; Gentzkow, M. Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election. *J. Econ. Perspect.* **2017**, *31*, 211–236. [CrossRef]
38. Özgöbek, Ö.; Gulla, J.A. Towards an understanding of fake news. In Proceedings of the 3rd Norwegian Big Data Symposium (NOBIDS 2017), Trondheim, Norway, 14 November 2017; pp. 35–42.
39. Shu, K.; Sliva, A.; Wang, S.; Tang, J.; Liu, H. Fake news detection on social media: A data mining perspective. *ACM SIGKDD Explor. Newsl.* **2017**, *19*, 22–36. [CrossRef]
40. Bakir, V.; McStay, A. Fake news and the economy of emotions: Problems, causes, solutions. *Digit. J.* **2018**, *6*, 154–175. [CrossRef]
41. Fallis, D.; Mathiesen, K. Fake news is counterfeit news. *Inquiry* **2019**, 1–20. [CrossRef]
42. Rini, R. Fake news and partisan epistemology. *Kennedy Inst. Ethics J.* **2017**, *27*, E-43–E-64. [CrossRef]
43. Rochlin, N. Fake news: Belief in post-truth. *Libr. Hi Tech.* **2017**, *35*, 386–392. [CrossRef]
44. Tandoc, E.C. The facts of fake news: A research review. *Sociol. Compass* **2019**, *13*, e12724. [CrossRef]
45. Merriam-Webster. Fake. Available online: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fake> (accessed on 15 June 2020).
46. Karlova, N.A.; Fisher, K.E. A social diffusion model of misinformation and disinformation for understanding human information behaviour. *Inf. Res.* **2013**, *18*, 573. Available online: <http://www.informationr.net/ir/18-1/paper573.html#.W3XY2slh3IU> (accessed on 3 March 2022).
47. Luciano, F. Brave. Net. World: The Internet as a disinformation superhighway? *Electron. Libr.* **1996**, *14*, 509–514.
48. Walters, R.M. How to Tell a Fake: Fighting Back against Fake News on the Front Lines of Social Media. *Tex. Rev. L. Pol.* **2018**, *23*, 111.
49. Giglietto, F.; Iannelli, L.; Valeriani, A.; Rossi, L. ‘Fake news’ is the invention of a liar: How false information circulates within the hybrid news system. *Curr. Sociol.* **2019**, *67*, 625–642. [CrossRef]
50. Grundmann, T. Fake news: The case for a purely consumer-oriented explication. *Inquiry* **2020**, 1–15. [CrossRef]

51. Silverman, C.; Alexander, L. How Teens in the Balkans are Duping Trump Supporters with Fake News. *Buzzfeed News*, 3 November 2016. Available online: <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/craigsilverman/how-macedonia-became-a-global-hub-for-pro-trump-misinfo> (accessed on 15 October 2020).
52. Kang, C. Fake News Onslaught Targets Pizzeria as Nest of Child-Trafficking. *New York Times*, 21 November 2016. Available online: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/21/technology/fact-check-this-pizzeria-is-not-a-child-trafficking-site.html> (accessed on 11 June 2021).
53. Dragomir, A.M. The fake news phenomenon in the social media era. *Impact Strateg.* **2017**, *64*, 54–65.
54. Gradim, A. *Manual de Jornalismo*; Universidade da Beira Interior/Livros Labcom: Covilhã, Portugal, 2020.
55. Kershner, J.W. *The Elements of News Writing*; Pearson Allyn and Bacon: Boston, MA, USA, 2011.
56. Richardson, B. *The Process of Writing News: From Information to Story*; Pearson Allyn & Bacon: Boston, MA, USA, 2007.
57. Ireton, C.; Posetti, J. *Journalism, Fake News & Disinformation: Handbook for Journalism Education and Training*; UNESCO Publishing: Paris, France, 2018.
58. Buckingham, D. Teaching media in a “post-truth” age: Fake news, media bias and the challenge for media/digital literacy education | La enseñanza mediática en la era de la posverdad: Fake news, sesgo mediático y el reto para la educación en materia de alfabetización medi. *Cult. Y Educ.* **2019**, *31*, 213–231. [[CrossRef](#)]
59. Kalsnes, B. Fake News. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 2018. Available online: https://oxfordre.com/communication/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228613-e-80?fbclid=IwAR2sgsaPZpAujWem5zK3pLccXF_OZaEe173VWynKoGZzxaCZRrJqdWiNO-M (accessed on 25 November 2020).
60. Watson, C.A. Digital Literacy: Detecting Fake News in a Post-Truth Era. University of Georgia: Continuing Legal Education 2018, 8. Available online: <https://digitalcommons.law.uga.edu/cle/2018/schedule/8> (accessed on 3 March 2022).
61. Levy, N. The bad news about fake news. *Soc. Epistemol. Rev. Reply Collect.* **2017**, *6*, 20–36.
62. Silverman, C. Here are 50 of the Biggest Fake News Hits on Facebook from 2016. *Buzzfeed News*, 30 December 2016. Available online: <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/craigsilverman/top-fake-news-of-2016> (accessed on 19 February 2021).
63. Hughes, B. How to Fix the Fake News Problem. *CNN*, 16 November 2016. Available online: <https://edition.cnn.com/2016/11/16/opinions/how-to-fix-the-fake-news-problem-hughes/index.html> (accessed on 19 February 2021).
64. Mourão, R.R.; Robertson, C.T. Fake News as Discursive Integration: An Analysis of Sites That Publish False, Misleading, Hyperpartisan and Sensational Information. *J. Stud.* **2019**, *20*, 2077–2095. [[CrossRef](#)]
65. Robertson, C.T.; Mourão, R.R. Faking Alternative Journalism? An Analysis of Self-Presentations of “Fake News” Sites. *Digit. J.* **2020**, *8*, 1011–1029. [[CrossRef](#)]
66. Vargo, C.J.; Guo, L.; Amazeen, M.A. The agenda-setting power of fake news: A big data analysis of the online media landscape from 2014 to 2016. *New Media Soc.* **2018**, *20*, 2028–2049. [[CrossRef](#)]
67. Berger, J.; Milkman, K.L. What makes online content viral? *J. Mark. Res.* **2012**, *49*, 192–205. [[CrossRef](#)]
68. García-Perdomo, V.; Salaverría, R.; Kilgo, D.K.; Harlow, S. To share or not to share: The influence of news values and topics on popular social media content in the United States, Brazil, and Argentina. *J. Stud.* **2018**, *19*, 1180–1201. [[CrossRef](#)]
69. Harber, K.D.; Cohen, D.J. The emotional broadcaster theory of social sharing. *J. Lang. Soc. Psychol.* **2005**, *24*, 382–400. [[CrossRef](#)]
70. Valenzuela, S.; Piña, M.; Ramírez, J. Behavioral effects of framing on social media users: How conflict, economic, human interest, and morality frames drive news sharing. *J. Commun.* **2017**, *67*, 803–826. [[CrossRef](#)]
71. Vosoughi, S.; Roy, D.; Aral, S. The spread of true and false news online. *Science* **2018**, *359*, 1146–1151. [[CrossRef](#)]
72. Wardle, C. Fake news. It’s Complicated. First Draft News, 16 February 2017. Available online: <https://medium.com/1st-draft/fake-news-its-complicated-d0f773766c79> (accessed on 3 March 2021).
73. Wittgenstein, L. *Philosophical Investigations*; John Wiley & Sons: Oxford, UK, 2009.
74. Manzoor, S.; Safdar, A.; Zaheen, B. Propaganda Revisited: Understanding Propaganda in the Contemporary Communication Oriented World. *Glob. Reg. Rev.* **2019**, *4*, 317–324. [[CrossRef](#)]
75. Braun, J.A.; Eklund, J.L. Fake News, Real Money: Ad Tech Platforms, Profit-Driven Hoaxes, and the Business of Journalism. *Digit. J.* **2019**, *7*, 1–21. [[CrossRef](#)]
76. Townsend, T. The Bizarre Truth Behind the Biggest Pro-Trump Facebook Hoaxes. *Inc.*, 21 November 2016. Available online: <https://www.inc.com/tess-townsend/ending-fed-trump-facebook.html> (accessed on 7 May 2020).
77. May, R.; Feldman, M. Understanding the Alt-Right: Ideologues, ‘Lulz’ and Hiding in Plain Sight. In *Post-Digital Cultures of the Far Right: Online Actions and Offline Consequences in Europe and the US*; Thurston, N., Fielitz, M., Eds.; Transcript Verlag: Bielefeld, Germany, 2018; pp. 25–36. Available online: <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/9783839446706-002/html> (accessed on 7 May 2020).
78. Talwar, S.; Dhir, A.; Kaur, P.; Zafar, N.; Alrasheedy, M. Why do people share fake news? Associations between the dark side of social media use and fake news sharing behavior. *J. Retail. Consum. Serv.* **2019**, *51*, 72–82. [[CrossRef](#)]
79. Thompson, N.; Wang, X.M.; Daya, P. Determinants of News Sharing Behavior on Social Media. *J. Comput. Inf. Syst.* **2019**, 593–601. [[CrossRef](#)]
80. Welch, D. Definitions of Propaganda. In *Propaganda and Mass Persuasion: A Historical Encyclopaedia, 1500 to the Present*; ABC-CLIO, Inc.: Oxford, UK, 2003; pp. 318–319.
81. Berkowitz, D.; Schwartz, D.A. Miley, CNN and The Onion: When fake news becomes realer than real. *J. Pract.* **2016**, *10*, 1–17. [[CrossRef](#)]

82. Klein, D.; Wueller, J. Fake news: A legal perspective. *Australas. Polic.* **2018**, *10*, 11–15.
83. Reilly, I. Satirical fake news and/as American political discourse. *J. Am. Cult.* **2012**, *35*, 258–275. [[CrossRef](#)]
84. Rubin, V.; Conroy, N.; Chen, Y.; Cornwell, S. Fake news or truth? using satirical cues to detect potentially misleading news. In Proceedings of the Proceedings of the Second Workshop on Computational Approaches to Deception Detection, San Diego, CA, USA, 12–17 June 2016; pp. 7–17.
85. Broussard, P.L. Fake News, Real Hip: Rhetorical Dimensions of Ironic Communication in Mass Media. Master Dissertation, The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, Chattanooga, Tennessee, 2013.
86. Marchi, R. With Facebook, Blogs, and Fake News, Teens Reject Journalistic “Objectivity”. *J. Commun. Inq.* **2012**, *36*, 246–262. [[CrossRef](#)]
87. Weiss, A.P.; Alwan, A.; Garcia, E.P.; Garcia, J. Surveying fake news: Assessing university faculty’s fragmented definition of fake news and its impact on teaching critical thinking. *Int. J. Educ. Integr.* **2020**, *16*, 1. [[CrossRef](#)]
88. Dahlen, M.; Rosengren, S. If advertising won’t die, what will it be? Toward a working definition of advertising. *J. Advert.* **2016**, *45*, 334–345. [[CrossRef](#)]
89. World Health Organization. Munich Security Conference. WHO Director-General Speech, 2020. Available online: <https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/munich-security-conference> (accessed on 22 November 2021).
90. Gabielkov, M.; Ramachandran, A.; Chaintreau, A.; Legout, A. Social clicks: What and who gets read on Twitter? *ACM SIGMETRICS Perform. Eval. Rev.* **2016**, *44*, 179–192. [[CrossRef](#)]
91. Wang, L.X.; Ramachandran, A.; Chaintreau, A. Measuring click and share dynamics on social media: A reproducible and validated approach. In Proceedings of the Tenth International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media, Colónia, Germany, 17–20 May 2016.
92. Dror, A.A.; Eisenbach, N.; Taiber, S.; Morozov, N.G.; Mizrachi, M.; Zigran, A.; Srouji, S.; Sela, E. Vaccine hesitancy: The next challenge in the fight against COVID-19. *Eur. J. Epidemiol.* **2020**, *35*, 775–779. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]
93. Humprecht, E. How Do They Debunk “Fake News”? A Cross-National Comparison of Transparency in Fact Checks. *Digit. J.* **2020**, *8*, 310–327. [[CrossRef](#)]
94. Baptista, J.P.; Gradim, A. Online disinformation on Facebook: The spread of fake news during the Portuguese 2019 election. *J. Contemp. Eur. Stud.* **2020**, 1–16. [[CrossRef](#)]
95. Cardoso, G.; Moreno, J.; Narciso, I.; Palma, N. Social Media Disinformation Pre-Electoral Period in Portugal; CIES e-Working Paper, Lisboa: ISCTE. 2019. Available online: <https://repositorio.iscte-iul.pt/handle/10071/20667> (accessed on 3 March 2022).
96. Grinberg, N.; Joseph, K.; Friedland, L.; Swire-Thompson, B.; Lazer, D. Fake news on Twitter during the 2016 U.S. presidential election. *Science* **2019**, *363*, 374–378. [[CrossRef](#)]
97. Guess, A.; Nagler, J.; Tucker, J. Less than you think: Prevalence and predictors of fake news dissemination on Facebook. *Sci. Adv.* **2019**, *5*, eaau4586. [[CrossRef](#)]
98. Marwick, A.; Lewis, R. *Media Manipulation and Disinformation Online*; Data & Society Research Institute: New York, NY, USA, 2017.
99. Stelzenmüller, C. The Impact of Russian Interference on Germany’s 2017 Elections. Brookings Institution, 28 June 2017. Available online: <https://www.brookings.edu/testimonies/the-impact-of-russian-interference-on-germanys-2017-elections/> (accessed on 25 May 2021).
100. Bruder, M.; Kunert, L. The conspiracy hoax? Testing key hypotheses about the correlates of generic beliefs in conspiracy theories during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Int. J. Psychol.* **2021**, *57*, 43–48. [[CrossRef](#)]
101. Imhoff, R.; Lamberty, P. A bioweapon or a hoax? The link between distinct conspiracy beliefs about the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak and pandemic behavior. *Soc. Psychol. Personal. Sci.* **2020**, *11*, 1110–1118. [[CrossRef](#)]
102. Moreno, J.; Narciso, I.; Sepúlveda, R. Dinâmicas de circulação de conteúdo (des) informativo sobre a COVID-19 no WhatsApp, nos media e nas redes sociais online. *Obs. Spec. Issue.* 2021, 3–23. Available online: <https://repositorio.iscte-iul.pt/handle/10071/22708> (accessed on 26 May 2021).
103. Bright, J. The social news gap: How news reading and news sharing diverge. *J. Commun.* **2016**, *66*, 343–365. [[CrossRef](#)]
104. Duffy, A.; Tandoc, E.; Ling, R. Too good to be true, too good not to share: The social utility of fake news. *Inf. Commun. Soc.* **2020**, *23*, 1965–1979. [[CrossRef](#)]
105. Galeotti, A.E. Believing fake news. In *Post-Truth, Philosophy and Law A*; Andina, T.C., Ed.; Routledge: New York, NY, USA, 2019; pp. 58–76.
106. Sydell, L. We tracked Down a Fake-News Creator in the Suburbs. Here’s What We Learned. National Public Radio, 23 November 2016. Available online: <https://www.npr.org/sections/alltechconsidered/2016/11/23/503146770/npr-finds-the-head-of-a-covert-fake-news-operation-in-the-suburbs?t=1574783978203> (accessed on 26 May 2021).
107. Weeks, B.E.; Holbert, R.L. Predicting dissemination of news content in social media: A focus on reception, friending, and partisanship. *J. Mass Commun. Q.* **2013**, *90*, 212–232. [[CrossRef](#)]