

LIES SPREAD FASTER THAN THE TRUTH ON TWITTER

False news reached more people than the truth; the top 1% of false news cascades diffused to between 1000 and 100,000 people, whereas the truth rarely diffused to more than 1000 people.

Falsehood diffused significantly farther, faster, deeper, and more broadly than the truth in all categories of information, and the effects were more pronounced for false political news than for false news about terrorism, natural disasters, science, urban legends, or financial information.

The degree of novelty and the emotional reactions of recipients may be responsible for the differences observed. In other words, it was found that false news was more novel than true news, which suggests that people were more likely to share novel information. Whereas false stories inspired fear, disgust, and surprise in replies, true stories inspired anticipation, sadness, joy, and trust. Contrary to conventional wisdom, robots accelerated the spread of true and false news at the same rate, implying that false news spreads more than the truth because humans, not robots, are more likely to spread it.



This research was based on a data set of rumor cascades on Twitter from 2006 to 2017. About 126,000 rumors were spread by ~3 million people. The news were classified as true or false using information from six independent fact-checking organizations that exhibited 95 to 98% agreement on the classifications.

Compiled by SCM (2019) from

Soroush Vosoughi, Deb Roy, Sinan Aral (2018, March). The spread of true and false news online. Science.



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