

Fake news impacted voters leading up to 2016 US General Election

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Increased production of fake news in the run up to the 2016 US General Election did impact the public's news viewing habits, new research from the UCL School of Management reveals.

The conversion of fake news article production to fake news site consumption was comparable to traditional banner advertising click through rates.

The findings reveal that fake news production affected everyone, not just those who had a prior disposition to it. Their findings counter the prevailing idea that fake news likely only affected people who obtain news from "echo chambers" to confirm their existing beliefs.

According to Assistant Professor Anil Doshi and his co-authors, while the consumption of credible news remained largely consistent before and after the election, with an expected spike the day after Election Day, consumption of fake news steadily increased in the lead up to the US general election and then tailed off after.

Professor Doshi says:

"We have always dealt with misinformation, but now anyone can produce it, it is instantly available to everybody, and oversight is exceedingly difficult. Although we cannot directly say how our findings affected voting behaviour, the 2016 US election was decided by such narrow margins in some states, we need to seriously consider institutional and regulatory responses."

These findings come from a 7-week study in the lead up to the election of over 1,400 internet users who accumulated over 1.7 million website visits.

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For more information, to speak to Professor Doshi, or for a copy of the study, contact Kate Mowbray at BlueSky PR on kate@bluesky-pr.com or call +44 (0)1582 7979 57