Fake News Situations: Comparison, Factors Analysis, and Model

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Abstract

The proposes of this article were (1) comparing the situations of fake information from News in Yellow Press, Propaganda, and Fake News on Social Media, (2) analyzing the factors which are bases of the fake news situations comparison, and (3) synchronizing the model explaining the cycle of fake news.

People have faced the fake news situations for centuries, but in different media landscapes. Fake news in all ages share three common factors. Firstly, fake news always attack the societies by appearing in the curious headlines. Second factor is the human naïve perception. Last, more frequently appearing of fake news in media could make fake news spreading wider from its original "Echo Chamber Effect". These 3 factors support the fake news life cycle. The cycle begins from its first small echo chamber effect with the designed heading aimed to touch the curiosity of people and media. When the shares happen, from both real people and

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media, the former echo chamber effect expanded. The number of reproductions leads to more frequency the information appear in the societies. When other people received the same news more frequently, they perceived more important that news is likely to be. Then, they are drawn into the cycle from that perception.

The article led to the recommendations about more studies on the fake news prevention conducted with all factors of the fake news situation. The practical educational system about fake news and human psychology should be applied for all users in the communication ecosystem, especially the social media users. The fake news studies and analysis from all factors' point of view should be conveyed. We may discover the suitable prevention, or regulation, applied to all factors in the fake news circumstances in the future.

Keywords : fake news, echo chamber effect, model, social media

บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้จัดทำขึ้นโดยมีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อ (1) เปรียบเทียบสถานการณ์ข่าวลวงในช่วง Yellow Press การโฆษณาชวนเชื่อ และข่าวลวงบนโซเชียลมีเดีย (2) เพื่อวิเคราะห์ปัจจัยร่วมที่เกี่ยวข้องและเป็นรากฐานของข่าวลวงจากการเปรียบเทียบสถานการณ์ข่าวลวงดังกล่าว และ (3) จัดทำแบบจำลองเพื่ออธิบายลักษณะของวงจรข่าวลวงในสื่อ

สถานการณ์ข่าวลวงเกิดขึ้นในการสื่อสารของมนุษย์มามากกว่า 100 ปี เพียงแต่แตกต่างกันที่ลักษณะของภูมิทัศน์สื่อในแต่ละยุค ซึ่งข่าวลวงจากทั้ง 3 ช่วงเวลา มีปัจจัยพื้นฐานในลักษณะเดียวกัน 3 ประการ ได้แก่ ประการแรก ข่าวลวงจะปรากฏขึ้นด้วยพาดหัวข่าวที่ชวนสงสัย ดึงดูดความสนใจ ประการที่สอง ปัจจัยอันเกิดจากการรับรู้อันอ่อนไหวของมนุษย์ (Naïve perception) และประการสุดท้ายคือ

ลักษณะการปรากฏขึ้นบ่อยครั้งของข่าวลวงทำให้ข่าวลวงนั้นมีการแพร่กระจาย
ออกไปได้ในวงกว้างมากขึ้น โดยทั้ง 3 ปัจจัยนี้ส่งผลต่อกันเป็นลำดับ กล่าวคือ
เมื่อมนุษย์มีการรับรู้ข่าวลวงจากความน่าสนใจของพาดหัวข่าว มนุษย์มีปฏิสัมพันธ์
อย่างใดอย่างหนึ่งที่ทำให้เกิดการแพร่กระจายข่าวลวงนั้นออกไปได้ และบุคคลอื่น
ที่เห็นข่าวลวงนั้นปรากฏขึ้นบ่อยครั้ง ก็จะเข้าใจว่าข่าวนั้นเป็นข่าวที่มีความสำคัญ
จึงมีปฏิสัมพันธ์ต่อข่าวลวงนั้นซ้ำ ๆ จนทำให้เกิดการแพร่กระจายข่าวลวงออกไปในวงกว้าง

      ข้อเสนอแนะจากบทความนี้ มุ่งเน้นให้เกิดการแก้ปัญหาการแพร่กระจาย
ของข่าวลวงที่ต้นเหตุ หรือปัจจัยต่าง ๆ ตามที่ได้วิเคราะห์ข้างต้น รวมถึงการให้ความ
รู้เรื่องปัจจัยที่มีผลต่อข่าวลวง ตลอดจนการจัดทำมาตรการเพื่อควบคุมหรือ
มีบทลงโทษแก่ผู้ที่เผยแพร่ข่าวลวงโดยคำนึงถึงปัจจัยพื้นฐานที่เกี่ยวข้องต่อไปในอนาคต

คำสำคัญ : ข่าวลวง, การแพร่กระจายของข่าวลวง, แบบจำลอง, โซเชียลมีเดีย

Nowadays, we are encountering tons of information in our everyday communication. We always interact with them somehow; read and tell someone else the stories, discuss the stories with colleges, press LIKE for some content on Facebook, comment or give your opinions to some information you see, or share them on your timeline wishing your friends see them too. Unfortunately, not all the information we stop by are the truth, some of them are the fake ones, or "fake news", which can be dangerous for individual to the nations. In Thailand, the situations of fake news spreading have been circulating in society for several years. Thai people share the issues about cancer and diabetic the most, and there were more than 300 fake news – gathered by the officer from *"Sure Before Share"* organization in Thailand – with more than 100,000 likes and comments in total for each topic (Panyalimpanan, 2017). The situation goes widely, until Thai government has set many methods to protect the audiences from those fake news, one of them is the application "Media

Watch". The Media Watch application was launched by the Ministry of Public Health allowing the public to report the fake news or complaint about the misleading information (Lim, 2017). However, this situation is not just happening only in the computer era. In the past, people faced the fake information situations in their traditional media landscape too.

Comparison of Fake News Situations

Actually, we have been dealing with fake news or disinformation since centuries ago. Therefore, the basis of fake news were the misinformation and disinformation which people share them across the society. UNESCO (2018) determined the definitions of the misinformation as the false connection and misleading content, while the disinformation is the interception between the misinformation and mal-information – leaks, harassments, and hate speeches. The disinformation is identified as the false context which is manipulated, imposter, or fabricated by someone or some organizations. Whereas the disinformation is the combination of the misinformation – which can cause the false perception, and the mal-information – which can cause the harmful one, the disinformation can cause both consequences (Wardle and Derakhshan, 2017). But with some reasons, people were trying to communicate something in hoax intentionally. Even in the media age 1 period, according to Mark Poster's new media theory, although all the mass communication happened centripetally and had many hierarchies before the news or information was printed (Littlejohn and Foss, 2008), there were still vast amount of fake pieces in societies. There were 2 major situations found in mainstream media in traditional media period; Yellow Press and Propaganda.

1. The Yellow Press

In 1895, when the newspaper industries reached their penetration stage (Baran, 2008), the most notorious press lord - William Randolph Hearst – specialized in buying up the failing newspapers and transformed into the profitable ones (Baran and Davis, 2012). He attacked the soft spot of his readers by providing the emotional, exciting and surprising information rather than the fact and directly sold them to the people or readers. Because he knew that people would spend on that point and they were attractive, tempt, and seductive for purchasing. He also added on the comic strips for his readers, starring by the kids in yellow pajamas – "Yellow Kids" was the name. This kind of newspaper was published and sold in the name of "Yellow Press", or yellow journalism.

Hearst once sent the western artist – Frederic Remington – to Havana, Cuba, in order to sketch the picture of Cuban insurgent fighting for independence from Spain. But, by telegram, Hearst was reported by Remington that there was not any war there, he would like to return. Hearst replied with his famous quote for his standing point of yellow journalism – *"Please remain, you furnish the picture and I'll furnish the war"* (Friedman, 2010).

2. The Propaganda

Later on, during World War I (1914 – 1918) and World War II (1939 – 1945), "Propaganda" was used extensively during the World Wars, and the years between those two World Wars witnessed the effective use of propaganda by antidemocratic demagogues in Europe (Krippendorff, 2013).

Propagandists revealed themselves through their use of tricks such as "name-calling), "plain folks" identifications, "card stacking" and so on (Krippendorff, 2013). Also, propagandists also rely on the "Disinformation" to discredit their opposition. They spread the false information about their opposition groups and their objectives (Baran and Davis, 2012). Especially, the "Black Propaganda" involved the transmission of the lies to the society.

One of the obvious evidences to explain how propaganda worked was the black and white film, "Eternal Jews" (1940). Showed during the war time, the film was used to communicate the image of Jewish people, painted by Germans, that they were dirty as the rats, ugly as the monster. Whereas, the white skin and blue-eyed people were the civilized ones. This film was the anti-Semitic German Nazi propaganda, posted as the documentary. From the insistence of the Ministry of Propaganda (Top Documentary Films, 2010).

3. Fake news on Social Media

Until 1990, when there was the emergence of the internet connection, the world ran to the media age 2. The communication ecology changed in many aspects; from "on air" to be "online", from the "centripetal" communication to the "centrifugal" one (the communication which does not have to be centralized as in the past, and everyone can be the senders in the society), or the people shifted from the "passive" to be more "active" (Littlejohn and Foss, 2008). The communication pattern shifted, as the fake information situation. The information seeking and consumption process are changing from the mediated form to a more disinter-mediated way (Shu and others, 2017).

Fake information has shifted to the internet connection and vary many forms; clickbaits, spammers, mislead heading, or sloppy journalism. Most people who share fake news, share lots of news in general (Lazer and others, 2017). The statistic survey from Pew Research Center on 2016 showed that 23 percent of U.S. adults have shared fake news, knowingly and unknowingly, with friends and others (Ordway, 2017). More than the normal human users, fake news on internet keep being expanded by the bots, cyborgs, or malicious accounts. These bots are designed to increase the stream of fake news reaches and to attack the vulnerabilities from our cognitive and biases, while in Twitter, fake news is shared by real people is proportionated in small set of website and highly active cyborg users – which automatically share the information without reading them (Lazer and others, 2017). Furthermore, there are 'Trolls' – the real people who intentionally interrupt the online communities and put the consumer into the emotional responses (Shu and others, 2017) – help sharing those false information.

The study from Zhao and others (2017) found that there was huge scale difference comparing between fake and real news spreading in Weibo in China and Tweeter in Japan. Fake news were shared by many broadcasters which make it broader than real news, which was dominantly shared by the original sources. These shares keep the fake news alive and the circle of sharing goes wider where more people can get the notification and they might be involved in the share system for another step. This sharing circle is a part of "**Echo Chamber Effect**".

For the fake news circumstance, the echo chamber effect is the situation that fake news keeps bubbling in wider range, upon the interactions from users – both human and non-human. This dues to the

psychological aspects from the audiences that they always selectively expose themselves into some certain kind of information, or they always follow the like-minded people and receive the information they post, promote, and share. Furthermore, because human's psychological foundation, consumers tend to believe that their perceptions of reality are the accurate point of views, and they prefer the information which confirm their existing beliefs (Shu and others, 2017). When they perceive this kind of information often on the traditional media, or social media, the consumers perceived that the shared information they perceive is true, credible, and is the important topics for the day. As the agenda setting theory, the more frequently the news keeps appearing, the more important that news is perceived. Moreover, consumers always perceive the source is credible if others perceive the source is credible (Shu and others, 2017). These foundations keep the echo chamber effect of fake news growing, and all the interactions; share, like, comment, word-of-mouth, can draw new users in and make them to be the helpers for spreading the fake information more.

In term of communication elements, David K. Berlo (1960) has stated the components of communication with 4 abbreviations; S M C and R, formed one of the most popular models across the field of study. S stands for sender, or sources – the origins of the communication process. It can be either organizations or individuals. M stands for messages. C stands for channel. R stands for the receivers –aimed by the senders since the beginning (Woods, 2009). From these 4 basic elements of communication, the comparison of 3 fake news situations can be summarized as follows:

According to the summary above, 3 common characteristics of the fake news situations found in the comparison are; (1) the messages are designed with some intentional objectives from the senders aiming for some behaviors or actions from the receivers, (2) emotional and curious messages have provided the influences on the reactions of receivers, and (3) fake information relies on the spreading from receivers which keeps the information alive in communication streams.

Table 1 The summarization of fake news situations

	Yellow Press	**Propaganda**	**Fake News on Social Media**
S (Source)	Press organization who aimed for the profit in business or had the political bias (Baran and Davis, 2012).	Mainly government and military organizations who aimed for the political, national reasons and war. Nazi's Ministy of Propaganda (Krippendorff, 2013).	Both organizations and individuals, bots, cyborgs, malicious accounts, or trolls can create or share the information, with various targets; from the number of click until to attack the opposites in political area (Lazer and others, 2017).

Table 1   The summarization of fake news situations (Continued)

	Yellow Press	**Propaganda**	**Fake News on Social Media**
M (Message)	Supported by the political parties which made the "bias" in the press. The cover page presented the emotional, sensational headlines. The price was inexpensive as a penny (Rodman, 2012).	Propagandists revealed themselves through their use of tricks such as "name-calling), "plain folks" identifications, "card stacking" and so on (Krippendorff, 2013).	Mainly convey the misleading, emotional, or mysterious heading which can attack the curiosity and vulnerability of people. Then, they have some feeling and have some reactions toward the messages (Shu and others, 2017).
C (Channel)	Newspapers	Newspapers, Print posters, Films	Articles, Images, or other forms posted on the Social Media.

Table 1 The summarization of fake news situations (Continued)

	Yellow Press	**Propaganda**	**Fake News on Social Media**
R (Receiver)	They were directly connected by the sources and were passive. Because they believed that the newspapers were always presenting the truth (Baran and Davis, 2012). They spread the information by their purchasing in the cheap price (Rodman, 2012).	They were directly connected by the sources, mainly government organization, and were passive and the years between those two World Wars witnessed the effective use of propaganda by antidemocratic demagogues in Europe (Krippendorff, 2013).	They are both directly and indirectly connected. Either organizations, bots, or individuals can affect the receivers. They spread the information by comment, share in Echo Chamber Effect (Zhao and others, 2018).

The fake news messages designed by the sources are always coated with some intentional objectives; making profit and revenue from themselves, convincing people to hate the opposite political sides, or just earning the number of likes and shares. As stated in Wardle and Derekhshan (2017), the fake news is the news article which is tended to be factual but contains misstatements of fact to arouse passion, attract viewership or deceive. The sources have always aimed for some actions

from the receivers, for examples; the yellow press publishing aimed for the revenue, or the number of sales (Rodman, 2012), the propagandists aimed for the audiences' attitudes changes which made them have more patriotic sense to their nations and hate on the opposites from the Black Propaganda (Baran and Davis, 2012), or the fake news on social media creators aimed for the numbers of click through, like and shares (Shu and others, 2017). Thus, the sources often find the ways to strike the mental psychology of their audiences to get the desire behaviors or actions.

The major mood and tone of the designed messages, or only the headings, to attract the attentions of people has been the emotional and curious ones. Since the yellow press period, the yellow journalists provided more on emotional contents rather than the factual which made people interested in the newspaper from the sensational headlines and they purchased the newspaper as the desire action (Rodman, 2012). Even for the social media era, the clickbaits always strike on our curiosity which make the audiences click on the links, providing the sources receive more increasing amount of the click-through numbers, and so on. To this point, human's psychological perceptions could be the soft spots for the fake news striking.

Then, fake news keeps being alive by the spreading actions. The circulation of fake news situation could be allocated from this point of action. This spreading activity is cooperated by *at least 2 parts; the users, or media*, and the frequency which the news appears on media. For the user part, there are both real users and fake account users, or cyborgs, including the paid users – or Trolls – in the circulation (Lazer and others, 2017 ; Shu and others, 2017). This may start from the users who are real users, trolls, ghost accounts for sharing, or hired to increase

awareness of some ideologies, share the fake news by some methods; word of mouth, purchasing the newspapers, clicking the like, comment or share buttons, they are increasing the frequency that the news keeps presenting in its communication environment, and the Echo Chamber Effect is created (Zhao and others, 2018). Afterword, when other people perceive that one news or information appears to them in high frequency, they will perceive that news as the important news, as the Agenda Setting Theory stating the frequency of the appearance for some information can be set as the important agenda for the audiences (Baran and Davis, 2012). Hence, they could be involved in the sharing, commenting, or like pressing which will keep that fake news alive longer and wider. This will appear as the increasing frequency and get other people involved more and more.

Factors Analysis from Fake News Comparison

From the mentioned three situations of fake news: Yellow Press, Propaganda, and the Fake news on Social Media, the first 3 factors which can be situated as the components making the fake news is in the communication ecology are as follows;

(1) The emotional/curious heading messages

(2) Human's psychological foundation

(3) Media and the frequency of repeating the fake news

1. The emotional/curious heading messages

As the definition, fake news is a piece of information which is fabricated or made up with misleading content for succeeding some

intentional objectives or actions from the audiences. Thus, the piece of fake news is always dressed up with some fancy heading to attract the attention of the people who wander around in the communication ecosystem. News from Yellow press, propaganda, until fake news on social media share this foundation to call out the attention from people and then lead to some action. Moreover, according to Wardle and Derakhshan (2017), the elements of the fake news circulation are the "Agent" – the person or the organization who create the news, "Message" – the information or content of the news, and "Interpreter" – the audiences who receive the news and interpret or react something. The messages may be referenced by the seeming credible agent which affirms the credibility of the news. Thus, the news affect the perception and make the reactions from the audiences.

2. Human's psychological foundation

Because humans are the communicators in the ecosystem, and humans have the attitudes toward all situations around them. People always follow the like-minded people, people's naïve realism – consumers tend to believe they have the accurate views normally – and confirmation bias – consumers prefer the information which supports their existing beliefs – Selective Exposure, and also people perceive the source is credible if others perceive it is credible (Shu and others, 2017). In any area of fake news spreading, there is the "room" of the fake news, the Echo Chamber, where in the ***Echo Chamber Effect*** appears. The echo chamber effect (or the filter bubble) is the space or the "room" where in the fake news are spread, the people – both journalists and the audiences – in one echo chamber will be reduced in chance to verify the other sides of

information outside the chamber. When the algorithm of the same fake news keeps repeating, it leads to the "confirmation bias" of the people and affects the confirmation bias of the like-minded people in the same platform (UNESCO, 2018).

These factors can lead to the consequence of sharing or reproducing of the fake news, or the Echo Chamber Effect enlargement – the phenomenon in media ecosystem which keeps the fake news alive for a period of time. Moreover, people have the shift perception which they perceive that others are more vulnerable to the media effects than they, themselves, are (Jang and Kim, 2017).

3. Media and the frequency of repeating the fake news

When media, including traditional media, bots, cyborgs, malicious accounts, and trolls, continue sharing the fake news, the reappearing frequency goes higher. This can strike to the consumers' vulnerability – people may naturally believe the information they see or hear frequently (Shu and others, 2017). This can also be explained by the mass communication theory "Agenda Setting Theory", where the media set the important agenda to the society by some methods (Baran and Davis, 2012); more frequency, more area of the news, or bolder typeface using, to make the audiences perceive that is the important topic of the day. Furthermore, media industry tries to serve the news or information which can satisfy their audiences (Shu and others, 2017). This can be the origin point of how other people are drawn in to the fake news cycle. After they perceive the news as real news, they have some reaction toward that news. Thus, they are one member of the people who make the fake news reappearing again and again.

Model Explaining the Fake News Cycle

According to the factor analysis above, the fake news situation and components can be applied and depicted as follow;
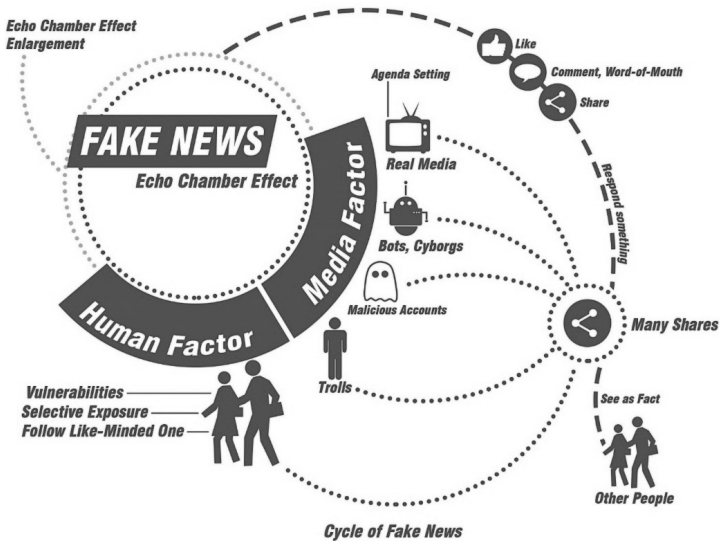
Figure 1 The cycle of fake news (Adapted from Shu and others, 2017; Zhao and others, 2018; Wardle and Derakhshan, 2017)

The cycle of fake news starts when there is any fake news with the emotional, exciting, curious, or strange heading posted into the communication system, both online and offline, and stays in its area of echo chamber effect. The people in one echo chamber will be reduced the opportunity to expose themselves to the other sources or sides of the information which leads them to their confirmation bias toward the fake news (UNESCO, 2018). When those people believe in what they perceive

– from both their psychology and the algorithm of the information – they react to the news which can expand the area of the echo chamber. Due to the expansion of the echo chamber effect, this news may be seen or reposted by some outsiders who have the vulnerabilities to the emotional, exciting, curious, or strange heading. And, if there is any opinion leader – who has many selective exposing followers – reposts, shares, or talk about this topic, the fake news can be expanded more to the followers as another confirmation bias. Meanwhile, the media – including traditional media, bots, cyborgs, malicious accounts, and trolls – keep reposting, broadcasting, or sharing the information, the fake news keeps appearing many times until other people may perceive that the information is important and real. Shares from both human and media factors can draw the attention from other people in the media ecosystem. Thus, the agenda setting works striking the perception of people that the keep – on – repeating information would be the importance yet the fact. Other people are drawn to have some interaction with the news – give their comments, word of mouth, share and repost the information again, or even press the LIKE button. Those interactions make the news being expanded in wider area, so more people are drawn into this cycle. The echo chamber effect of fake news keeps growing, then the cycle goes back to its origin, and all the processes go again and again.

Summary and Recommendations

Fake news, or fake information, has been in human's communication ecosystems since centuries ago. Background in some

reasons – economics, politics, or just some stand points – the comparison between the Yellow Press, Propaganda, and Social media suggests that fake news in all ages share the same factors. Firstly, fake news always attacks the societies by appearing in the emotional, exciting, or curious heading. The mislead headings are used for attracting the attention of people and users in the media field. Aiming for some actions, the senders need to strike to the perception of the receivers. Thus, the fanciful headlines are the executions. The mentioned purposes of these misleading headlines are as stated in Wardle and Derakhshan (2017); to arouse passions, attract viewership or deceive, and added with the economic and political purposes as appeared in the Yellow Journalism and Propaganda period (Rodman, 2012 ; Baran and Davis, 2012). Second factor is the human perception. As it appears in Shu and others (2017) about the human's naïve perception that people always believe in their own perception in the fake news situation and don't realize at first about the factual or fake information they are perceiving. People mostly trust their sense and they believe that the content they receive are true. Moreover, humans always selective expose themselves into the information which can affirm their own existing beliefs. So, when there is any piece of news gets along with their existing perception, people mostly believe that information is true. People always follow the like-minded people, and they have their vulnerabilities; they will perceive that the sources are credible when their opinion leader perceive they are credible, and people always perceive that the information they frequently see is the important and real one (Shu and others, 2017 ; Lazer and others, 2017). Lastly, the frequency of posting and share of the media – including the traditional

media, bots, cyborgs, malicious accounts, or trolls on social media – can make the echo chamber effect of the fake news getting wider and wider. The more frequent one information reappears, the more important that news is in perception of people. The media frequently posts and shares may lead to the agenda setting in communication ecosystem, as Lippmann's (1920) Agenda Setting Theory explains the situation that the more frequency of information appearance in media lead to the more important that information is in the audiences' perception (Baran and Davis, 2012). The amount of shares from people and media can strike the curiosity of other people. They, then, see the shared information as the fact and have some reactions – LIKE, comment, or share – to the fake information they see. So, the fake news keeps spreading more and more. The echo chamber effect grows wider and wider.

These 3 factors support the fake news time of circulation. The cycle begins in its echo chamber effect with the designed heading which aimed to touch the curiosity of people, also the media. When the shares and reproductions happen, from both real people and media – free and paid - the former echo chamber effect expands. The number of reproduction leads to the frequency the information appears in the societies. And, again, the frequency strikes the perception of other people who think more frequently they receive the news, more important and real the news is. According to that perception, other people are drawn into the cycle by their interactions to the information – LIKE, comment, share, or else – which make the fake news expand further, the echo chamber effect grows wider. The cycle goes back to its origin again, and continue processing the same loop.

Nowadays, there are many miscommunication situation happen in the world, from the minor scale until the global one. The communication occurs quickly. Fake news is one of the inflammable problems in communication area which needs more studies and researches from academic to the professional point of view. As the purposes of this article are (1)comparing the situations of fake information from past to present day, (2)analyzing the factors which are bases of the fake news situation, and (3)synchronizing the model explaining the cycle of fake news. The recommendations are, hereby, stated as follows;

1) The studies for the fake news prevention should be conducted to all factors of the fake news situation.

2) The practical educational system about fake news and human psychology should be applied for all users in the communication ecosystem, especially the social media users, as the human factor in one of the factors supporting the fake news cycle.

3) The fake news studies and analysis should be conveyed from all factors' point of view, in order to develop for finding the suitable prevention, or regulation, to all agents in the fake news circumstances.

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