ACICE
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UPDATE ON
THE
INFORMATION DOMAIN

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Reflecting on the 2024 Information Domain: Key Trends and What to Expect in 2025

Introduction

1. According to the Global Risks Report 2025, "misinformation and disinformation remain the top short-term risk for the second consecutive year, and may fuel instability and undermine trust in governance, complicating the urgent need for cooperation to address shared crises". In 2024, there were a number of significant events that allowed maligned actors to leverage the information domain to undermine national cohesiveness by sowing discord and confusion. These included the UK's Southport riots, assassination attempts on then-President-elect Donald Trump and the record number of elections.

Key Trends Observed In 2024

Generative AI has become widely available

2. 2024 saw a maturation of generative AI technologies. One of the key developments is the evolution of multimodal models. These models allow users to produce content across multiple media formats. For example, users can upload an image and request the AI model to provide a descriptive caption. The model AI model is also capable of generating coherent and contextually relevant texts, audio and visual images. As described in a blog post by AlphaSense, "From text-to-image generation to text-based video creation, these advancements have opened up new possibilities for applications in fields such as

content creation, customer support, and education". In May 2024, OpenAI introduced GPT-4o, with the capability of processing and generating multimodal content through a combination of text, audio, image and video. The result is a more holistic tool capable of a range of applications involving more complex problem-solving, such as the ability to describe the humour in usual images, summarise text from screenshots and answer exam questions that contain diagrams.

3.   While traditional forms of misinformation and disinformation continued to persist, the spread of AI-generated content introduced a new layer of complexity in 2024. The combination of generative AI capabilities and social media targeting feature makes it a powerful tool for manipulating public opinion and disseminating misinformation and disinformation with unparalleled precision and efficiency.

4.   In the weeks leading up to the 2024 US Presidential Election, AI-generated content, including misleading charges aimed at casting doubt on the legality of the democratic process, spread rapidly throughout social media platforms. These AI-powered content were created to reach their target audience to maximise their influence with precision, amplifying the intended impact of misinformation and disinformation at a vital time (Figure 1).

Figure 1: An AI-Generated Image of a Fake Candidate with Fake Constituents in the US election

An AI-generated image of a fake candidate with would-be constituents, demonstrating how such images can potentially influence elections. (Graphic by Sean Westwood/DALL-E artificial intelligence)

5.   The challenge of detecting such efforts stem from the growing

sophistication of generative AI technologies. Unlike traditional types of misinformation and disinformation, AI-generated content may be tailored to match the tone and style of the target audience, thereby making it more difficult for both humans and automated systems to recognise it as fake. Existing techniques for detection struggle to keep up with the rapid advancement of these technologies, thus resulting a huge gap in effectively identifying AI-driven misinformation and disinformation.

Importance of social media influencers

6.   Increasingly, where social media influencers hold significant sway over public opinion, sharing misleading materials without fact-checking poses serious consequences. Their followers, who are predisposed to trusting the content that matches their prejudices, may fail to critically engage with it.

7.   In a 2024 UNESCO report, there were concerns about the frequency of misinformation and disinformation shared by digital creators. The report stated that "62 percent of influencers do not fact-check the content they share, which poses a serious threat to public trust and discourse." The lack of fact-checking has real-world consequences. For example, false reports of migrants stealing pets went viral in Ohio, resulting in bomb threats and school closures in 2024.

8.   A news article published by AP News in 2024 highlighted right-wing influencers were duped to work for covert Russia operation. The article suggested Moscow "may be attempting to capitalize on the skyrocketing popularity of right-wing podcasters, livestreamers and other content creators who have found successful careers on social media in the years since Trump was in office". The article further elaborated that "the US Justice Department doesn't allege any wrongdoings by the influencers, some of whom it says were given false information about the source of the company's funding." In this case, the influencers were misguided into supporting content with misleading information about its origins, which could potentially further Russia's interests.

9.   Lack of fact-checking can lead to the propagation of misinformation and disinformation. This will have far-reaching implications such as manipulating public opinion. When influencers failed to verify their sources or accept responsibility for the content they disseminate, they risk becoming instruments that are engaged in potentially harmful activities.

Looking Ahead: What To Expect In 2025

10.   In 2025 we anticipate several trends in misinformation and disinformation will continue to evolve and intensify. For generative AI, we are likely to see an increase and improvement in AI generated videos. Already, OpenAI has launched Sora in December 2024 which is capable of generating better and more realistic images and videos, as compared to other generative AI videos tools.

11.   In the face of emerging AI technologies, security and trust will remain key concerns for the information community. A three-prong approach can be adopted: (a) at the individual level, media literacy efforts must be stepped up to equip individuals with the skills and knowledge on how to identify potential misinformation and disinformation and how to factcheck information; (b) governments must continue to engage social media companies to ensure that their platforms flag out and remove misleading content effectively; and (c) legislations must stay current and relevant to tackle the threats of misinformation and disinformation.

12.   As social media influencers have the ability to influence public opinion and cultural trends, they remain vital participants in today's digital information landscape. While some influencers polarise society by promoting controversial ideas, others can act as bridges and creates healthy debates. Influencers should have civic responsibilities and create opportunities to bring people together and confront harmful narratives by being a responsible user on social media platforms. For example, influencers should fact-check before posting and maintain transparency about sponsored content help build trust with the audience.

Conclusion

13.   2024 was a year characterised by the pervasive presence of misinformation and disinformation across a wide range of topics. From politics to xenophobic prejudice, no aspect of public life was spared from false accusations and manipulated narratives. The multifaceted nature of AI enables us to work towards responsible usage of AI, such as combating misinformation and disinformation and enhancing fact-checking techniques. AI-powered technologies, such as Facticity.AI was selected as one of the Time magazine's greatest inventions of 2024.

14.   In 2025, we will likely see more fact-checking tools and websites, as well as efforts being made to enhance it. As reported in The StraitsTimes news article "CheckMate a free fact-checking service will also deploy generative AI in its WhatsApp chatbot to automate the detection of tell-tale sign of a scam or unreliable news". The prevalence of misinformation and disinformation underscores the urgent need for critical thinking, media literacy, and robust fact-checking efforts to counter the spread of misinformation and disinformation and protect the integrity of public discourse.

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All reports can be retrieved from our website at www.acice-asean.org/resource/.

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