Misinformation during the COVID-19 outbreak in China: cultural, social and political entanglements | IEEE: Transactions on Big Data

By Yan Leng, Yujia Zhai, Shaojing Sun, Yifei Wu, Jordan Selzer, Sharon Strover, Hezhao Zhang, Anfan Chen, and Ying Ding

February 4, 2021

Not only did COVID-19 give rise to a global pandemic, but also it resulted in an infodemic. The consequences of this infodemic can erode public trust and outlive the pandemic. The evolving and fragmented media landscape, particularly the extensive use of social media, is a crucial driver of the spread of misinformation. We collected four million Weibo posts on the Chinese social media from 12/2019 to 4/2020, examining misinformation identified by a fact-checking platform. Our results show that the evolution of misinformation follows an issue-attention cycle, pertaining to topics such as city lockdown, cures, and school-reopening. Sensational-reassuring misinformation characterizes the whole issue-attention cycle, with misinformation on cures and prevention flooding social media. We also study the evolution of sentiment and observe that positive sentiment dominated during COVID-19, which may be due to the unique characteristic of "positive energy" on Chinese social media. Lastly, we study the media landscape during Covid via a case study on a controversial unproven cure, which testifies the importance of scientific communication in a plague. Our findings shed light on misinformation's distinct characteristics and its cultural, social, and political implications during the COVID-19. The study offers insights into combating misinformation in China and across the world.

[...]

Source: [Misinformation during the COVID-19 outbreak in China: cultural, social and political entanglements](#)