News Item

Research note: Tiplines to uncover misinformation on encrypted platforms: A case study of the 2019 Indian general election on WhatsApp | HKS Misinformation Review

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February 1, 2022

> There is currently no easy way to discover potentially problematic content on WhatsApp and other end-to-end encrypted platforms at scale. In this paper, we analyze the usefulness of a crowd-sourced tipline through which users can submit content ("tips") that they want fact-checked. We compared the tips sent to a WhatsApp tipline run during the 2019 Indian general election with the messages circulating in large, public groups on WhatsApp and other social media platforms during the same period. We found that tiplines are a very useful lens into WhatsApp conversations: a significant fraction of messages and images sent to the tipline match with the content being shared on public WhatsApp groups and other social media. Our analysis also shows that tiplines cover the most popular content well, and a majority of such content is often shared to the tipline before appearing in large, public WhatsApp groups. Overall, our findings suggest tiplines can be an effective source for discovering potentially misleading content.
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