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Digital Media Deception in Yemen...
Repercussions and Possible Solutions

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Digital Rights Project

A non-profit human rights window for SAM with the support of Internews, aims to introduce digital rights, and monitor digital violations against users of the digital space, where it works to advocate for the digital rights of Yemenis with the aim of reaching a safe, fair and free digital space. It allows for the submission of reports of digital violations, contributes to the documentation of violations through the window, and the formation of a database on digital violations. The window works through the publication of studies and research on digital activism, digital rights and digital security, and the planning and management of local and international advocacy campaigns.

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Introduction

The increasing spread of the Internet and social media has provided a fertile soil for which fake news and deception have become a vexing problem for societies, to the point that reaching the truth has become a convoluted process for some.

This threat of deception and its repercussions become more severe by the involvement of media professionals (relating to conflict parties) in the chaos of deception, evading the controls of journalism ethics and media honor codes; and this constitutes an issue that brings about a lot of perplexity worry.

Some fall into the trap of deception easily, because the fake news creators are keen on ascertaining that the followers are deluded and distracted from any loophole that may question their narrative; and they do all that is takes to keep the followers in the dark, so that all that they receive is just the falsehood through deceptive tactics to give credibility to the fake news they are publishing.

However, even though there is an enormous amount of deception, distinguishing truth from falsehood is a task within the reach of everyone, including ordinary people, who lack skills, provided that they are prejudice-free and open-minded, and provided that they put everything they read or hear under the loop of the critical mental reasoning that seeks the only truth.

The motives and goals of fake news and deception publishers vary, but what unites them all in common is the "interest" derived from falsehood publishing and the effort to generate a reaction. However, in most cases, publishing fake news is done for political considerations and accounts, even if it appears in the disguise of a humanitarian or religious cover.

To provide a glimpse into the phenomenon of media deception in Yemen, we conducted an electronic questionnaire for this purpose and distributed to 100 participants, to get closer to this phenomenon. For that, we affirm that the topic of this paper is not a study, but it is rather a journalistic report; we also affirm that the respondents› answers are not proportional representation, and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the community, but are a supportive addition to the report. From this perspective, we have approached the matter from "journalistic report" perspective, not a "survey study".

Distinguishing between the «overlapping» concepts of media deception

In general, three levels/forms of misinformation can be identified, based on its nature and the purpose of publishing it, namely: fake news (fabricated information that mimics news content in the form) and misinformation (disseminated with no intentional intent to cause harm), and finally disinformation (often biased and attracting information created with the intent to deceive or harm others).

Accordingly, "misinformation and disinformation are incorrect in essence; however, the motive for sharing content and the actors who share it are very different. Misinformation sometimes indicates an explicit error, for example when an article containing misinformation is written by a reputable media outlet. In contrast, disinformation is intentionally false and is spread tactically, and is expressly intended to cause confusion or cause the target audience to believe a lie. In this sense, disinformation is an information warfare tactic, according to Renée DiResta, director of technical research at the Stanford Internet Observatory which studies the misuse of information technologies.

Regarding "fake news", in essence, it is defined as false and fabricated news, which are not based on facts, sources, or verifiable quotes, and sometimes these news may be propaganda which is intentionally designed to deceive the reader, or they may be designed as a clickbait so that the writer benefits from the number of people who click on the story. However, it is important to recognize that "fake new is a complex problem, which is much larger than the narrow definition above, as the term itself has become politicized, and has been widely used to distort any opposing viewpoint, doubting opponents, controversial issues, or the credibility of certain media institutions," according to the University of Michigan Library.

The Yemeni media... Misleading propaganda and severe attraction

As Yemen slipped into the swamp of war, and the country witnessed a "new phase of the militarization of the civil press, under the influence of political attraction, whose gap began to widen exponentially with the escalation of the war and the multi-polarity of the political division managing the conflict, and seeking to spread its narrative of reality in terms based on the dimensions of the political goal that collides with an other reality and purpose which totally contradict with, making the scene the scene of dissonance most clear. This dissonance keeps developing carrying with it the field battle into a parallel struggle in the field of slippery journalism - due to the emergency reality - in the clutches of political fight, far from its real mission," according to an investigation published on May 2021 on "Khoyut" electronic platform.

"During the current war, dozens of websites and satellite channels were launched, as part of the direct war between the conflict parties, and their editorial policy and management are often handled by non-professional individuals who lack skills and moral responsibility, but their financial capabilities and their intense work and their targeting of the audience's emotions and the collective interest of a particular group had made them an effective tool for shaping the public opinion, with all its impurities and risks," according to a report published in February 2022 by Al-Mushahid website.

According to a report issued in 2021, Media Landscapes, (the institution specialized in analyzing the state of the media), it was indicated that the media reflect one of the most powerful propaganda services that ever occurred in Yemen. "With us or against us» is the current slogan of the country›s media and journalists, who serve opposite political agendas. In addition, journalists who are still working are engaged in a propaganda game, positioning themselves with or against the loyal government, thus paying the price.

Data journalist and fact-checker Farouk Moqbel Al-Kamali said in an exclusive interview with the Digital Rights Project that the deception scene in Yemen is growing in a very frightening way every day. He also stated that the dissemination of this deception and falsehood in Yemen flourishes during the period of political dispute between the ruling partners in one way or another, which constitutes an evidence that deception is created to achieve certain goals and is not completely spontaneous; and despite the existence of platforms to detect deception and counterfeiting, they are no longer able to keep pace with it, according Farouk.

The investigative journalist Aseel Sariya also stated to the Digital Rights Project that each of the conflict parties in Yemen owns several media and electronic platforms (including means and platforms whose direction, affiliation and funders are unknown, as well as the lack of clarity in the purpose of their inception), which created chaos in the large amount of information and news that these sites and platforms pump to the audience; therefore, this caused the emergence of the phenomenon of "faking news and information" as well as the promotion of its widespread. Aseel commented: "We live in a big media chaos that has not and will not be controlled in the foreseeable future. In the midst of this chaos, independent and credible websites were lost, or affected, and no longer had an effective voice."

 "The political polarization practiced by the conflict parties in the country has reflected on the outcomes of official, partisan and independent media platforms and websites, and contributed to the dissemination of disinformation and rumours. In the essence, providing Yemenis with access to impartial news and increasing opportunities for local journalists to develop their skills is an essential element in building peace in the country. In Yemen, the political polarization of the media is exacerbating the conflict and the challenges which Yemenis are faced with in their daily lives, according to an investigation in August 2021 by Daraj Media, an independent media platform founded by Arab journalists.

Social media platforms and the spread of deception

Social media platforms are a fertile environment for the creation and infusion of deceptive content on a large scale. In this regard, the Sidq Yemen team explained to the Digital Rights Project that hundreds of deceptive materials (published through these platforms) are monitored every day, but they do not publish everything they monitor, as there are specific conditions and policy for publication on the platform. According to them, noting that "the number of deceptive materials that have been monitored and their truth published since the beginning of this year until August 19, reached 350, while the number of deceptive materials that were monitored and published exceeded.» Its truth since the platform was established in August 2019 has 1,600 materials."

In addition to an individual›s intellectual and social biases, "a third set of biases (which make the social media ecosystem vulnerable to intentional and accidental deception) arise directly from the algorithms that social platforms and search engines use to determine what people see on the Internet. These personalization techniques are designed to select only the most engaging and relevant content for each user, but in doing so may end up reinforcing users' intellectual and social biases, making them more vulnerable to manipulation." "Scientific American," June 2018

Another bias type relating to the popularity of news, is called the "Bandwagon effect". It occurs when we are influenced by the number of times something has been shared or liked, rather than being influenced by the content itself. The number of ratings a story gets or the percentage of people who rated it positively affects people›s perceptions and beliefs, making them more likely to support that story, and interact with it without reading or evaluating what was shared, according to the Center for Information Technology and Society at UC Santa Barbara (CITS).

It is true that social media platforms play a positive role, but relying on them in developing awareness among their users may not be valid for every time and place, given the challenges related to information literacy for civil society, as posed by the digital age. We are overwhelmed with tremendous amounts of information every day that it is difficult to sort reliable information from fabricated. In addition, new technologies for creating and sharing information on a large scale allow the dissemination of misinformation that appears to be from a reliable source. Besides, the escalating conflict we are witnessing between speed and accuracy in our digital age has increased the chances of misinformation, and social media is making it very easy to choose information that supports our pre-existing beliefs, according to the Center for News Literacy of Stony Brook University School of Journalism.

Relying on social media platforms, as a reliable source of news, and interacting with what is published on them and sharing it without checking and verifying it, is a very dangerous matter. Here, the danger is not limited to the truth only, but – without exaggeration - it extends to all aspects of life, including coexistence and societal peace, which requires fighting faking and falsification, starting with its detection and refutation, to public awareness, then setting and remedies to curb deception and prevent its spread, at least.

## Public engagement with the news of «social platforms»

Social media has replaced traditional media and has become an important source of news for a large segment of citizens, who are now involved in one way or another in consuming and creating news content, in addition to interacting with and sharing it. These social channels contribute positively to the communication and dissemination of information on a large scale, and enable individuals to stay informed of the happenings around them, but this feature is surrounded by many caveats and negatives, most notably the spread of deceptive information and false news and the consequent distortion of the truth and loss of confidence in "credible" information sources, as well as negatively affecting the perception and awareness of the public.

According to the company "Data Reportal" (specializing in providing data and statistics on the Internet world), there were 3.50 million social media users in Yemen in January 2022, equivalent to 11.4% of the total population, and the number of users increased by 301 thousand (+9.4%) between 2021 and 2022, but it is important to note that social media users may not be unique people.

Yemenis rely on social media platforms - to varying degrees - to provide news, as respondents said that they permanently rely on Facebook (32% of respondents), Twitter (20%), and WhatsApp (18%), in addition to news websites (23%). It is noted that nearly three quarters of respondents rely on social media platforms to follow up on news permanently, while the percentage of those who obtain news permanently from news websites is 23%.
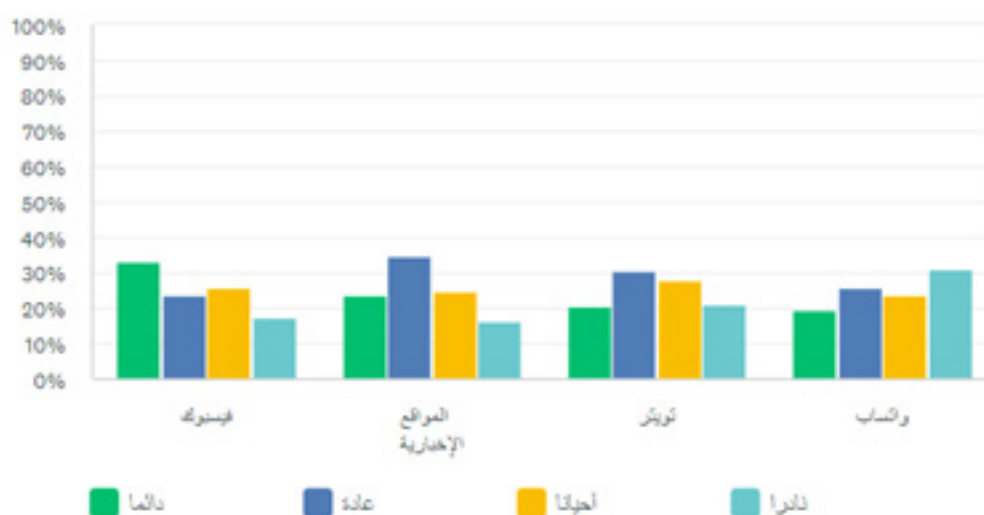

Yemenis' reliance on social media platforms, in this way, may explain the decline in their confidence in the content published on news websites, which are dominated by sharp political polarization, in a way that these news websites appeared as if they were huge machines pumping out deceptive propaganda, in addition to their position in the category of yellow journalism, which lacks professionalism and objectivity. Loss of public confidence due to what is published on the digital space was not limited to news websites, but also included local media in general. In another question, respondents reported that their confidence in local media does not exceed 37%.
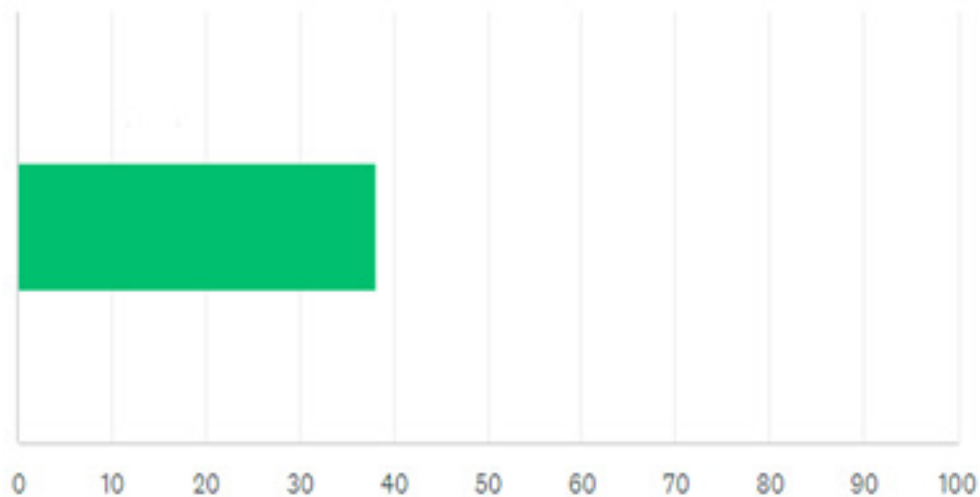
Dr. Maha Abdel-Maguid, an expert at the National Center for Social and Criminal Research in Cairo, stated to Scientific American (dated October 2017) that the crisis of the spread of deceptive information increases with the low levels of public confidence in the official media, which is coupled with the public›s orientation to alternative sources of information, including citizen journalism applications and others, and seeking to obtain information and news from various sources, including inaccurate ones.

The audience was asked whether they verify the news they read on social media, the responses showed that 45% of respondents verify the news always, 34% usually verify it, 10% sometimes, and 11% do not or verify it rarely).
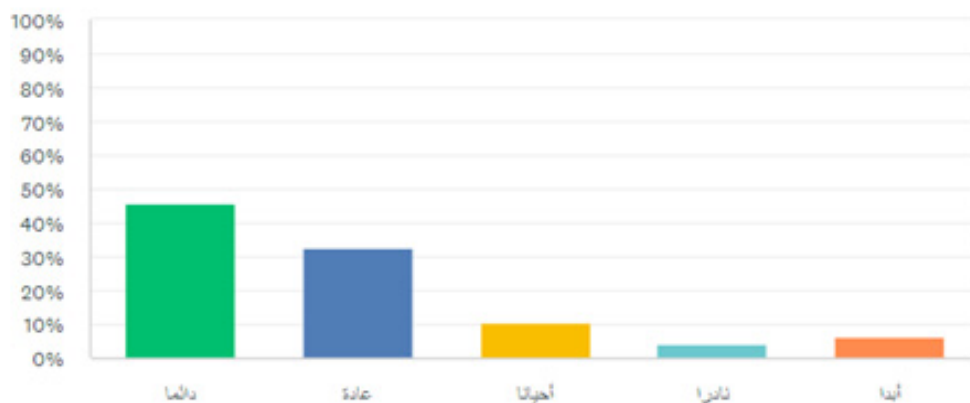
Regarding the respondents› evaluation of the degree of the public media awareness, 27% of them see that the public›s awareness is very weak, 51% stated that awareness is weak, while 20% said that the awareness of the public is good.
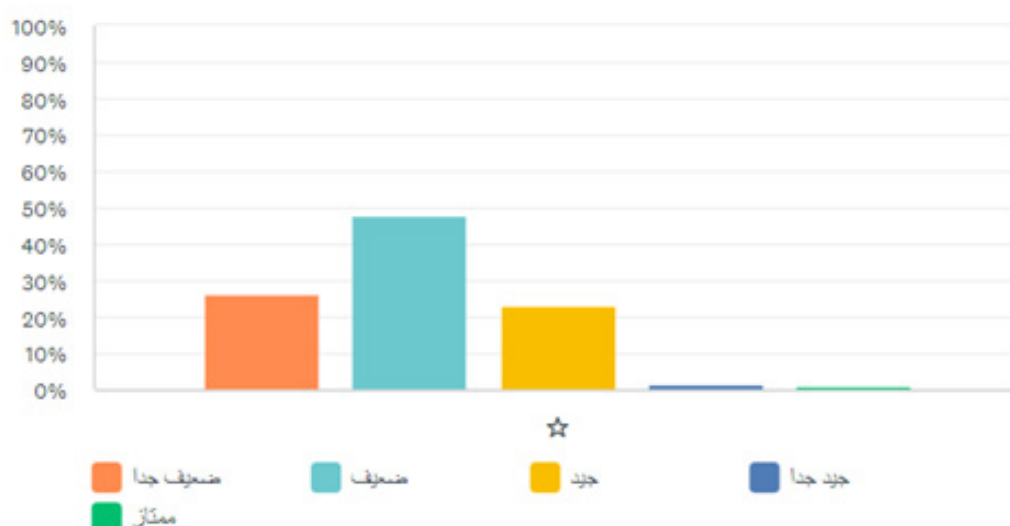
The "Sidq Platform" team believes that evaluating the level of public awareness is not based on the number of deceptive information that is circulated, but through the public's interaction with that information. The team adds to the Digital Rights Project: "It can be said that public awareness began to form about the danger of fake and deceptive news, but at a slow pace, which made us assess that there is awareness that began to form is the public's reaction to the information they watch; you may see some commenting on someone who publishes a piece of news with phrases such as: "Have you verified the news? Did you check the image or context? Have you seen the truth? Did you ask those involved in the news?" and other alike questions.

Topics/ areas of deceptive materials

A large amount of deceptive information and news (at various levels) is pumped every day through social media platforms, but political topics, as mentioned by (84%) of the respondents, are the most vulnerable to deception and falsification, followed by social topics (8%), and (7%) personal and religious topics.
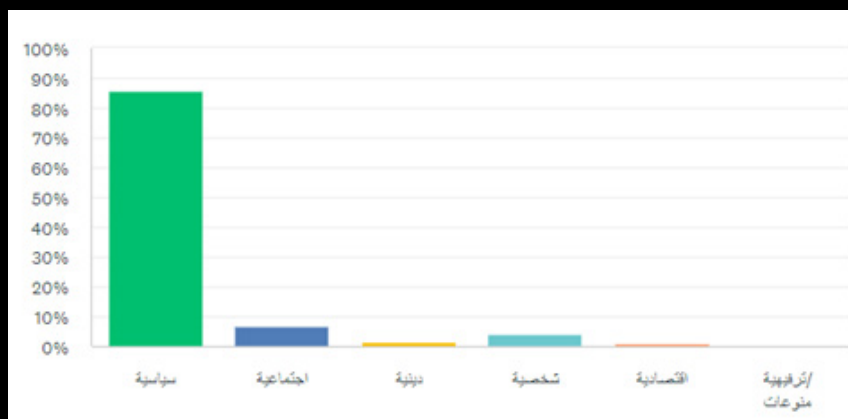
Respondents' answers reveal the areas most affected by deception (which are political topics). This does not mean that other areas are immune from deception, as - for example - usually military topics serve political goals and objectives, according to the "Sidq Platform" team. It is the most vulnerable to forgery (for media professionals and activists) due to the ongoing conflict in the country, and the failure to implement a media honor code. This makes media professionals and activists cross red lines; as they publish everything for purposeful political maliciousness and exposing opponents.

As for the ordinary citizen, social and security issues are the most vulnerable to falsification due to the users› sympathy with such topics, and their desire to share everything that amazes them, even if it is deceptive.

The armed conflict parties sought to establish media platforms and attract independent media, which negatively affected the output of local media, contributed to the dissemination of deceptive material, spread rumors and surrounded Yemenis with hundreds of politicized and contradictory reports about the events taking place in the country, according to Draraj Media (Ibid)

In an interview with Al-Mawqea Post on May 2017, the economic journalist Mustafa Nasr pointed out that "the war in the country negatively affected the performance of the media, and language consistent with the course of the war spread, which has taken the media away from professional standards." He added: "There is also a state of great attraction witnessed by the media during the last period because of the conflict, as well as the decline of media freedoms to an unprecedented level in the modern era of Yemen."

During the monitoring carried out by "Khuyot", the period between September 2014 and April 2021 witnessed the launch of 143 news websites out of 236 active news websites (with different orientations), where about 90% of the content they publish (in Local news outlets), takes a hostile and biased direction, in addition to the fact that it mostly lacks professional basics, as well as bias in opinion and bringing about disputatiousness to serve the biases and goals of political parties. In the midst of this chaos, the digital platforms concerned with "steady journalism" in Yemen do not exceed 1.5% - of the total sites covered by the monitoring - as they have good capabilities that helped provide better content, although most of them focus on non-political aspects due to considerations related to the standards of bodies and organizations supporting social and humanitarian media in Yemen."

Forms of media deception

The forms of media deception vary, depending on the medium and context in which it is disseminated, and they are presented in templates and patterns that are often difficult for ordinary people to identify and debunk.

From the respondents› point of view, the most deceptive information they encounter comes in the form of unprofessional yellow journalism that aims to whip up public opinion (81%), followed by completely fabricated untrue information (79%), in addition to the third form of deception that is based on picking out certain facts only about an issue and neglecting important facts about the same issue (61%), while 60% of respondents indicated that propaganda (propaganda aimed at influencing people›s opinions and behavior) is one of the most common forms of deception they encounter (on digital space), and 43% of the respondents believe that deceptive information comes in the form of a "wrong context" (correct information, but the time/place is not), and a negative link between two different topics, according to the opinion of 41% of the respondents.
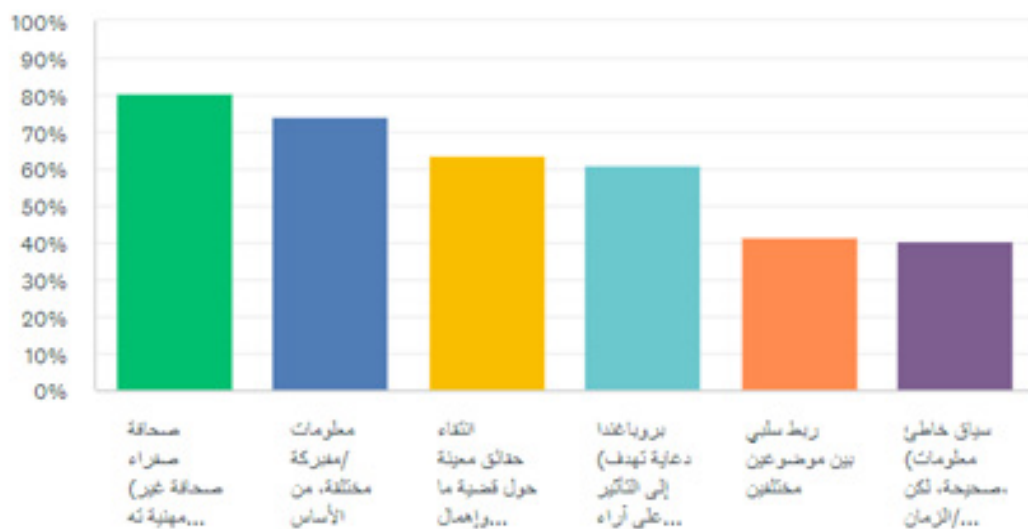
Respondents' view that yellow journalism is the most spread form of deception is associated with what they read on news websites, which rely mainly on rumors and provoking headlines, with the intent of attracting the reader's interest, and what is transmitted about them, through social platforms, and perhaps the public's low confidence in the media according to a field study conducted in August 2020

by DT-Global (a company concerned with promoting stability and preventing conflict), "Yemenis tend to hold the media responsible for deception even if the media outlets themselves are not the ones who have fabricated the information." .

Adel Abdel-Mughni, SEO of Media and Development Studies Platform, indicated in an interview with "International Journalists› Network (IJNet)" that what is more dangerous than false news - perhaps - is the deceptive news that contains a real part of the information mixed up with other parts of the false information within the framework of directed news. The deception here is not limited to the written material, but extends to include photos and sometimes videos, which may be subjected to a misleading montage, according to Abdel-Mughni›s opinion.

"Rumors have become one of the most important and most widely used weapons of conflict among the local and regional actors in the Yemeni scene. From time to time, this battle intensifies, either by focusing on specific issues or regions and influential parties in the conflict, with the aim of weakening the morale of the targets and making them lose popular support, or destroying their reputation and demonizing them. In the absence of correct information, the media find their way to the "rumour", which is an open-source "black market" that is ready to provide its services to whomever wants it, free of charge, Aljazeera Media Institute July 2022.

Motives of media deception

The process of creating and disseminating deceptive information and fake news is not arbitrary, but rather has motives and goals that its publishers seek to achieve, with the exception of those who circulate it out by mistake.

79% of the respondents indicated that spreading false news and deceptive information comes with the aim of: achieving political, military, and material gains, distracting public opinion and covering up other facts (79%), causing harm, or undermining effective groups/persons (74%), press scoop (49%), while 41% of the respondents stated that there are those who publish false news and deceptive information due to their ignorance that the information is «deceptive».
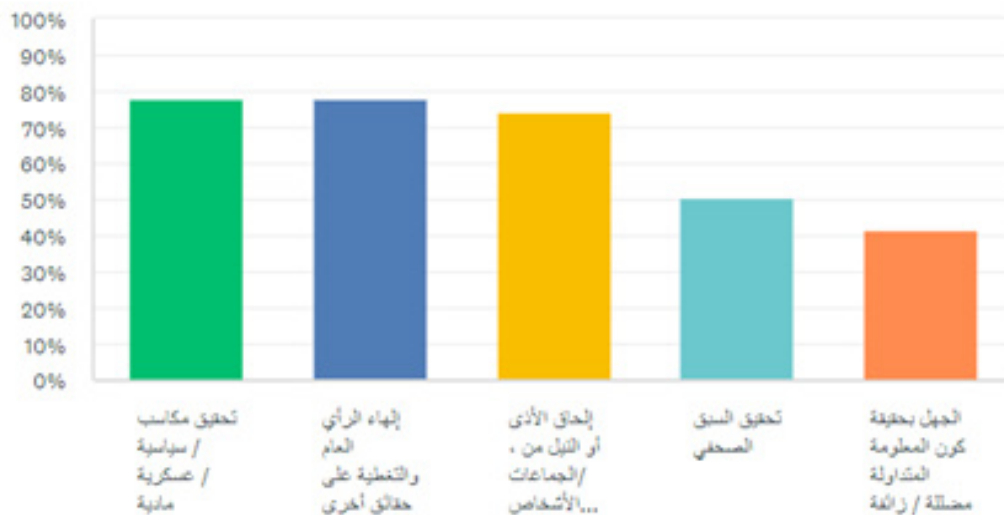
Journalist Al-Kamali believes that the motive of deceptive information is "the pursuit of political gains through deception and exploitation of people›s confidence given that the party circulating or issuing the falsehood is close to decision-making positions, and therefore they believe that they have reliable information, while the truth is that they exploit this confidence to spread misinformation and falsify facts."

The American magazine, "Foreign Policy", indicated in a report issued in February 2021 that there is a conflict across the digital space parallel to the civil war in Yemen, considering that this conflict, which is plagued by deceptive information and hatred discourse, undermines the trust remaining after 7 years of horrific war in the country. The report pointed out that the goal of all warring parties is to control the content, by limiting access to and slandering international and local news providers, in addition to working on keeping civilians in the dark and make them more vulnerable to their own propaganda.

The media owned by the conflicting parties seeks to shape public opinion with specific frameworks that suit their orientations. In a survey study published by the "Al Jazeera Center for Studies" on March 2015, the researcher "Omar Abrin" concluded that "the Yemeni media use specific frameworks and trends in their coverage of political conflict issues. This may be for the purpose of directing public opinion, especially partisan bases, to adopt specific stances towards these issues that are consistent with the partisan practices expressed by those means, especially since written media coverage often comes after a day or more from the event, where the political and partisan forces have in most cases strengthened their positions towards those issues.

In turn, Khuyut conducted interviews with journalists working for a number of directed electronic platforms in Yemen; it was found that part of the problem is affected by funding variables, as most of them depend on two sources for funding. One is the direct or indirect support of a party / group or political bloc; and the other is the revenue from allowing Google ads to appear on the pages and windows of the site, and the number of visits, which directed interest in the pursuit of excitement, intimidation and fake titles in order to attract the largest number of visits. Here the goal was to transfer information to commercial goals, which explains the state of chaos and the absence of objectivity that marked the Yemeni press."

Deceptive information pioneers

Respondents believe that the most generating fake news and deceptive materials are: anonymous accounts on social media platforms, followed by social media activists, the news websites, media professionals and journalists, then politicians.
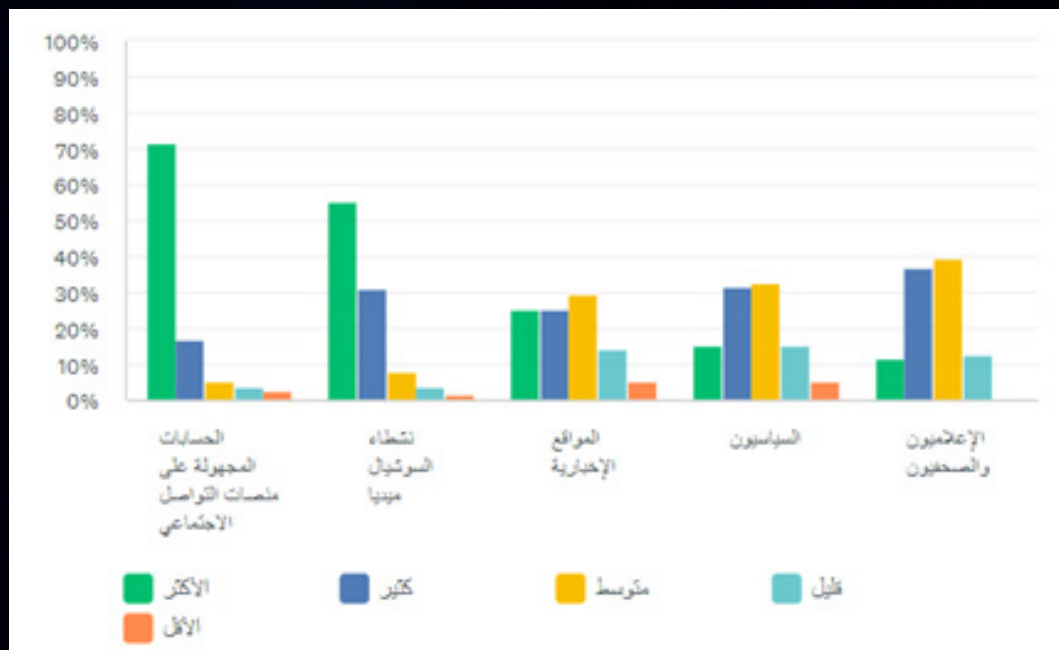
Anonymous accounts on social media platforms occupy a central position in the swamp of deceptive information. This is mainly due to the media circulation of what these accounts publish through social platforms; that is, the number of deceptive news taken from fake accounts and published by the media, is greater than the number the news broadcast by these anonymous accounts. For example, in April 2022, an account named "Sumaya al-Khulani" published on Twitter information as revealing the existence of corruption and exploitation of girls by relief organizations, which the news sites seized, without hesitation, and republished the tweets of that account – which gained more than 30 thousand followers within weeks – extensively. In addition to that, social networking activists launched a fierce campaign against the organizations doubting by the aforementioned account, without providing a single evidence of its allegations, to turn out later that the account is completely fake.

«There is a large infusion of information through social media by non-specialists, as it does not comply with publication standards or the ethics of journalistic code. Journalists often publish information obtained from biased sources, fabrications, deceptive or blackmail, and take positions to defend it without investigation or scrutiny," according to Al-Sharabi: "Many Yemeni journalists are no longer distinguished from the rest of the activists in this regard, which is reflected in the performance of electronic media and news websites that are not committed to work standards and professional ethics", journalist Rashad Al-Sharabi in an interview with IJNet (July 2017).

The journalist Aseel Sariya pointed out that there are two types of people who spread deceptive information: the first type are those who publish intentionally, knowing that it is false and untrue information, but they publish such news for purposes compatible with a certain party or regional belonging, or due to support of a party to the war. The other type falls victim to the first, as they do not know that it is deceptive and untrue information, and therefore publishing it directly without verifying it. Sariya added: "We have journalists who seek the scoop, and we always say: In light of the spread of the media, the scoop is no longer important, for being the second or third person to publish a true news is better than being the first to publish a fake and deceptive news."

For example, an electronic monitoring carried out by the Yemen Future Foundation revealed that 12 Yemeni news websites out of the 25 covered by the monitoring were a source of deceptive news at the height of the armed conflict during the period from December 16 to January 16 2022, where 74 websites were monitored. During this period only, misleading news was reported about the main issues and the actors involved in the armed conflict. The monitoring showed that these websites adopted a deception approach based on excitement, including headlines that do not match the topic of the story, in addition to the fact that most of the misleading news and information originated from unknown sources. "

This huge number of news websites have perplexed the public and made them unable to sort the truth, which was indicated by the report of DT Global (ibid), where a sample of Yemenis was asked about the obstacles they face when accessing reliable news and information; many of the interviewees simply say there are too many media to choose from, and they also warn that their society has become highly polarized and divided, with everyone gravitating toward sources that reflect their views on conflict and political crisis.

The emergence of yellow news websites is departure from the basics of professional and honest journalism, whether at the level of form or news content, according to «khuyut» platform - May 2021 – "Most news websites tend to republish what is published on local or Arab platforms, and it is often done through copy-past with alterations in the titles to make them more interesting, or making slight changes in the content, which sometimes leads to diluting and distorting the material, in a way that suggests lack of knowledge of journalistic editing methods. Or it may perhaps be due to the fact that a significant proportion of the journalists are intruders of the profession." This necessitates supporting of professional and honest journalism, to help it carry out its mission of providing trustworthy news content, and exposing and refuting deceptive information.

Repercussions of deceptive media

93% of the respondents indicated that spreading hatred and deepening the division among Yemenis are the most prominent repercussions of media deception. 77% see that media deception distracts citizens and distracts their attention from the important issues the country is witnessing, while 71% of respondents stated that media deception hinders citizens and limits the ability to see of the truth; 63% considered that deception leads to a change in the way the public perceives a particular issue or topic, and 62% stated that media deception undermines their trust in the media.
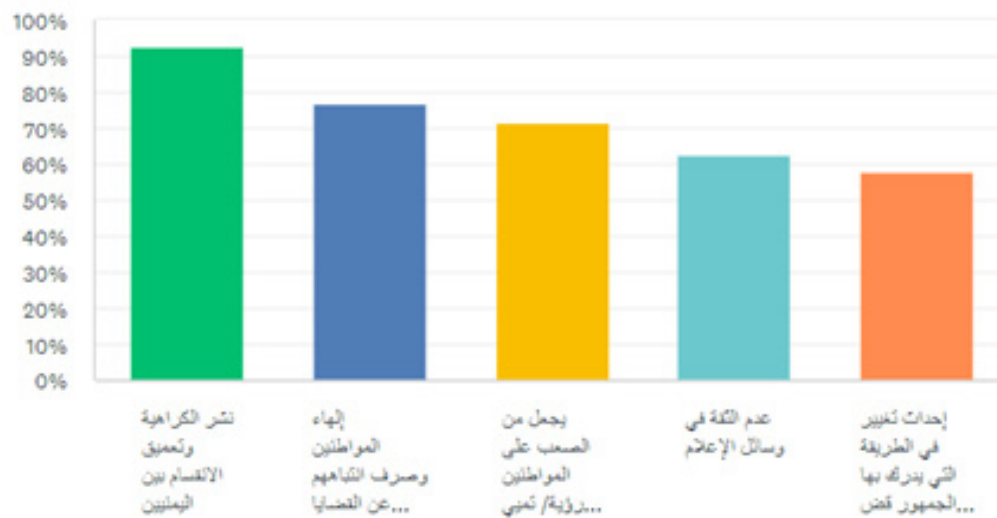
Regarding the media deception's contribution to fueling the conflict and deepening divisions among Yemenis, the journalist Al-Kamali stated: "I see the matter as very catastrophic, as there is no acceptance of the other any longer even at the slightest scale, to the extent that killings occur just because of differences of opinion, and people are arrested, and they have even though they have no hand in this conflict." He added: "The matter is not only at the southern-northern level...there is fueling of hatred at the level of the governorates in the north and south, and it will not be easy to address this", expressing his fear of moving towards the Rwandan situation that was produced by hatred discourse.

The investigative journalist Aseel Sariya shows that deception today has become a prominent feature in Yemeni media in particular, more than any other media, which leads to directing the public, and influencing it negatively, because it accumulates and is not quickly refuted, despite the presence of verification platforms. He added: "Lie then lie till people believe you." It has become a rule known to a large part of the conflicting parties, who own media institutions specialized in influencing public sentiment and attracting their attention through deceptive news.

Sariya considers that media deception may lead to igniting battles, opening new fronts, and may hinder any upcoming peace talks, because each party injects "deceptive" information against the other. He added "what we are witnessing of societal division came as one of the most prominent repercussions of media deception. There are media professionals whose mission is to inflame the conflict".

According to a survey conducted by ARK Group and DT Global in August 2020, with the participation of 705 participants, from seven Yemeni governorates (Taiz, Ibb, Al Hudaydah, Marib, Aden, Abyan and Hadhramaut), Yemenis are increasingly feeling powerless and unable to make informed decisions, as a result of the spread of fake news and deception. The study reported that 70% of participants said that the quality of Yemeni news outlets has deteriorated in the past five years, which has prompted Yemenis to rely more on foreign news organizations.

Measures to prevent the spread of deceptive information

57% of the participants believe that "holding the party providing deceptive information accountable" is the most effective measure to reduce the spread of deceptive information, followed by "building partnerships between fact-checking platforms and social media companies" (50%), and "following up on news from several sources" (49%), "raising awareness among the public" (48%), and "promoting news literacy and supporting professional journalism" (43%).
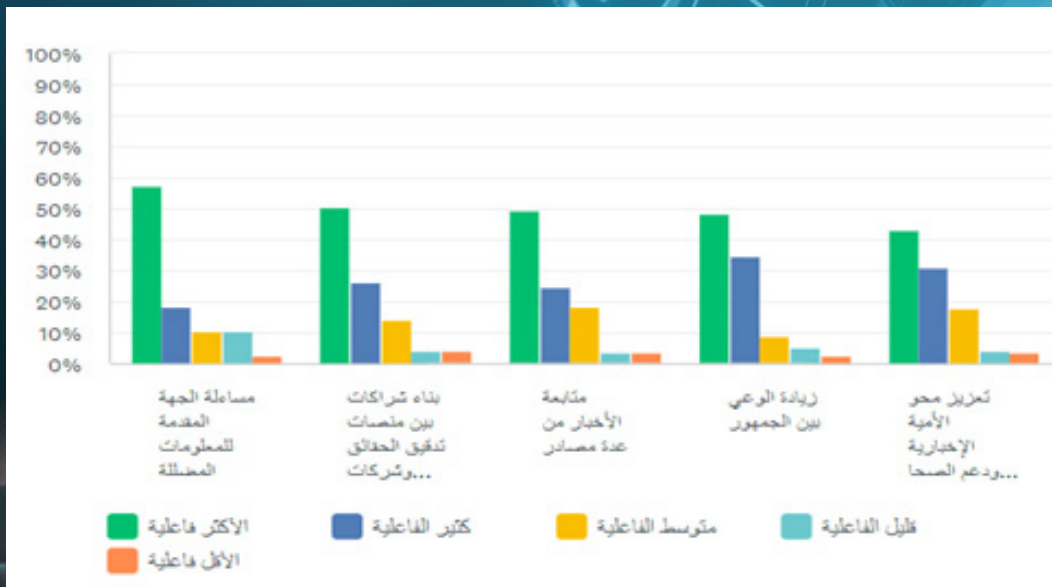
Respondents view that holding the party providing deceptive information to be the most effective measure may explain the need for a body to regulate the state of information disruption in the digital space. However, in the absence of a law sanction for spreading rumors, this measure remains an inapplicable solution. Moreover, the existence of such a law –even though it's important to be in place- may constitute restrictions on media freedoms, so that the authorities resort to sanctioning a media entity, under the pretext of "spreading rumours".

Considering what news websites provide, some journalists suffer from low professional skills and abilities, which contribute to the spread of deceptive information through these websites by these journalists. In a study entitled "Investigation in the Yemeni Press and How Yemeni Journalists Deal with Fake News," researcher Abdullah Salem Bakhrisa reached several results, the most important of which is that Yemeni journalists have knowledge of the concepts of fact checking and fake news, but they do not have sufficient knowledge of tools and platforms, verification and investigation of facts, in addition to the fact that lack of verification of information by journalists results in a repetition of error and contributes to the dissemination of false news," according to a summary published by Hadhramaut University on March 2022.

For his part, the SEO of the Platform for Media and Development Studies, Adel Abdel-Mughni, said in an interview with IJNet (July 2019) that in a country like Yemen, which is witnessing an armed conflict, verifying the news by professional journalists is very important, given that rumors in war are one of the tools of conflict management. He asserts that social media has turned into popular and available tools for spreading rumors, falsifying facts and pumping out huge amounts of fake and deceptive news, especially in light of the lack of censorship and the absence of professional and moral responsibility when publishing, since such means are an open space for all visitors.

The Sidq Platform team advises to slow down before publishing any content, and to ask questions about the topic (Where? when? How? Who? What?). This is because slowing down for a minute may be a way to sort the truth and not contribute to spreading deceptive information. The team also recommends the use of verification tools (the easiest of which is the reverse image and

video search tools) to find out whether the image you are viewing is in the right or wrong context. Sidq Yemen App is available on Google Play Store for Android phones in order to perform the verification process. The platform team added: "We attach great importance to the awareness aspect, by publishing several publications and videos to achieve two goals: First, raising public awareness about the danger of deceptive materials and what behavior they should take in the event of such information, and second, teaching the public how to verify news before publishing it".

Yemeni news verification platforms play a prominent role in exposing deceptive and exposing its promoters, as well as educating the public about mechanisms for verifying deceptive information across the web. Moreover, "While they may not resolve underlying tensions, these types of digital humanitarian response mechanisms can help inform and empower affected communities and networks by providing them with accurate and verified information. Access to trusted journalists and online networks that share trusted information can lead to to improve humanitarian action through targeted communication campaigns and expand services to reach the most vulnerable, with the strengthening of digital peace talks, local peace negotiations and UN-backed peace negotiations," according to Foreign Policy (Ibid).

A proactive approach to controlling rumours is to explain the tactics used to manipulate public perceptions of a particular topic or issue and influence the public's behavior. This approach helps the audience discover deceptive themselves; and thus, the rate of interaction with deceptive information will decrease and its spread scope will narrow.

Recommendations

To the audience:

- Put everything you hear/read under an intellectual reasoning. Look beyond the headlines and assess all the sources. Ask: Is the story coherent? Is there bias? Is there evidence? Is the context real?

- Question everything that is published without evidence and proof. All claims are false until proven true.

- Be careful of information that matches your biases and preferences, and be careful not to simply be deceived.

- Consider the old saying: "Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence."

To press and media organizations:

- Commitment to the principles of the profession, including integrity, independence, accuracy, credibility, objectivity, accountability); adopting informed and ethical journalism standards, and adopting best practices in press and media publishing.

- Enhancing the capabilities of employees and raising their competencies through training on tools and mechanisms for verifying information, in particular, and developing their skills in various fields of press and media profession.

To journalists and media professionals:

- Working in compliance with the Media Code of Honor, and practicing the profession based on the principle: "Journalism›s first obligation is to the truth."

- Information must be obtained from reliable and credible sources, provided that it is supported by sound and coherent evidence, and a clear distinction between opinion and truth should be made.

- Investing in vocational training and developing personal skills in the field of "information auditing" and the press in general.

To the authorities:

- Not to use official media outlets to spread deceptive and fake information to serve political/military agendas, and to avoid manipulating public opinion, and everything that would affect citizens› perceptions and their vision of the truth.

To organizations and donors:

- Investing in supporting platforms concerned with "fighting deceptive information" to enable them to continue their enlightening and purposeful mission, thus contributing to showing the truth, and curbing the spread of hatred fueled by deception.

**Digital Media
Deception in Yemen...**
Repercussions and
Possible Solutions

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