

Fake news and the role of the ordinary citizen

Fake news is eroding trust in the media in Africa, fuelling hate speech and leading to violence in extreme instances. Research into the responsibility of citizens in the spread of fake news will be presented at the PAMRO conference next month.



Image source: Gallo/Getty.

The spread of misinformation, political spin and fabrications have been around for as long as humanity has had the means to circulate these views, from the time of soapbox orators to the early printing press.

However, the ease at which this kind of information is disseminated has taken on a particular voracity in the age of digital and social media and the term “fake news” has come to the fore in recent years – particularly in connection with the United States 2016 presidential elections and Donald Trump’s attempts to dismiss his critics.

The consequences of fake news and its ability to erode trust, fuel social division – at times leading to hate speech and violence – is well documented. As is the challenge faced by journalists who, on tight deadlines, have to constantly filter and determine the legitimate from the fake. The result among African audiences is an erosion of trust in the media, which has done little to curb their excessive exposure to fake news, and often knowing spread of it.

Until now, the emphasis of the research has focused on the technology allowing fake news, as well as the motivations of those creating it, with little exploration into the voice and responsibility of ordinary citizens.

It is with this in mind that Claire Rooney of BBC World Service Audiences, will be presenting a comparative study, *Duty, Identity, Credibility: Fake news and the ordinary citizen in Kenya and Nigeria*, at this year's [PAMRO All Media Research Conference](#), which will take place from 25 – 28 August 2019 at Hilton Mauritius Resort and Spa, Flic-en-Flac.

Through immersion into the lives of ordinary citizens, the research which was compiled by Santanu Chakrabarti, Claire Rooney and Minnie Kweon of BBC World Service Audiences; and the teams at Flamingo and Synthesis, takes a deep dive into the social and cultural forces, as well as personal desires and aspirations and the influence these have in the spread and growth of 'fake news'.

The PAMRO conference is sponsored by DSTV Media Sales, Nielsen, GeoPoll, Ornico, Plus 94 and Ipsos.

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