

A Transparency Driven Analysis of News Trust Tools



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Introduction

In order to combat the public's declining trust in news in the United States, developers have created tools that increase the availability of information about news content. However, these tools have not been considered through the lens of transparency that they enable. We examine an existing set of tools and identify the types of transparency (disclosure, participatory, or ambient) each tool aims to address in order to understand the landscape of online news tools that provide more information about online news content. To assess the type of news transparency enabled by these tools we conduct a categorization of a database of tools from the Research and Development Corporation (RAND) designed to enable users to establish the transparency of online news content (i.e. written articles, tweets, etc.).

Method

Our study aims to determine the specific types of transparency enabled by online news transparency tools. To study this dimension of these types of tools, we analyze the RAND Fighting Disinformation Online Database to assess the type of transparency targeted by each news trust tool. After removing defunct or inaccessible tools, we had 59 tools remaining for analysis. We then categorized these tools based on the types of transparency that they enable.

Results

We found existing transparency tools promote transparency through a number of approaches. Two-thirds of the tools in our sample focused on enabling one type of transparency (disclosure, participatory, or ambient). The remaining third focused on enabling a combination of transparency types (multi-level transparency).

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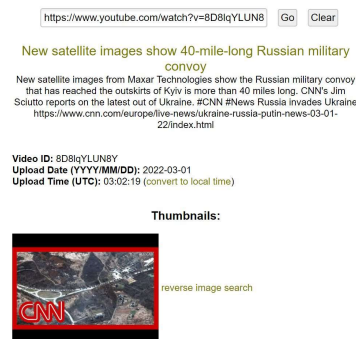
The Guardian view on democracy: an uncertain year
Editorial

Ambient Transparency: Techniques or tools that are used/added by news producers in the vicinity of news content making it possible for news consumers to evaluate and form new meanings of news stories.



Participatory Transparency: Inviting outsiders (such as the audience) to partake in various stages of the news production by, for example, commenting or sending in images of events.

Youtube DataViewer



Disclosure Transparency: various techniques illustrating to the public how and why the news is being made.

Discussion

Through analyzing news transparency tools on dimensions of transparency practices, we find that these tools mostly engage disclosure transparency or more than one type of transparency. In the future, we plan to conduct an independent aggregation and analysis of additional tools. This technique will generate a broader picture of the transparency tool landscape and determine if the trend of disclosure transparency dominance continues. We also plan on studying the usability of these tools, the ability to access transparency tools is useless without the ability to use it effectively.

Transparency Type	Tool Count
Disclosure	26
Multi-Level	20
Participatory	10
Ambient	3

Table 1. Transparency Categorizations

References and Acknowledgements

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