Effects of different media on the sharing of fake news on social media

○氏名 (Cheng, John William / チェン、ジョン　ウィリアム)

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1　目的

During the 2016 US Presidential Election, the number of Facebook engagements of fake news had exceeded that of the real ones (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017), which marks the beginning of the post-truth era, in which the 'virality' of information is valued more than its truthfulness (McNair, 2018). Although most believe social media are the main cause of this phenomenon, McNair (2018) argues that conventional news media are also responsible and Chadwick et al. (2018) find that alternative news media also play a part. Thus, the objective of this study is to examine the effects of different media on people's sharing of fake news on social media.

2　方法

This study focuses on Japan because fake news is also on the rise in Japan (立岩 & 楊井, 2018) but currently most studies on fake news are US and Europe focused. It adopts structural equation modelling with survey data collected from 1,286 social media users in 2018. It hypothesises that people's sharing of fake news on social media is affected by their usage of different news media, and the effects are mediated by fake news stories on social media. A path model is constructed to test the hypotheses, in which people's sharing of fake news (intentionally and unintentionally) is set as dependent variables while their usage of different news media is set as independent variables, which include both conventional (e.g., TV, news aggregator websites, etc.) and alternative (e.g., discussion forums, tabloid magazines, etc.) sources. The mediator (fake news on social media) is represented by news stories on a range of topics from politics to entertainments on social media that people perceived to be not fully true (misinformation) and totally fake (disinformation).

3　結果

The results show that despite fake news is spread on social media, using social media as a news source has no effect on the sharing of fake news. Instead, the sharing is affected by consuming news from alternative media, and the effects of some alternative media are mediated by fake news stories that people came across on social media. In addition, it is also found that consuming news from conventional sources reduces the sharing of fake news on social media.

4　結論

The findings imply that despite most fake news is spread on social media, the sharing of the fake news stories is actually affected by other news media. Thus, to truly understand the phenomenon, the dynamics between different news media also need to be taken into consideration.

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