

Counter media in the larger media ecosystem: utilization and reframing of mainstream media articles

Pihla Toivanen^{1,2} and Matti Nelimarkka^{1,3,*}

¹ Department of Computer Science, Aalto University, Finland

² Department of Computer Science, University of Helsinki, Finland

³ Methods Center, Faculty of Social Science, University of Helsinki, Finland

* Corresponding author: matti.nelimarkka@aalto.fi

Abstract

We study how five different online-only publications, framed as “fake news” in Finnish popular media, reference and position themselves in a larger media ecosystem. We observed that 38,645 articles published in these publications (76% of all publications) have an explicit reference to a source of the article. Largest group of references were made (38%) to various mainstream media outlets, suggesting that these “fake news” sites integrate the mainstream media content to articles. We observed three categories of such integration: critiquing of mainstream media, reframing of mainstream media and developing original content using mainstream media as background sources. Through computational data analysis, we observed reframing is the most commonly used integration approach, but different media types and outlets are integrated in a different way. Our findings suggest that articles on these are based on mainstream media content, but are opinionated reframings of them. Based on these findings, we argue that group of journals considered as “fake news” have differences within and may not be a single group. This study provides additional evidence to the increasing critique on the concept of fake news.

Full manuscript available upon request from matti.nelimarkka@aalto.fi .