

Propaganda



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What is propaganda?

HAVE YOU HEARD OF THE WORD “PROPAGANDA”?
MOST PROBABLY YOU DID, ESPECIALLY IN THE POLITICAL SPHERE.

Where it all started

According to Erwin W. Fellows (1959), propaganda was a Latin word used in biology to refer to the reproduction of plants and animals. However, its meaning changed over the years. From being used in religious context in the eighteenth century, to becoming attached to political and military contexts in the late nineteenth century.

The word came to common use with the start of World War I when the fascist and communists tried to extend their reach and power by employing propaganda. Since then, propaganda has become a part of political campaigns.

Where it is all started

Entities have been employing propaganda techniques to amplify the reach and spread of online content, good and bad ones. This is due to the fact that propaganda works on framing the information and involves the use of language in a way that evokes emotions. Blinded by those emotions, online users tend to share those harmful contents with their friends and family.

Critical Digital Literacy and Propaganda

It is important to learn what propaganda is as a part of Critical Digital Literacy to create a safer online space, where we engage with the digital world critically. Online users need to be aware of the use of propaganda in online content, then be empowered with the analytical skills that help them identify propaganda techniques by analysing the message, and finally critically interact with the message, and use the internet responsibly.

WHAT IS PROPAGANDA IN TEXT OR PROPAGANDISTIC TEXT ?

A text can be labelled as a propagandistic text when it uses the language, or the components that create the message, in a specific manner to influence its consumer.

Let's take a closer look at the definition and its components, as these the components that serve the first steps in critically engaging with any content:

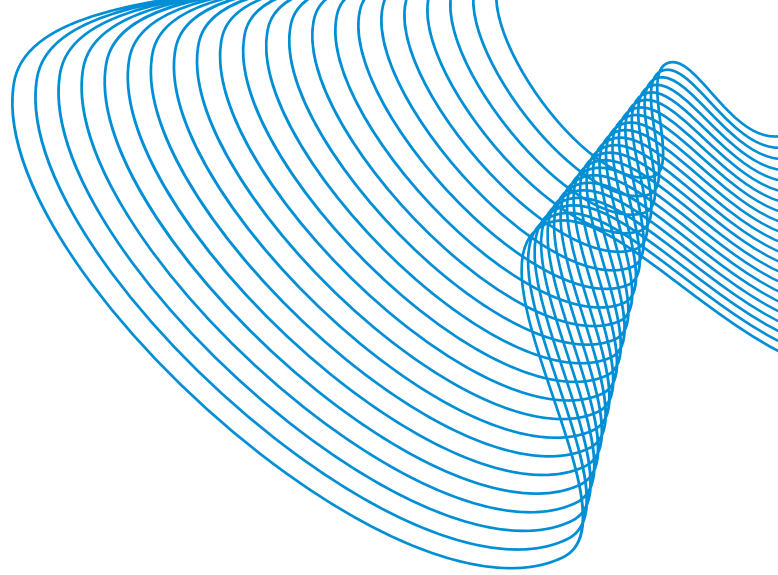
- 1- Text: is anything that has a communicative function. It could be a written text, a picture, a sound, or a combination of all above.
- 2- Components that create the message: in any text, the creator of the message can build the message in a way that serves the function of the message. This means the creator of the text is free to use any technique that fulfils their goal, or the influence that the message is aiming for!
- 3- The influence of the message: a message can influence its consumer to adopt a certain idea, take actions, and/or make them feel a certain way about an entity or idea. The influence can be a combination of all mentioned before.

Let's study the following examples for propaganda techniques:

- ***"He spent the weekend golfing, the morning comparing himself to Jesus, and the afternoon lying about having money he definitely doesn't have," the statement said.***

The above example is talking about a subject referred to as "he". The first thing to notice is that the message is labelling the subject in the part: "lying about having money he definitely doesn't have". However, the message is still painting the subject in a negative light implicitly in the following part: "comparing himself to Jesus". This message was created to paint the subject in a negative light, trying to push the idea that he holds him in high regard when he compares himself to Jesus, narcissistic, and a liar.





- ***“Just 26% of Americans say “Bidenomics” has been good for the country.”***

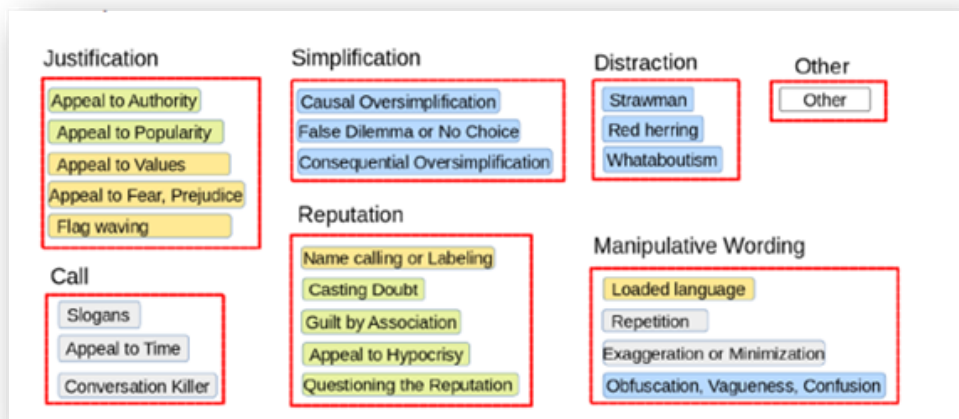
This message was created to give a negative perception of the Joe Biden administration's economic policy. The message starts with the word “just” right before stating the percentage. This gives the impression that 26% is pretty low. In reality, 26% may be a good value if compared to previous results or the percentage of people who believed it had a negative effect on the economy of the country. However the message doesn't mention that information for comparison leaving the reader with the word “just” and the percentage, giving the impression that this is a really small percentage, and painting the Joe Biden administration as ruining the economy.

- ***“Kennedy 's positions are widely popular among Americans from both sides of the political aisle.”***

This message was created to give a positive perception of Kennedy Jr., by saying that his political positions are shared by two groups that actually oppose each other.

Propaganda Techniques

One way an entity can have such an effect or influence is by using propaganda techniques in the message. Currently, we study 23 propagandistic techniques:



Resources and References

- What Does the Word "Propaganda" Mean? <https://daily.jstor.org/word-propaganda-mean/>
- <https://www.jstor.org/stable/454039?mag=word-propaganda-mean>
- <https://www.historians.org/resource/the-story-of-propaganda/>
- <https://www.coe.int/en/web/campaign-free-to-speak-safe-to-learn/dealing-with-propaganda-misinformation-and-fake-news>

