

MARKETING COLLOQUIA

Fall 2024 - Abstract

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HARNESSING PARTISAN MOTIVES TO COMBAT MISINFORMATION

Partisan motives are often conceptualized as fundamentally in opposition to accuracy-directed motives. Rather than being opposed, however, it may be that partisan and accuracy motivations simply operate independently – in which case political motives may not necessarily interfere with truth discernment. Here, we test this hypothesis in the context of crowd evaluations of (mis)information. We predict that in the presence of accuracy motivations, stronger partisan motivations can actually lead to better outcomes – an increased quantity of flags, coupled with as good or better truth discernment – by motivating people to preferentially flag news that is both false and politically discordant. To empirically assess this prediction, we carried out a survey study and analyzed field data from X's (Twitter's) crowdsourced fact-checking platform Community Notes. These data show that more politically motivated individuals are more active community fact-checking participants, helping sustain overall contribution levels. Furthermore, our results show that more politically motivated participants engage in more politically biased flagging yet exhibit the same or better flagging discernment as compared to less politically motivated participants. Together, our results challenge the notion that partisan motives inherently undermine the ability and willingness to evaluate truth. Rather, political motivation may actually be the key to the provisioning of high-quantity and quality crowdsourced fact-checks.