

Snoops

A real time information app for your day to day life

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Abstract

Ideally, when hearing a political speech or reading a news article, we would be able to trust it and know that the information conveyed was factual and trustworthy, devoid of any partiality. In reality, this doesn't always happen.

The information itself might not be entirely incorrect but the way it's delivered can suggest something false or mislead the receiver. The problem described is Post-Truth, and this way of manipulation is unexpected since it can come from any person and the most diverse platforms, bringing some severe consequences. The distorted information shapes the thoughts and opinions of everyone who consumes it and ultimately can influence society's development from the moment politics are shaped by manipulated data.

Post-Truth can only take place in a society where there is a lack of education towards critical thinking. This enables mainly political personalities to push their agendas employing different techniques of discourse and mixing factual with erroneous information, making it difficult to tell them apart. Finally, this issue is not simple to solve since there is a fine line between information selection and censorship.

Therefore, we believe that the answer to this problem is never to reduce the information available to the public but to increase it and make it easily accessible for everyone, that way when a piece of information arises, each person can double-check it with other sources and authors and make an informed decision to believe it or not.

Our project consists of an app that tracks and collects all the information the user is exposed to throughout the day, such as informal conversations and interactions, visited websites, and news articles shared. Then, the app will rate the information on a scale from one to ten according to a number of criteria that determines if it is trustworthy. Moreover, the app compiles various sources about every subject apprehended to complement and further clarify the data absorbed by the user.

Keywords: Post Truth, Information, Media, News, Manipulation

1 - Existing Problems

While researching for this project we came across what we believe to be the main problems that contribute to the increasing of fake news and the growth of the Post-Truth Era.

Starting with education, according to Daniel J. Levitin in "Weaponized Lies", "this is a dangerous by-product of a lack of education in our country that has now affected an entire generation of citizens". The lack of education combined

with the language being adopted nowadays has begun to obscure the relation between facts and fantasy, making it harder each time to make good decisions for ourselves and our fellow citizens.

Blended with language is the manipulation of the public, through different speech techniques such as insinuation, the omission of important information, lack of context, and others; The use of these techniques can lead to changing the public opinions according to what we want them to

believe. With social media increasingly becoming a primary platform for the consumption of information, it also clearly has become a field where this manipulation and propaganda campaigns play out.

Finally, there's the problem with misinformation, also known as "fake news". Misinformation happens when false information is randomly mixed with the factual one, making it difficult to separate the two and therefore creating a fine line between the selection of the data we think is real and censoring someone's opinion or work.

2 - Snoops app

The Snoops app is meant to be a tool to filter and facilitate access to verified sources. The information featured in the app depends on the user, the data they came across, and their interests.

The homepage will display a list of the received news in chronological order, with the additional sources and articles available as soon as the user clicks on the text they want to know more about.

A score will be included in the app next to every affirmation detected to give an immediate appreciation of its accuracy. This score will be an average of five groups of criteria that we believe are the best system to rate each information. The groups are Purpose and Intended audience, Authority

and Credibility, Accuracy and Reliability, Currency and Timeliness, and Objectivity or Bias. Clicking on the score, the user will be presented with a detailed description of every principle and how it is met or not.

Swiping left from the homepage, the user is presented with a profile page, which includes basic user information, notifications, and settings. Swiping right, there is a page with graphics and data to analyze the amount of information captured, the peaks, and the lows and other statistics.

2.1 - Objectives and Target audience

During the making of the Snoops app, we kept in mind specific objectives. Our main intention is to bring to light the Post-truth problem and to warn our users that we must never absorb nor accept information acritically. Beyond bringing awareness, we also wish to provide our users with a tool that will help them endure this critical process, which starts by learning more about a certain subject and ends with a more complete and informed opinion. Altogether, our app should inform, educate, and protect its users.

The target audience we intended for the Snoops app is people between the age of 18 to 55 that search for and receive a lot of information daily and are worried about the veracity of the facts that reach them.



Figure 1: Snoops app first screen and home screen



Figure 2: Snoops app animation frame

Limitations

To accomplish this project we are aware that there are several restraints. In our original concept, the app would be able to collect all of the information that the user would assimilate, by seeing or hearing. But that would raise the need for a way to capture the same as the user's eyes, and for the moment we couldn't find a solution for it. However, we recognize that in the future this app could be more comprehensive. For this project, we decided to make an app, and thus we focused on what the user hears and can be captured by the mobile phone. From the start, we faced the privacy issue, since the assumption that the Snoops app hears everything the user hears can be problematic, but in reality, this basically already happens with our smartphones. Therefore we figured that this aspect wouldn't be shocking since with the app the user knows how it operates and the data is used only for its known purposes.

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