

## ANATOMY OF A LIE: MAPPING THE STRUCTURE AND SPREAD OF HOAXES IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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### Abstract

In the digital era, the spread of hoaxes or fake news has become an increasingly complex and worrying phenomenon. Hoaxes are not just misinformation, but have a systematic structure and pattern of dissemination, fuelled by political and economic gain, or simply provocation. Social media and digital platforms play a major role as catalysts for the spread of hoaxes due to their characteristics of wide reach, speed of dissemination, and low filtering of truthful information. Mechanisms such as echo chambers and digital platform algorithms amplify the effects of hoaxes, increasing the risk for individuals with low digital literacy. To counter the negative impact of hoaxes, strategic measures are needed such as improving digital literacy, strengthening education on information verification, and developing effective regulations in the digital world. Collaboration between the government, digital platforms and the public is essential to address the threat posed by hoaxes, as well as to shape a more critical and informed society.

**Key Words:** Anatomy of a Lie, Structure, Hoax Spread, Digital Age.

### Introduction

The digital age has brought about major changes in the way people obtain and share information. The internet, social media and communication technologies have accelerated the spread of information around the world. As such, the spread of information, especially inaccurate information or hoaxes, can have serious impacts on individuals, groups and society at large. At the social level, the spread of hoaxes often triggers conflict, division and polarisation in society due to the emergence of various conflicting viewpoints (D. Silverman, 2015). In addition, in the political realm, hoaxes can be used to manipulate public opinion, lead to certain perceptions, and even destabilise the country. In the economic sector, false information can reduce public trust in certain institutions or products, leading to potential financial losses. Not only that, the spread of false information also has a direct impact on people's psychology, by creating fear, panic, or even apathy in receiving news. All these impacts serve as a reminder of the importance of collective efforts to improve information and digital literacy (DiResta & et al., 2018).