Judyta Rykowska, MA

WSB University in Dąbrowa Górnicza

e-mail: : jrykowska@gmail.com

RELIABILITY OF INTERNET SERVICES INCLUDING THE THREATS OF HATE

Abstract

The credibility of a website means the user's confidence that their expectations regarding receiving specific information from this website will be met without incurring additional, unjustified costs: economic, social, psychological, legal and ethical. On the other hand, the problem of hate speech is a relatively new phenomenon, but definitely a very negative one. Nowadays, we know that hate causes many negative consequences. In extreme cases, it can lead to suicide, because hate is a discrimination, it is intentional criticism that sometimes takes the form of exceptional cruelty.

Key words

Internet, threats, hate, safety

Introduction

The credibility of a website means the user's belief that their expectations regarding receiving specific information from this website will be met without incurring additional, unjustified costs: economic, social, psychological, legal and ethical. Nowadays, information is becoming an increasingly more valuable resource.[1] Thanks to mass computerization and the continuous development of ICT networks, managing an increasing amount of information is becoming easier than ever before.[2] Unfortunately, along with the simultaneous development of the knowledge society, the excessive amount and decreasing quality of available information is becoming an increasingly greater problem. The global Internet is a tool that provides, on the one hand, unlimited possibilities for exchanging and obtaining information, and on the other hand, it is a place where its excess creates a risk of unverified or false information appearing.[3] This is influenced by, among others: great information freedom and the increasing commercialization of the Internet.[4]

The following can be considered reliable information:
– confirmed in several sources
– if several websites publish the same information, we can hypothesize that it is true;

– published on the Internet by entities that enjoy authority and are reflected in material reality (e.g. www.gazeta.pl, www.rzeczpospolita.pl), enjoy social trust (e.g. www.wosp.org.pl) or are known an authority, e.g. in the field of science;
– located on the government website (e.g., www.mf.gov.pl).

When assessing the quality and, therefore, the credibility of information on the Internet, its content and form of presentation should be considered.

When assessing website content, you should pay attention to a number of criteria, such as:
– thematic scope;
– correctness;
– completeness;
– objectivity;
– data validity.[5]

The criteria for assessing the quality and reliability of information provided in electronic documents include primarily the following attributes[6]:
– timeliness (determining whether the found documents have a publication date, whether the content is topical, whether the frequency of content updates is consistent with its content),
– authority (determining whether the found documents are signed with the author's name, whether

1   More: M. B. Małecka, *Analiza rozwoju portali społecznościowych w Internecie*, Warszawa 2008.

2   https://help.eset.com/glossary/pl-PL/email.html [access: 12.04.2024 r.].

3   See: V. Rogers, *Cyberprzemoc – jak być bezpiecznym w sieci: ćwiczenia dla dzieci i młodzieży*, Warszawa 2011.

4   http://www.e-mentor.edu.pl/artykul/index/numer/81/id/1433 [access:12.04.2024 r.].

5   M. Nowakowski, *Ocena wiarygodności informacji w serwisach internetowych*, „Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego" 2015, No 36, pp.106–107.

6   Evaluating Information Found on the Internet https://www.uv.es/~fores/programa/kirk_evalinternet.html [access:12.04.2024 r.].

the author is a specialist/expert in each field),

– accuracy (determining whether the content of the found documents is adequate to the level of knowledge represented by the recipient, whether it precisely and precisely defines the topic),

– availability (determining whether the found documents are available when they are needed by the right recipients),

– completeness (determining whether the found documents contain the appropriate amount of data that is sufficient to be processed into specific knowledge),

– correctness (determining whether the found documents contain content that is correct in terms of editing, grammar, spelling and style),

– relevance (determining whether the found documents have content corresponding to the information sought, whether this content meets the needs and is important for the recipients of the information),

– reliability of the transmission (determining whether the found documents contain information confirming the truthfulness of the transmitted data and contain elements ensuring the reliability of the transmission).

In turn, the criteria for assessing the quality and credibility of information in terms of the electronic media that make it available include:

– timeliness (determining whether the found documents have been on a website that has been operating on the Internet for a long time, whether the website has information about the date of creation and the last update),

– legal aspects (determining whether the found documents are available on the website with information on privacy policy, data processing procedures, data security policy),

– authority (determining whether the found documents are on a widely known and prestigious website, whether the website can boast of positive opinions about itself on the Internet),

– availability (determining whether the found documents are on the website adapted to be viewed from different browsers, whether they can be read in both text and graphic versions, whether the website is free from software errors, whether access to the website content is free of charge, whether the website is working on an appropriate quality server, whether the website supports people with various disabilities),

– completeness (determining whether the found documents contain enough data for the selected topic, whether they have links to other sites, whether these links work properly and are valuable),

– objectivity (determining whether the found documents are located on a website with objectively written content and comments, whether the website has links to other competing websites, whether there is a balance between one point of view and another, whether the website uses the so-called

propaganda content on its websites),

– appropriateness of form (determining whether the found documents are located on a website with a specific purpose, whether all documents have an appropriate description and presentation, whether text content is supplemented with photos, graphics and other documents or multimedia effects, whether the latest technological solutions are used to transmit information and expanding the offer),

– popularity (determining whether the documents found are on the website with a visit counter and general visit statistics, what is the number of pages referring, i.e., linking, to the website, whether the links placed on the website pages work correctly),

– usability (determining whether the found documents are on a website with an intuitive user interface, whether the content has been properly selected for the group of target users, whether the website has a help system, whether there are foreign language versions on the website, whether the website has appropriate page interactivity, whether communication is possible with the owner/administrator of the website),

– image (determining whether the found documents are on a website with a good image in terms of graphics, typography and intuitive

division of information on the main page and subpages, what type of domain the website supports, whether the website has an original graphic design, etc.),

– ownership (determination whether: found documents are located on the website for which the owner, form and legal nature of the website can be determined).[7]

Currently, using the Internet and network services is a standard to which an increasing number of people are becoming accustomed, regardless of gender, nationality or place of residence. At the same time, more and more users of the global network are engaged in active networking activities. This automatically creates more and more content available to everyone, which is not always of appropriate quality, because the ease of entering it causes the mechanisms of its verification to slowly disappear. Therefore, it is important for every Internet user to be aware that not all content found there may have information value. Therefore, it is worth expanding your knowledge not only with new opportunities to obtain information, but with the possibilities and tools for verifying it in terms of quality and compliance with reality. This applies to companies and institutions for which the value of information is increasingly important in their activities, but it also applies to users who use network technologies only for private purposes[8]. Websites edited by Internet users may be a signal and not a source of information, e.g., Wikipedia – although there may be

---

7   M. Nowakowski, *Ocena wiarygodności…*, pp. 107–108.

8   http://www.e-mentor.edu.pl/artykul/index/numer/19/id/410 [access: 12.04.2024 r.].

„gems" there, they do not have a certificate of credibility. The sources of vocations should be checked, as well as their credibility.

Hate on the Internet

The problem of hate is a new phenomenon, but definitely a very negative one. Nowadays, we know that hate causes many negative consequences. In extreme cases, it can lead to suicide.[9]

The term „HATE" is difficult to clearly explain. It is in vain to look for its definition in the dictionary. This word comes from English, specifically from the word „HATE", i.e., to hate, while a „BULLIES" is a name for people spreading hate. Such a person posts offensive comments on the Internet that are intended to promote discrimination or provoke Internet users into arguments, insult and cause people affected by the hate to significantly lower their self – esteem. The effects of hate are what the person being hated feels most strongly. Being exposed to public attacks on the Internet can even lead to very serious health problems. Hate should never be taken lightly. Every attack on the Internet hurts in real life. It is difficult to give an exact definition of the term „hate". Famous people are most vulnerable to hate on the Internet. Hate also involves incitement to hatred and discrimination on religious, sexual or political grounds[10].

Hate is a phenomenon present not only on the Internet, but also in personal life. It involves negative and aggressive comments or a hostile attitude towards a topic or person. Hate is an activity full of hatred, which primarily refers to the Internet. Anyone online can become the target of hate. This behavior includes not only snappy or aggressive comments, but also offensive memes, videos and graphics. This content is published solely for the purpose of causing distress to the other person. So-called „haters" despise and humiliate other people on the Internet. These behaviors can be seen particularly strongly on Instagram, Facebook and TikTok, but also on all kinds of discussion forums relating to various spheres of life.[11] What drives the scale of hate is being anonymous online. This is done using the written word, there is no direct contact with the person being hated. This situation definitely facilitates this type of behaviour.

It can be noticed that the reason for hate is very often:

– jealousy,
– dissatisfaction with your life or appearance,
– bad mood, negative emotions, accumulation of bad mood,
– the existence of stereotypes and prejudices towards specific social groups,
– strong political views,
– desire to offend others,
– dissatisfaction with your life situation[12].

The consequences of hate are felt very intensely by the person who is subjected

---

9 See: J. Koszewska, *Internet i nowe technologie w zapobieganiu samobójstwom*, Warszawa 2014; A. Gawliński, *Namowa lub pomoc w samobójstwie. Aspekty kryminalistyczne i kryminologiczne*, Olsztynek 2018.

10 https://dziendobry.tvn.pl/styl-zycia/hejt-w-internecie-na-czym-polega-jakie-sa-kary-da305192 [access:12.04.2024 r.].

11 See: A. Borkowska, *Cyberprzemoc. Włącz blokadę na nękanie. Poradnik dla rodziców*, Warszawa 2020.

12 https://psychoterapiacotam.pl/hejt-w-internecie/ [access: 16.04.2024 r.].

to this behavior. Those stigmatized on the Internet have a reduced sense of self – worth. A person who is a victim of hate lives under enormous stress and may therefore suffer from insomnia, depression, neurosis and even attempt suicide[13]. Hate is such a broad concept that it is hard to find it in the Penal Code. However, acts such as defamation, insult, persistent harassment or criminal threats are reflected in the Penal Code and may be enforced. The above behavior may get the perpetrator into serious trouble with the law. It is not difficult to write one word too many on the Internet. We should be very careful about what we publish, because everything on the Internet leaves a trace. Sometimes one word can cause great harm.

Aggressive and hateful behavior, insults, curses and insults, death wishes, posting on internet forums, however, have their limits. This boundary is the hallmarks of a prohibited act. Most of them are prosecuted at the request of the injured party, which means that the case requires a private indictment. It is worth doing this so as not to give haters a sense of impunity. A child who is the object of attacks, humiliation and ridicule from others may not be able to cope with such a difficult situation. The types of hate that are classified as crimes include:

- criminal threat (Article 190 of the Penal Code),
- stalking (Article 190a of the Penal Code),

- bullying (Article 207 of the Penal Code),
- defamation (Article 212 of the Penal Code),
- insulting a person (Article 216 of the Penal Code),
- racism art. 257 Penal Code and art. 107 of the Code of Petty Offences[14].

Based on M. Czaplicka's report „Hate on the Internet" from September 2015, network monitoring data leave no doubts. A lot is written about hate. In the period from September 1, 2014 to July 1, 2015, statements on the Internet with the words hate, hater, hate, etc. were mentioned almost a million times (946 thousand). Men dominate – 57% to 42%. People write most often on Facebook – 6 out of 10 statements, Twitter (17%) and photo and video portals, e.g. YouTube – every tenth comment about hate appears there.[15]

However, research conducted and published according to the report "Wolves and sheep on the Internet, or a report on hate among young people" (October 2016) indicates that insulting, criticizing, ridiculing and humiliating others are determinants of hate – speech. This report states that as many as 33% of Internet users define hate as insulting, while 23% consider criticizing other people, ridiculing, malicious, humiliating and harassing people on the Internet as violence. Approx. 20% of people have encountered the term hate and know exactly what it means, while 5% have not

---

13 https://dziendobry.tvn.pl/styl-zycia/hejt-w-internecie-na-czym-polega-jakie-sa-kary-da305192 [access:16.04.2024 r.].

14 https://nszzp.pl/aktualnosci-prawne/hejt-nie-przekraczaj-tej-granicy-za-ktora-grozi-odpowiedzialnosc-karna/ [access: 19.04.2024 r.].

15 M. Czaplicka, *Hejt w Internecie. Raport Ilościowy*, Warszawa 2015.

encountered such a term.[16] The report "Wolves and sheep on the Internet, i.e. a report on hate among young people" shows that there are twice as many people aged 12–24 who experience hate as those who generate such behavior. This means that for every seventh young person, hatred has become an everyday occurrence: they both hate and experience hate. Every third person has fallen victim to oppressors, even though they do not communicate in this way themselves.

This phenomenon intensifies during secondary school; During this period, the highest percentage of both haters and hated people was recorded. The youngest ones most often check posts under their own entries rather than post negative entries. Their activities are dominated by positive entries. Only one in nine entries is negative. This shows how the amount of tension and anger and the ease of „letting it out" increase with age.

As statistics obtained from the report show, the desire to express one's – often critical – opinions is the dominant reason for posting entries, and every seventh person changes their views based on critical comments from other Internet users. What is most terrifying is that young people are aware of the consequences of excessive hate and are very strongly convinced that haters should bear the legal consequences of their actions, and yet:

despite everything, they want to have the right to express their opinions (often very harmful) in a situation, when someone behaves "stupidly" and some of them feel that they have the right to freedom of speech, i.e., the right to hate.

Hate – a case study

An example of hate is Kasia Lenhardt, who died at the age of 25. Kasia fell victim to mass online cyberbullying. The model broke up with the famous Bayern Munich footballer, Jerome Boateng, which was exceptional fodder for gossip portals. There were accusations, presumptions and quotes from the former partner as well as unrefined suggestions towards Kasia Lenhardt. The young woman was harassed in the media in the comments, and this situation was intensified by the headlines of gossip portals, which humiliated her as a woman. Once again, the media issued a verdict without listening to the witness, and internet haters became the judges. This brought the woman to the brink of mental exhaustion, because of which she took her own life. Katarzyna Lenhardt was honored on social media by her mother, Adrianna Lenhardt. She posted on Instagram: „My angel, fly to heaven. Fly, my angel. No one will cut off your wings." In one of her first posts, Ms. Adrianna Lenhardt drew attention to mobbing. He believes that he caused his daughter's death: „Mobbing… You took my child away from me."

There are many more examples of such effects of hate on the Internet, for example: Hana Kimura, the star of Japanese wrestling and the popular Netflix show „Terrace House", took her own life at the age of 22. In Poland,

---

16 https://globaldignity.pl/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Wilki-i-owce-w-internecie_raport_Glibal-Dignity-Poland_ IQS_2016.pdf [access: 19.04.2024 r.].

on March 18, 2020, a wonderful man, Professor Wojciech Rokita, passed away. The professor and doctor was infected with the coronavirus, but his death was not related to the deterioration of his health as a result of COVID-19. He fell victim to mass online harassment. A sensitive doctor committed suicide. The daughter of the deceased professor then told the „Uwaga!" program: „Dad said he was exhausted and tired. People would not leave him alone. They went crazy. They wrote and called even at 4 a.m. They wrote terrible things."

The "SOS Children's Villages in Poland" association conducted a survey as part of the social campaign "Online violence leaves invisible wounds". Data for the study were collected at the turn of December 2020 and January 2021 via a survey delivered to young people aged 13+. 238 children aged 13+ were examined. The respondents were asked whether their friends were affected by cyberbullying. Almost half of the respondents (49%) claim that their friends are most often the victims of name-calling, humiliation, and ridicule on the Internet. Impersonating someone is also quite common (41%). Many young people also said that their friends are threatened (31%) and blackmailed (21%) online, and that degrading materials are sent to people they know (27%). 42% of young people answered that they were insulted online, many people also experienced humiliation and ridicule (23%), 17% of people were threatened, and 15% experienced impersonation and sending

degrading materials about themselves, while every tenth respondent admits that he was blackmailed.[17]

Summary

Hate is hate speech. This is deliberate criticism that sometimes takes the form of exceptional cruelty. We must fight it and fight it on several fields. First of all, it's worth starting with yourself. Think about what is being said and why, and if we see hate, let's react by setting boundaries and not entering into discussions and further insults. Those who are hated, who do not use this form of communication themselves, are significantly more likely than others to be convinced of the need to apply legal consequences against haters. However, this opinion is not shared by haters who do not experience hate. People experiencing hate more often invoke freedom of speech than others.[18]

Bibliography

Borkowska A., *Cyberprzemoc. Włącz blokadę na nękanie. Poradnik dla rodziców*, Warszawa 2020.

Czaplicka M., *Hejt w Internecie. Raport Ilościowy*, Warszawa 2015.

Evaluating Information Found on the Internet https://www.uv.es/~fores/programa/kirk_evalinternet.html.

Gawliński A., *Namowa lub pomoc w samobójstwie. Aspekty kryminalistyczne i kryminologiczne*, Olsztynek 2018.

---

17 https://poland.us/strona, 25, 39620, 0, kasia-lenhardt-polska-modelka-popelnila-samobojstwo-przez-hejt-w-sieci.html?fbclid=IwAR2VUyo3oIDkUq71aEGNb7pDVua95nX0-yo7T8uAKETCfDySbJVTiaJhB_I [access: 19.04.2024 r.].
18 Ibidem.

Koszewska J., *Internet i nowe technologie w zapobieganiu samobójstwom*, Warszawa 2014.

Małecka M. B., *Analiza rozwoju portali społecznościowych w Internecie*, Warszawa 2008.

Nowakowski M., Ocena wiarygodności informacji w serwisach internetowych, „Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego" 2015, No 36.

Rogers V., *Cyberprzemoc – jak być bezpiecznym w sieci: ćwiczenia dla dzieci i młodzieży*, Warszawa 2011.

http://www.e-mentor.edu.pl/artykul/index/numer/19/id/410.

http://www.e-mentor.edu.pl/artykul/index/numer/81/id/1433.

https://dziendobry.tvn.pl/styl-zycia/hejt-w-internecie-na-czym-polega-jakie-sa-kary--da305192.

https://dziendobry.tvn.pl/styl-zycia/hejt-w-internecie-na-czym-polega-jakie-sa-kary--da305192.

https://globaldignity.pl/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Wilki-i-owce-w-internecie_raport_Glibal-Dignity-Poland_IQS_2016.pdf.

https://help.eset.com/glossary/pl-PL/email.html.

https://nszzp.pl/aktualnosci-prawne/hejt-nie--przekraczaj-tej-granicy-za-ktora-grozi--odpowiedzialnosc-karna/.

https://poland.us/strona, 25, 39620, 0, kasia-lenhardt-polska-modelka-popelnila-samobojstwo-przez-hejt-w-sieci.html?fbclid=IwAR2VUyo3oIDkUq71aEGNb7pDVua95nX0-yo7T8uAKETCfDySbJVTiaJhB_I.

https://psychoterapiacotam.pl/hejt-w-internecie/.

About the Author

Judyta Rykowska, she is a 1st and 2nd degree graduate in internal security at the University of Finance and Law (Academy of Applied Sciences). She completed her first-cycle studies specializing in forensics and criminology, and her second-cycle studies specializing in information security and IT systems. Additionally, she completed postgraduate studies in occupational health and safety and pedagogical preparation. She has been involved in the protection of people, property and areas for 10 years.