



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Automated Detection And Classification Of Fake News Using Machine Learning

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Abstract:

The rapid spread of fake news on social media and other digital platforms has become a serious concern, as it can mislead the public and even pose threats to national security. To address this issue, researchers are actively exploring solutions to identify and prevent the distribution of false information.

In this project, we explore existing research in this area and concentrate on applying traditional machine learning methods to determine the most effective approach for distinguishing between genuine and fake news articles. We'll be using supervised learning, which involves training a model with labelled examples of both real and fake news.

The implementation will be done in Python, using the scikit-learn library along with Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques. NLP helps the model understand the content of articles by breaking down the text into key components, known as features, that the model can analyse.

To convert the text data into a numerical format that machine learning algorithms can understand, we'll use tools like CountVectorizer and TfidfVectorizer. These tools help represent the importance of words and phrases in each article. We'll also experiment with different methods to select the most relevant features.

The ultimate objective is to develop a model that can accurately classify news as real or fake. To evaluate its performance, we'll use a confusion matrix, which provides a clear breakdown of correct and incorrect predictions.

Introduction

Fake news often involves spreading inaccurate or deceptive content—such as falsified statistics or inflated prices—which can lead to significant consequences, including social instability. A notable example is the Arab Spring, where the circulation of misleading stories contributed to rising tensions and unrest.

While initiatives like the UK's House of Commons reports and the Crosscheck project aim to combat misinformation by fact-checking and holding media outlets accountable, these efforts mainly depend on human intervention. Given the massive volume of content shared online each day, manual verification alone is too slow and resource-intensive to keep up.

To address this challenge, researchers have increasingly turned to technological solutions. A number of studies have examined how machine learning can be applied to detect fake news. For instance, Rashkin et al. (2017) analysed language patterns and writing styles to identify deceptive content. Ahmed et al. (2018) developed models for classifying text to separate real from fake news. Similarly, Shu et al. (2019) provided an overview of methods that combine natural language processing (NLP) with machine learning to enhance detection effectiveness. These studies demonstrate that automated tools, when trained properly, can reliably detect misleading information based on both content and source characteristics.

Our Approach

In this paper, we suggest building an automated system that can check how trustworthy a news article is. The system will use machine learning to look at things like the article's wording, headline, and source. We'll train it with a labelled dataset—this means each news article in the data is already marked as either real or fake, which helps the model learn the difference.

We'll use tools like CountVectorizer and TfidfVectorizer to convert text into numbers that a

computer can understand. Then, we'll test different machine learning models (like Random Forest, SVM, and Naïve Bayes) to see which one works best. We'll also use feature selection methods to find out which parts of the text—such as specific words or phrases—are most useful for making accurate predictions.

To measure how well the model performs, we'll use a confusion matrix, which shows how many predictions were right and wrong. The final goal is to create a tool that can automatically classify new articles as real or fake. This system could work on its own or be added to websites and platforms to help stop the spread of fake news in the future.

Literature Review

Social Media and Fake News

Social media includes websites and apps that people use to chat, share posts, write blogs, save links, and contribute to online communities like wikis. While fake news can sometimes be shared on purpose, researchers believe it often spreads by mistake—especially when people aren't fully informed. For example, during the Nepal Earthquake, false information spread quickly due to confusion and panic.

In 2020, fake news became especially dangerous in health-related topics. The World Health Organization (WHO) warned that during the COVID-19 outbreak, people were overwhelmed with too much information—some true, some false. This flood of content, known as an "infodemic," made it harder for people to find trustworthy news and put public health at risk.

Natural Language Processing (NLP)

Natural Language Processing (NLP) helps computers understand and work with human language. It's used to read, analyse, and even generate text or speech. NLP can detect different

languages and understand things like what someone is saying, how they feel, or who or what they're talking about.

Chunking and semantic role labelling – understanding how parts of a sentence relate to each other

Another important part of NLP is Sentiment Analysis, which looks at the feelings behind the words—whether the tone is positive, negative, or neutral. It works by checking key words and phrases and assigning them scores based on how strong or emotional they are.

While these tools work well for many European languages like English and Italian, they can be harder to use with languages like Hindi, Arabic, or Sanskrit. For instance, Sanskrit uses a method called tree-banking to understand grammar, while Arabic uses Support Vector Machines (SVMs) to figure out the structure of sentences and types of words.

Data Mining

Data mining is the process of finding useful patterns, trends, or insights from large amounts of data. There are two main types:

Supervised learning – The system learns from data that already has labels (like “fake” or “real”) and uses that knowledge to make predictions on new data.

Unsupervised learning – The system looks for hidden patterns or groups in data that hasn't been labelled. A common method is clustering, where similar data points are grouped together.

Machine Learning (ML) Classification

Machine learning is a part of artificial intelligence where computers learn from past data and improve over time. Instead of being manually programmed, the system figures out how to make decisions on its own.

In this project, we use six different machine learning models to decide whether a news article is fake or real. The model is trained on features chosen by the data scientist, and once it learns enough, it can start making predictions on new, unseen data.

Decision Tree

A Decision Tree is a simple but powerful tool used in machine learning to make predictions. It works like a flowchart: each step asks a question about a feature (like “Does the article mention a known fake news source?”), and based on the answer, the data follows a branch until it reaches a final result—such as “Fake” or “Real.”

Decision trees are easy to understand and work well with both numbers and categories. They help show which features are most useful, how they relate to each other, and can even create new features during analysis. Because of this, they are commonly used in early data exploration and prediction tasks.

START

1. Import and Load the Dataset
 - Input: A collection of news articles, each labeled as either *real* or *fake*.
 - Output: Separated into text content (X) and their corresponding labels (Y).
2. Clean and Prepare the Text Data
 - Convert all characters in the text to lowercase.
 - Eliminate punctuation marks and common words that don't carry much meaning (stopwords).
 - Break down the text into individual words (tokenization).
 - Apply word normalization using stemming or reduce words to their base forms.
3. Transform Text into Numerical Features
 - Use tools like CountVectorizer or TF-IDF Vectorizer to convert the cleaned text into a set of numerical

values that a machine learning model can understand.

4. Divide the Dataset
 - Split the data into two parts: training and testing sets. A common ratio is 80% for training and 20% for testing.
5. Train the Decision Tree Model
 - Create an instance of a Decision Tree classifier.
 - Train the model using the training data (X_train, Y_train).
6. Generate Predictions
 - Use the trained model to predict outcomes on the test data (X_test).
7. Measure Model Performance
 - Evaluate how well the model performs using metrics such as:
 - Confusion Matrix
 - Accuracy Score
 - Precision and Recall
8. Save the Final Model
 - Store the trained model so it can be reused for future predictions without retraining.

END

Tree-Based Learning Algorithms

Tree-based learning algorithms are commonly used in supervised learning because they often give very accurate results. They are especially good at handling complex, non-linear relationships between data. These algorithms can be used for both classification and regression tasks. One popular type of tree-based model is called CART.

Methodology.

Data Collection

Methodology

1. Collecting the Data

We began by gathering a dataset of news articles that were already labeled as either *real* or *fake*. These labels are essential because they teach the machine what true and false news typically look like.

2. Preparing the Text

Before training the model, we cleaned up the text to make it easier for the computer to understand. This involved:

- Changing all letters to lowercase
- Removing punctuation and common words (like "the", "is", "and")
- Breaking the sentences into individual words (called *tokenization*)

This made the text more structured and simple for further analysis.

3. Turning Text into Numbers (Feature Extraction)

Since machines can't directly understand words, we had to convert the text into numbers. We used two common methods:

- **CountVectorizer:** Counts how often each word appears
- **TF-IDF:** Highlights words that are unique and important in each article compared to the whole dataset

These methods help turn the articles into numerical data that the model can work with.

4. Selecting the Most Important Features

Not every word is helpful in deciding whether a news article is real or fake. So, we picked only the most useful words or features. This step makes the model faster

and more accurate by focusing only on what really matters.

- 5. Training and Testing the Model
- The dataset was split into two segments:

Training data – utilized to train and build the machine learning model.

Testing data – used to evaluate the model's accuracy and performance.

We applied three widely-used classification algorithms to train the model:

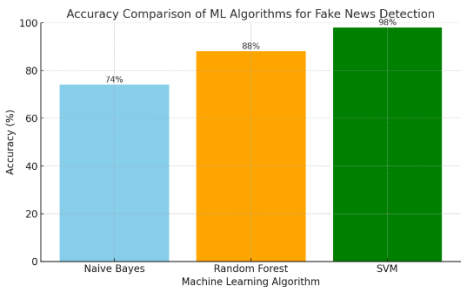
- Random Forest
- Support Vector Machine (SVM)
- Naïve Bayes

To improve performance, we also tested a combined method (voting system) that uses all three models together.

Summary Table

Algorithm	Speed	Accuracy	Best Use Case
Naive Bayes	Very Fast	~70–76%	Quick text classification, small data
Random Forest	Moderate	~85–91%	Balanced power and performance
SVM	Slower	~96–99%	High accuracy needed, complex data

Here's a graph comparing the accuracy of three popular machine learning algorithms—Naive Bayes, Random Forest, and Support Vector Machine (SVM)—for fake news detection.

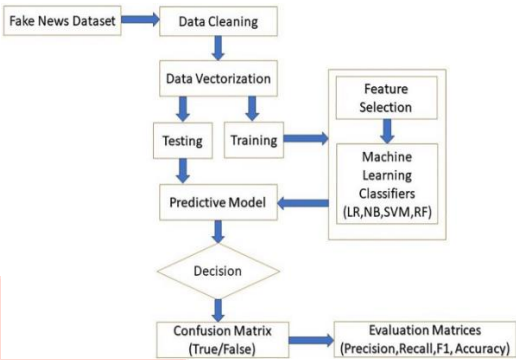


- 6. Evaluating the Model
- After training, we tested the model using the test set. To measure how well it worked, we looked at:

Accuracy: How often the model gave the correct answer

Precision: How well it identified fake news specifically

Confusion Matrix: A table showing how many articles were correctly or incorrectly labelled



Result and Discussion

Scope of the Project

The goal of this project was to identify fake political news using a dataset known as the LIAR dataset, which includes news articles that are already marked as either real or fake.

We followed a clear step-by-step approach to analyze and work with this data:

- Collecting the Data
- We used a pre-labelled dataset of political news where each article was tagged as either true or false.
- Cleaning the Text (Preprocessing)
- Before analysing the articles, we cleaned the text by:
- Removing punctuation marks
 - Changing all letters to lowercase

- Removing common words that don't add much meaning, like "is," "the," and "and"

3. Converting Text to Numbers (Feature Extraction)

Since computers work with numbers, not words, we used tools like TF-IDF and Count Vectorizer to change the words into numerical values.

4. Choosing Key Information (Feature Selection)

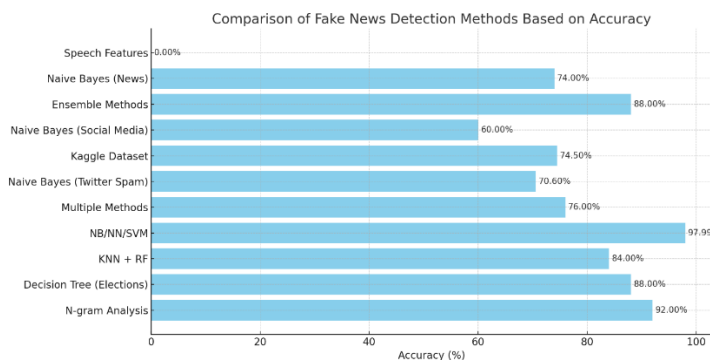
We picked out the most useful words and patterns that help the model tell the difference between real and fake news. This helps the model perform better and faster.

5. Checking Model Accuracy (Evaluation)

We tested how well the model worked by looking at:

- Accuracy: How often it got the result right
- Precision: How well it identified fake news specifically
- Confusion Matrix: A simple table showing correct and incorrect predictions

We used these steps to analyze the dataset, and the results showed which machine learning algorithm performed the best at detecting fake news.



Here's a graph comparing different fake news detection methods based on their reported accuracy. It clearly shows how various approaches perform, with methods like N-gram

analysis and the combination of neural networks and SVM achieving the highest accuracy.

Conclusion

This research focused on detecting fake news in two main steps: understanding fake news and finding ways to detect it.

In the first part, we looked at how fake news spreads, especially on social media. In the second part, we explored different methods to detect fake news using machine learning algorithms.

Many studies have tried to detect fake news by analysing text, with different approaches and results:

One study used speech features and predictive methods but didn't perform well.

Another study used a Naive Bayes classifier to detect fake news, with an accuracy of 74%.

Some research combined different machine learning algorithms but had varying results, with accuracy ranging from 85% to 91%.

Studies using Naive Bayes for social media fake news detection had lower accuracy for unreliable sources.

Research using data from Kaggle achieved about 74.5% accuracy.

One study detecting Twitter spam with Naive Bayes had accuracy between 70% and 71.2%.

Another team tried several methods and got 76% accuracy.

A study comparing Naive Bayes, Neural Networks, and Support Vector Machines (SVM) found Naive Bayes at 96.08% accuracy, while other methods reached 99.90%.

Research combining KNN and random forests improved accuracy by 8%.

A study of fake news during the 2012 Dutch elections showed that the decision tree algorithm worked best with an F-score of 88%.

One study using N-gram analysis for fake news detection reached the highest accuracy of 92%.

From reviewing these studies, we found that many used the Naive Bayes algorithm, with accuracy ranging from 70% to 76%. Most studies focused on qualitative analysis, like sentiment analysis and word frequency.

Our approach builds on these methods by adding quantitative analysis using Part-of-Speech (POS) tagging. We believe this will improve accuracy, especially with the addition of extra features like:

- Total word count
- Count of distinct (unique) words
- Type-to-token ratio (TTR) — a measure of vocabulary richness
- Total sentence count
- Mean sentence length (ASL)
- Total number of characters
- Mean word length (AWL)
- Frequency of parts of speech

By adding these extra features, we hope to improve the precision of detecting fake news.

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