

## NTU's Centre Studies Online Behaviour During the Pandemic

Kirana Aisyah | February 4, 2022



The COVID-19 pandemic has increased people's reliance on different media technologies to navigate daily life, making them more likely to be susceptible to digital harms, such as being exposed to falsehoods circulating online. To [monitor](#) Singapore residents' online behaviour during the pandemic, such as how they interacted with fake news, their online shopping activity and digital payment trends, researchers at Nanyang Technology University's (NTU's) Centre for Information Integrity and the Internet (IN-cube) tracked a panel of Singapore residents through online surveys in Dec 2020, Jun 2021, and Dec 2021. Singapore is considered to be one of the most digitally connected nations in the world.

According to [findings](#) from a study, there is a disconnect between how confident people here are in spotting fake news and their ability to actually do so amid the Covid-19 pandemic. About half of the people polled here – 48 to 53 per cent – said they could tell if a piece of information on social media is true or false. However, about seven in 10 – 69 to 76 per cent – admitted that they have unknowingly shared fake news.

The study sought to understand Internet use in Singapore over time and polled between 420 and 1,610 Singapore residents online, aged 21 and above. On why some people share fake news without realising could be due to how fake news tends to stir people's feelings.

For instance, scientific evidence is often conveyed in a very factual, even boring way, such as showing that vaccines work. This does not usually trigger emotions in people. But people who are not on their guard may get emotional over fake news on how vaccines could cause side effects, making them want to share it. Another reason is the “better safe than sorry” attitude. People do not want to miss out on a good deal, or to miss out on such a critical piece of information.

The study showed that this reason was more prevalent amongst the baby-boomer generation, where they tend to forward fake news to warn their family and friends. They also send news that they think will interest the people around them, which might signal a desire to maintain or improve social connections with others. But not everyone who shares fake news doesn't know that it's fake news. 51 to 60% of people surveyed shared fake news, even when they know it is fake.

Singapore has one of the world's farthest-reaching [anti-misinformation laws](#) enacted in recent years and other countries have modelled similar legislation after Singapore. Rights groups, however, have warned that the law's broad scope could be used to hinder free speech and target government critics.

As [reported](#) by OpenGov Asia, NTU Quantum Science and Engineering Centre has developed microchips smaller than fingernails which can predict stock performance, encrypt data and model networks like COVID-19 clusters. The centre aims to develop devices and technologies powered by quantum science – the study of how particles behave at the atomic level.

The centre, the first of its kind in Singapore, will conduct research on developing and producing quantum chips using semiconductor fabrication technologies. These chips form the backbone of quantum devices such as quantum chip processors, networks, and sensors. They hold important applications in many areas such as quantum computing, communication, cryptography, cybersecurity, and sensor technology.

The Centre aims to train skilled manpower for quantum engineering, the application of quantum science to real-world scenarios, and to promote and develop Singapore's quantum industry. It will collaborate with the Centre for Quantum Technologies (CQT), a Research Centre of Excellence established in 2007, on quantum technology research and engineering application, and look to establishing an international platform to collaborate with other overseas partners.