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THE «VENTRILOQUIST EFFECT» OF THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS AGENCIES. THEORETICAL REVIEW AND INCIDENCE ON NEW FORMS OF MISINFORMATION

El «efecto ventrilocuo» en las agencias internacionales de noticias. Revisión teórica e incidencia en las nuevas formas de desinformación

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ABSTRACT

This research reflects, from a theoretical perspective, how most of the international events that reach the rest of the media are disseminated through news agencies, causing

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The «ventrilocuo effect» of the international news agencies. Theoretical review and incidence on new forms of misinformation

the well-known «ventriloquist effect»: multiple media, a single voice; and explores how online platforms have fostered this phenomenon, causing a structural increase in misinformation. In this sense, the research aims to understand the development of the «ventriloquist effect» with the progress of «new media» and, as a consequence, the increase of disinformation. For this grounded theory documentary analysis, the methodological procedure was based on the bibliographic review of the literature in the international reference databases (WoS and Scopus), carrying out an analysis of primary studies to synthesize the information. The results indicate, among other issues, that social networks foster spaces of structural misinformation in the current ecosystem. In conclusion, the relationship between the "ventriloquist effect" and misinformation, which arises from reticularly and information-digital decentralization, is determined.

KEYWORDS: Social networks - digital media - communication - ventriloquist effect - fake news - digital age - citizen participation - digital press - media literacy

RESUMEN

Esta investigación reflexiona, desde una perspectiva teórica, cómo a través de las agencias de noticias se difunden la mayoría de los acontecimientos internacionales que llegan al resto de los medios de comunicación, provocando el conocido «efecto ventrílocuo»: múltiples medios, una sola voz; y se indaga sobre cómo las plataformas *online* han fomentado este fenómeno, provocando un aumento estructural de la desinformación. En este sentido, la investigación tiene por objetivo conocer el desarrollo del «efecto ventrílocuo» con el progreso de los «nuevos medios» y como consecuencia, el aumento de la desinformación. Para este análisis documental de teoría fundamentada, el procedimiento metodológico se ha basado en la revisión bibliográfica de la literatura en las bases de datos internacionales de referencia (*WoS* y *Scopus*), realizando un análisis de estudios primarios, con el fin de sintetizar la información. Los resultados indican, entre otras cuestiones, que las redes sociales fomentan espacios de desinformación estructural en el ecosistema actual. En conclusión, se determina la relación entre el «efecto ventrílocuo» y la desinformación, que surge como consecuencia de la reticularidad y descentralización informativo-digital.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Redes sociales- medios digitales - comunicación - efecto ventrílocuo - desinformación - era digital -participación ciudadana - prensa digital - educucomunicación.

O <<EFEITO VENTRÍLOQUO>> NAS AGÊNCIAS INTERNACIONAIS DE NOTÍCIAS. REVISÃO TEÓRICA E INCIDÊNCIA NAS NOVAS FORMAS DE DESINFORMAÇÃO.

RESUMO

Esta pesquisa reflete, desde uma perspectiva teórica, como através das agências de notícias se difundem a maioria dos acontecimentos internacionais que chegam ao resto dos meios de comunicação, provocando o conhecido <<efeito ventríloquo>>: vários meios de comunicação, somente uma voz, e se investiga sobre como as plataformas online fomentam este fenômeno, causando um aumento estrutural da desinformação. Neste sentido, a pesquisa tem por objetivo conhecer o desenvolvimento do <<efeito ventríloquo>> com o crescimento dos <<novos meios de comunicação>> e como consequência, o aumento da desinformação. Para esta análise documental de teoria fundamentada, o procedimento metodológico foi a revisão bibliográfica da literatura com as bases internacionais de referência (Wos e Scopus), fazendo uma análise de estudos primários, com a finalidade de sintetizar a informação. Os resultados indicam, entre outras questões, que as redes sociais fomentam espaços de desinformação estrutural no ecossistema atual. Como conclusão, se determina a relação entre o «efeito ventríloquo» e a desinformação que surge como consequência da reticularidade e descentralização informativa-digital.

PALAVRAS CHAVE

Redes sociais - meios digitais - comunicação - efeito ventríloquo - desinformação - era digital - participação cidadã - imprensa digital - educomunicação.

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1. INTRODUCTION

News agencies are companies dedicated to preparing information and marketing it (Bustor and Pastor, 1995). Starting from this premise, it can be said that the spectrum of plurality is limited, giving way to what is known as the «ventriloquist effect»: “multiple media, one voice” (Arráez, 1998). In other words, despite the existence of a large number of media, most of the international information comes from the same sources, either due to a reduction of their own correspondents or due to the inability of the media to have ubiquitous journalists.

As a consequence, the information sent to the reader is weakened by three aspects: (1) ethnocentric bias, (2) handling of other sources, and (3) the agenda-setting effect. With the emergence and rise of the Internet and, therefore, digital newspapers and social networks, the “ventriloquist effect” has increased in scope and impact, which has generated consequences such as the expansion of biases. These concepts will be the object of study in the text, reflecting on the relationship between ventriloquist bypass and misinformation due to biases in the information age.

In this sense, documentary research is carried out that begins with the review of recent academic studies and literature, which allows framing the research, substantiating the field of study, and understanding the consequences derived from the “ventriloquist effect” in the digital ecosystem. For this, an exploration of the WoS and Scopus databases was carried out, under the search term misinformation and news agencies. Once the primary list was obtained (nSUM=11274), the search was

limited only to social science journals from 2015 to 2020 by criteria of thematic relevance, emerging a total of 2089 documents. Once the first phase was carried out, a second screening of the literature review and based theory was carried out, with which the same epistemological, ontological, and theoretical forms would be correlated. All this, through the analysis of content with an interpretative basis.

The results obtained indicate how the "ventriloquist effect" constitutes a dominant idea, hidden under a supposed plurality that in reality is nothing more than the paraphrase of different agencies and that is aggravated by the reach that the online media and the lack of media literacy of the audiences can have, regarding criteria of informative interpretation and understanding of biases.

Thus, the main objective of this research is to know the theoretical development and impact on the communicative praxis of the «ventriloquist effect» concerning the progress of new media, as well as to identify the increase in misinformation due to biases as a consequence of the reticularity of the digital ecosystem, thus arising the main research question (RQ1) how does digital evolution influence misinformation and the ventriloquist effect?

2. MATERIALS AND METHOD

This research is exploratory and descriptive, establishing as a field of analysis the impact of news from the same source (international news agency) and the relevance that misinformation acquires due to biases with this phenomenon in the digital field. To achieve the proposed objectives, a review of the current literature (2015-2020) on digital media and disinformation is carried out. The development of the study is structured in three phases: (i) Design the search strategy, (ii) the compilation of specialized literature on new forms of misinformation, and, (iii) the analysis of the extracted information.

To design the search strategy, the keywords that are related to the object of study were identified, which makes it possible to delimit the number of articles resulting from the preliminary search. Once the search criteria misinformation was carried out, the selected words were: misinformation, digital media, news agencies, "ventriloquist effect", social networks, and digital age. That is, after the first initial scan, those documents in which the previous words emerged were selected.

The reason why "misinformation" is selected as the search object instead of "ventriloquism" is because when searching only for ventriloquism effect, most of the resulting literature is related to studies on ventriloquism (the art of modifying and imitating voices and sounds) since the term, although it has been used for more than a decade, is not universalized in the scientific community of communication and journalism.

This documentary review was carried out in scientific databases, following an order by impact, starting with the main collection of the Web of Science (WoS) followed by

Scopus. These two databases are chosen as they are international and with selective procedures based on quantitative impacts (citations), understanding that the emerging documents in these repositories have had prior control, peer review, and scientific visibility.

Exploration was carried out selecting the period 2015-2020 to provide the research with a novel framework and detect the current development of the literature on this subject in the last five years (see figure 1). To search, the following selection criteria were taken into account:

- a. Thematic relationship: 6525 documents were analyzed in *Scopus* and 4749 in *WoS*, refining only those related to the object of study (Social Sciences-Communication area, type of document article, and journal source). After this screening, 1044 are selected in *Scopus* and 1049 in *WoS*.
- b. Due to the novelty of the article: For this, the search was limited to the years 2015-2020, and the number of emergent citations in *WoS* and *Scopus* was taken into account, with special emphasis on the most innovative. The geographical scope is not delimited, considering all emerging documents, after screening, regardless of their origin.
- c. Due to its quantitative impact: The most cited (organization) were taken into account. 18 documents emerge, of which only those with more than 20 citations are selected. Although the newest articles (for example 2018-2020) are indeed less likely to have this high-for-the-area number of citations, the citations criterion is important because it shows that the article has become a research reference for academics.

In *Scopus*, the search criterion *misinformation* was carried out. Following the same dynamics as for *WoS*, for the refinement of the research, we opted for the selection of emerging documents 2015-2020, from the area of Social Sciences, type of document article, and type of source journals. Before the first screening, 6,525 documents emerged, which after refining became 1044. For its part, the same criteria were applied in the *Web of Science (WoS)*, reflecting 4,749 documents in the first screening. For the filtering, the period 2015-2020 was selected, only in the thematic area of Communication, type of article document, obtaining 1,049 documents from this screening (see figure 1).

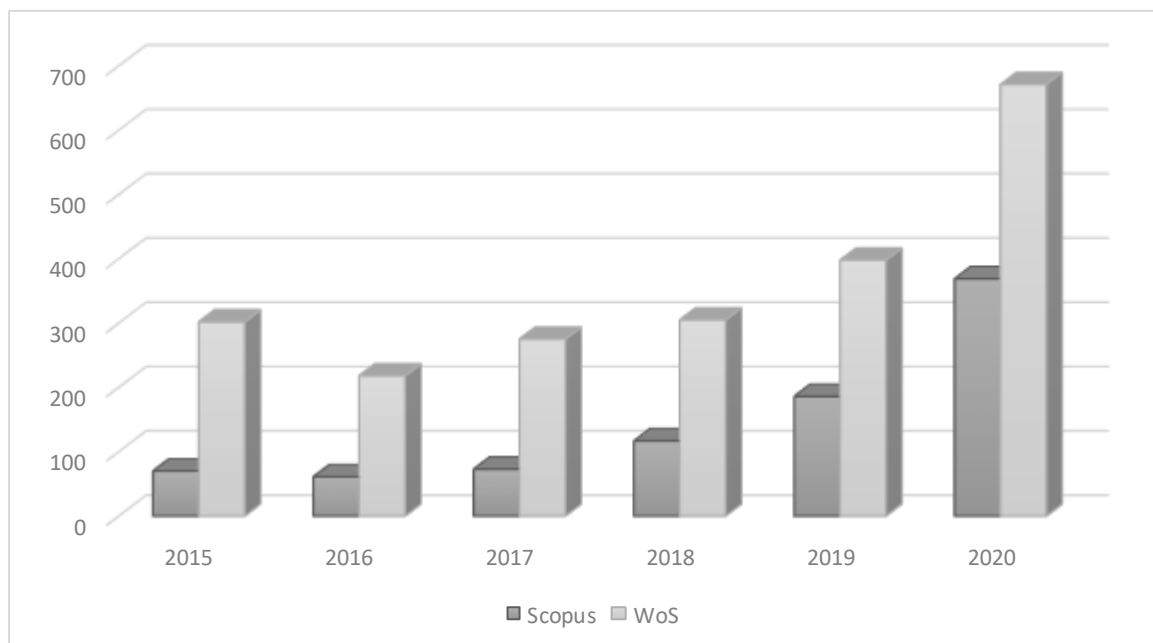


Figure 1. Emerging documents in WoS and Scopus (2015 - 2020)

Once the first screening was carried out, we selected those research that included the keywords: misinformation, digital media, news agencies, «ventriloquist effect», social networks, and digital era in the «topic» or metadata (title, abstract, and/or keywords). With these documents, a review of the literature and based theory was carried out, with which the same epistemological, ontological, and theoretical forms would be correlated.

The analysis consisted of an objective and exhaustive reading of the documents resulting from the selection criteria used, through a mapping or revision matrix, to reach the most relevant literature, extracting that information referring to our search criteria and that lead us to the stated objectives. To carry out this data analysis, the procedure used has been based on the content analysis with an interpretative basis, justified as a qualitative instrument for collecting information.

3. RESULTS

3.1. News agencies

News agencies are the least studied media in Social Sciences, because of their origin, the service to other media, acting as intermediaries between events and information companies (Jiménez, 2011). Along these lines, De Bustos and Pastor (1995, p. 21) affirm that "news agencies are the companies that are mainly dedicated to the elaboration of all kinds of information to be sold later". Jiménez (2011), as a result of the classification of the aforementioned authors, and according to various functions, makes a more current classification (table 1):

Table 1. Classification of international news agencies

By geographical area		By type of information		By property	
International	They are those that began as national agencies and made the leap to internationalization, hiring journalists abroad to market their content outside the country	General information	They are those that report about any type of event	Public	They are completely publicly owned, or the majority of their shares or participation.
Global	They are those that have coverage in all countries. They have a large number of correspondents and, therefore, have a greater chance of obtaining newsworthy events.	Of specific information	They focus their activity on specific information.	Private	They are those whose property belongs to a natural or legal person of a private nature.
National	According to the definition of UNESCO in 1953, these agencies are those that only collect national news and distribute them in those countries where they have headquarters.	News agencies	In charge of sending news, chronicles, reports, interviews to the media.		
Regional	Two elements are essential to consider an agency as regional, according to Jiménez (2011): First, most of the capital must belong to entities, shareholders, or participants of the community itself. On the other hand, the news of this media outlet should be focused on the regional or local community.	Photography agencies	They offer photographic and visual elements.		
		Infographic agencies	They are in charge of distributing infographics and graphics to the media.		
		File agencies	They provide cuts and documentation that have been the result of previous interviews or shows.		
		Documentation agencies	They are specialized in preparing data for sale to the media.		

Source: Self-made based on De Bustos and Pastor (1995) and Jiménez (2011)

The battle of the agencies for the coverage of international news is fought fundamentally between four big houses: *Associated Press*, *Reuters*, *France Press*, and the national one *EFE* (Gelado, 2009).

Any media professional or communication scholar knows that the role of press agencies in the Spanish and world media panorama is much more important than it transcends to the general public. Without them, the multiplicity of information and entertainment to which mass communication has been subjected in recent years would be difficult to understand (Frost, 2019). However, the fact that they have offered such an exercise from birth to their powerful present, does not mean that they have not brought a good number of consequences of doubtful desirability (Gelado, 2009).

An example of a negative consequence due to the indiscriminate use of news agencies is that most of the large Spanish and foreign newspapers are fed by several news agencies, but none of them is outside the western sphere (the example could be extrapolated beyond our borders with a high probability of success); therefore, the ethnocentric bias is guaranteed (Gelado, 2009). As Muro Benayas assures (2006, p. 22):
[...] Although impartiality and rigor are attributes that are part of the imagination of all agencies, their practice is associated with a certain worldview -Anglo-Saxon, Arab, Latin American, or Asian- that hovers above the neutrality of its editors.

All this, in practice, translates not only into a much lower volume of news for certain parts of the planet, which could be justified by the proximity criterion but also in the creation of certain stereotypes referring to other cultures, at the same time that it results in the difficulty of elaborating an honest portrait of the countries and cultures with the scarce number of news articles dedicated to them (Gelado, 2009).

Chomsky and Herman (1990, p. 69) state:

“The mass media model acts as a propaganda asset through various filters, among which the following stand out: 1) the size, concentration of ownership, and orientation of the dominant companies, 2) advertising as a source of income, 3) the dependence of the media towards the government and/or companies, and, 4) the action of pressure groups on journalists”.

Similarly, the news that comes from international agencies and media outlets have a certain influence on the impressions and attitudes of the people who receive the message towards the country to which they refer (Camacho Domínguez, Romero-Rodríguez, and Aguaded, 2018), especially because most audiences do not have access to the plurality of information on international events (Wu, 1998; López-García, 2006; Torres-Toukoumidis *et al.*, 2017).

Ultimately, the only way to neutralize the bias effect of the agencies would be either to multiply their number, diversify their origin, or make more domestic media completely independent of their influence, even if this would imply getting rid of the

obsession with immediacy in which the vast majority has been immersed for some time (Gelado, 2009).

3.2. The "ventriloquist effect"

After delving into news agencies and understanding what their most significant tasks are, it is understood that these organizations easily determine the nature of the international public, as well as public affairs and their treatment (priming, framing, and gatekeeping) with consequences such as the spiral of silence (Day, 2018) or the bandwagon effect. This is because both journalists and the public trust them basically because they dominate news distribution channels (Tunstall, 2008), that is, their credibility is based on the very foundations of their exercise (Rivera-Rogel et al., 2017; Rodríguez-Hidalgo, Rivera-Rogel, and Romero-Rodríguez, 2020).

The “ventriloquist effect” according to Arraez (1998) is defined as “multiple media, one voice”, that is, as a selection of news that is broadcast through multiple media, but that comes from the same agency (paraphrased or not). Advances in studies on the «ventriloquist effect» have led other authors to generate new definitions such as the one offered by Torres-Toukoumidis et al., (2017) or Tejedor-Calvo et al. (2020) who defend that this effect consists of informational perspectives that are based on public opinion due to the lack of capacity of the media to generate other frames. With the development of technologies, the concept is questioned and new ideas arise such as the one proposed by Day (2018), which defines the «ventriloquist effect» as a political, economic, and cultural dominance that has been in continuous growth and is in crisis due to the emergence of new digital voices. Likewise, along the same lines, Frost (2019) states that it is a threat to democracies, the plurality of thought, and the quality of information, considering it a source of misinformation due to bias that must be detected.

The economic crisis that began in 2008 was a severe blow to the media, news agencies, and advertising in general. In Spain, between 2008 and 2013, a total of 284 media outlets were closed because advertising investment had fallen by more than 50%, generating economic losses and eliminating 11,151 jobs (Madrid Press Association, 2013). As a consequence of this decline, the media chose to reduce production costs, reducing their circulation and production, dispensing with their workers abroad -correspondents-, going to international news agencies, and migrating to digital platforms, which strongly affected the informative quality and result of the final news of the media (De-Pablos & Mateos-Martín, 2004).

Due to the support of the media in international news agencies throughout this period, it is essential to highlight the current role of news agencies and transnational networks in the news oligopoly of matters that go beyond national borders. The changes that the conventional media are undergoing, such as the press, radio, and television, compete in the information ecosystem with social networks and digital media. This situation has forced the national media to reduce the costs of news production (De-Pablos & Mateos-Martín, 2004), which increases dependence on

international news networks -v.gr. CNN, BBC, Al Jazeera, among others- and international agencies -v.gr. Reuters, AP, AFP, EFE, etc.-. Aspinall (2005) points out that the national media tend to have a large number of journalists displaced to key places within the same territory, although the situation changes when it comes to reporting on foreign affairs because for such tasks, journalists seem incapable of personally covering the news, either due to the lack of support for coverage outside their borders or because of the cuts in personnel.

This somehow originates a "ventriloquist effect", in which a single or few informational perspectives are accepted as true by all the media, due to the inadequacy of the media system to corroborate the facts with journalists in the place of the events (Arráez, 1998). This phenomenon could also occur because the different media, as stated by Rodgers (2003, p. 6), "draw from the same sources". Other authors, such as Arroyo and Yus (2007), do not hesitate to affirm that most of what we read in a newspaper comes from the information that news agencies provide.

For his part, Cooper (1957) referred to this phenomenon in the 20th-century meridian, when he explained how, at a wedding, the bride asked him what he did: "Have you heard of the *Associated Press*?" to which the bride replied, "Of course! - exclaimed the bride- My husband always reads it. In all the newspapers". Therefore, it can be said that these agencies and transnational media determine the agenda-setting, the framing, and its different versions, generating the opinion matrices of any event. Although there appears to be a "plurality of biases", in reality, it is nothing more than the result of their paraphrasing -like a sounding board- in each media outlet or in the information that is shared through social networks. This is exactly what causes the «ventriloquist effect», which can be summarized as "multiple media, one voice" (Arráez, 1998).

[...] This could lead to the unification of informational and programming criteria, even when editorial lines seem dissimilar, so the multiplicity of channels or options should not determine informational, ideological, or freedom of expression pluralism, but that it could rather be a direct reflection of a greater business concentration of ownership of these media. This is, at the same time, illegitimate due to its effects, due to the continuous exercise of a descending linear power that seeks that the receivers act in a different way than they would with truthful information (Romero, 2011, p.8).

Along the same lines, Noëlle-Neumann departed, at the beginning of the 70s, of «consonance» as one of the origins of the uniformity of journalistic information (Dader, 2009). «Consonance» represents the similarity between the ideas, beliefs, and values of the media, which would explain how under an apparent model of pluralism with a multitude of headlines, a great homogeneity of topics can be hidden (Noëlle Neumann, 1973).

This social edge is important in the academic field, not only in the one that is based on the critical or Marxist theories of communication of Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse,

or Habermas, but also in the one that deals with control, which advances at a dizzying pace, and the decrease in competition for the globalizing flow that it creates as a transnational oligopoly of media, increasingly centralized in large conglomerates in which realities are expressed in a single way of thinking, undermining plurality (Rubido *et al.*, 2009).

According to Gurevitch, Levy, and Roeh (1991) and Clausen (2004), the coverage of international news is subject to certain frames, in the sense that international agencies and media maintain determined cultural inclinations trying to frame (framing), construct (agenda setting), and estimate-prioritize (priming) events from the dominant discourse of their audiences, generally from the Western approach, where respect for Human Rights, democracy, the rule of law, and institutionality, are conclusive elements in the creation of the discourse. Through framing, the media connects with the masses, defining the situation of an issue and establishing a position to generate a debate. Framing allows us to identify how the media address a newsworthy event and, in turn, determines the effectiveness of the coverage (Nwakpoke, *et al.*, 2020).

Authors such as Seaton (2003) have been interested in the problem of the repetition of news, a fact that, as mentioned in reference, comes from an excess of trust or even dependence of the different media with the international news agencies. This situation, whose consequences in the field of pluralism are as obvious as they are pernicious, is intensified if we take into account other derived aspects. In particular, 3 aspects that can weaken the information sent to the reader will be highlighted.

- Ethnocentric bias.

With an ethnocentric bias, we refer to the fact that both the main news agencies and their audiences are generally Western, so the framing of the news is oriented to a single society (Sanz, 2007). As Muro Benayas (2006) assures, although objectivity and rigor are qualities that are part of the values of all agencies, their practice is affiliated with a certain worldview -Anglo-Saxon, Arab, Latin American, or Asian- which is above the bias of its editors (Muro Benayas, 2006). This encourages agencies to regularly offer a different type of coverage for similar events, depending on where they happen on the globe (Branston & Stafford, 2003).

- Other sources

International news agencies do not tend to ensure that their journalists can witness all the events they write about (Fenby, 1978). Moreover, when the newsworthy reality surpasses them, they use the resources of people who are in a position to know what has happened. An example of this is the case of the magazine *Der Spiegel*, where one of its journalists has written manipulated news based on data taken from other media and film images.

In this regard, Tuchman (1978) states that communication professionals use quotes as protection to get away from events. This process of transfer of responsibility and accountability does not have to end here (Bishop, 2001); For this reason, it is not surprising that in an almost continuous process of paraphrasing, the final reader of a news item can actually become the last link in a chain of sources that refer to sources that, in turn, refer to other sources.

Television and radio networks or even Internet portals (Laso & Iglesias, 2002) seem to be governed even more by the limitations derived from intense competition and the exacerbated desire for immediacy, so that dependence on agencies can occur with even greater intensity (Domingo Santamaría, 2006).

- Agenda-setting effect

International news agencies maintain a remote-control system, which has a consequence that the increasingly high audience is exposed to an increasingly diminished news agenda (Gelado, 2009). Therefore, if there are fewer "voices" telling the rest of the media what is news and what is not, there is a greater chance that there will be a greater number of events that remain outside the news agenda (priming that generates gatekeeping and, in derivation, volitional omission and censorship). As a consequence, it seems that the reality is that only a small number of events become reviewed news (Hall, 1973).

On the other hand, the reiteration of the speeches in each one of the media outlets only reduces pluralism, insofar as it makes the number of publications unimportant since what matters, in the end, is the number of agencies that provide information to the media (Gelado, 2009). According to the same author (op. cit., 2009), such repetition contributes to the agenda-setting effect and also produces that not only themes are repeated, but also that stereotypes are sustained.

3.3. Misinformation, "ventriloquism effect", and digital media

The Internet has meant, with its boom and popularization, not only positive aspects but also problems such as oversaturation and infoxication, which will be discussed later. This has caused a special change in the way of information consumption and the crisis of the conventional media (Shenk, 2003). The appearance of social networks and digital platforms brings with them characteristics such as immediacy, omnipresence and ubiquity, interaction, and, in many cases, gratuitousness, pressing all media to share these characteristics, which makes it difficult to distinguish between information, rumors, and misinformation. According to López-García (2004), this situation leads to abandoning the traditional media as the main source of information.

Content publishers on the Internet produce their own news reports but research on news content in the digital realm shows that they generally mix it with a large amount of content from secondary producers, such as push services, normally provided by

major electronic journalism portals that provide a continuous flow of content and information.

These Internet services originate their own content based on international news agencies with little or no changes. Therefore, agencies reach audiences well through their own websites, as well as all other major online news providers (such as Google News). Although news agencies have historically tried to minimize their public exposure, they now rely on popular appeal and brand names for digital audiences and are now aggressively marketing their names in the "electronic journalism" sector. The information provided, however, rarely comes from news agencies other than *AP* or *Reuters*.

Global multimedia information conglomerates, such as the Associated Press (*AP*) and *Reuters*, dominate Internet news for the most part in a low-key way, and their superiority appears to be growing. Thousands of media outlets around the world do original reporting on occasional mass stories, such as war, but international coverage, in most other cases, is left almost exclusively to news agencies (Torres Toukoumidis *et al.*, 2017).

The convergence manifestations have given rise to a sector of electronic journalism in which the production of information on public affairs is more concentrated than it already was. Such trends indicate that a global information infrastructure that contradicts popular thinking and dogma will be indifferent and unable to challenge existing inequalities. What then happens with multimedia concentration is a large number of secondary effects, typical of the current communication ecosystem, and which causes the aforementioned "ventriloquist effect".

As can be seen from the above, like any change in the system, the overcrowding of the Internet has brought about new problems, which have produced different consequences:

- Oversaturation and infoxication of the communication spectrum (v. gr. Shenk, 2003, p. 396-397; Cornellà, 2010; Carr, 2011). This is due to the growth and importance that social networks have acquired since they have become a repository of information and a means of exchanging it.
- The decentralized distribution of fake news (v. gr. Lotero-Echeverri, Romero-Rodríguez, & Pérez-Rodríguez, 2018; Sartori, 1998; Ortega, 2006), which, although it has always existed in conventional media, through the Internet reach a great impact and virality (Pauner, 2018). Fake news, according to Quandt *et al.*, (2020), is constructed through falsification of facts, accidental errors, negligence, and intentional manipulation.
- Increase in the crisis of the conventional media that has fostered the reduction of journalists' workforce (v. gr. Thom, 1992, p.14; López-García, 2004, p. 23).
- The multiplication of information without verification, which produces misinformation. The term misinformation is used to refer to the intention to manipulate people through dishonest information (Del Hoyo, et al., 2020)

- The impact that automated bots and social media algorithms have had on the population, segregating information to the tastes and interests of each user (Frost, 2019; Tejedor-Calvo *et al.*, 2020).

These aspects can constitute a perfect setting for structural misinformation in the ecosystem, having an unsuspected scope and for which no social institution was prepared (v. gr. Pérez-Rodríguez, 2003; Pérez-Tornero, 2005; Romero-Rodríguez, Valle Razo, & Torres-Toukoumidis, 2018; Lotero-Echeverri, Romero-Rodríguez, & Pérez-Rodríguez, 2018).

5. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

As the review carried out exposes, the main news agencies are in charge of disseminating the information by the rest of the media, causing the so-called "ventriloquist effect." This result arises from the excess of recidivism information in the diffusion channels. Consequently, there is news of global interest that is outside the disclosure process (omission) and, therefore, outside the information spectrum.

Although some authors, such as Cooper (1957), already spoke about this phenomenon and how false plurality affected societies, offering stereotyped views and preventing the emergence of new or different approaches in public opinion, it is an effect that continues to generate negative impacts on society. Moreover, with the development of social networks, the "ventriloquist effect" is being magnified by the scope that is generated in them regarding the reading of users and the plurality of information on the Internet.

Furthermore, according to Frost (2019), it is observed how automatic bots and Internet algorithms contribute even more to the spread of this effect, causing the segregation of news according to the tastes of the receiver. On the other hand, other authors such as Zhang *et al.*, (2020) argue that with the multiple independent media that appear on the Internet, the ventriloquist effect decreases, although the number of false news and misinformation that go viral is, logically, on the rise due to content decentralization.

However, the overuse of news agencies and, therefore, the continued development of the "ventriloquist effect" has notorious consequences in the world of communication, as well as in societies. As has been shown previously, some of the consequences of this effect is misinformation, news that is not verified or to deceive that is on the Internet and disseminated through social networks, to mobilize public opinion towards a point in particular, or to profit from advertising revenue. Second, there is informational oversaturation, which confuses due to the difficulty of human beings to process a large amount of information.

The relationship between misinformation and the "ventriloquist effect" is close. The multiplication of channels produced by the rise of technologies offers a "false sense of information." Yes, misinformation is considered as a lack of information, and the

definition of Arraez (1998) on the «ventriloquist effect» is selected: multiple media, one voice, it can be concluded that a single news item disseminated by various media, does not lead to plural and quality information, but to a state of intoxication where everything is confusing, unclear, and limited by the consequences of this effect.

The "ventriloquist effect" leads us to misinformation because the reality is that not all the events that could be news are reported, nor are different perspectives offered than those that are on the agenda-setting.

According to Civila *et.al.*, (2020), to avoid this type of social damage, it is important to establish edu-communication and media literacy in educational and social plans, for the population to interpret and understand the functioning of the media.

Edu-communication is a challenge in today's society because the development of critical skills in the digital environment allows interacting with information responsibly and ethically (Area, 2012). In multiple studies, it is evidenced that the expansion of digital skills is essential to act critically in society. The time spent on the Internet and the level of media literacy conditions the social attitude towards newsworthy events (Ayoub & Garretson, 2017; Robinson & Martin, 2009).

The lack of pluralism in the media can definitely be a key object of study in the field of edu-communication, as it is a phenomenon that can affect the perception of citizens about certain issues.

In short, the concept of the "ventriloquist effect" has transformed as a result of the years, changes in consumer behavior (now *prosumer*), and the emergence of new channels and digital spaces for dissemination.

In principle, literature refers to news agencies and the purchase of information by other media. In other words, all the available media outlets were fed from the same sources. On the contrary, at present, this effect is spoken of as a misinformation weapon that causes the lack of dissemination of other relevant news, based on the algorithms that are produced in digital spaces, as a result of the readings and interactions they receive. It is expected that the greater the number of active users on social networks, the possibility of increasing the effect will be greater.

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