

Research Strategies in the Post-Truth Era

Estrategias de investigación en la era de la posverdad

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Editorial

At the end of 2016 the Oxford Dictionary chose the neologism "post-truth" as word of the year, and at the end of 2017 the term would enter the Dictionary of the Spanish Language of the Royal Spanish Academy with the following definition:

1. f. Deliberate distortion of a reality, which manipulates beliefs and emotions in order to influence public opinion and social attitudes. Demagogues are masters of post-truth.

There were two political events that encouraged the committee responsible for the Oxford Dictionary to declare "post-truth" as word of the year: the referendum on Brexit in the UK held on June 23, 2016 and the US Presidential Election held on November 8 of the same year and which, against all odds, Donald Trump won over Hillary Clinton. In both electoral processes the mistreatment of the truth in order to influence public opinion and the appeal to beliefs and emotions, reached unknown quotas for Western democracies not seen since the second half of the twentieth century.

When politicians lie in an electoral campaign, it is not surprising to anyone, it is a fact almost assumed by the voters; the groundbreaking thing about the case, and what called the attention, while worrying political analysts, sociologists and social psychologists, was that a large part of the electorate chose to believe those lies, which made them feel good about a truth they did not like. When President Trump's advisor defended in a January 2017 interview that the blatant lie about the number of attendees at the new president's inauguration (a blatantly false number of attendees was given to exceed the number of people who attended Barack Obama's inauguration) on the grounds that it was not a lie, it was simply an example of "alternative facts" (alternative facts). This fact was underpinning the birth of the post-truth era.

Interspersed with sociological and psychological determinants such as inequalities, anxiety, the loss of certainties, the radicalization of opinions, the spread of authoritarianism and a long list of other factors, one crucial factor can be highlighted from the field of communication: Infoxication. The term infoxication refers to the overload of information, often contradictory, and the consequent inability to process it properly. Infoxication causes information fatigue and accentuates one of the most negative consequences of cognitive dissonance described by Leon Festinger in *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (1957): the refusal to expose ourselves to information that contradicts our opinions or beliefs on a given subject. This flight from information we do not like, together with the choice of information we wish to believe without evaluating the credibility of the source, are undoubtedly two of the greatest enemies of truth, science and knowledge. The question of the credibility of the source, once we set aside our personal preferences, is the question of the research method used to acquire the information that is offered, the conclusions that are made public.

The passage from subjectivity to objectivity, from opinion to knowledge, is necessarily mediated by analysis, critical thinking and evaluation of research methodologies. Therefore, *Communication and Methods* focuses on this first step in the search for knowledge in the field of Communication. It is a task that must be undertaken without fear and without complexes. Without complexes in having to compare ourselves with the (more) exact sciences, in whose fields of study regularities are (more) the norm. And without fear of making explicit the difficulties and limitations of the research methods we use, as suggested in the journal, since difficulties and limitations are as much a part of science as the results and conclusions, and all this, instead of impoverishing them, enriches the findings of an investigation.

The question about the method, and the pedagogy about it, are two of the tools that social scientists have to mitigate the effects of this post-truth era that can be interpreted as a crisis of rationality, but at the same time gives us the opportunity to have a useful intervention in reality, therefore, needless to say, let's make use of them!

In this sense, volume 4, number 1 of the *Communication & Method* Journal, which gathers different research methods, where the innovation, creativity and analysis capacity of the authors can be highlighted.

The first article questions about the acceptability of using death in advertising campaigns as a stimulus for consumers, to know what are the perceptions that the public has

about this element; thus, the arguments of this work are developed by means of neuro-marketing. Then, we find the use of the theoretical landscape of the sign to decode the ideological codes of television series, considering this means of communication as a cultural vehicle.

The authors of the third text focus on the investigation of the arts, emphasizing the methodology used for the visual realization. In the same way, the objective is to know the conceptual relations that are had during the artistic creation. Through the experience of the University of the Arts in Isa Cuba, these questions are solved. From the visual arts, we move on to graphic design, since Isa Cuba, these questions are solved. From the visual arts, we move on to graphic design, since a methodological proposal is presented to analyze magazine covers, both in their content and in their form and design. One of the authors' contributions is the creation of an analysis sheet that includes qualitative and quantitative categories.

The fifth paper reviews the film analysis, focusing on the documentary genre. The proposed model comprises four phases: technical-artistic record, contextual analysis, analysis of the filmic form and interpretation of the analysis, which can be adapted according to the needs of the analyst. In addition, this methodology can approach other film genres, as is the case of fiction. The following article takes us to the field of politics, which integrates theoretical approaches, paradigms and techniques, all with the intention of formulating a methodological proposal that serves for the thematization of the public sphere, taking into consideration the communicative strategies and transactions between individuals, social groups, and institutions.

Next, the reader will find an interdisciplinary work that approaches business communication from the perspective of sustainability. With her research, the author seeks to verify the operational contribution to sustainability objectives. This issue of the journal ends with a study that focuses about migration in Spain, as the authors present a content analysis model on the Latin American migrant in the Spanish press.

Finally, as can be seen throughout the pages of this issue, the variety of perspectives and research techniques are one of the keys for opinions to be transformed into significant knowledge and for professionals and academics in the Social Sciences to continue with their scientific contributions.

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