

Soraya Araujo Uchoa Cavalcanti
(Organizadora)

IMPACTOS DE LAS TECNOLOGÍAS EN LAS CIENCIAS SOCIALES APLICADAS

4

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Impactos de las tecnologías en las ciencias sociales aplicadas 4

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APRESENTAÇÃO

A coletânea *Impactos de las tecnologías en las ciencias sociales aplicadas 4* é composta por 15 (quinze) capítulos produtos de pesquisa, revisão integrativa, relato de experiências, relato de caso, dentre outros.

O primeiro capítulo apresenta os resultados da pesquisa acerca da eficácia do desempenho na prática docente. O segundo capítulo, por sua vez, apresenta os resultados da pesquisa que tem por objetivo estabelecer as estratégias pedagógicas em educação ambiental.

O terceiro capítulo caracteriza as estratégias de avaliação andragógica no processo de aprendizagem para a formação de competências em estudantes universitários. O quarto capítulo, apresenta a análise dos setores econômicos sobre a estrutura do produto turístico.

O quinto capítulo reúne informações sobre como as pessoas julgam suas fontes de informação e o papel do marketing nesse processo. O sexto capítulo, por sua vez, apresenta a proposta de projeto social de design e cultura envolvendo artesãos e designers peruanos na era digital.

O sétimo capítulo apresenta os resultados da análise da política habitacional em Portugal no período entre 1992 e 2008. O oitavo capítulo, apresenta os resultados da pesquisa acerca da estratégia de comunicação digital e o fortalecimento de participação cidadã neste contexto.

O nono capítulo discute o desmantelamento do mito da integração como possível causa de um colapso nacional e suas repercussões nesse contexto. O décimo capítulo, por sua vez, discute a introdução de novas metodologias de ensino, avanços tecnológicos em Licenciaturas e Mestrados da Universidade de Barcelona.

O décimo primeiro capítulo, discute os resultados da pesquisa sobre a adoção de tecnologia móvel no comércio internacional. O décimo segundo capítulo discute a proposta de um modelo que avalie as organizações tendo como referência o clima organizacional.

O décimo terceiro capítulo, apresenta os resultados da pesquisa acerca da influência da nomofobia na ansiedade dos estudantes no ambiente universitário. O décimo quarto que analisa as oportunidades de negócios para empresas estrangeiras nas áreas de investimento de cidades, fabricas e portos inteligentes.


E finalmente o décimo quinto capítulo, faz o acompanhamento de especialistas para assessorar os diferentes setores e suas estratégias ambientais de adaptação às mudanças climáticas atuais.

Soraya Araujo Uchoa Cavalcanti

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CONSPIRACY THEORIES AND MARKETING: ARE THERE COMMON GROUNDS THAT CAN HELP STARTUPS?

Data de aceite: 03/10/2022

Fernando Gaspar

ABSTRACT: In a world where brands find increasing difficulties to communicate their message, in part due to the splitting consumer's attention and in part due to the difficulty in having consumers believe their messages, we also notice everyday growth of conspiracy theories in many fields (politics, health, social relations, ...) who seem thrive and find it easier than ever to enter peoples lives and gather believers. Can marketing learn something from the success of major conspiracy theories and their facility in reaching people's attention and earning their trust? Should it? Should marketing fear the success of conspiracy theories as they seem to result from decentralized and uncontrolled forms of communication and tribe creation? This paper sets up to start these discussions by gathering information about the way people see both phenomenon and how they judge their information sources. The generic conspiracy beliefs scale is used to characterize a sample's tendency to believe in conspiracy theories and then their attitude toward advertising is measured using a previously tested scale. Then an analysis was made about the way people talk about some specific issues on Twitter. Conclusions are drawn for brands' guidance, both in effective communication and in ethical behaviour.

KEYWORDS: Conspiracy theories, marketing, advertising, social networks.

1 | INTRODUCTION

The rise of Conspiracy Theories' profile in media has brought attention to a phenomenon that exists for centuries but seems to have found in nowadays world of social networks platforms and multiple parallel media the more fertile grounds ever.

Belief in CTs has been explained in the literature by primary psychopathy (March and Springer, 2019), social factors (Phadke, Samory and Mitra, 2020), Jumping to Conclusion (JCT) Bias (Pytlik, Soll and Mehl, 2020) and by social class belonging (Mao, Yang and Guo, 2020), among many other factors.

On the other hand, attitudes toward advertising have been proved to be getting more negative with time.

So, in this world where people believe the most extraordinary claims (presented by Conspiracy Theories), people also mistrust and don't believe in advertising (including institutional advertising).

Are these the same people?

Perhaps we should look at these factors individually, in the first place.

2 | CONSPIRACY THEORIES

Even though this subject became a star in recent years, conspiracy theories are not new. There is even a famous anecdote (apparently based on a true story) saying the United States

of America is the result of such a unfunded story being spread among the former British colonies.

Among the many definitions of conspiracy theories, the one closer to the subject of this study, and therefore the one adopted is “beliefs that significant events are the result of malevolent actions from powerful groups who “pull the strings” behind the scenes” (Douglas, Sutton, & Cichocka, 2017 (Adam-Troian *et al.*, 2020)). The term “conspiracy theory” itself seems to have been introduced by Karl Popper (Allington, Buarque and Barker Flores, 2021) and it is often presented as an attempt to offer easy explanations to account for complex social phenomena, comprising multiple conspirators, who act in unison, in secret and in pursuit of some hidden plan (Baden and Sharon, 2021). Nevertheless, literature still has not presented convincing methodologies to identify conspiracy theorists, conspiratorial thinking or paranormal beliefs (Enders and Smallpage, 2019).

Conspiracy theories (CTs) are not a natural result of human activity, they have been shown to be the result of “a loose movement of alleged truth-seekers who publicly advance scientific claims at a crossroads between partial evidence, pseudo-science, and conspiracy theories. It comprises scientists, businesspeople and celebrities united by their distrust of governments and mainstream science” (Casarões and Magalhães, 2021). Literature also claims that contrary to “old time” conspiracists, purveyors of the new conspiracism make no attempt to substantiate their theories (Morone, 2020).

CTs have been important to totalitarian regimes and to would-be totalitarian political forces (Šteřtka, Mazák and Vochocová, 2020; Allington, Buarque and Barker Flores, 2021) with many historic documented examples, from the French revolution to the totalitarian regimes in first half XX century Europe to nowadays politics in all continents. In particular, CT belief was shown to be related to populism and with populist political forces, particularly in discourses that present the masses as victims of elites’ conspiracies (Castanho Silva, Vegetti and Littvay, 2017). In fact, literature suggests right wing activism (in particular the so called alt-right) has embraced conspiracy theories and strategic disinformation more than the left, but more research is needed to reveal the magnitude of that inclination (Freelon, Marwick and Kreiss, 2020; Walter and Drochon, 2020).

CTs also influence people’s attitudes toward public health, particularly vaccination acceptance with CT believers proving to be 3.9 times less willing to take the COVID19 vaccine (Earnshaw *et al.*, 2020; Germani and Biller-Andorno, 2020; Roozenbeek *et al.*, 2020) or to comply with confinement measures (Maftei and Holman, 2020; Romer and Jamieson, 2020).

Very important about these CTs is the difficulty to disprove them. “Every attempt to deny a conspiracy theory can be turned into evidence for its pervasiveness, which only inflates the perception of the conspirators’ genius and power... the mind of the conspiracy theorist can hardly be changed, and surely not on mere logical grounds” (Castanho Silva, Vegetti and Littvay, 2017, p. 4).

3 | ATTITUDES TOWARDS ADVERTISING

The way advertising is accepted and incorporated in people's day to day life is something that can be seen as very dependent on culture with both place and time differences.

Different cultures seem to have incorporated the aggressive audiovisual advertising the TV, the cinema and the social network platforms brought to our lives e different ways. These incorporation has proven to be a path that takes its time to become accepted in the society.

Overall the consumer's attitude towards advertising presents challenges to brand's communication efforts and must therefore be known by managers.

4 | BIG 5 MODEL

The pursuit of a model to describe and explain human personality took long time and many efforts and resulted in the Big Five Model, a cross-cultural framework that describes and explains human personality through five main traits: Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, Agreeableness and Openness (OCEAN). This is arguably the most popular, the most used, the most widely replicated model in this field. It has been widely used in cross-cultural studies (Sulwen, 2018).

5 | PRECURSORS TO CONSPIRACY THEORIES

It is interesting to note that belief in one conspiracy fantasy proves the person likely to believe in others and that conspiracy beliefs may influence individual action, like the decision to vote or to volunteer to political activities (Allington, Buarque and Barker Flores, 2021).

It thus becomes very relevant to know what drives people to "buy into" conspiracy theories. The literature offers several explanations to this phenomenon.

Cultural values (Hofstede's model) showed a positive link between collectivism, and masculinity and CT beliefs (Adam-Troian *et al.*, 2020). Trust in science was negatively associated with CT beliefs on COVID19 (Agle and Xiao, 2021). The European antisemitic tradition was offered as another precursor to CT beliefs (Allington, Buarque and Barker Flores, 2021). Genre seems to have some relevant role in the phenomenon, as women were found significantly less likely than men to endorse COVID-19 conspiracy theories (Cassese, Farhart and Miller, 2020). Age, education level and vocational status also proved related to CT beliefs (Duplaga, 2020). A wide range of factors seems to predict CT belief, overall grouped in political, psychological, and structural factors (Kim and Kim, 2021) but the psychological factors are particularly intriguing.

For starters, the literature proposes that people with a more intuitive (and less analytic)

thinking style a people more prone to faster decision making and jumping to conclusion bias are more prone to buy into CTs (Pytlik, Soll and Mehl, 2020; Stoica and Umbreş, 2021). It is even suggested that belief in CTs can provide several kinds of psychological benefits and everyone to some degree and in certain areas and at certain points in time actually takes up some degree of CT belief, something that is clearly different from CT creation and diffusion (Troubé, 2020).

But the literature also claims that schizotypal personality dimensions Odd Beliefs and Paranoid Ideation, as well as social dominance orientation (SDO), right wing authoritarianism (RWA), paranormal beliefs (PB) and conspiracy mentality (CM) were also shown to have a positive influence on CT beliefs (Dyrendal, Kennair and Bendixen, 2021) social dominance orientation (SDO, while in another study psychopathological factors (schizotypy and delusion-proneness) emerged as the strongest predictors of CT beliefs (Georgiou, Delfabbro and Balzan, 2019) and Machiavellianism and primary psychopathy positively predicted general and Covid specific CT beliefs, whereas collective narcissism positively predicted Covid specific CT beliefs only (Hughes and Machan, 2021; Stoica and Umbreş, 2021). In the same line Authoritarianism also proved to be a precursor of CT beliefs (Prichard and Christman, 2020). So the literature presents us with wide support to the idea that those with aversive personalities (Machiavellianism, narcissism, psychopathy, and sadism) are more prone to entertain odd beliefs/magic thinking, be fatalistic, and distrust others and, in that way, believe in CTs (March and Springer, 2019; Walter and Drochon, 2020; Kay, 2021).

Younger males, with Unjust World beliefs and politically right-wing views, proved more likely to endorse CTs (Furnham, 2021), while COVID19 specific CTs found more believers among people with greater concerns about their own safety, and lower concerns about the safety of close others (Hornsey *et al.*, 2021).

Social class has also been proven to significantly negatively predict individuals' belief in conspiracy theories (Mao, Yang and Guo, 2020).

One more factor literature claims to underly conspiracist ideation was called epistemic mistrust, something that leads the "voices of authority" to be negated. Once that happens, the resulting epistemic vacuum can send individuals "down the rabbit hole" looking for answers where they are vulnerable to the biased processing of information and misinformation within an increasingly "post-truth" world (Pierre, 2020).

6 | DETERMINANTS OF ATTITUDE TOWARDS ADVERTISING

Literature has shown the consumers' attitudes toward advertising results from on advertising features like credibility, informative, hedonic/ pleasure and "good for economy" (Ling, Piew and Chai, 2010).

7 | METHODS

An instrument was developed to measure belief in CT, attitude towards advertising, the BIG 5 personality and demographic characteristics of repliers. The resulting questionnaire was spread online with short videos making fun of advertising and CTs during the month of May 2021. The posts had a call to action offering to give eBooks to all answerers. In June 2021, the repliers received a graphical assessment of their BIG 5 answers (personality characteristics) with a call to action to invite their friends to answer the survey and receive their own Big 5 graphical assessment.

The questionnaire included GCBS to measure CTs belief. This scale was created by (Brotherton, French and Pickering, 2013), analyzed and validated by (Castanho Silva, Vegetti and Littvay, 2017; Drinkwater et al., 2020; Majima and Nakamura, 2020) and used by many studies (Maftai and Holman, 2020; Hughes and Machan, 2021) (Enders and Smallpage, 2019).

It also included a scale to measure attitudes towards advertising (Ling, Piew and Chai, 2010) and the Portuguese version of Big-five 44, arguably the most used scale to measure personality traits (Almeida, Brito-costa and Bem-haja, 2015; Brito Costa et al., 2016; Simões, 2016; Sulwen, 2018).

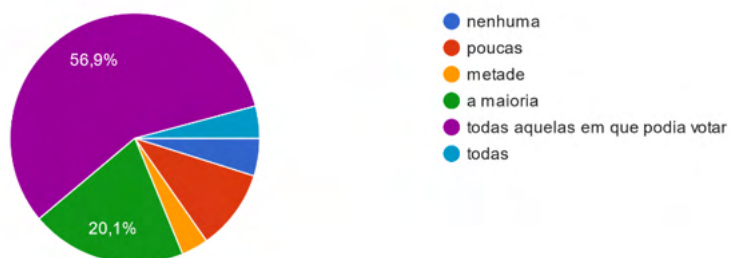
Finally, the questionnaire included a battery of demographic questions, including a scale to measure social class (Adler et al., 2000).

8 | RESULTS

Preliminary (June 30th) results shows a balanced sample with a composition very close to the universe's (Portugal) in genre, age, urbanity (distribution among dimension of localities participants lived in), academic qualifications and electoral participation (number of elections people participated in).

Habitualmente vota nas eleições?

144 respostas

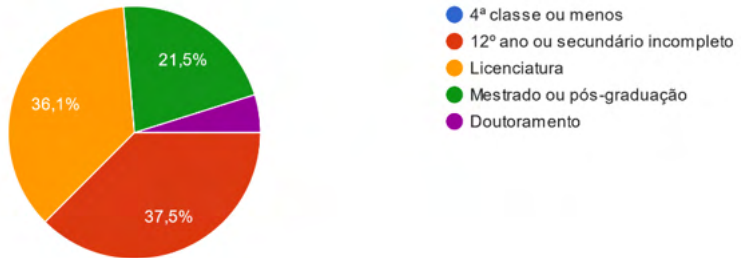


Respondents voted in all the opportunities they had (56,9%), or the majority of them

(20,1%).

Quais são as suas qualificações?

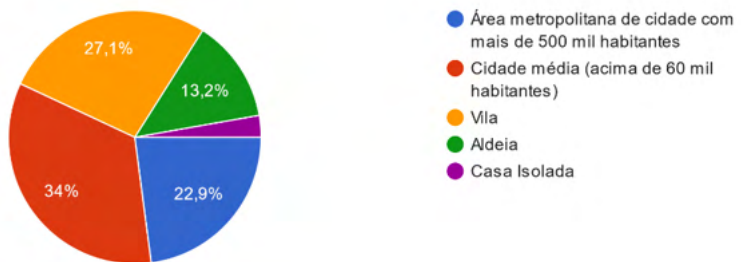
144 respostas



37,% of respondents had qualifications lower than a college degree.

Habita em que tipo de localidade?

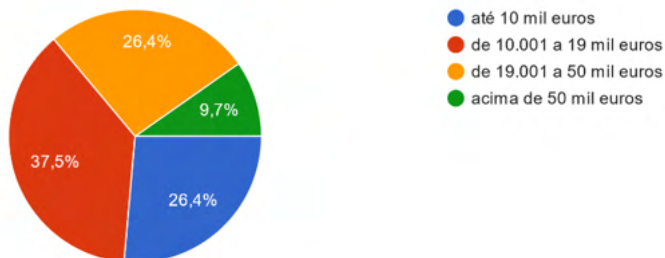
144 respostas



22,9% of respondents lived in a metropolitan area and 34% in an average city. 27,1% in a small town and 13,2% in a village.

Qual o nível de rendimento anual do seu agregado familiar?

144 respostas



Only 9,7% of respondents were part of an household with income above €50k, while 26,4% were part of households earning less than €10K per year. The rest should be considered middle class.

On the attitude towards advertising, respondents scored on average 23,6 out of the 6-30 scale. Standard deviation was 3,14.

On the GCBS scale, respondents scored an average of 77,1 out of the 30-150 scale and standard deviation was 16,4.

These are preliminary results to be further crosstabed and analyzed.

9 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The parallel between CTs spread and acceptance among people prone to “odd beliefs/magic thinking” and other kinds of fantasy acceptance, on the hand, and the way advertising has been populating peoples’ imagination with fanciful claims, often as ungrounded as any CT, on the other hand, seems too obvious to be ignored.

Its study holds the promise of exploring new communication strategies for companies, particularly startups and SMEs who aim only at small fringes of the market.

At the core of every conspiracy theory is the idea that a powerful person, or group of people, is secretly hatching a dastardly scheme. Can startups/SMEs take up this basic framework and replace the “powerful person” part with “powerful incumbent company”? Or is it much more complicated?

Will “TC like” communication strategies only work with specific parts of the population whom are characterized by specific personality traits?

Should a new brand learn from TCs to create its communication strategy?

Is the acceptance of the “easy answers” TCs offer the result of decades of advertising messages filled with fantasy and “easy solutions”?

These are the ultimate answers this research project aims to get, but it is only starting.

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