



FAKE NEWS AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

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ABSTRACT

Over the past few decades, society has made continuous use of the Internet and social media. People all over the world spend a certain time of their lives connected to social networks, making them a channel of communication and social relationship. As a reflection of this interrelation, changes in behavior and interaction between various communities are perceived, thus making the spread of news rapid. Given the large volume of content available, the phenomenon of fake News among social media users has been growing, thus affecting political campaigns, information about reality and consumer behavior, concerning the products and brands they consume. This research approached how *fake news* impacts consumer perception and behavior regarding the products and brands they consume. This correlation is studied under the aspect of the variation of this perception by different age groups, focusing on the discussion of how older people are impacted by this fake news, how and why they share it, and how organizations should act, not only to minimize its impacts but also to empower these consumers to deal with the consequences of *fake news*, distinguishing them and promoting their clarification. This theoretical essay

seeks to fill gaps in the literature. It contributed to Marketing studies by shedding light on a topic that is still little addressed in the area. A variety of people, of various age groups, are subject to fake News, however, it is noticed that older people are more likely to consume and share fake news, due to several factors, among them, lower academic education and later insertion into the digital world. The phenomenon of fake News is the subject of research, but the literature is still incipient. However, new studies are presented to try to explain this aspect of social media.

Keywords: Consumer behavior, social media, social networks, Fake News, brands

1. INTRODUCTION

Society has made intensive use of the Internet and social media over the past few decades. A study conducted in the United States showed that today 31% of people are online almost constantly, and another 48% connect to the Internet several times a day (PERRIN, ANDREE; ATSKE, 2021). In this context, the use of social networks has also been growing rapidly (JACOB POUSSHTER et al., 2018), being very often used for the dissemination of news. Around the globe, about 61% of people use social media as a source of information (NEWMAN et al., 2021). However, the placement of *fake news* on these platforms has become a constant.

Several fields of research have focused on this phenomenon. The literature shows that *fake news* is not only relatively common but also has important consequences for society as a whole (PENNYCOOK; RAND, 2018) (BAGO, BENICE; RAND, DAVID G.; PENNYCOOK, 2020) (BRASHIER; SCHACTER, 2020a), even influencing issues such as the adoption of self-protection measures during the COVID-19 pandemic (APUKE; OMAR, 2020)(MELKI et al., 2021)(PENNYCOOK et al., 2020)(THE ECONOMIST, 2020) until political elections around the world (CINELLI et al., 2020) (GRINBERG et al., 2019) (CALVILLO, DUSTIN P. ; GARCIA, RYAN J.B. ; BERTRAND, KIANA ; MAYERS, 2021). Although the phenomenon of *fake news* has received considerable attention from areas such as political science, economics, and Social Sciences, this topic is still quite incipient in the Marketing literature (DOMENICO et al., 2021a).

This research approached how *fake news* impacts consumer perception and behavior regarding the products and brands they consume. This correlation is

studied under the aspect of the variation of this perception by different age groups, focusing on the discussion of how older people are impacted by this fake news, how and why they share it, and how organizations should act, not only to minimize its impacts but also to empower these consumers to deal with the consequences of *fake news*, distinguishing them and promoting their clarification.

This theoretical essay seeks to fill gaps in the literature. It contributed to Marketing studies by shedding light on a topic that is still little addressed in the area. (APPEL et al., 2020b). In doing so, it has also collaborated for studies on *fake news*, further expanding its scope of consequences (ALLCOTT; GENTZKOW, 2017a). In the same sense, the present research seeks to contribute to the literature by investigating how *fake news* affects consumer behavior and their understanding of brands. Although little explored, evidence indicates that brands are vulnerable to the actions of *fake news* (BORGES-TIAGO et al., 2020).

This research, therefore, can provide *insights* for managers in formulating their digital brand communication strategies. More specifically, brand managers will be able to make use of these findings to understand the different types of users and their relationship with *fake news*, reformulating social media branding strategies, and promoting better communication practices in them. (BORGES-TIAGO et al., 2020)

2. FAKE NEWS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media represents a set of internet-based applications that allow the creation and exchange of content, generated by the user, in addition to the interaction between them, in real-time, producing value in this interaction and in the content generated by it (KAPLAN; HAENLEIN, 2010). Although it was created to enable connections between people, this channel has become an important path for the production and exchange of information and news (DOMENICO et al., 2021a).

Even in the face of the large volume and diversity of content available in these media, users tend to interact in virtual communities that resemble their ways of thinking and acting, sharing information that goes against their convictions. Thus, like-minded people do not infrequently share controversial theories, biased views, and selective news that end up resonating among their peers (BESSI et al., 2016a) (DOMENICO et al., 2021b). In fact, reinforcing specific news, without going through critical analysis by users, provides the appearance of not being committed to reality news (ALLEN et al., 2020) (BARBERÁ, 2021). It is in this context that *fake news*: News content published on the Internet that aesthetically resembles real legitimate news content, but that is fabricated or grossly inaccurate. (PENNYCOOK; RAND, 2021)

In recent years the spread of misinformation via social media has grown dramatically. An analysis of 2.8 million episodes of news sharing on Twitter revealed that 59% of the news was shared without having been opened. Today, six out of ten readers found the headline compelling enough to share the story without reading it. (JALBERT, 2021). In this context, social media now provide the necessary inputs for the rapid spread of *fake news*.

Social media represents a particularly conducive environment for the dissemination of *fake news*. This is because (i) they have low entry barriers/costs; (ii) the media format, where information is presented in "thin slices", making it possible that the greater the user's interaction with the information (liking, commenting, or sharing), the less ability he has to judge the veracity of the information; (iii) echo chambers; (iv) the information created and passed on social media by individuals, institutions, and organizations do not have an editorial supervision criterion, which allows its dissemination faster than real news (BESSI et al., 2016b), (ALLCOTT; GENTZKOW, 2017a), (VOSOUGHI; ROY; ARAL, 2018), (LAZER et al., 2018b), (ZHANG; GHORBANI, 2020).

A piece of information is seen as true from the moment that the one who receives it already has a predisposition in this sense, starting from his

perception of the world. In this sense, when something is inconsistent with existing beliefs, people tend to take longer to read, and have trouble processing it. On the other hand, when information that is inconsistent with one's beliefs produces a negative affective response (JALBERT, 2021). In addition, the number of repetitions in which *fake news* is presented to their audience has great relevance. The perception of such repetitions leads certain people to agree with each other about the veracity of the broadcast news. In this sense, they seek to warn others about this fact, but the impact of misinformation via repetition can be mitigated but does not disappear. (JALBERT, 2021)

The circulation of misinformation on social media, therefore, becomes an important phenomenon to be mapped. Although this aspect has been widely explored in several areas, little has been studied about how consumers process fake news and its relevance to marketing communications (NYILASY, 2019) or the persuasion results regarding a fake post about a brand. (CHEN; CHENG, 2019)

3. FAKE NEWS AND THE IMAGE OF BRANDS

Global spending on internet advertising is continuously increasing: in 2019, it exceeded \$300 billion, thus, marking the first year in which more money was spent on internet advertising than on traditional media. This implies that digital advertising already accounts for about half of the global advertising market. Simultaneously *fake news* - news imitating the content of formal media manufactured to deceive people who are targeted (ALLCOTT; GENTZKOW, 2017a) (LAZER et al., 2018a)- has become common in these networks. (LEE; CHO, 2020)

Considering the importance of social networks for the communication process of the contemporary consumer, and since this consumer has faced a series of problems to identify *fake news*, it should be evaluated how the consumption and dissemination of false news can impact companies and the consumer himself in his decision-making process. Therefore, understanding this relationship will make it possible to provide insights into strategies that can be used by managers and regulators to protect their brands and eliminate the viral spread of harmful online

news. The widespread of *fake news*, especially in social networks, constitutes a risk for organizations.

The reputation of a company and/or brand can be impacted and altered by the circulation of fake news. *Fake news* produces misinformation, with the immediate consequence of changing the power of consumer analysis and critical positioning. This fact added to the comment of other consumers, who may also be under the influence of the same fake news, or by a massive attack of negative digital waves, dissemination of *fake news* via bots, can produce widespread misinformation, and no organization and/or brand is safe from the critical positioning associated with comments posted on social networks (PARCIANELLO et al., 2018) (FGV, 2017). A single exposure to a false headline can increase a consumer's belief that that brand is involved in the story presented (FLOSTRAND; PITT; KIETZMANN, 2020).

Although the consumer is expected to think analytically, most people are susceptible to *fake news* driven by lazy thinking, that is, with low analytical capacity, this is partially elucidated by the analytical cognitive style where these consumers have a greater willingness to believe in fake news. (PENNYCOOK; RAND, 2019)(BRONSTEIN et al., 2019). Most often such a consumer will simply believe what he sees or hears, and even more so, share it, because they will be too lazy to conduct an in-depth analysis. (PENNYCOOK; RAND, 2019)

Fake news has a potential negative impact on a brand by one of three fundamental functions of the brand: i) when a buyer seeks to buy or seeks information about his favorite brand, finding the same associated with fake news; ii) fake News spread by an unethical competitor can increase the perceived risk to the buyer; iii) the consumer of the brand contaminated by fake news, increases rather than reduces his psychological risk. (FLOSTRAND; PITT; KIETZMANN, 2020)

It can be understood as a psychological risk when instead of the consumer assigning the brand status and admiration, this impacted by fake news begins to associate the brand with ridicule and even animosity. (FLOSTRAND; PITT; KIETZMANN, 2020)

Despite being a fairly incipient topic in marketing, some early studies are in line with the above rationality. For example Slater and Rouner, 1996 and Wu and Wang, 2011. (VISENTIN; PIZZI; PICHIERRI, 2019a)

Given the above, it can be proposed that:

- H1: *Fake news* affects negatively the brand image.

Fake news can affect not only the image of brands but also the subsequent behavior of consumers. Today's consumers are quite expressive in sharing their beliefs, values, and world views, which also affects their regular tendency to boycott via these networks, when they feel deceived, assaulted, or demeaned by an organization and/or brand.

The empowered consumer, with its great ability to collect and distribute information, has been daily imposing its will on the decision-making of the company itself. But this consumer is poorly able to differentiate fake news from real news, which leads to incorrect decision making, most of the time not only not consuming a product and/or brand, but also disseminating erroneous news of it. This rejection can present itself in the form of a boycott of the brand and its products. (FLOSTRAND; PITT; KIETZMANN, 2020). For example, PepsiCo, which in 2018 suffered from widely disseminated news through social networks, such as "HIV-infected blood was put in Pepsi products" or "someone put HIV-infected blood in Pepsi products", causing a direct impact on the value of its shares in the market. (MISHRA; SAMU, 2020)

It is possible to perceive the existence of a vulnerability of brands against the attack of fake news. The rapid spread of misinformation via social media presents a major challenge to managers of companies whose brands are co-created online. It is necessary to identify sources of information that can be reliable and promote positive consumer attitudes toward this brand. (BORGES-TIAGO et al., 2020)

Data taken from a Flash Eurobarometer of 26,576 respondents in 28 European countries enabled a cluster analysis and revealed users' attitudes toward

fake news and brands. The result of this study points out that concerning fake News, it differs between countries, but demonstrates that young and experienced in technology are more likely to recognize fake news, however, other age groups tend to credit the same altering their intention and understanding of value for the product and its brand.(VISENTIN; PIZZI; PICHIERRI, 2019b) (BORGES-TIAGO et al., 2020)(FLOSTRAND; PITT; KIETZMANN, 2020)

Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

- H2: Fake news affects negatively brand image.

3.1 Fake News and impacted audiences

The existence of a huge variety of age groups inhabiting social media leads to the questioning of how they are handling the fake news aspect. It is known that these media are used in all age groups, but the vast majority of users are among urban youth aged 18-35 years (SHAFI; RAVIKUMAR, 2018). Older people, over 60 years of age, prefer to use traditional channels of communication, such as television or radio. However, there has been a growth in recent years of digital media as a reliable source of interest for older people. (CECÍLIA DE SOUZA MINAYO, 2012) (NIC NEWMAN, RICHARD FLETCHER, ANTONIS KALOGEROPOULOS, 2018)

An important question is presented when it is sought to identify whether people's trust increases with age, as well as whether the identification power of fake news is changed as the age of the user increases on social media.

Older people, in search of feeling more active, connected, and inserted in society, look to social media for a channel for this connection, being targets of fake news, as they tend to believe in the content of the messages, starting from the credibility created by the media image (built by traditional media such as television and radio), assimilating these messages and incorporating them into their daily lives, in addition to passing them on to acquaintances. Research shows that people over

the age of 65 share seven times more Fake News. (PIROLA et al., 2012) (GUESS; NAGLER; TUCKER, 2019)

Young people, due to the social context in which they are inserted, are more resistant to obtaining information through traditional channels, such as radio and television. In this way, they seek to inform themselves through social media, and this constant and voluminous exposure makes them better able to discern whether or not a news story is *fake news*. (PENNYCOOK; RAND, 2018)

On the other hand, older individuals are easier targets for fake news as well as its sharing. An example of this was the US elections in 2016, where it was possible to identify that older people passed on a greater volume of *fake news*. One way to understand the acceptance of fake News by older people is through cognitive deficits. Although older adults forget where they learned the information, fluency remains intact, and knowledge accumulated over decades helps them evaluate statements. (BRASHIER; SCHACTER, 2020a)

When it comes to consumption, the literature shows that younger people are more attentive to fake news, developing a greater ability to identify them. In a 2016 US survey, 75% of adults were misled by fake news. However, analyzing the information consumption behavior of adolescents, it was possible to detect that their habits lead them not to absorb the contents of traditional and social media in an unrestricted way, increasing the level of questioning when this access, they are more able to identify *fake news*. (TANDOC; LIM; LING, 2018)

Studies reveal that not all digitally active users are able to recognize fake news or trust their ability to recognize fake news. (WARNER-SØDERHOLM et al., 2018). Because they are later in the insertion on social media, older people tend to have less discernment to know if certain news is true or not. (BRASHIER; SCHACTER, 2020a)

Other studies corroborate this position when they confirm that older people with a lower academic school level are more likely not to seek confirmation of the news, as well as share them without this proof because they only trust the sites on which this news is exposed. (JOHNSON; KAYE, 2000)

One can exemplify the questions pointed out in this text, with the differences in the consumption of false political news and how they are disseminated on the social network Facebook. Based on studies, it was possible to track how people between different age groups reacted to Fake News. It was clear in the results that false content had a greater acceptance and a lower level of confirmation in people of a higher age group, but it was not possible to verify the reasons that led to these results, that is because older people share a greater volume of *fake news*. (LOOS; NIJENHUISY, 2020)

Therefore, it is clear that young people share less *fake news* than older ones. However, it is not clear what role age plays in consumer behavior in the context of *fake news*.

From the information above, the third hypothesis of this study is:

- H3: *Fake news* negatively affects the purchase intention of older consumers more than that of younger ones

4. GENERAL DISCUSSION

4.1 Theoretical Contributions

There has been much debate about the effects of *fake News*, as well as its relationship with information has undergone major transformations in this society of the "age of Technology" and "Knowledge Society", when information arrives instantly. It becomes necessary to reflect on how to take a stance, as individuals, organizations, and society, in such a dynamic scenario, where "knowledge" and judgment capacity are constantly put to the test. Information has become mutant, in a process of construction and reconstruction never seen before. (MOTTA, 2013)

There is a growing concern among politicians, managers, and researchers about the role that social media has played in the construction, receipt, and dissemination of information, especially the role that fake News has in the

construction and consolidation of what is meant by truth and how social media is used as a tool in the dissemination of incorrect information. Research has focused on the implications of fake news for political communication, with a lesser focus on the implications of social media misinformation on marketing and consumers. Since social media currently plays a preponderant role in communication, the literature presents a gap in the understanding of fake News from the perspective of the consumer.(DOMENICO et al., 2021a)

The literature proves that disinformation causes serious damage, either by helping and disseminating doubts in modern medicine or by inciting violence. In this context, older adults are especially susceptible to the sharing of *fake news*. Take the 2016 U.S. election, for example, when older adults shared more fake news than younger voters. (BRASHIER; SCHACTER, 2020b)

To understand the growth of fake News in the social environment, it is necessary to make a greater observation about its consumer and propagator audience, in the case of this work, older adults, since they are more vulnerable to fake news. A YouGov survey conducted in 2018 shows that 44% of adults over the age of 65 have been targeted by fake news. On the other hand, this same audience is also more likely to share *fake news*, studies show that adults over the age of 65 share nearly seven times as much Fake News as adults between the ages of 18 and 29. (EADY et al., 2019)

A partial explanation for the sharing of fake news among older adults can be given by the cognitive deficit, where even with all the knowledge accumulated during life, which could help them understand the information received, these adults remain prone to sharing *fake news*. Adults over the age of 65 are involved in social changes that generate greater self-confidence and some obstacles to the discernment of lies, at the same time that their communication skills become less skillful. (BRASHIER; SCHACTER, 2020b)

If it is necessary to address another aspect, older adults entered the world of social networks at a late stage of their lives, when the new and learning turn into difficulties in filtering content and manipulated images. Interventions in a post-truth world must also consider their changing social goals and gaps in their digital literacy. (BRASHIER; SCHACTER, 2020b)

Another important point that was addressed concerns the knowledge of the psychological mechanisms that influence people in their beliefs in false news and how to help in understanding the determinants and effects of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), since companies need this understanding when they are faced with "attacks" of false news from a competitor or when their ads are side by side with this news. A company, when becoming a victim of *fake news* must develop strategies to defend and consolidate its image. (VISENTIN; PIZZI; PICHIERRI, 2019a)

The literature tends to address cognitive mechanisms with greater emphasis, paying little attention to the effective and emotional determinants of belief in fake news and how these beliefs are directly impacting the perception of the value of brands. Emotions play a fundamental role in the creation of links between consumer and company, being this consumer more strongly linked to the brand the more intensely its image is consolidated in the mind of this consumer, and this implies in its repurchase behavior. (GRISAFFE; NGUYEN, 2011), (DUNN; HOEGG, 2014), (THOMPSON; WANG; DAYA, 2019)

4.2 Practical Implications

It is fair to say that these days, social media are present in everyday social connections daily on Instagram, Facebook or Messenger, TikTok, and Twitter... The number of social media users has been growing worldwide. In 2019 it increased by 9% compared to the previous year (3.484 billion users). 38 percent of Twitter's users that year were men, but 61 percent also used Snapchat. In contrast, women were more likely to use LinkedIn and Facebook. (KARIM et al., 2020)

Social media does not present itself to society in a static way. Every day some changes improve and streamline the connections between users in their most varied aspects of relationships, whether personal and/or professional. In the current scenario of social media, two aspects can be observed: platforms that provide the technologies and business models that constitute the industry itself and its ecosystem; and a place where diverse profiles of people and organizations use in their relationships. (APPEL et al., 2020a)

Organizations are aware of this movement in society and the consumers who live there, as they have already identified that social media has become a space for co-creation, where the user shares photos, movies, and content, having in this media their reliable source of information (ZAVIŠIĆ, S., & ZAVIŠIĆ, 2011). Social media is seen by organizations in a broader way, being less a technological service and more a digital place where the consumer leads a significant part of his life, also building his perceptions of true and correct, either in social driving or in the way of consuming.

The circulation of *fake news* has aroused the interest of organizations, although this circulation is not a novelty, especially due to the massive form they are taking place. The first studies of fake news were published recently pointing to consumer concern about the content presented by brands (RIZVI; ONEY, 2018)(BERTHON; PITT, 2018) (BORGES-TIAGO et al., 2020)

Analyzing the production and circulation of fake news from the perspective of the organization, and its brands, becomes relevant for two reasons:

- i. the increasing occurrence of personalization does not make it possible to identify the limits between the user and the content, interrupting traditional practices of construction and relationship with brands, as they begin to consider themselves as co-creators. (HENNIG-THURAU; HOFACKER; BLOCHING, 2013) (IND; IGLESIAS; SCHULTZ, 2013)

- ii. social media provides a publishing space, where information and misinformation can be widely accessed, shared, transformed, and commented on, by all participants. Information including organizations and their brands. (BHANDARI; RODGERS, 2018) (TAJVIDI et al., 2018) (BORGES-TIAGO et al., 2020)

In addressing these market failures, which lead to distortions, society, organizations, and the state should take the initiative to increase information about the real state of the world, increasing incentives for consumers of fake news to understand the true state of the world. In practice, social media platforms and advertising networks have faced some pressure from consumers and civil society to reduce the prevalence of fake news in their systems. For example, Facebook and Google are removing fake news sites from their advertising platforms because they violate policies against misleading content. (ALLCOTT; GENTZKOW, 2017b)

4.3 Future Research

From this study, several managerial implications can be extracted, since part of the consumers, defined here as older adults, are being impacted and are modifying their perceptions and value that are intended by brands and their organizations, interfering in their behavior and purchase intention.

As younger generations age, brands ' current concerns lie in identifying how fake or misleading news will act, as new generations are better informed and better able to detect this type of content. It is necessary to advance in the studies to understand the phenomenon of fake News and its correlation to the formation and perception of value by consumers.

Organizations are concerned about the effects of fake news on their brand image because studies point out that reliable sources of information directly affect knowledge and the ability to discover fake news, so combining these results

with the conclusions presented here can help determine where to post content to increase brand trust. (VISENTIN; PIZZI; PICHIERRI, 2019a)

Identifying these implications can provide insights for brand managers and formulators of organizational strategies, who can focus on small details that made it possible to validate these actions, maximizing consumer perception and reliability, therefore generating a positive attitude. It is then necessary to deepen the identification of this direct relationship between fake News, consumer behavior, and brands.

In order to conclude and affirm a greater understanding of fake news, its sources, and consequences, it is necessary to deepen the studies to further explore the predominant behaviors in the various age groups, especially in the age groups of older consumers, since most studies report that high contact with fake news leads to changes in perception of value, but very little is presented in the form of a study when seeking information about subgroups. (BORGES-TIAGO et al., 2020)

Studies propose interventions focused on the individual empowerment of the user and the structural change of social media so that prophylactic actions are taken instead of therapeutic actions, thus reducing the population exposed to fake news. In the search for a greater capacity to evaluate the message and reduce the likelihood of creating, sharing, liking, and consuming *fake news*, three interventions are proposed: (I) psychological inoculation, (ii) promotion of digital and media literacy, and (iii) imposition of user transaction costs. (ECCLES; DINGLER, 2021)

Psychological inoculation refers to an anticipation of the attack. Individuals are subject to social influence, through persuasion or propaganda, and with this, they tend to change their behaviors and attitudes on some issues. Psychological inoculation "inoculates " individuals with persuasive messages, announcing to the individual that there will be an attack on the position, attitude, or belief. The individual is presented with this "threat" in its milder form, being encouraged to develop defenses to attack. Research shows that psychological

inoculation is only effective in the preemption of refutation after a period of delay (between hours and weeks). (MCGUIRE; PAPAGEORGIS, 1962) (PFAU et al., 1997)

What interventions can be effective to stem the flow and influence of *fake news*? The literature identifies two categories: (i) those aimed at empowering individuals to evaluate the fake news they encounter, and (ii) structural changes aimed at preventing individuals' exposure to fake news in the first instance. (LAZER et al., 2018a)

To discuss actions that can empower individuals to evaluate fake news, one must understand how it is classified. Grouping the different types of false information into False/True ends up ignoring differences that are important to know why and how a specific type of fake News is successful or not. Another important point in this assessment lies in understanding the types of communities in a network, which refers to groups of nodes that are strongly connected compared to the rest of the nodes. (BABCOCK; COX; KUMAR, 2019)

An important element in understanding the spread of fake News and the ability of the user to analyze and respond (consequently their ability to evaluate) is to understand the speed at which fake news spreads through social media. A study conducted from false stories found in conversations on Twitter about the movie Black Panther and the dissemination of community responses to them showed that both end up having a similar diffusion speed, but it was detected that the individual who disseminates fake News also disseminates a response to them, generating a mixed community (community *pro* and *anti-fake*). (BABCOCK; COX; KUMAR, 2019)

It is necessary to redesign the information ecosystem so that society and organizations can create a news environment and a culture that values and promotes truth.

5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Following the development of contemporary society, it is possible to verify profound transformations that are taking place in various sectors, either by the

format of new businesses or by the reformulation of production and consumption processes. Many of these changes are due to the intense use of the internet, especially social media, which has come to play a relevant role in the formation of individual knowledge. Shared knowledge becomes the new way of relating.

To better understand this dynamic, it is also necessary to understand the real definition and meaning of social media, which covers much more than the social networks involved. Through social media people express themselves and relate to each other, generating an impact on their own behavior, as well as on the behavior of others (individuals, organizations, and society). The study of this ecosystem makes it possible to identify the profound transformations of these relationships.

But a problem arises with the massive use of social media: the spread of false news (*fake news*). Disinformation via social media has alarmingly grown in the last ten years, gaining expression at all levels of understanding and relationship of the individual, be it political, social, or economic.

One point becomes clear in the literature review on the topic: one does not have a single and final definition of *fake news*, as well as it is not possible to fully understand which elements are part of this construction. The fact is that it presents itself as being disseminated by humans or non-humans, propagating distorted information about reality. These distortions may occur consciously or unconsciously, but they will be driven by financial or ideological interests.

The literature identifies why people believe in *fake news* however, it leaves a gap concerning age groups and the ability to identify fake news.

In the literature review, it was presented that older people are more susceptible to sharing fake news, either because they do not accurately identify the source of the information, or because they give credibility to social media, having as a parameter the credibility that traditional media impute (for example radio and television). Older people forget where they learned their information from.

By crediting the information disseminated by social media, without a prior check, older people tend to spread more Fake News.

Finally, this study raised the question that older people tend to spread more *Fake News* and that by assuming such behavior they also see their perception of the value of the brand, and of the organization that owns it, changed for the worse. This led us to also question how organizations will be able to deal with such a phenomenon, and if the same will be maintained with the aging of new generations.

This study proposes to test in a real-life situation, observing whether the recognition and distribution of *fake news* occur more forcefully in people of a higher age group, and may include the identification and impact of other factors such as gender and educational level. Another factor that fits into the study is the interactions of audiences with brands. It is recommended to implement tracking tools to identify the role of age in source verification.

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