



SOCIAL MEDIA – INSTRUMENT OF THE INFORMATION WARFARE. FROM INFORMATION TO INFLUENCING –

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Information is a very valuable weapon, it can help in manipulation and it can result in changing behaviours and actions. Information warfare in the cyber environment can be considered the most developed form of warfare, through which the goal is achieved without human loss and without bloodshed.

While many studies and researches have been conducted on the “weapons of attack” of this unconventional war, fake news and propaganda, since ancient times, less has been written about “weapons of defence” counteracting and combating their effects, and scientific studies and research are still far from finding the answer.

In this article, we aim to analyse both the main weapon of attack: communication, as a method (technique, tactics) of transmitting fake news and propaganda and the main means of conducting information warfare, social media, by the force (speed) of the dissemination of communication. We will make this analysis starting from the origin and characteristics of interpersonal communication and social networks, which we will identify in disciplines such as psychology, sociology, social psychology and anthropology and show how each of these areas contributes to shaping the lives of users of virtual social networks. They can thus be used in information warfare.

In our approach, we start from the hypothesis that communication aims to influence, the social network broadens the communication environment and promotes influence, and the Internet makes the communication process take place at the mass level, amplifies the speed of dissemination, which further accentuates influencing and recommending social media as a tool in the information war.

We also aim to analyse this process of modelling (influencing) from socio-psychological perspectives to highlight how propaganda and fake news in social media work and how they could be countered using simple principles of communication and psycho-sociology.

Keywords: social media; fake news; propaganda; information; influence;



INTRODUCTION

Social media is an extremely generous space both in terms of reach, including social networks, wikis, blogs, newsgroups, online games, chat and news feeds, and as a potential for data and information storage and rapid dissemination of information, which is why social networks Twitter and Facebook have become synonymous with Web 2.0 (O'Reilly, pp. 1-5). Both dimensions play an important role, as directions of action used in the information war.

Starting from this aspect, it is necessary to highlight the basic feature on which web 2.0 is centred: socialisation, the interaction between users, which from our point of view must be viewed from two perspectives.

On the one hand, social media is an environment where information spreads at a fast pace, in which each of the billions of user accounts is a source of information that can reach from the moment of posting to other users of the network. This space where everyone shares what they want and, with the help of the algorithms behind the social media platform, that “*what they want*” is seen by someone else, who, by a simple reaction, sends it to someone else, is a space to which individuals, groups, companies and organisations attach special importance to promoting their own interests, sometimes using fake news and propaganda to achieve them.

On the other hand, the content generated by the users of these social networking sites offers the possibility to understand human behaviours and social phenomena representing practically a reference environment for understanding users' choices, intentions and feelings in real time. The information posted, comments, shares, likes, re-tweets, inbound links are invaluable values that give us direct feedback, showing us what people think and how they found us, and whether engages (or does not!) with our content. This intelligently identified, collected and used data and information can be used as a tool

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to make a decisive contribution to the achievement of military, political, economic or social goals, with minimal costs and maximum efficiency.

In this article, we aim to analyse social media and its role in information warfare, starting from the origin and characteristics of interpersonal communication and *social networks*, analysed in disciplines such as psychology, sociology, social psychology and anthropology and making a parallel with *virtual social networks*, as a component of social media with an important role in the process of *modelling (influencing) users*.

In other words, starting from the hypothesis that communicating may also mean influencing, we will argue that the social network makes the process of social media communication take place at the mass level, which emphasises the influence and recommends it as a tool in information warfare. We also aim to analyse this process of modelling (influencing) from socio-psychological, politico-economic, military and security perspectives, as well as to highlight how each of these areas contributes to shaping the lives of users of virtual social networks and how they can be thus used in information warfare.

Consequently, we appeal to Aristotle's ancient rhetoric to substantiate that *communicating means influencing* (Aristotle, pp. 17-58). Also, in order to understand social media, and, implicitly, why influence has found a perfect framework for action in this environment, as well as to test the hypothesis of a multidisciplinary approach to social media, we will direct this approach to the origin of social networks and to the disciplines that analysed it, as well as to social networks as part of social media and the disciplines through which we need to analyse it in order to have a complete picture and achieve effective strategic communication in combating fake news and propaganda.

THE ORIGINS OF STUDYING COMMUNICATION

Communication is a privileged field, to the development of which the great thinkers of humankind have contributed and who, for over two millennia, have known a variety of approaches and theorisations that force the boundaries of the field and interconnect disciplines and adjacent fields.

In the context in which the study of this field impresses as antiquity and abounds in terms of quantity and diversity of approaches, it is natural that scientific research leads to the identification of various types of communication, from public to internal communication, from communication from direct, interpersonal or group to indirect or mediated, and then move to interdisciplinary approaches, where strategic communication comes to integrate the field of public communication with specialisations such as marketing and advertising and with mass, group or individual interests in areas such as economic, political, military or social.

We communicate in order to convince. Based on deliberate activity to achieve goals, communication has been labelled as *a means of social influence* (Stanton, 1995, p. 1) for thousands of years in ancient Greece, when persuasion was identified with the need for people to defend themselves in court of justice, newly appeared at that time, to decide the truth and to attribute justice.

The first concept of communication is attributed to one of the most influential thinkers, the Greek philosopher Aristotle (384 and 322 BC): identify the elements with which you can convey a persuasive message. The Greek philosopher wrote about the use of language to impel people to think and act according to certain patterns, as described in the art of rhetoric (Argenti, 2009, pp. 11-16), being the author of an efficient and detailed communication system that allowed the understanding of both which is convincing, as well as the way to create convincing messages. Aristotle was the first to argue that through communication we try to influence, that we use words to persuade, showing that persuasive messages can be supported by logic and reasoning (logos), credibility (ethos) and emotion (pathos), proposing the first model of persuasion (Docimo, Littlehale, 2017).

The model of an efficient communication process, using the elements of ancient rhetoric, can be represented graphically in the form of a triangle, as in *Figure 1*, which has at each end an element of Aristotelian rhetoric: logos, ethos, pathos proposes targeting the listener and transmitting messages in order to influence – and inside it another triangle, kairos – by which the communicator ensures



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that are not sustainable in the contemporary information environment and undermine the credibility of current and future messages and communication efforts. Seen as real weapons of information warfare, propaganda and fake news are currently the major concern of researchers.



THE ORIGINS OF SOCIAL NETWORKS

The first scientific approaches to social networks date back to the first half of the twentieth century. Two of the studies in the fields mentioned above, *Networks in social psychology*, starting with Kurt Lewin (Doreian, 2014) and *Network analysis in French sociology and anthropology* (van Meter, 2014, p. 20), bring forward excerpts from the reports to John Scott (1991) and Linton Freeman (1996, 2004) and studies the psychological, sociological and anthropological aspects of social networks.

The first theories of socialisation are attributed to the German sociologist Georg Simmel (1858-1918), considered by many researchers to be the founder of the field, even though he never used the term social network. Simmel's ideas about "socialisation", the fundamental form of interactions between people, was the basis of subsequent theories and analyses of social networks. The German sociologist is the author of the theory that the fundamental social unit is *the triad*, not the *dyad*, a principle that underlies the theory of social networks. According to this theory, the relationship between two people is intensified by "a third element or a social framework that transcends both members of the dyad" (G Simmel, 1950, p. 136), regardless of the content of these connections (e.g. friendship, business, kinship). To support this theory, Simmel exemplified that *a marriage with a child has a completely different character from that of a marriage without children, but is not significantly different from a marriage with two or more children* (Simmel, 1955, p. 154) arguing that while an isolated dyad favours a greater individuality of both persons, since no majority can exceed the vote of one person, the addition of a third member makes such a majority possible. As a result, *strong individuality is devalued in a triad*, and compliance with group norms is greater.

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SOCIOMETRIC DIAGRAMS – FORERUNNER OF SOCIAL NETWORKS –

The Austro-American psychiatrist Jacob Moreno (1889–1974) developed in 1925, in New York, *the theory of group psychotherapy and the methodology of psychodrama*. His fundamental contribution to the analysis of social networks appeared in *Who will survive?* (Moreno, 1934), which was a signal event in the history of social network analysis, a turning point for field development (Freeman, 2004). Moreno used the term “network” in the modern sense, fulfilling three of the four key criteria – *structural links that link social actors, systemic collection of empirical data and graphical images – but did not use mathematical models* (L. Freeman, 2004, p. 7). This is how the sociogram appeared, *a diagram (graph) of points and labelled lines that represent a set of relationships between individuals from a small social group*. Relational data could be collected by multiple methods, including observations, experiments, interviews, or questionnaires. *For Moreno, social configurations had defined and perceptible structures, and mapping these structures into a sociogram allowed a researcher to visualise the channels through which, for example, information could flow from one person to another and through which an individual could influence on another* (Scott, 1991, pp. 3-11).

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The construction of a sociogram allowed a therapist, for example, to identify group leaders and isolated individuals and to reveal indirect connections, reciprocities, and asymmetric choices (Ibid). For example, a sociometric “star” receives many friendly choices from others, reflecting her popularity and leadership in the group. Moreno applied sociometric methods to the investigations of Sing Sing Prison and the problem of an escape to the Hudson School for Girls in New York (Moreno, 1932). In the latter study, he showed that, by mapping the preferences of girls to sit at the table with and implementing changes based on diagrams, fugitives have dropped dramatically.

The Yankee City study found numerous cliques, defined as informal subgroups whose members develop a sense of group, intimacy, and norms (Warner et al, 1975, p. 32). After discovering the existence of these clicks in the comments made by those they studied, Warner

and his associates claimed that they are second only to family in placing people in society. People are integrated into communities through ‘informal’ and ‘personal’ family and clique relationships, not just through the ‘formal’ relationships of the economy and the political system (Scott, 1991, p. 21). Because many people belong to multiple cliques simultaneously, *such a clique overlap spreads into a network of relationships that integrates almost the entire population of a community into a single vast system of clique relationships* (Warner et al, p. 32). Thus, network subgroups structure the larger social systems in which they are incorporated.

In *The Human Group*, Homans (1950) reanalysed data from several classical network studies to demonstrate how his triple classification scheme explained structural relationships. Using data from the *Old City* project, he displays a two-way matrix of 18 white southern women participating in 14 social events ordered by date (Freeman et al, 2003). By rearranging the matrix row and columns, Homans showed that the women were divided into two cliques whose members participated in various party groups.

Social network contamination

The idea of contamination in the social network is based on the tendency of people to imitate each other. The desire to smoke, for example, can be transmitted in a social network just as the decision to quit smoking can be determined by the decision of a friend of your friend who has quit. Social network contamination is argued from examples such as laughter crises to suicides or even political beliefs and ideas.

Although researchers claim that *we still do not know whether the Internet will increase the speed or spread of contamination in general* (Christakis, Fowler, 2009, pp. 3-105) on a much larger scale, the phenomenon of contamination can be easily observed today, an eloquent example of this is the interpretation of social media users and political decisions on immigrants in Syria, or, recently, the issue of vaccination within COVID 19 pandemics. The expansion of the Internet, access to social platforms such as Facebook or Twitter,



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the flow of information through various forms of media have made people away from events to be influenced even emotionally. Moreover, the influence of the phenomenon can be seen in the reactions and decisions of some Western governments.

Dr. Christakis and Dr. Fowler, authors of the famous book *Connected* state that the tendency to form social networks is part of our biological heritage, the human brain being built in this regard. If a man is led to the idea that he will end up disconnected, his belief in supernatural forces in God will increase. Moreover, social networks are inscribed in our genes. The number of friends, the location in the centre or at the periphery of the network are genetically determined. Man is, in fact, *Homo dictyous, the man of networks*, altruistic, cooperative, but also selfish and vengeful, different from *Homo economicus* (Stanford Encyclopededia of Philosophy, 2018), who pursues only his own interest to obtain maximum personal gains with the most low possible cost. *Altruism, cooperation, the desire to punish and take advantage of others are inscribed in our DNA*, the researchers argue.

They also show that the theory that the individual acts rationally and out of self-interest cannot be valid because it leaves no room for altruism and does not study how people get to want what they want, they build a new theory of *Homo economicus* (Rakesh Sharma, 2020), in which the pursuit of one's own good contributes to the good of society. *By belonging to a social network, man pursues his own interest, taking into account the well-being of others, we want what other people we are connected to want.*

THE SOCIAL NETWORK – A SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE –

Extensive analyses argue and highlight the power of social networks by presenting how they *shape (influence) our lives*. (Christakis, Fowler, 2009, pp. 3-105).

To establish the basis of this argument, researchers identify five rules according to which networks are formed and influence is produced in the network:

1. We model our network;

2. We are shaped by our network;
3. Friends influence us;
4. Our friends' friends influence us;
5. The network has a life of its own.

Although the theory is generally accepted that friendships are not accidental and that social relationships depend on factors such as culture, geographical boundaries, political affiliation, socioeconomic status, or even genetic factors, researchers bring arguments, examples, and statistics to support idea *that if you are rich, you will attract more friends, and if you have more rich friends, you will find more ways to get rich* (Ibid), is an illustrative statement in this regard.

Connection and contamination are two fundamental aspects of social networks and anthropological studies have shown, on the one hand, that the distance between two strangers is six steps (Miligram, 1967) – your friend is one step away from you, the friend of the friend is two steps, etc., and, on the other hand, researchers argue that the *influence in the network* is achieved only in *three steps* (Christakis, Fowler, 2009, pp. 4-103) starting from the idea that everything we do and say tends to be sent in our network, influencing our friends, one step, then our friends' friends, two steps, and our friends' friends, three steps. This theory identifies three possible reasons for limiting influence:

- deterioration of the accuracy of the information as it is transmitted,
- the uncontrollable evolution of the network in the sense of the inconsistency of the connections,
- evolutionary biology whose history holds that humans evolved in small groups.

For example, Dr. Nicholas A. Christakis and Dr. James H. Fowler refer to a study of happiness that argues for the ability of social networks to influence people's emotions. Happy people prefer the company of those like them and pass on the same feeling to others. The probability of being happy increases by 15% if you are at *a level of influence of a happy friend*, by 10% for the *second level of influence*



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and by 6% for the third. Also, the probability of people being happy increases with the number of friends. Instead, people who feel alone will lose 8% of their friends in a year.

From “group thinking” to epistemic bubbles and “echo chamber”

In support of the theory of belonging to the social network is the theory of “group thinking” (Billow, 2002) – a psychological phenomenon in which people give interest to reach a consensus within a group. In most cases, people set aside their own personal beliefs to adopt the opinion of others in the group (Cherry, 2020). The term was first used in 1972 by social psychologist Irving L. Janis (1972, p. 276).

According to this theory, people who oppose the dominant decisions or opinions of the group as a whole often remain quiet, preferring to keep the peace instead of disturbing the uniformity of the crowd. The phenomenon can be problematic, but even well-meaning people are prone to make irrational decisions in the face of overwhelming pressure from the group.

Signs of group thinking

Group thinking may not always be easy to distinguish, but there are some signs that it is present. There are also some situations where there are indications that it is likely to occur. Janis has identified a number of different “symptoms” that indicate group thinking (Lunenburg, 2010, p. 13):

- *The illusions of unanimity* lead members to believe that everyone agrees and feels the same. It is often more difficult to speak when it seems that everyone else in the group is not on the same “wavelength”;
- *Unquestionable beliefs* lead members to ignore possible moral and sometimes even legal issues and not to consider the consequences of individual and group action;
- *Reason* prevents members from reconsidering their beliefs and causes them to ignore warning signs;
- *Stereotyping* causes group members to ignore or even demonize members outside the group who may oppose

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or challenge the group's ideas. This causes group members to ignore important ideas or information;

- *Self-censorship* causes people who may have doubts to hide their fears or doubts. Instead of sharing what they know, people stay calm and apply the principle that the group needs to know best.



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THE “MINDGUARDS” ACTIONS TAKEN OVER BY THE 2.0 ALGORITHMS

The “*guards of the mind*” are constraints that social groups add to decision-making processes acting as self-censors to hide problematic information from the group. Rather than sharing important information, they remain silent or actively prevent sharing. In this context, the *illusions of invulnerability* lead the members of the group to be overly optimistic and to take risks. When no one expresses or expresses an alternative opinion, it leads people to believe that the group must be right.

Direct pressure to comply is often put on members who ask questions, and those who question the group are often seen as disloyal or traitors.

From this information, one can easily notice the similarity with the process of algorithms in social networks. Basically, the algorithms do the same thing on social media and the recent documentary *Social Dilemma* (Netflix, 2020) in which former employees of the main social networks make public the mechanism described above with concrete examples.

Tristan Harris, a former Google employee, explained, in 2019, the fact that Google and other social networks have no need to spy on you in order to know what you want. “*Companies such as Facebook, Google do not have to listen to conversations, because they’ve already collected the cookies and links that you accessed, so they make these voodoo dolls that act more and more like you do*” (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2019).

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By “voodoo dolls”, he means the digital avatars built on the user’s profile. All it needs to do is simulate a conversation the voodoo doll would have and they already know the conversation that they just had, without listening to your microphone. Australian Broadcasting Corporation (2019) states these in order to accurately show thee was social media is able to influence its users.

GROUP THINK IMPACT VS. SOCIAL MEDIA IMPACT

Starting from the studies of the “group thinking” phenomenon, the perspective of the “bubbles” in social media no longer seems so distant. We are all connected, like a network we cannot see (Mickenberg and Dugan, 1995: 5-12). We find it difficult to see the network while you are inside it, whether we are talking about a social network that uses technology or not.

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“Group thinking” can lead people to ignore important information and can eventually lead to poor decisions. This can be harmful even in minor situations, but can have much more serious consequences in some settings. Medical, military, or political decisions, for example, can lead to unfortunate outcomes when the effects of group thinking affect them.

While group thinking can generate consensus, it is by definition a negative phenomenon that results in poor or uninformed thinking in decision-making. Some of the problems it can cause include (Gokar, 2013, pp. 225-240):

- Blindness to potentially negative results;
- Failure to listen to people with opposing views;
- Lack of creativity;
- Lack of preparation to deal with negative results;
- Ignoring important information;
- Inability to see other solutions;
- Interest in other things than those discussed in the group;
- Listening to authority;
- Overconfidence in decisions;
- Resistance to new information or ideas.

Consensus can allow groups to make decisions, complete tasks and complete projects quickly and efficiently, but even the most harmonious groups can benefit from some challenges (Ibid).

Relating these issues to those generated by social media in the web 2.0 era, we can say that in order to have a correct perspective *the high costs estimated by researchers must be multiplied by the speed of spread in online social networks in terms of time to create such a group (called the bubble or resonance chamber in social media language), as well as with “2.0” in terms of amplifying symptoms and problems. We base these statements on the fact that the online favours through algorithms (Farrell, 2018) the instant creation of such groups based on common passions, studies, political affiliation, etc., as well as by the fact that “bubbles” or “resonance chambers” are much harder to prevent and getting out of them is much more difficult than in the case of “group thinking” because in real space freedom and privacy are greater than online, applying the principle of reducing the number of social steps (Christakis, Fowler, 2009, pp. 4-104) previously presented.*

If in working groups it has been shown that the diversity of group members improves decision-making and reduces group thinking, this principle is much more difficult to implement in online social networks because the group’s intervention is much more prompt and group thinking is the only one the members of the group hear, due to the information selection algorithms that reach them, this aspect determining them to be sure that this is the only available alternative.

When people in groups have diverse backgrounds and experiences, they are better able to bring different perspectives, information, and ideas to the table. This improves decisions and makes it less likely to fall into group thinking patterns. Starting from this premise, we consider that in order not to fall into the trap of these “bubbles” one of the viable solutions is an alternative that offers exposure to diversity even if this alternative will also be a component of the virtual environment and the most possible it could be one that provides more security when it comes to the use of personal data – the biggest risk identified



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by users of online social networks. A concrete example in this sense can be exemplified by the recent migrations from Facebook, respectively WhatsApp networks, to the detriment of networks such as “Me we”, respectively “Signal”, following the announcement of data sharing between WhatsApp and Facebook.

In other words, both in the real and in the virtual environment, the social network represents *the connection* with at least two other people, and this communication connection implies the influence that in the social networks expands step by step leading to the contamination of the network.

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From origin to cause, from cause to effect

As we have shown in *the origin of communication study*, messages designed to influence behaviour have existed for centuries, but it has become easier because the methods of mass communication have allowed a wider dissemination of propaganda.

The model of persuasion used in ancient Greek rhetoric may from my point of view be an approach to false news and propaganda.

Kairos is actuality, adequacy, decorum, symmetry, balance – awareness of the rhetorical situation or “circumstances that open moments of opportunity” (Kinneavy, Eskin, 1994, pp. 42-131).

As neglected in classical rhetoric as the current concept of *kairos* practically translates into Aristotelian key communication as *correspondence truth*, another Aristotelian theory (Aristotle, 2007, pp. 23-39) may have applicability in combating false news This theory is based on the foundation that truth has a much greater persuasive force than false, regardless of rhetorical arguments, and that only because of lack of preparation, knowledge the use of evidence, plaintiffs lose some cases in front of more educated or skilled. *A sentence is true when it says about something that it is what it is or that it is not what it is not. It is false when it says about something that it is what it is not or that it is not what it is* (Aristotle, 2007, pp. 23-39). Truth is what corresponds to reality, because the truth is to tell as it happens in reality.

Basically, starting from his theory, a sentence is true when it says about something that it is what it is or that it is not what it is not. It is false when it says about something that it is what it is not or that it is not what it is. This type of truth is also called correspondence truth. *“Rhetoric is less the art of persuasion than the art of discovering everything that, in a given case, involves something persuasive”.* (Aristotle, 2004, p. 24).

In Aristotelian vision, the means of persuasion or evidence are:

- a) extratechnical, represented by various testimonies, documents, etc., which exist before the demonstration, are not procured by the speaker but can be used by him;
- b) techniques, these being the invention of the speaker: the character and authority of the speaker, his real or apparent demonstrative argumentation and the disposition in which the audience is (Ibid).

Applying the Aristotelian theory, we can identify a model for combating false news by simply promoting the truth (*figure no. 2*).

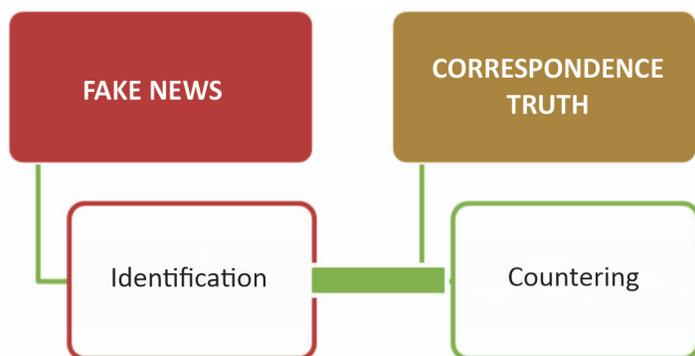


Figure no. 2: Fake news combat model using the Aristotelian correspondence truth.

“Rhetoric is less the art of persuasion than the art of discovering everything that, in a given case, involves something persuasive”.

If the truth has a greater persuasive force than the false, it is logical that telling the truth to the person exposed to the false will decrypt the initial message and categorise it as false. Continuing the Aristotelian reasoning, the uneducated (untrained) can be an exception to this theory, for which the model of combat must provide a component of education (training).



To help readers recognise false news, the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) has published a best practice guide that includes tips that should be applied by all readers to protect them from false news and, moreover, to prevent the spread of false news. Among the association's recommendations are: consider the source; read beyond, reading the whole article, not just the headline; check the author: who sign the articles; check the date the information was written; ask the experts: check the information with experts in the field.

This exception is not negligible because fake news professionals use *increasingly diverse methods*, Claire Wardle identifying, in 2017, *no less than seven types of fake news* (Wardle, 2017). This aspect reinforces the importance of the education component, with an essential role in the first stage of the process of combating fake news, that of identification (*figure no. 2*). For example, to help readers recognise false news, the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) has published a best practice guide¹ that includes tips that should be applied by all readers to protect them from false news and, moreover, to prevent the spread of false news. Among the association's recommendations are:

- Consider the source: searching and investigating the source of the accessed information as well as its contact list;
- Read beyond: reading the whole article, not just the headline, which often has nothing to do with the text of the article;
- Check the author: who signs the articles? Are they real? Are they credible?;
- Check the date the information was written. Old articles can be reviewed and reposted and introduced in a context;
- Ask the experts: check the information with experts in the field.

So these concepts, written and argued by Greek philosophers as a necessity to answer current problems of the time, the need for people to defend themselves before the courts, which had the role of cutting the truth and assigning justice, find applicability to you. and current issues such as combating false news and propaganda. Given the circumstances in which the communication took place - people's need, their personal interest in defending and convincing to achieve the desired effect – I consider this type of communication to be a starting point in addressing the phenomenon of false news and propaganda. In other words, in our opinion, *kairos*, translated by saying the right word at the right time, supported by the Aristotelian triangle of rhetoric

¹ "How to Spot Fake News". IFLA blogs. <http://blogs.ifla.org/lpa/files/2017/01/How-to-Spot-Fake-News-1.jpg>, 27 January 2017, retrieved on 12.10. 2019.

can be considered a first variant of the strategic communication approach. To combat fake news and propaganda.

In the same vein, starting from the theory of the French philosopher Jacques Ellul (1865, p. 6) according to which *propaganda ends where dialogue begins*, we consider that the tool to be used to counter propaganda and fake news is social media. All the more so as social media is the main medium for using and spreading false news and propaganda.

For example, at the level of the Ministry of National Defence, an institution with an active presence in social networks, we consider that it is necessary to use the official pages of the institution both for reporting (presenting) false news and prompt public information on the topic debated by them, and for education the public for their recognition and involvement in the detection and reporting of false news. The online communication strategy should also develop an information and message transmission component on the general topic addressed by the opponent's narratives. As arguments for this mode of action are *the credibility of the military institution (materialised in the large number of followers of the institutional pages)*, which would lead to efficient and real-time dissemination of institutional information and messages, *the interaction offered by social networks*, which would help educate the public and implicitly would lead to both the detection and the reporting of false news. Also, this type of content posted on the official pages of the institution would be taken over by the media, which would contribute to the expansion of the information dissemination environment.

CONCLUSIONS

To get an overview of social media, in addition to the fact that web 2.0 uses technologies focused on the concept of user-generated content, online collaboration and information exchange and collective intelligence (Davidson, Yoran, 2007, pp. 117-119), we must keep in mind that these technologies are focused on the concept



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Starting from the theory of the French philosopher Jacques Ellul according to which propaganda ends where dialogue begins, we consider that the tool to be used to counter propaganda and fake news is social media.



Therefore, the social network broadens the communication environment and promotes influence and the Internet makes the communication process take place at the mass level, amplifies the speed of dissemination, which further emphasises the influence and recommends social media as a tool in the information war.

of **social network**, a concept that integrated users and made possible the generation and exchange of content, producing collective intelligence and, implicitly, the emergence of Web 2.0. Therefore, social media and web 2.0 are new concepts based on a concept recognised for its characteristics, developed with the help of technological evolution and the emergence of the Internet.

We consider that, regardless of the environment, either social or virtual, the social network means *the connection* with at least two other people, and, according to the triad theory, this connection involves influencing. The social network propagates this influence according to the theory of social steps, and the Internet increases the speed of propagation and rapid contamination of the network.

Basically, if the social network makes the difference from “one to one” or “door to door” communication to “from three to infinite plus” communication, virtual space, Internet and web 2.0 make the transition to *virtual social networks* where it is stored and it even amplifies the intention to communicate with the transmission of the desire and intention to influence.

Therefore, *the social network broadens the communication environment and promotes influence and the Internet makes the communication process take place at the mass level, amplifies the speed of dissemination, which further emphasises the influence and recommends social media as a tool in the information war. On the other hand, we consider that propaganda and fake news could be countered using simple social networks principles of communication and psycho-sociology.*

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