



RESEARCH

Received: 15/03/2021 --- Accepted: 12/07/2021 --- Published: 03/01/2022

DISINFORMATION AS A CORPORATE RISK: THE NEED FOR A NEW METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

*Las empresas ante la desinformación. La necesidad de un nuevo enfoque
metodológico*

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This research is part of the project "The company in post-truth environments", funded by the COTEC Foundation for innovation in the Open Innovation Program PIA2017

How to cite this article:

Mut Camacho, M. y Rueda Lozano, A. (2022). Disinformation as a corporate risk: the need for a new methodological approach. *Vivat Academia. Revista de Comunicación*, 155, 113-129. <http://doi.org/10.15178/va.2022.155.e1327>

ABSTRACT

This research aims to determine the need for a crisis management model on reputational risks related to media misinformation. Companies recognize that they are facing a new corporate risk and the professional communication sector recognizes the urgency of having measures in the face of a hoax event. For this, the research carried out on Spanish companies on their perception of risk is taken as a starting point, where it was determined that for the professional the risks derived from misinformation are highly dangerous and the gap between the professional perception and the priorities of the organization. This qualitative report, with focus groups on a qualified sample of those responsible for the reputation and corporate communication of Spanish companies, reviews the trend of these crises and the system used in crisis management. The results corroborate the need to create a base methodology that collects the foundations on which disinformation acts. This fact is giving rise to new work dynamics and provides knowledge in the creation of efficient dynamics for the fight against misinformation. The conclusions propose a methodological scheme that can improve the work of communication professionals.

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KEYWORDS: Disinformation - Corporate risk - Reputation - Fake News - Post-truth - Corporate communication - Reputational crisis - Intangible value - Dircom

RESUMEN

Esta investigación tiene como objetivo determinar si las empresas se hallan ante la necesidad de contar con un modelo de gestión de crisis sobre riesgos reputacionales relacionados con la desinformación mediática. Las empresas admiten encontrarse ante un nuevo riesgo corporativo y el sector profesional de la comunicación reconoce la urgencia de contar con medidas ante un evento por bulo. Para ello, se toma como punto de partida la investigación realizada a empresas españolas sobre su percepción de riesgo, donde se determinó que para el profesional los riesgos derivados de la desinformación son altamente peligrosos y se descubría la brecha entre la percepción profesional y las prioridades de la organización. El presente informe de corte cualitativo, con grupos focales a una muestra cualificada de responsables de reputación y comunicación corporativa de empresas españolas, revisa la tendencia de estas crisis y la sistemática empleada en la gestión de la crisis. Los resultados corroboran la necesidad de crear una metodología base que recoja los fundamentos sobre los que actúa la desinformación. Este hecho está dando lugar a la necesidad de ampliar el conocimiento en la creación de dinámicas eficientes para la lucha contra la desinformación. Las conclusiones bocetan un esquema metodológico que puede mejorar el trabajo de los profesionales de la comunicación.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Desinformación - Riesgo corporativo - Reputación - *Fake News* - Posverdad - Comunicación corporativa - Crisis reputacional - Valor intangible - Dircom.

EMPRESAS DIANTE DA DESINFORMAÇÃO. A NECESSIDADE DE UMA NOVA ABORDAGEM METODOLÓGICA

RESUMO

Esta pesquisa tem como objetivo determinar se as empresas se deparam com a necessidade de um modelo de gestão de crise dos riscos reputacionais relacionados à desinformação na mídia. As empresas admitem estar perante um novo risco corporativo e o sector da comunicação profissional reconhece a urgência de se tomar medidas perante situações de embuste. Para tal, parte-se da pesquisa feita sobre a percepção de risco de empresas espanholas, onde se determinou que para o profissional os riscos derivados da desinformação são altamente perigosos e os gaps entre a percepção profissional e as prioridades da organização. Este relatório qualitativo, com focus groups numa amostra qualificada dos responsáveis pela reputação e comunicação corporativa das empresas espanholas, analisa a evolução destas crises e o sistema utilizado na gestão de crises. Os resultados corroboram a necessidade de se criar uma metodologia de base que reúna os alicerces sobre os quais atua a desinformação. Este fato está suscitando a necessidade de ampliar o

conhecimento na criação de dinâmicas eficientes para o combate à desinformação. As conclusões traçam um esquema metodológico que pode melhorar o trabalho dos profissionais de comunicação.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Desinformação - Risco corporativo - Reputação - Notícias falsas - Pós-verdade - Comunicação corporativa - Crise de reputação - Valor intangível - Dircom.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Although they already existed as corporate risks, the global pandemic has fueled two of the great risks businesses face today: disinformation and cybersecurity. This is because we are in the era of post-truth, characterized by the rise of a digital universe where fake news is spread that deteriorates honesty and truthfulness (Mut Camacho, 2020). The company is exposed to this hyper-connected public environment that consumes an immense amount of information, where people not only produce and access content immediately but also consume and disseminate information instantly. We saw how the continuous increase in reputational risks, boosted by hyper-connection and fake news, were openly discussed at the World Economic Forum in Davos (2020a), which supports the need to observe the reputational risk of misinformation as an urgent requirement. Representatives of the world economic and political order announce that the next wave of technologies of the 4th Industrial Revolution will drastically change economies and societies with unintended consequences. Cyber-attacks have become a common danger to individuals and businesses. Surveys rank these problems as the seventh most likely risk and the eighth-most shocking, and the second most worrisome risk for doing business globally in the next 10 years (World Economic Forum, 2020b, p. 60).

To deal with this situation, the European Commission promoted among companies the signing of a Code of Good Practice on Disinformation (2018). The purpose of this code is to unify actions that signatories can implement to address challenges related to disinformation. Among the measures that the document proposes, it is proposed to suspend the advertising income of those who adulterate information, close false accounts, clearly identify political propaganda, promote transparency and verification of content, etc. Even so, there are still cases that affect the reputation of companies. The NGO Avaaz (2020) published a study against the recommendation algorithms of the YouTube platform, as it claimed that they facilitate the dissemination of disinformation about the weather, supported by the promotion of important advertisers such as Warner Bros, Decathlon, Samsung, Carrefour, L'Oréal, and even Greenpeace Spain or the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). Brands, victims of programmatic advertising, advertise with their spots in these videos that spread false and manipulated information.

The complex fronts that companies face are varied as facilitators of disinformation, as unwitting participants, or as direct victims. Fake news increased 365% in 2017, generating serious reputational damage to institutions and companies (Canvas, 2018). Basically, the two solutions that are proposed are aimed at the two actors involved. The first focuses on the owners of social networks, asking them to abandon their position as mediators and take responsibility for the content published and shared by their users, as well as their security and privacy. The second places the accent on advertising brands, companies, and their managers to lead the change in the fight against misinformation (Corporate Excellence, 2018).

For company managers, cybersecurity problems are a loose end, 49% of Spanish managers (44% in the world) recognize that their companies lack a comprehensive security strategy, 53% that they do not have training programs for employees, and 55% that they do not have previously established procedures to respond to security incidents. In fact, when a cyberattack occurs, most companies recognize that they are not able to identify its authorship (41% in Spain and 39% in the world) (PwC, 2017).

On the other hand, confusion has become widespread in the population, 63% of people acknowledge not being able to distinguish between true news and rumors or falsehoods. All this, together with the fact that 65% of citizens on a global scale receive information through social media platforms, search engines, or news apps, has caused trust in traditional media to drop to 22% (Canvas, 2018).

Furthermore, the study Influence of fake news on public opinion indicates that 88% of the Spanish population believes that fake news is generated to damage the image and reputation of people and organizations, because whoever generates it expects to obtain a personal benefit or a benefit for the group to which they belong (75.8%). For 84.7% of those interviewed, the damages caused by fake news are very serious (Communication Study, 2018).

2. PROPOSALS ON HOW TO MANAGE THE REPUTATIONAL DISINFORMATION CRISIS

As the Global Risk Management Survey (AON, 2017) assures, damage to corporate reputation is ranked as the first of the concerns of company directors and managers in the world. Thus, we confirm how companies maintain constant care and prevention of everything that can affect the good perception of their public and everything that can seriously damage their intangible resources, and, therefore, their economic results. We have verified that, while studies on the effects of disinformation and fake news are basically found in the media world, there are few theoretical studies of this disruptive phenomenon applied to what its existence and theoretical confirmation means for the company.

Recent research has shown that the spread of misinformation that impacts organizations is a real and permanent risk. Given the weakness to which organizations are subjected, the need arises for them to establish work routines that

allow effectively detecting hoaxes and denying them. Although the author observes that most have not established permanent protocols for this (Rodríguez-Fernández, 2019, p. 1725).

Mainly, the task of meditating on corporate reputation subjected to the areas of disinformation, at present, we can find it in the professional world through communication consultants. They have approached the issue of post-truth and its reputational consequences from urgent, real, and daily practice, aware that a new, more direct relationship with public opinion has emerged and alternative means of communication with great influence and dissemination have been consolidated. Meanwhile, traditional information channels have lost importance in the face of the rise of new communication channels: personal blogs, *YouTube*, *WhatsApp*, *Telegram*, *Facebook*, *Twitch*, *Instagram*, *Tik Tok*, or *Twitter*. The new communication represents an opportunity and a risk, "a mere tweet can mobilize the masses and cause unthinkable results" (Llorente & Cuenca, 2018a, p. 6).

The *Real Advocacy* document (Llorente & Cuenca, 2018b) recognizes the danger of fake news in the business environment and proposes developing digital identity programs that promote the presence of company managers and collaborators on social media. The logic is to face the lie promoted by false profiles with truthful information promoted by real and informed ambassadors. Once again, attention is paid to the problem of misinformation in the publication *Disrupción* (Llorente & Cuenca, 2020,) warning that fake news is created to persecute audiences, damage reputations, or defend ideological positions. It proposes the need, on the part of companies, of listening and agile reaction, as well as being active in the digital space to amplify the version of the company. The consulting firm raises the *embrace disruption* strategy, as it considers that new methodologies are lacking to face new challenges. It formulates a new way of looking and a new style of telling the company to the public based on four pillars: the corporate story, the generation of trust, sustainable communication, and the capacity for anticipation and innovation (Llorente, 2019).

The consulting firm Deloitte (2019) warns in a report about the difficulty of proving falsehood in time and preventing it from spreading. It announces that organizations need to protect the security and reputation of their brand, since uncontrolled effects damage reputation by inciting adverse reactions and delegitimizing the company, causing loss of trust in the organization, financial losses, and difficulties in finding a quick solution. It is proposed that the company formulate a brand strategy identifying potential vulnerabilities and that an action plan be developed to mitigate the risks of spreading false information. They advise increasing the strategy in social networks to have a strong voice, bet on innovative monitoring technologies, and have a response plan prepared to be effective in tackling reputational risk.

For its part, the consulting firm PwC (2018) reports that we are facing a scenario of uncertainty where companies must be very careful about the advance of fake news,

they must be careful to understand the context of their messages and generate trust in the client. They propose that companies not only monitor the entire digital universe but also be proactive in counteracting it and mitigating reputational risk. Organizational audiences must see a trusted organization beforehand to counteract the effects of malicious viral content.

Along the same lines, Edelman's *Trust Barometer 2019* (2019a) anticipated that, in general, society trusts organizations less and that the lines between what is true and what is not true are blurred. This, together with the loss of authority of the communication channels, has caused a change in the consumer's mentality, more distrustful, more attentive, and proactive in the search for neutrality and authenticity. The report alerts us to the social problem we are facing as it revealed that 73% of citizens are concerned that disinformation, fake news, and digital bots are weapons of modern propaganda. There is no clear solution to the verification of facts that allows to quickly discern what is real and what is false, consequently, trust in business, worldwide, is around 56%. And, therefore, companies must fight to find the best way to tackle fake news and disinformation campaigns that are so complex and invasive (Edelman, 2019b).

Hill & Knowlton also warn brands about post-truth and announce that it is time to move and defend themselves from the situation that is originating from the "balkanization" of social networks, the rejection of the citizens to the experts, and the decisions contingent on consumer data. All this has given rise to a new "digital gap", not as a division of access to technology, but of access to truth: "This division is a wound on which those who wish to keep society at odds are primed" (Goldhammer, 2017, p. 17).

Likewise, Burson-Marsteller (now BCW) proposes that companies implement the correct tools and resources to monitor online conversations about their brands to receive early alerts when false information circulates. If the response is too slow, substantial damage to business and stakeholder relationships can occur before the crisis can finally be fully addressed (Chang & Olson, 2017).

Having good communication is not enough, companies must anticipate the demands that may arise from regulators, customers, employees, and society. Information flows are key, but success will depend on the reflection that each organization knows how to make of itself (PWC, 2017) and on having a plan that involves an interdisciplinary and transversal team to the entire organization (AON, 2019). The management of reputational risk will be successful if it is coordinated with the rest of corporate risks since they all have an impact on reputation, brand, profits, and capital (Vizcaíno-González, 2010). If for organizations, measuring their corporate reputation was already a complicated task (Xifra, 2020), trying to calculate their new reputational risks is more complex.

Disinformation has emerged as a matter of public relevance since the pandemic health crisis began. It affects trust in brands and the effects they have on audiences

can be serious. In most of the cases described, there are recurring economic effects linked to the crisis generated by a hoax: the fall in the stock market or the fall in the income statement (Pina, 2019). We verify from theory how companies must create action protocols that serve to defend and remake themselves, now we are going to seek the opinion of the professional in charge of reputation and communication in the company.

3. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

This research is the necessary continuation after the results obtained in a previous work that began with the purpose of knowing to what extent the Spanish company planned, among its corporate risks, the effects of media misinformation on corporate reputation and, therefore, if they were included as a risk within the reputational risk architecture. Those conclusions showed us that the rise of this new risk derived from misinformation was considered urgent from the position of the communication professional, but from the company, it was not yet considered one of its priorities and it was not addressed as an anticipated risk. However, the pandemic health alert has shown companies new priorities and, now, they face the urgent challenge of understanding the effects of misinformation on their corporate reputation and addressing it by achieving an efficient management process.

It is worth remembering some of the most significant data for the evolution of the research (Mut Camacho, 2020):

- 98% of professionals considered the risk of a hoax or misinformation about the brand a threat
- 86% considered it a corporate risk
- 80% had been immersed in a crisis caused by fake news about their company
- 55% do not have any formal program to manage the reputational crisis and 21% did not know if they had one.

This qualitative research seeks to delve into how the misinformation crisis is received and how it is managed in Spanish companies. For this, the opinion of experts has been used to help obtain conclusions that signify the advancement of knowledge. The objectives that have guided the work are:

- Determine the degree of importance in the company's risk strategy of a disinformation crisis, hoaxes, and fake news.
- Describe the methodology followed by communication professionals in Spanish companies and check the level of importance in the management of intangibles
- Know the strategies used in times of crisis.

The ultimate goal is to discover if there is a clear, manifest, and protocolized strategy, and to detect if there are more effective positions. For this, it has been necessary to approach the communication professional who is in charge of the tasks related to everything that, from communication, generates corporate reputation in the company.

The present work focused on a qualitative technique such as the discussion group. An opinion space was sought to capture the feeling, thinking, and living of communication professionals, causing self-explanations to obtain qualitative data (Hamui-Sutton and Varela-Ruiz, 2013). Another characteristic of the method that seemed relevant to us was that it is a technique that focuses on the plurality and variety of attitudes, experiences, and beliefs of the participants in the same limited space and time (Ruíz Olabuenaga, 1996).

According to the objective, the interview guide, the choice of participants, and the scheduling of sessions were determined. The dynamic was organized in two sessions in October 2020 through an online video calling platform due to the health alert situation. The reason for convening two sessions is that we plan each meeting according to the size of the selected companies to delve into possible differences between companies. Among the selected sample, Spanish small and micro-enterprises were not counted because it is not a significant sample concerning the management of intangibles and the general lack of communication professionals in these organizations (Dircom, 2018). The first session organized on October 16th, 2020, was held with a representative sample made up of 8 representatives of the large Spanish company. We understand large companies as those organizations with more than 250 employees and a turnover of more than 50 million euros according to the official criteria of the European Union regarding the business typology. The distribution of the sample was made up of: 80% men and 20% women. The ranks they occupied in their companies are: two general managers, three sales and marketing directors, two communication directors, and a communication consultant. The characteristics of the selected companies fall within the spectrum of large companies linked to the telecommunications, ceramics, and food sectors. Regarding the communication consultant, it focuses on full services linked to the management of intangibles and strategic planning in communication and branding in large companies in the industrial field. The participants had education in Economics and Business, Industrial Engineering, and Journalism, also including two MBAs and a master's degree in Corporate Communication. The duration of the session was 60 minutes divided into two phases: a presentation on the points to be discussed where a series of questions were formulated and a second phase of debate and discussion within the object of study in question.

In the second session, organized on October 21st, 2020, a representative sample made up of 8 representatives of medium-sized Spanish companies was selected. We understand medium-sized companies as those organizations with less than 250 employees and a turnover of fewer than 50 million euros. The distribution of the sample was made up of: 60% men and 40% women. The ranks they occupied in their companies are: four general managers, three marketing and sales managers, and a communications director. The characteristics of the selected companies are linked to the hospitality, air conditioning, and technology sectors. The participants had education in Law, Business Administration and Management, also including an MBA, two masters in Marketing, and a course in Digital Marketing. The duration of

the session was 60 minutes divided into two phases: a presentation on the points to be discussed where a series of questions were formulated and a second phase of debate and discussion within the object of study in question (Authors' note: the names of the participants in the dynamics are not offered as some requested confidentiality).

4. RESULTS

In the first place, we delved into the main conclusion drawn from the earlier research carried out in the previous months to find out how, in general, the Spanish company is systematized and corporate risk is organized due to misinformation in the risk architecture. Let us recall that the research confirmed the gap between professional perception and the organization's priorities. We can verify that communication departments manage reputational crises, but that the strategic importance of a new problem such as misinformation about the brand, a hoax, or fake news that affects the company, is not yet considered by the company at the same level of alert that the professional attributes. As the dircom of a company in the food sector comments:

The food industry has always been in the eye of the hurricane of lies to harm us. We are a sector prone to falsehoods. Now I see how the risk increases with the passage of time and the circumstances that are occurring. Companies must create action protocols that allow us to defend ourselves. It is a pending task (dircom food sector).

Likewise, the marketing director of the telecommunications business field says:

It is true, we have to act as firefighters in times of crisis, when the truth is that it is a key moment, we should have clear protocols as in other cases we already have. We have to influence this; we have to work on it more in the company (dircom telecommunications company).

The main thematic axes that structure the sessions were:

- Disinformation as a business problem
- Managing disinformation as a corporate challenge
- Methodologies and techniques to deal with it

First of all, and after explaining the different basic concepts about what we understand by disinformation in the business environment and the types of attacks we have observed, we asked the attendees if there had been any disinformation attack in recent years. In the group of large companies, six of the eight attendees assured that they had had a reputation crisis due to the effect of lies that arise and are viralized on social networks. As an example, we can cite: "There are very professional people behind fake news, who use skillful techniques to generate connection with people. Above all, a very common means of propagation is *WhatsApp*, so difficult to control for preventive monitoring" (communication consulting professional).

Regarding medium-sized companies, only two members of those who attended commented that they had had this type of event. We verified that to the importance and difficulty of knowing in-depth the causes and consequences of a disinformation crisis, we must add the enormous complexity that surrounds social networks and the disorientation in which those in charge of communication in companies work. Large companies are more subjected to reputational problems that can come from this type of attack and, possibly, can recognize it more quickly and have more means to do so, or outsource tasks that help solve the crisis, while the medium-sized company is disoriented and does not know how to face this type of attack and how to control the development and monitoring of the crisis.

We can confirm that the members of both groups agreed that disinformation is a problem of the greatest magnitude for their companies and a new risk undervalued in their risk plans. As one of the participants assured: "The current context has led us to assess fake news, and all its effects, as one more form of corporate risk" (general manager of the company).

All the representatives, both of large and medium-sized companies, agreed that the global health situation changed their perception of fake news, deep fakes, and other elements of disinformation. As mentioned by the director of marketing and sales of a medium-sized company, "Being subjected to so much misinformation during the pandemic: hoaxes, half-truths... has allowed me to begin to reflect on information consumption and how it can undermine the image of my company". In fact, we, therefore, detect that the social situation is one of the drivers of crisis due to misinformation and that this leads companies to evolve, forcibly, their weaknesses and the need to turn them into a core element in the planning of corporate risks.

Regarding the categorization of business risk, it was unanimous in both groups to frame this risk within the reputational risks of the company, since misinformation damages the perception of the public and this affects the recognition of the organization (marketing and sales director of a large company). As a note, there was a reflection within the group of medium-sized companies on the definition of reputation and image. We will not delve into this question since it is not the objective of this research, but it is necessary to highlight the need to continue teaching about the key concepts in the management of intangibles in companies.

Another of the goal points in these dynamics was knowing how they faced and managed this new risk. There was consensus in the management of this business crisis with the requirement that it be described in the risk plans that companies have. As one of the participants stated: "If we assume that it is a risk for companies, it will have to be included in the risk plan" (general manager of a company). In this same group, a certain debate was generated between the risk plan and the crisis plan, concluding that beyond a conceptual debate, the crisis plan is an executive document to face possible risks. There was disagreement as to who would have to take responsibility. The group of large companies assured that the management of this

risk should be carried out by the management, while in the group of medium-sized companies they assumed that it was something completely transversal in the organization. We observe that, beyond the size of the companies and the hierarchy of tasks, it is interesting to highlight how medium-sized companies understand risks as something inherent to the entire organization, while large companies, possibly due to a much more bureaucratic scale, insist on the need for management to start from the top of the organization chart.

Finally, how to act in the face of a misinformation attack was discussed, being one of the biggest controversies in both sessions. At the meeting of large companies, it was assured, not without a prior debate, that it should be undertaken with the crisis plans that organizations already have, although with the nuances required by the characteristics of the disinformation event. To our cross-questioning about what kind of characteristics, the different members had vague and doubtful answers. This exercise can be summarized in one of the phrases of the meeting: "We have to realize that we are facing something new and that it is going to increase every time. We do not know exactly how to act to be effective, we lack information (communication director of a large company)".

For its part, the communication consultant that participated in this session proposed the possibility of creating new business areas on the matter. In short, it is confirmed that we are facing crisis management that each company faces differently, depending on what the top management decides about the action. In some cases it is said that the slogan is to let go and do nothing:

The lies are interested and generally respond to economic ends, it is preferred to let the storm clear without saying anything. If it clears, this strategy is considered a success and, if it does not clear quickly, it is assumed that whatever had been done it would have still happened (communication director of a large company).

We proposed several real cases for debate such as those that happened to Coca-Cola, United Airlines, or Starbucks. We questioned whether the Spanish company is prepared to stop the reputational impact of a similar situation. This was the topic that generated the most debate among all communication professionals. While some advocated continuing with the crisis plans that they had in their organizations (general director and two marketing directors of medium-sized companies), others assured that they did not know exactly how to act before an unforeseen event like this: "Honestly and thinking about it carefully, there are so many types of misinformation attacks that surpass us. In truth, I don't know what strategies to follow and what steps I have to take. I think I would doubt if the moment came" (general manager of a medium-sized company).

One of the marketing and sales directors of this session made a final reflection accepted by all where he stressed that it was of vital importance to reformulate post-pandemic actions, codes, and behaviors of companies. It is confirmed that there is a consensus that fake news causes serious damage to companies, which must

permanently monitor everything related to their reputation on the Internet and have strategies designed to anticipate the reputational damages derived from the expansion of the hoax. This will force companies to strengthen their relationship with their stakeholders.

It is verified that active communication managers in Spanish companies need new approaches and methodologies to deal with misinformation. The members of the discussion groups confirmed that it was something completely necessary and pointed out the need to create content to train and adapt it to their organizations. As an example, we can cite this reflection: "I think it would be a good idea to start collecting in the study plans or in training courses ways to face this new reality" (company director of marketing and sales).

In short, in the review of the interviews, we establish that there are a series of issues that are urgently demanded to solve the crisis due to misinformation and optimize the tasks of the communication department: "If there are even completely organized vaccine deniers thanks to social networks with a terrible influence, I do not want to imagine if deniers of my organization appear" (general director of a medium-sized company).

5. CONCLUSIONS

Information has become a critical element in the coexistence environments between the social and economic world, therefore, it is vitally important to become aware of its power and understand how the mechanisms that promote this reality work (McIntyre, 2018). In this process, today's society lacks the critical training necessary to obtain the instruments that allow it to reflect on the information that shapes its perception (Fernández Aragonés, 2020). This context is transferred to business environments insofar as society needs information to create an image of the company that facilitates decision-making about it. Since interest groups generate expectations regarding organizations based on the satisfaction they obtain from their corporate behavior and the effectiveness of the generated relationships (Velarde and Pulido, 2018). If the information that the public receives is injurious or is based on an intentional lie, it takes a toll on business trust, damaging the business and its survival in the short term. Therefore, as we have been able to observe throughout this research, disinformation is one of the main problems that companies will have in the coming years. In a context of change where facts are no longer important and trust among the public is broken, achieving legitimacy for organizations by society will be one of the main corporate objectives if they want to survive in virulent digital environments.

Technological advancement and changes in socio-cultural contexts have brought new demands and also new risks for society as a whole. The health alert has done nothing more than to put in the contention that we are facing a change in the socio-economic paradigm where the demands will change and where, unfortunately, it will be increasingly difficult to separate the truth from the lie, causing a schism

between expectations and trust, and, therefore, in the good coexistence between all the actors.

Faced with this environment, companies must face new communication challenges and be prepared at all levels to respond effectively. Knowing about the reputational crisis due to disinformation will allow to create better organizations and establish a clear roadmap for those responsible. Corporate misinformation is rich terrain for analysis and a starting point for dealing with communication for years to come. Recognizing the attacks, establishing roles, and inquiring about the most affected intangible value, among others, will shape new approaches and seed the future training of professionals and organizations with theory.

The horizontal nature of the new modes of digital communication has been the facilitator of a new form of reputational crisis of falsehoods about the organization. This environment generates a large amount of content, from various sources that are not very rigorous or doubtfully true, damaging brands and making it difficult to manage their solution. On the other hand, the idea is reinforced that the traditional mechanisms to build trust in an organization have been replaced by the number of followers, comments, and user ratings. In this panorama, the need to reinforce the corporate communication management area with new profiles and suppliers is strongly growing.

For now, the proposed solutions focus on prevention and monitoring, and on the need to have a rigorous plan that helps to have a tour of all the problems that the brand may encounter given the crisis. In large companies, the formation of crisis committees is proposed, made up of the communication director, the compliance officer, and legal advisers at least. We must add that not only fake news represents great reputational damage for companies, but the theft of data and information through cyberattacks is just as alarming, so the task of managing the intangible values of organizations faces unusual and challenging situations.

Finally, it should be noted that new communication models will emerge derived from post-truth and disinformation environments. The importance of creating new methodologies adapted to the casuistry of misinformation to effectively resolve this type of informational situation has been evidenced. With all this, it will be possible to reduce the damage to business reputation and be closer to creating more valuable companies for society. Disinformation is a new risk, not specified in previous studies, therefore, we must create methodologies that capture these characteristics and that are above all verifiable and useful for institutions.

Therefore, to finish, we incorporate as another step in our future research to delve into the types of attacks, types of crises, and their impact on the corporate culture of the organization. By studying these approaches, a detailed, well-founded, and reliable action framework can be established for one of the greatest challenges that companies and institutions will have in the coming years. In this framework, we propose as a new methodological approach for the management of a crisis derived

from misinformation the active listening of interest groups, and their communication spaces, establishing processes that involve the entire organization in its development. Through an agile methodology in the form of a matrix, we will divide reputational management into two scenarios, one analytical and the other for execution, in turn, composed of four different stages to deal with disinformation events: perceptual dimension, perceptual risks, audience map, and types of attacks and chain of transmission. With these two scenarios, an action plan is articulated for executives and members of responsibility in organizations. In subsequent research, we will delve into this methodology for its study, development, and implementation.

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