

Cuba, Internet and the Media Change

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Cuba is not foreign to the media change. Several social networks are among the most visited websites by internet users. Much less on the sidelines of disinformation through the ICTs.

Although the existence and consequences of the climatic change are still questioned by some - for example, the United States current administration -, apparently the same doesn't happen with what could be called the media change.

The latter is a fait accompli, if we take into account the results of a recent survey by the Pew Research Center, where they supported that at present it's more likely that North Americans read news from social networks rather than from newspapers.

According to a survey published on Monday by this institution, 20% of North Americans mentioned the social networks as frequent source for news, in comparison to the 16% who said to read them on newspapers.

According to the AP agency, is the first time that Pew has found websites like Facebook and Twitter to surpass newspapers, a more than proven fact if one keeps in mind that Pew has been monitoring the consumption of news since 1991, when 56% of North Americans still mentioned newspapers when asked where they had obtained yesterday's news.

The survey also demonstrated that not only newspapers suffer the decadence against the muscle of social networks. In the case of television: 81% of people 65 years old and older more frequently consume news from television, in comparison to the 16% of people with ages between 18 and 29.

"Misinformation"

Although, like every change, the use of social networks has its advantages, among them immediacy – we don't

need to wait long hours for the printed edition of newspapers to find out something, because thanks to internet facts are transmitted live from any mobile -, the other side of the coin is misinformation.

Professional intrusiveness, the "sage" with many followers and the uncontrollable wishes of social acceptance (Facebook, therefore I am) has turned social networks into a sort of virtual common ground where are mixed, besides the news produced by newspapers, all type of information. The variety is wide and ranges from the most transcendent and serious event to the most hilarious joke or the broadcasting of private life to the Truman Show style. With such excess of information, it's not odd that truth gets contaminated of lies, sometimes innocently and others with the worst intentions.

No wonder only a few days back the website Dictionary.com chose "Misinformation" (deceiving information) in opposition to "Disinformation" (disinformation), as word of the year. According to Jane Solomon, linguist of Dictionary.com, the website chose "mis" deliberately instead of "dis" as a "wake-up call", to stay vigilant in the battle against the propagandist ones, those that raise campaigns who believe Earth is flat and other fake news creators.

According to AP, "what the enterprise with base in Oakland, California wanted to highlight was the intention concept, of whether the deceit was unnoticed or on purpose."

For Solomon: "The widespread diffusion of deceiving information generates great challenges to navigate life in 2018. Misleading information exists since long ago, but for over a decade, social networks booming have changed the way to spread information completely. We believe that understanding the concept of deceiving information is essential to identify it when we find it in everyday life, and that would help to dampen down its impact."

The deceiving information, added the linguist: "comprises everything we have experienced in the last 12 months", hence the website with 90 million users per month has been in charge of adding the definitions of "bubble filter", "fake news", "post-fact", "post-truth" and "homophilic", among others.

The Media Contamination

A leading role in "disinformation" has had it Facebook, where the contamination by fake news seems to have reached levels only comparable to those attained by plastic contaminating oceans. The best example was the crucial role of Facebook in the Cambridge Analytica data scandal, as well as the reiterated use of that social network to encourage violence.

Facebook's disinformative contamination, the hatred speech and the published rumors, according to the expert from Dictionary.com promoted "violence against the rohinya Muslim in Myanmar; there were riots in Sri Lanka after fake news incited the Buddhist majority against Muslims, and false rumors about children kidnappers in WhatsApp raised violence in India."

As for WhatsApp, it is an example of how social networks were used in the recent elections in Brazil. As denounced by newspaper Folha de Sao Paulo, that social network worked as platform to Brazilian far-right managers to spread thousands of "fake news" to discredit the candidate for the PT and assure Jair Bolsonaro's victory.

Task Force or Fake News?

Cuba is not foreign to the media change. Several social networks are among the most visited websites by internet users. Much less on the sidelines of disinformation through ICTs. In the aggression plans against Cuba play a fundamental role the use of social networks with subversive ends. Since the appearance of new technologies in the media field, the propaganda machinery, directed "on purpose" from the United States, has used them to stir their campaigns of lies. Among the antecedents of those intentions the fail attempts of ZunZuneo, Piramideo, Commmotion and Operation Surf.

The second public meeting of the Task Force for the Internet in Cuba that, under the eye of the U.S. Department of State has as objective to promote "the free flow of information and without regulations toward Cuba and inside the island", has just taken place in Washington, a few weeks after made public in the budget documents of the Internet Diffusion and Adoption in Cuba, part of the Task Force, the purpose of using Facebook Cuban accounts of "native Cubans" and "unmarked" to spread content created by the U.S. government without informing Facebook Cuban users.

According to statements in the aforementioned meeting by the director of the Office of Cuba Broadcast, Tomás Regalado- who was against the meeting to alleviate the technological blockade of the United States, the main cause for Internet limitations in Cuba -: "In United States there are the best brains in the world and the widest range of resources to completely disregard the aid of the Cuban, with the régime of Havana, to offer Internet to Cubans."

The best brains in the USA were a bit slow, if we take into account that, despite the blockade imposed by the U.S. against Cuba, on the same day that took place the Task Force meeting in Washington, in Cuba was taking place another important change: the implementation of Internet access in wireless cell phones.
