

## ARTICLE

## The process of disinformation and informational behavior an analysis on the choice of vote for the 2020 municipal elections

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### ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** The article analyzes how the disinformation process, through the fake news, can influence the informational behavior of voters/residents of the East Zone of the city of Manaus/Amazonas, in the decision of the vote for the municipal elections of 2020, thus, it sought to present the disinformation process as a product of political, social, communicational and cultural influence, in addition to investigate the behavioral profile of voters from the phenomena of influence of the spread of fake news disseminated in digital media and observe the behavioral relationships established in these processes. **Method:** The method of theoretical-methodological analysis was based on the Theory of Political Action, whose application of the study occurred from the collection of data through the remote questionnaire and interview in Google Forms, made available and managed in WhatsApp groups. **Results:** The results showed that the behavioral aspect of voters, both in the informational field and within the politics and social context portrayed in the research, presented itself as quite heterogeneous, being then observed that there is a predilection of voters for the more traditional communication vehicles, such as TV and Radio, even if the consumption of information clearly originates from news broadcast in social media and instant messaging groups. **Conclusion:** It is considered that the decision to vote and the criteria for choosing candidates suffered direct influences of the type of informational content consumed by voters, regardless of the type of media (traditional or alternative), and it can be inferred that their informational behavior tends to be dictated by false news or low-quality information.

### KEYWORDS

Disinformation. Information behavior. Communication. Politics – Brazil.

## O processo de desinformação e o comportamento informacional uma análise sobre a escolha de voto nas eleições municipais de 2020

### RESUMO

**Introdução:** O artigo analisa como o processo de desinformação, por meio das *fake news*, influenciaram o comportamento informacional de eleitores/moradores da Zona Leste da cidade de Manaus/Amazonas, na decisão do voto para as eleições municipais de 2020, sendo assim, buscou-se apresentar o processo de desinformação como um produto de influencia política, social, comunicacional e cultural, além de investigar o perfil comportamental dos eleitores a partir dos fenômenos de influencia da propagação de *fake news* veiculadas nas mídias digitais, observando as relações comportamentais estabelecidas nesses processos. **Método:** O método de análise teórico-metodológica foi baseado na *Teoria da Ação Política*, cuja aplicação do estudo deu-se a partir da coleta de dados por meio do questionário e entrevista remotos no *Google Forms*, disponibilizado e gerenciado em grupos de *WhatsApp*. **Resultados:** Os resultados mostraram que o aspecto comportamental dos eleitores, tanto no campo informacional, quanto no seio da política e do contexto social retratado na pesquisa, se apresentou como bastante heterogêneo, sendo então observada que há uma predileção dos eleitores pelos veículos de comunicação mais tradicionais, tais como a TV e o Rádio, mesmo que o consumo da informação seja nitidamente originário de

notícias veiculadas em mídias sociais e grupos de mensagem instantânea. **Conclusão:** Considera-se que a decisão do voto e os critérios de escolha dos candidatos sofreram influências diretas do tipo de conteúdo informacional consumido pelos eleitores, independente do tipo de mídia (tradicional ou alternativa), podendo inferir que o comportamento informacional deles tende a ser ditado por notícias falsas ou informações de baixa qualidade.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE**

Desinformação. Comportamento informacional. Comunicação. Política – Brasil.



JITA: BJ. Communication

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Amidst the wide debate about politics, information and communication in the social networks, it is of utmost importance to observe this whole phenomenon of correlations, conflicts and engagement of actions from a more holistic and scientific point of view. Therefore, when dealing with the subject of "misinformation", it is of fundamental interest that an intrinsic analysis is carried out regarding the aspects that structure the formation process of informational competencies, as well as the impacts generated through its influences on the informational behavior of the individual.

Citizenship is formed by a set of rules that guarantee rights and establish duties to the individuals of a given social group. All rules are established aiming at the good coexistence of the collectivity. Every citizen must play his role because this is how he will guarantee the fulfillment of his rights and duties. However, one of the ways citizens can fulfill their act of citizenship is by voting, which is one of the main ways to exercise citizenship. According to Pinto (2003, p. 166), "voting is how the active part of the right to suffrage is exercised", suffrage coming from the Latin "sufragium", which means the declaration of one's own will through elections (PINTO, 2003).

The current political scenario, which over the years is being formed based on an alternative structure of access through networks and social media, is increasingly aligned with discussions about the impact of communication on the voting decision. Thus, it is observed that the way information can be manipulated to reach a certain target audience or objective is configured in a new social process: fake news - directly linked to the process of misinformation and post-truth.

The studies about post-truth and disinformation allow us to understand how the manipulation of information transcends, or just seeks to transcend the debate about the veracity and credibility of a particular news item. In the current political sphere, there is an ongoing discussion about this new context of the use of information through the manipulation of data and the distortion of informational processes. Therefore, it is salutary to rethink how informational competence can outline ways and means to reduce or eliminate the barriers of misinformation in the political, social, and cultural fields.

The theme, besides being perceptive to the aspects of scientific and academic approach to Information Science (IC), through the study of information and communication as a mediation strategy, is very broad in its debate structure, considering that the political context is directly related to the need to observe information as a useful and strategic tool. In this way, informational behavior and communication need to be observed as efficient study mechanisms to deal with the phenomenon of spreading fake news (GENESI, 2018).

The research is presented from the following structure: in the initial section, introduction, it is made a broad approach on the proposed theme; then, the theoretical and conceptual foundations of the research are presented with a focus on the thematic perspectives of the study; after that, it is performed a presentation of the methodological procedures of the research and the steps of data collection and analysis; in the subsequent section, it is discussed the results and the analysis of the study from the investigation proposed in the research; and finally the final considerations with the reflections and considerations about the analyzes observed in the research.

Given the above, this article aims to analyze how the disinformation process, through the fake news, can influence the informational behavior in the voting decision of voters/residents of the East Zone of the city of Manaus, Amazonas, for the 2020 municipal elections. Thus, it was sought to present the disinformation process as a product of political, social, communicational and cultural influence, in addition to investigating the behavioral

profile of voters from the phenomena of influence of the spread of fake news disseminated in digital media, observing the behavioral relationships established in these processes.

## 2 INFORMATIONAL BEHAVIOR, MISINFORMATION AND POST-TRUTH

According to Gasque (2008), informational behavior refers to the state of the individual's relationship with information through contact, i.e., through an interaction, which may reflect in a change of attitude. The concept presented by Gasque and Costa (2010), in turn, can be associated with the behavioral relationship of the voter through the consumption of information for a decision making in the process of choosing the vote - also called the information assimilation process (COUTINHO; LISBÔA, 2011). This relationship between informational behavior and the process of information consumption denotes a set of elements and factors that guide the use and critical reflection of the information consumer, to generate new knowledge, as is widely discussed by researchers in the areas of Communication, Political Science and CI.

The studies on information behavior models trace evolution of the relational pattern of the information user/consumer with the elements that influence his/her decision process and information needs. Martínez-Silveira and Oddone (2007) discuss the main models for studying informational behavior in CI: Wilson's (1981) model of informational behavior based on informational needs; Dervin's (1983) model, called Sense-making, which analyzes the motivation of informational need from a 'gap'; Ellis' (1989) model, which deals with the process of informational search from the needs of individuals; The revised model by Wilson (1997), reformulated from a study with physicians based on the need for information with cognition as the activating mechanism; and the model by Choo (2006), which deals with the process of information seeking based on the individual's need to use information.

The concept of disinformation is presented by Pinheiro and Brito (2014, p.4) as: "(...) the absence of information and informational noise, while at the same time making sense of manipulated information for the broad masses with the role of maintaining their alienation. The authors argue that misinformation can be considered as a process of loss of credibility of information from the absence of reliability in the purpose of the message it wishes to convey. Dawkins (2007) notes that the traffic of information works based on its replication, that is, from its logical chaining of the repetition of the message in a process of maximizing communication - the basis of the propagation of content on the web. The contextualization of the approach presented by Dawkins (2007) notes that misinformation is primarily a social and behavioral phenomenon.

The understanding about the idea of "post-truth," as Genesi (2018) analyzes, refers to the idea that there is a supposed "truth," transfigured or fragmented, beyond the truth itself. The most recent studies on a post-truth deal with analyzing how its reproducibility can affect the context of informational communication in society, as analyzed by Moraes, Almeida and Alves (2020) on its relationship with impact on science. The role of science in this behavioral context of access and transmission of knowledge is fundamental to the struggle against the post-truth scenario. Still, Moraes, Almeida and Alves (2020), discuss the relevance of IC and related areas in promoting informational quality and provide viable ways to reflect on the importance of science in communication processes.

In a more in-depth theoretical-argumentative discussion for the IC field, Santos D'Ámorim and Miranda (2021) reflect on the impact of misinformation on the process of generating new knowledge, observing the phenomenon of damage caused by the fluidity of low-quality information. That said, misinformation can affect an entire cyclical chain of production, dissemination, consumption, and reproduction of information in society,

generating a communicational and informational impact. Still, as Santos D'Ámorim and Miranda (2021) analyze, disinformation also generates consequences in the democratic construction of a nation, being then directly associated with the phenomenon of political-ideological obscurantism.

The term "fake news" was popularized in mid-2016 during the campaign for the presidency of the United States of America, in which the Republican candidate, Donald Trump, effusively used news with unreliable content to discredit the reliability of the news broadcast by the American mainstream media (FÁBIO, 2016). In the same year, the term was considered the most cited by Oxford Dictionaries, and then chosen the word of the year, along with the post-truth (FÁBIO, 2016). It is identified that there is a terminological association with politics, which has become, on one hand, a social culture based on the assimilation of false information and, on the other hand, a latent need to debate and confront this phenomenon, especially on the web, more specifically, in the context of networks and social media.

Tobias (2018) considers that networks and social media have come to dictate the current informational flow through the usability modes of digital platforms, such that the information filtering aspects have become fragile in the face of the expansion of information traffic on the internet. In the context of the vulnerability of information reliability checks, there is a huge possibility of a link emerging between the creation of fake news and the dissemination of the content - hence, mass dissemination.

Genesi (2018) analyzes that fakes news represent a post-truth society, in which truth has become subjective and speculative, while the disenchantment by traditional media observed by some social groups, and the emergence of alternative communication, have potentiated the appearance of new "media" - parallel to the traditional medium - opening space for *communicational gaps*<sup>1</sup>. This perspective presented by Genesi (2018), regarding the political and communicational conception, relates the production of information in the social environment from the understanding of communication gaps or "communication noise", whether intentional or purposeful.

The consumer of information is the individual who "feeds" on a piece of news and analyzes it according to the content of the propagated message. Gasque and Costa (2010) understand that informational behavior is the mode of relationship between the consumer of information - the one who holds the information received through an information channel - and the content of the information, which was produced and propagated by a particular broadcasting agent. Currently, a growing trend of the influence of social media and networks on information consumption is recognized.

Tobias (2018) points out that digital platforms have great shaping power in the construction of information trends, as well as resonate a particular strand of ideological discourse according to a particular political vision. For Gleick (2013), information tends to propagate according to the replication process, therefore, the maximization of the communication range made possible by social media allows a piece of information to obtain an even higher level of traffic ability than before the existence of social media.

This new reality, still according to Gleick (2013), allowed the emergence of a paradox: the use of information flows according to the intentionality of communication and the recipient of this information now has even less access to the original source. This scenario has been called "*zombification*": the spread of the "information virus" from one agent to an even larger group of hosts (society) (GLEICK, 2013).

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<sup>1</sup> A coined term that expresses the possible communicational failures from the emergence of informational spaces that spread fake news, whether on purpose, or in an amateurish or unprofessional way.

### 3 POLITICS, COMMUNICATION, AND CULTURAL MASSIFICATION: POSSIBLE RELATIONS AND CONCEPTS

The transformations in the media and the social relationship with the practice of communicational culture are objects of analysis and discussion about the main aspects of informational behavior and the study itself about cultural massification. For Caune (2008), regarding his epistemological analysis, there are three aspects that coadunate to the cultural practice in communication: industrialization of culture, innovation processes and the valorization of heritage. The relationship of immersion of new technologies and the emergence of a scenario articulated with real-time information motivated the creation of a communicational by-product linked to the need for real-time consumption. Thus, the practice of consumption of this type of information can be observed as a dichotomous and continuous process: sometimes the information is demanded, sometimes it is consumed and reproduced (CAUNE, 2008).

According to Castells (1999), the information society is being remodeled into a pattern called network society, in which the consumption relation and the informational practice are intertwined on the aspects of "communication tribalism". The understanding of communication and culture, from a sociological and epistemological point of view, is no different from the multisensoriality of social perceptions and the symbolism of artistic and cultural production or communicational relations. As Caune (2008) addresses, the convergence of methods and techniques of cultural and communicational processes has produced new communicational languages and new cultural expressions within a cultural and social domain, which has developed throughout contemporary society.

This same line of analysis is observed by Gasque (2008) when he analyzes that the informational behavior is constituted by the construction of experiences and experiences from the contact with information, regardless of the means of access, being possible to assimilate and reproduce new languages, representations, communicative aspects and the formation of a so-called "consumer identity". The development of tribalized communication, according to Caune (2008), was propagated by the conception of diffusion of information in society over time and dynamized by the emergence of new information technology tools. Also according to Caune (2008), the relationship of cultural practice in communication was encouraged by the variability of consumption needs - denominated as a process of convergence from a traditional communication model to a more expressive and perceptible media model in society - a "diffusionist model".

The aesthetic manifestations and the objectification of information and content to serve the masses are one of the main inputs of the sociological thesis presented by Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, called the cultural industry (DUARTE, 2003). Although its conceptualization was defined around 1940, the conception about massification and the cultural industry comes from the German sociological studies of Horkheimer and Adorno in the work "Dialectics of Enlightenment". In thesis, the sociological basis of the cultural industry is formed by the cultural massification process - the manipulation of the population through mass cultural instruments to disseminate an elitist view of culture (DUARTE, 2003; HORKHEIMER; ADORNO, 2002). Lima (2002) cites Horkheimer (1990) when observing that the cultural industry is triggered by the domination of the means of production and media control that, over time, began to influence the social layers as to appropriation and consumption: fashion, trends, literary works, TV and Radio programs, etc.

According to Rua (2015, p.1), the understanding of political science starts, first of all, from the definition of what is politics - which comes from the Greek "polis", and refers to the city-states of antiquity. Politics can be defined as a set of procedures, actions, treaties, concepts, and expressions that influence power relations in society and how conflicts and decisions can

result in a certain purpose in society (RUA, 2015; SAES, 2011). For Boianovsky (2014), the current political conjuncture in Brazil denotes a complex structure of nuances and events that have transformed the scenarios of the last elections into a sphere of even fiercer discussion about society's decision making in the choice of its representatives. Amorim Neto (2016), argues that economic and political factors can be pointed out as influential agents of great impact on elections in the last decade in Brazil and worldwide, driven by the political weakening amidst the corruption scandals observed between the years 2014-2017 and the deepening of the economic crisis in 2015.

The voter's behavior started to suffer the direct influence of information technologies, given of the emergence of new digital communication channels, which emerged from the spread of the use of social networks and media. Gasque and Costa (2010), analyze informational behavior as human behavior concerning to the sources and channels of information, because of their contact in the use and appropriation of that information. The development of the media and the rise of technological tools have provided a modification of the social environment of the relationship between society and information sources. Primo (2006) points out that the process of bringing society closer to the technological tools has reconditioned the way of dealing between the real and the virtual world, and thus the individual has become part of the communication process as a multi-relational agent.

Concerning the social scenario, politics has increasingly taken over the lives of viewers. Before only by traditional media (TV and Radio), a few years ago the relationship of the individual with the sources of information were brought closer by the new context of socialization of information, especially in the political field (THOMPSON, 2008). In the view of Gomes (2004), the relationship between communication and politics, from the point of view of the emergence of electronic media, attenuated the cultural massification and stimulated the remodeling of the electorate pattern in the sense of making the society closer to the plea, but critical of the process. The relationship between politics and communication is not recent, nor can it be observed in a dissociable way. For Gomes (2004), politics and communication are immersed in an exchange relationship: at the same time that mass communication guarantees ample access to the political agent, politics generate greater audience attraction for the media.

The centrality of the media is observed by Gomes (2004) as a natural aspect of media transformation within the process of information innovation, in which, despite the emergence of alternative media, the power of information is still centered in one facet of communication. The relationship of politics, power, and mass culture reflects a homogeneous process in the communication process. The social frame created between media and politics formed by the cycle of interest relationships is termed by Miguel (2002) as a central niche of power interests. The interaction between media and politics arises from a logical sphere of combination between the interests of the political field and the media field. As Bourdieu (1997) analyzes, the political field and the media field are involved in a process of seeking and maintaining common social power: the power of communication.

The current relationship of political communication is observed by Genesi (2018) as a linkage of interests formed from the strengthening of political power under the media: politicians are not merely public agents, they have become celebrities and show business personalities of everyday society. The media has influenced political discourse for decades, motivated mainly by the interest of manipulating information and communication among the masses. As Miguel (2002) points out, the politician has become a piece encompassed by journalistic products, that is, it is natural to observe that many political agents have emerged from communication vehicles - this trend was accentuated from the 80s on, with the massification of talk shows and the rise of police journalism on TV and Radio - such phenomenon is also observed in Brazil until today.

## 4 METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

The article presents a basic research of basic nature and descriptive typology (GIL, 1999) since it seeks to deepen the knowledge about the phenomena of misinformation, fake news and post-truth. In addition to the literature review, it has as method the Case Study, which for Yin (2015, p. 17) "[...] is an empirical investigation that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the 'case') in depth and its real-world context [...]". To construct the study method, the research analyses were based on what Yin (2015) advocates about empirical scientific research.

The theoretical and methodological basis of the study was the Theory of Political Action, as presented earlier, from the conception of party-political influence on media information (dependent and independent) in society through the consumption of information. The study has as its empirical basis the theories observed by Chomsky and Herman (1994) about the ideological influence on information conveyed by the press, whose structuring is defined in two strands: Right (State determining the news) and Left (News determined by capitalist ideological interests). Moreover, it had as a theoretical-analytical basis the studies of Gasque (2008) and Gasque and Costa (2010) about informational behavior and the processes of information consumption.

The field of analysis of the study goes through the social, cultural, media and behavioral spheres:

- a) Cultural (social analysis of the voter);
- b) Communicational (analysis of the disinformation process with the dissemination of fake news);
- c) Media (analysis of the influence of information consumption by social media in the decision about the vote).
- d) Behavioral (analysis of informational behavior in the process of use and appropriation of information)

The study obtained the information through the following data collection instruments:

- a) Questionnaire (remote) - opinion survey (Google Forms);
- b) Interviews (hybrid: remote and face-to-face);
- c) Instant messaging groups (WhatsApp).

The research universe comprises the city of Manaus, Amazonas. Due to the current pandemic period due to the new coronavirus (COVID-19), data collection was conducted via questionnaire in Google Forms, made available in WhatsApp groups. The WhatsApp groups were created based on a pre-analysis (pre-test) carried out with residents of the East Zone of the City who fit the inclusion criteria, described below. There was no nominal identification of the participants-respondents so that their privacy was duly respected and preserved.

The number of interviewees and questionnaire respondents had a sample universe of 54 voters, all living in the East Zone of Manaus. The number of non-respondents was 33 voters, who did not return the contact after the pre-analysis (pre-test) in WhatsApp groups. The questionnaire was composed of a total of 10 questions, 08 closed questions and 02 open questions. The following inclusion criteria were taken into consideration for the study:

- a) Age group: 18 years and above;
- b) Education: From Incomplete Elementary School to Complete College Education;
- c) Gender (Female and Male);
- d) Have a smartphone and internet access.

The choice of the region in the East Zone of the city as a research and analysis sample for the study was based on the following factors: population contingent; indicators based on the



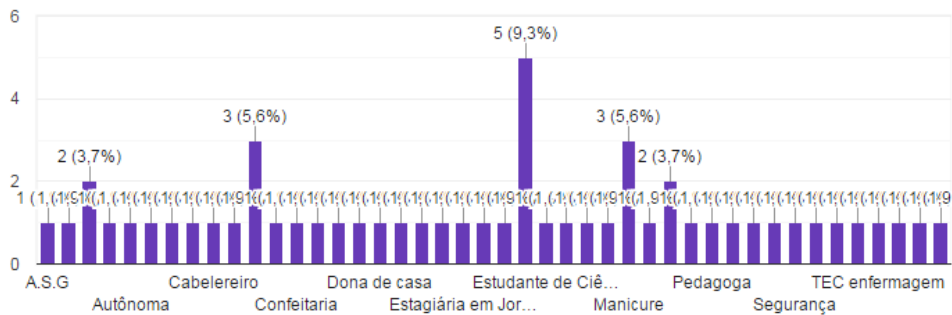
Human Development Index (HDI) and because it is the largest electoral college in the city, according to data from the last census presented by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE). The time frame for the research was from September 30 to October 15, 2020. The analysis and discussion of the results obtained are presented below.

## 5 PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The opinion poll was conducted through the availability of a form on Google Forms for individuals living in neighborhoods in the East Zone of Manaus. The approach was through the pre-selection of individuals in WhatsApp groups, in which contact was maintained with the respondents to fill out the form.

The research presents a sample universe of fifty-four (54) respondents. Next, in Graph 1, the characterization of the voters' profile is presented, based on their professions:

Graph 1. Profession

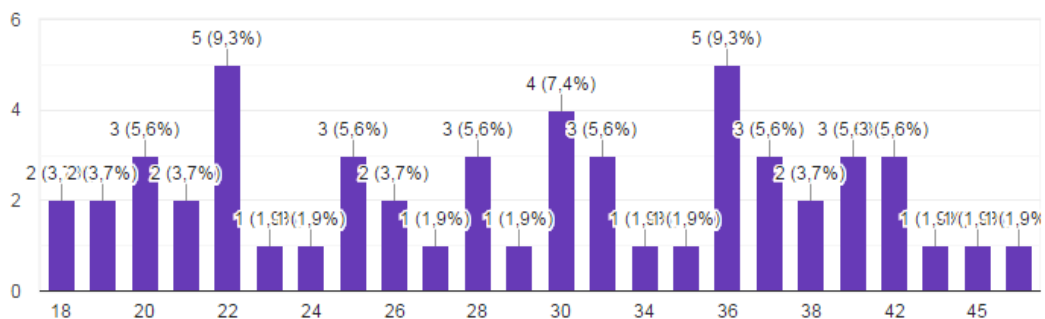


Source: Research data

It can be seen that a large part of the respondents' labor characterization is self-employed (17.8%), including the self-employed. Thus, it can be seen that there was a variety in the typification of professions in the electorate surveyed.

Graph 2 presents the age bracket:

Graph 2. Age group



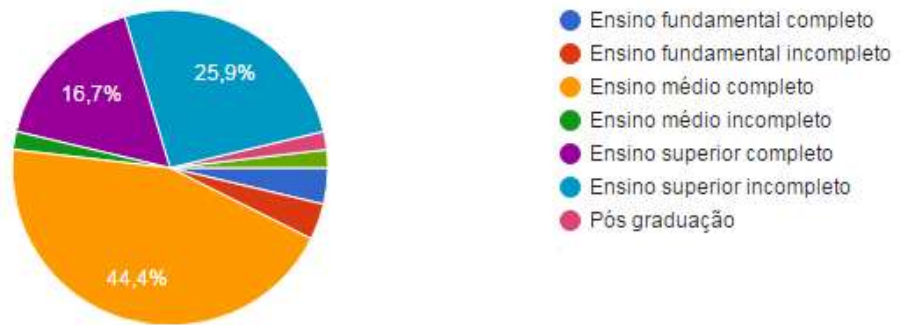
Source: Research data

The largest number of respondents in the survey are among the age group of 18 to 24 years old (28.5%) and 34 to 42 years old (28.6%). Respondents between 43 to 45 years old showed a lower percentage in the collection of the study (5.1%). Note then a variability in the

age of respondents between the age range of 18 and 45 years, which expresses a character of homogeneity in the characterization of the electorate surveyed.

Graph 3 presents the level of education:

Graph 3. Level of education

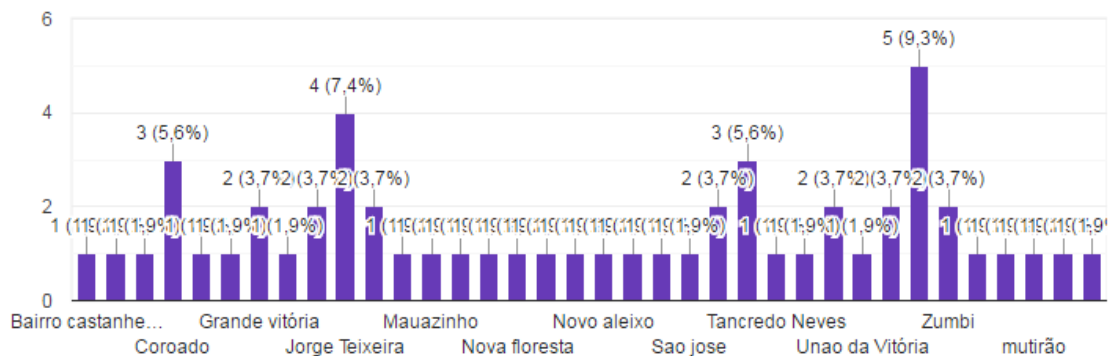


Source: Research data

Graph 3 shows that the highest percentage of respondents have only a high school education (44.4%), followed by complete elementary school education (25.9%), and complete college education (16.7%). This is a heterogeneous public of voters, which characterizes the diversification of the public surveyed.

Graph 4 tried to ascertain the residents by neighborhood in the East Zone:

Graph 4. Neighborhoods in the East Zone

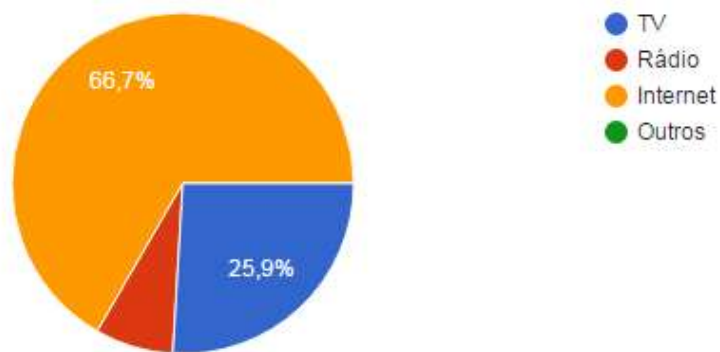


Source: Research data

A variability is identified regarding the residence of the respondents, with highlights to: Zumbi neighborhood (9.3%), Jorge Teixeira neighborhood (7.4%) and Coroado and Tancredo Neves neighborhoods (both with 5.6%). Because it is considered, according to the most recent statistics from the IBGE, the most populous area of the city of Manaus, the East Zone presents a wide range of neighborhoods, which for the research incurs in a larger contingent of voters.

Graph 5 presents the means of transmission of information that the voters-respondents usually access:

Graph 5. Vehicle of information

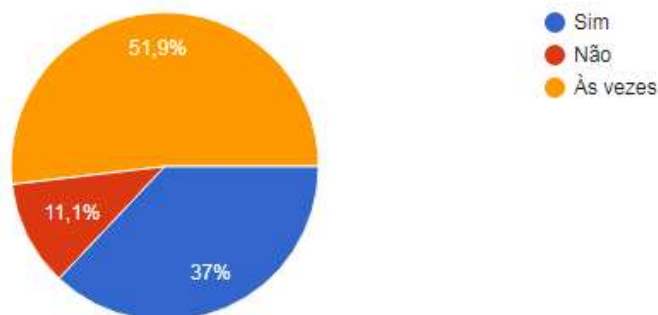


Source: Research data

A considerable percentage of respondents said they use the internet as their main vehicle of information to stay informed in their daily lives (66.7%), followed by TV (25.9%). This data may indicate that the current picture of the social scenario regarding access to information is associated with the use of the internet, considering some factors: growth in the use of social networks, the use of smartphones, more accessible news (real time), etc.

Graph 6 illustrates a panorama on the degree of reliability of the transmission of information by traditional media:

Graph 6. Reliability of traditional media

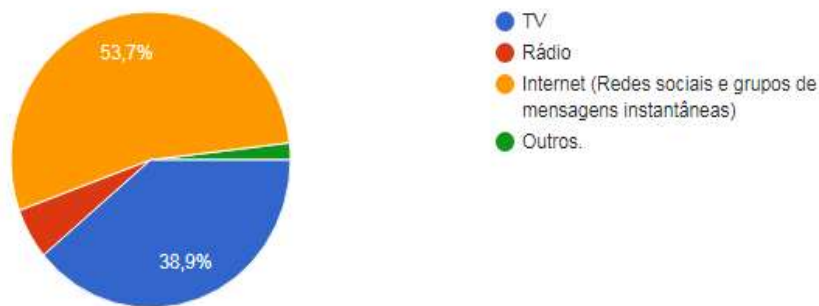


Source: Research data

Most of the voters who answered the survey said they partially trust traditional media (51.9%), followed by those who find traditional media trustworthy (37%) and those who do not find them trustworthy (11.1%). This panorama can be analyzed as a reflection of the immersion of social networks and media in people's daily lives, which can be observed as a process of modification in the consumption of information: before people were informed only by traditional dissemination channels such as TV and Radio, a few years ago this type of conventional channel shared space with the Internet, mainly by the increased use of smartphones.

Graph 7 represents an analysis regarding the aspect of access to information about politics through the use of information sources:

Graph 7. Sources of information for political news

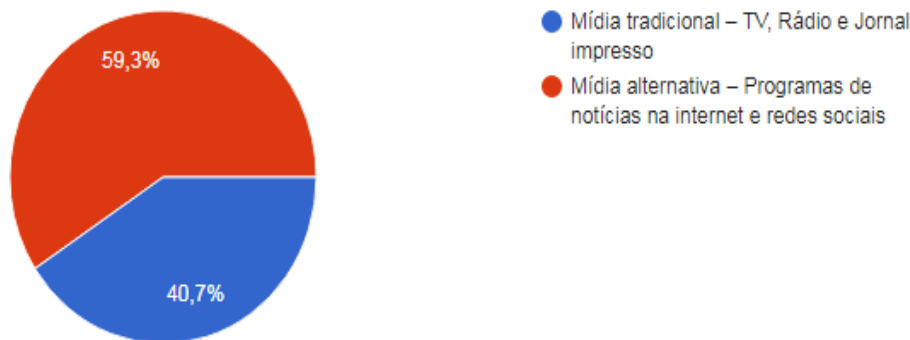


Source: Research data

The number of the percentage of voters who follow political news through the Internet and social networks is higher (53.7%), followed by TV (38.9%) and Radio (5.6%). It is inferred that access to information through the Internet reflects a scenario of change in the way information is consumed, especially in the political arena. The social networks and instant messaging emerge as new channels for the dissemination of information in a social-political fabric of the electorate much more aligned with real-time information, in an alternative and less traditional way.

Graph 8 presents the preference of interest of the responding voters as to the type of media (traditional or alternative) to follow news about politics:

Graph 8. Interest in following news



Source: Research data

As well as the data presented in Graph 7, one can identify in Graph 8 that the respondent voters are more interested in alternative media. This data may indicate that the voter's approach to alternative information channels (mainly social networks and instant messaging applications) is more daily, which may influence their way of consuming information. This portrait in the relation consumption x information about politics is seen as a reflection of the change in the behavior of the current voter, who tends to consume information faster and in real-time.

About the criteria for choosing a vote based on the analyses of the proposal we asked "Regarding the choice of your candidate, do you usually follow the proposals he presents during the electoral campaign to conclude your choice, or do you only vote for him based on the information you follow? Why? The majority stated that they are aware of and follow the proposals of their candidates during the election. "I follow the proposals he represents," "I vote based on what I follow," and "I follow to better analyze" were some of the answers,

whose perception denotes an electoral profile that votes according to the proposals they have access to.

Next, the voters were asked about the current electoral scenario in the city regarding the choice of candidate. It was asked: "Of the pre-candidatures already presented for the 2020 elections in the city of Manaus-AM, do you already have a candidate to vote for? If not, what are the criteria you have been following to define your candidate? According to the information collected in the period from September 30 to October 15, 2020, most voters were still undecided about their vote choice. Those who answered "no" claimed, for the most part, that they were still analyzing the government proposals and would decide by election day. "Yes, and with the best proposals", "I don't have a candidate yet, I'm in doubt" were some of the answers.

Graph 9 presents a questioning about the sharing of political news on the Internet:

Graph 9. Sharing of political news on the Internet



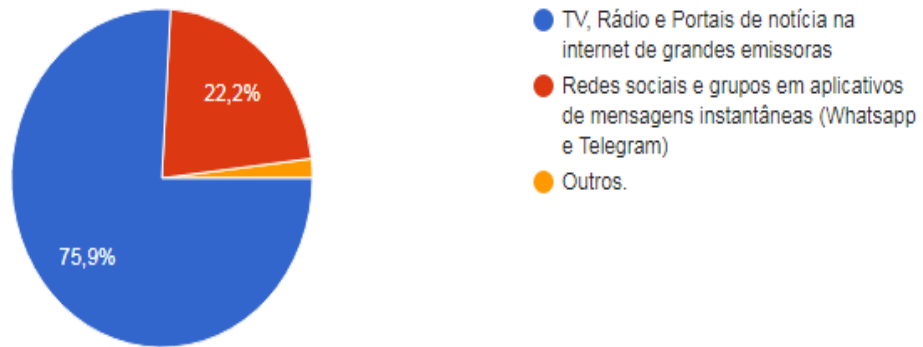
Source: Research data

It is observed from what has exposed a very diversified panorama as to the diversity of answers, especially as to the question about the analysis that the voter makes before sharing a news item. Most of the respondents affirmed that they "do not share" news on the Internet without first checking its veracity (16.7%), followed by those who informed that they "do not share news on the Internet" (5.6%). Only 3.7% affirmed that "yes," they share news on the Internet without verifying the veracity. This panorama can be observed on some aspects, among them, that there is a concern in not transmitting fake news, and that, according to what was observed, the profile of the current voter is more aware of what fake news are. However, it should be noted that most of the individuals who post news on the internet without pre-checking the content do so without having a critical sense of the act. This is what Gasque (2008) analyzes about the relationship of information consumption with its behavior through an intrinsic relationship of use and appropriation.

Next, the voters were asked about the preferred information portals to get informed about politics: "What are your profiles and preferred portals for regional and national information about politics? As for regionality, almost all voters prefer local TV programs, with a greater inclination for programs that involve police journalism with entertainment. As for the national aspect, there was also a greater preference for some traditional TV programs and some Internet portals of greater access and knowledge by society. There was no mention of alternative news portals or those less known or popular in terms of audience.

Graph 10 presents an analysis of the voter's perception of the reliability and veracity of the information broadcast in the media:

Graph 10. Sharing of political news on the Internet



Source: Research data

It can be observed in graph 10 that 75% of the respondents affirmed that they feel more confident as to the veracity of the information when they read a piece of news broadcast by traditional media (TV, Radio and news portals), while 22.2% affirmed that they feel more reliable when they read news in the alternative media (Social networks and groups in instant applications). According to the data, it is inferred that the credibility of traditional media, despite the increase in the consumption of information in alternative media - mainly through the Internet - is greater, the voters still prefer to believe in TV, Radio and traditional communication portals. However, it is glimpsed that this reality of consumption may represent a social culture of access to information (watching TV shows at home or listening to the radio in the car, for example), which may not reflect a daily routine of capturing and consuming information about politics, which tend to be increasingly conveyed by the Internet - including the traditional media.

*5.1 Analysis of the informational behavior of voters*

The analysis of the informational behavior of voters was carried out based first on the collection phase and then on the investigation and discussion of the data collected and the scientific aspects observed in the panorama of results. An analysis based on three aspects was then traced: information consumption, the process of misinformation from the perspective of post-truth (fake news), and the observance of the criteria of vote choice in the view of the Theory of Political Action.

It was observed in the collection parameter of the study a very heterogeneous aspect regarding the criteria of information consumption. In Graph 5, for example, it was found a considerable predominance of the Internet as a means of information consumption for the daily lives of the responding voters. This context fits the understanding of Levy (1999) about the perception of information consumption in cyberspace, in which society would be immersed in a context of more interactive and less tangible communication.

For Gomes (2004) the change in the individual's behavior in the Era of mass communication is an aspect of democracy that came to modify social relations, both from the point of view of a contact with information and in the way the individual would reproduce this information. In the political spectrum, it is identified that voters tend to consume information at an increasingly instantaneous and accumulated speed-what Brandão (2016) addresses as "synchronous communication" in politics. This type of communication is a product of the innovation and transformation of information and communication technology in the digital age.

For the field of politics this reality has been even more tangential to an electoral scenario that seeks to aggregate to digital spaces - or within the context addressed by Levy (1999) as cyberspaces - to seek better communication with the new profile of voters that are being formed - Genese (2018) mentions the "digital natives" - or groups of individuals who use the internet as the main means of interaction and social relationship.

This parameter of relationship and consumption of information, within the field of mass communication, can be observed from what Debord (1997) advocates when arguing about the objectified social relations and transformed into mere experiences of appearance, without any essence. About the consumption of information and the relationship with the use and appropriation, Gasque (2008) analyzes that the process of appropriation consists of an intrinsic relationship with the information through its content, which is built from a set of elements that link its informational need with the critical sense, which tends to generate from this process a new approach on a particular subject.

In this sense, the consumption of information for the electoral profile observed in the study, as evidenced in Chart 7 about sources and information for daily life, shows that people are increasingly more articulated, socially and culturally, to what the contents disseminated on the Internet present to them. According to what Gasque and Costa (2010) postulate about the evolution of information behavior through information consumers, it is inferred that the surveyed voters consume political information largely from digital media - which denotes a sharper tangency of the current electoral politics to the digital communication niches - which is characterized as a relationship of affinity to the consumed content, that is, it is a process of construction of belonging to what the consumer believes to be true.

### *5.2 Influence of mediatization x post-truth*

When addressing the responses coming from the opinion poll it is noticeable the emergence of some characteristics that reflect aspects of the influence of the mediatization process in the informational behavior of the electorate. As highlighted by Miguel (2002) when analyzing the role of media in social and political transformation in the informational context, especially about the directions of elections and voting decisions, a direct influence on opinion construction is observed. This influence can be understood as being either biased or spontaneous - according to the approach of Pena (2005) when analyzing that the media has a power of influence capable of bypassing relationships and changing contexts, which can be corroborated by the Theory of the Fourth Estate, in which the author analyzes that the role of the media in mass communication and its relationship with certain influences in politics is imbued with interests from the perspective of certain power narratives.

However, it is worth analyzing here - as can be seen in Graph 9 - the relationship of voter reliability with the press. The study showed that, despite the degree of information consumption being higher when accessing alternative media, credibility is higher when the voter has presented news broadcast by a TV program or a radio station. A discussion regarding the process of disinformation and post-truth - argued by Genesi (2018), as a natural chain of construction of individuals in contemporary politics - is also highlighted here: despite the increased consumption of information in digital and social media-based media, the credibility of traditional media can still be observed as more prominent - as the opinion poll itself has shown.

The influence relationship of mediatization with the issues about fake news and post-truth can also be discussed from the perspective of the Theory of Political Action. According to Pena (2005) the ideologization of politics in the press and the construction of news in the media has a strong and important impact on society, influencing decisions and

grouping narratives. Thus, it is understood that the voter is exposed to a particular narrative that can influence his way of observing the facts and building his world view, including his political view, either by access to conventional or alternative media.

Fake news emerges here as an important "tip of the scales" for understanding the social contexts that involve and influence the decision to vote for one politician or the other. For Clavery (2015), the disinformation processes from the fake news tend to build narratives and scenarios that self-replicate in an agile and capillary way, especially from the advent of social networks. In the study, it was identified that a large part of the surveyed voters, despite stating that they believe in traditional media, also reported that they do not check the reliability of the information when they share it, which may present a favorable scenario for the dissemination of fake news.

### *5.3 Analysis of voter choice*

The study analyzed the approach on the choice of the vote based on the reports and data collected from respondents in the opinion poll. When analyzing the question "Regarding the choice of your candidate, do you usually follow the proposals he presents during the election campaign to conclude your choice, or do you only vote for him based on the information you follow? Why?" it is inferred that the profile of the analyzed voter presented a characteristic different from what has generally been observed in the social-political context. As Gomes (2004) states when he observes that the political social fabric in Brazil has always been historically built based on the perception of the "halter vote", but after the democratic reinstatement in 1985 (Diretas já) a path was opened for the importance of the popular role in Brazilian politics. This kind of panorama can be explained by two reasons: the growth of voters' interest in politics in the last few years; and, the rapid broadcasting and propagation of news in networks and social media, which brings the voter closer to the reality of society in real-time.

The current political reality from the perspective of vote choice also goes through the evolution in the interaction of communication with society. According to Castells (1999), the network society is built on a process of approximation: networks tend to maintain a symbiosis in communication, which can generate an environment of communicational interrelationships. When observing the answers in the survey about the proposals and monitoring of candidates for the 2020 municipal elections, it is relevant to note that, in most of the answers, there is an emphasis on some key expressions, such as: "history of political life (...)", "important to know the correct information (...)", "I follow the news every day (...)" and "based on true information (...)". These excerpts can be interpreted as criteria of choice that, based on the interest in having access to information that is not of a falsified nature, will serve as a basis and criterion for the choice of the candidate.

In the analysis on the criteria of choice, the voters were presented with a question about the "criteria that has been followed for the choice of the candidate in the 2020 elections". It was observed that, in addition to the majority of voters presenting a state of doubt about the choice of their candidates, the choice of their criteria was presented in a rather plural manner. For Braga (2018) plurality in political discussion emerges a reality that has been growing in the electoral scenario: public debate in social networks. This scenario presents a relationship that brings together and embraces the electorate in agendas that, previously, when social media did not exist, did not present themselves with such relevance to the public debate.

The relationship between the media and the influence on the choice of votes traffics in the perception of the voter's informational behavior through the consumption of biased



information. Traquina's (2012) analysis presents a pointed observation for the influence of media ideologization based on how it interacts and relates to the social fabric. One can then influence that media interaction, mainly through news portals and mass media outlets, including through social networks, has a substantial impact on voters' voting decisions. This aspect could be observed when asked about the reliability in accessing information and sharing news without verifying the source of the information - which characterizes susceptibility to manipulation and disinformation propagation - whether by traditional media or alternative media.

## 6 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The political-electoral scenario has been a very fertile field of debate for CI studies, especially in the aspect of communication, informational behavior and the analysis of the impacts arising from the rise of social networks and media and the phenomena of misinformation and post-truth. In this sense, investigating the informational behavior based on the point of view of fake news in the political process has been a challenge for researchers, given of the voracious growth of events and scenarios that have been built over the years, especially in the electoral scenario.

The proposal of the study focused on analyzing the relationship of informational behavior with politics amidst the aspects of misinformation. The municipal elections of 2020 represent well the current context, in which the electorate in the region of the city of Manaus-AM is directly present in the construction of narratives and opinions, and this electorate is the main object of this research. Therefore, the observation of the study was not limited to a general context, but sought to focus the analysis on the characteristics of the voter based on their informational and electoral behavior, in its main aspects: consumption of information, media coverage, influence on criteria for choosing the vote and the disinformation (fake news) based on perceptions of post-truth and behavior in access, use and appropriation of information.

The study presented a trend of the informational behavior of the responding voters under the social, political, communicational and cultural aspects. Based on the data collected, the study showed that the influence of the media and communication vehicles tends to outline the profile of voters, although there is a differentiation of the public regarding the typology of the information channels consumed. Therefore, it was verified that the voters present a profile much more informed about political facts, which may denote a portrait of the current social context, in which social networks and the growing use of smartphones corroborate the construction of this scenario.

It is inherent to the analysis of the study to observe the current social-political context in 2020. With the holding of municipal elections in Brazil during the new coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), politics began to migrate even more rapidly and actively to the networks and social media, motivated by the prohibition of street campaigns. This scenario has created a more virtualized political process, in which politicians began to invest more in electoral advertisements in digital channels - which can then be called a media landscape of politics in a scenario of social isolation. Moreover, it is worth pointing out that the credibility of the media through reliable information sources (conventional media) has occupied an important space in this current moment, mainly by the work of checking and verifying facts, despite the wave of misinformation propagated in recent years.

The voters' decision-making is largely given by the access to information broadcasted in their preferred information channels. According to the survey, we observed a more present inclination to choose based on the "proposals" of the candidate, as well as by what the

traditional media presents. This scenario may represent a preference of voters, even in a period of much questioning about the reliability of traditional media, for more traditional communication vehicles such as TV and radio. The media's influence on voters' voting decisions was analyzed from the perspective of the Theory of Political Action.

The study presented a very heterogeneous panorama in the motivations for choosing a candidate for the 2020 elections, with emphasis on following the proposals. It was noted that a large part of the voters uses the media - traditional and alternative - to follow the profile and proposals of the candidates. Although there is still a lot of indecision in the electorate analyzed in this study, it has alluded that most will choose their candidate until Election Day and the information broadcast in the media will have, in fact, a decisive role in this process.

It is considered that the behavioral aspect of the voters, residents of the East Zone of Manaus-AM, both in the informational field, as well as within the political and social context portrayed in the research, was presented as quite heterogeneous, being observed that there is a predilection of voters, even if in a period of much questioning about the trustworthiness of traditional media, by the more traditional communication vehicles, such as TV and Radio. It is concluded that the decision to vote and the criteria for choosing candidates suffered direct influences of the type of informational content consumed by the voters, regardless of the type of media (traditional or alternative), and it can be inferred that their informational behavior tends to be dictated by false news or low-quality information.

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