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Title: Disinformation, dystopia and post-reality in social media: A semiotic-cognitive perspective

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Abstract: Based on recent political happenings, such as Brexit (UK) and the election of Donald Trump (USA), it has become clear that political marketing has been using 'Big Data' intensively. Information gathered from social media networks is organized into digital environments and has the power to determine the outcome of elections, plebiscites and popular consultations. New advertising and persuasion mechanisms have been created to undermine the reliability of traditional mass media communication that are familiar to the general audience. Consequently, 'fake news' and 'alternative facts' have emerged along with the notion of 'post-truth', which defines the state of affairs represented in public opinion that has been contaminated by these strategies. Based on the pragmatic-semiotic concepts developed by Peirce, such as belief, mental habits, controlled action, final opinion, truth, and reality, we argue that the 'global village', (McLuhan, 2008) may be at a dangerous fork in the road. This author's 'scientific method' was elaborated based on (1) the concatenation of hypotheses, (2) the deduction of its consequences, and (3) the design of experiences and aims to test our beliefs against our results which would be critically evaluated by communities of researchers. This fork in the road, which rapidly evolves as a dystopia built and reaffirmed by the spread of disinformation on social networks, points towards a 'post-reality' that can represent an illusory and brief comfort zone for those who live in it but may also represent a tragedy with no turning back for our entire civilization.

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