XESCOM 2019 – Highlights of the Symposium – The Novelty of Scientific Research

by Vânia Sousa for JOCIS

The fourth edition of the XESCOM 2019 (International Symposium on Communication Management) was hosted by the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Porto on April, 26 and 27 in the city of Oporto, Portugal. It was organized with the collaboration between the University of Porto, IMMAA (International Media Management Academic Association) and PIMENED (Integrated Mentor Project, Enterprise Spirit and Business Models in Digital Edition). On this edition new topics related to the creative industries and entrepreneurship in the digital era were added to the main areas of study.

The symposium aggregated both expert conference and communications from international researchers. The conference themes were communication, management, media, creative industries and entrepreneurship in the digital age. This report aims to briefly summarise the most relevant insights that both industry experts and researchers have contributed to XESCOM' 2019.

The first panel discussion started with a plenary session entitled "Challenges for journalism and media companies". João Palmeiro, President of the European Google

Fund and President of Portuguese Press Association, led the session together with Iván Puentes (moderator), Francisco Campos and Valentín Martínez (commentators). The next session reflected on "Television and public media service in Europe, Latin America and USA" with the participation of Iván Puentes, Francisco Campos, Valentín Martínez, João Palmeiro, Tomás Beijet, John Pavlik and José Ruas Araújo (moderator) from Vigo University (Spain).

A wide range of issues around the major themes of the symposium were presented by the researchers at different parallel sessions during the two intensive days.

The panel **tourism and creative cities** brought to light a discussion about a new urban and creative tourism approach. Since we live in a globalized world, large cities are challenged to come up with more creative ways of improving the citizens' life through sustainable tourism. Cities are now demanded to create problem solutions that benefit both the population and tourism (especially in terms of poverty, social habitation, urban mobility, pollution, climatic issues, among other issues).

Urban artistic expressions, such as graffiti, street dancing, photography or experimental videos can also play a fundamental role in recovering abandoned and degraded spaces. As these spaces are restored, they often "return" to the local community, and as a consequence, urban artistic initiatives can also contribute to spread tourism into places located outside the urban centers, because art is a "tourist magnet" not to be underestimated. The city of Málaga, (Spain) was presented as a good example on leveraging the city's identity and branding from cultural aspects into a new communication strategic direction: "innovative, smart and creative city". When implementing these new communicational and technological advances, cities actually stand out from the competition.

The **communication** theme combined various different scientific approaches on the panels. Researchers have presented their processes and conclusions related to communication themes, such as theatre and cinema, higher education, health institutions, management and public relations, public platforms and mediatic speech. The consumer and persuasive communication, media training and semantics were also communicational alternatives studied by researchers.

Independent cinema in Brazil was presented as a part of an alternative culture. It was pointed out that there is an increasing need to develop efficient strategies in order to promote this alternative cinematic genre. The importance of the public policies, which can help on the exhibition and the distribution of low budget films was highlighted as well. Another cinema-related theme presented at this panel touched upon the use of neurocinematic tools to help cinema audiences understanding the real nature of a film. This neurological process can be accomplished by analyzing spectators' cognitive mechanisms according to the different cerebral areas that are stimulated during the screening.

Communicating to higher education audiences in a most effective and motivating way requires educators to adopt innovative and technological teaching methodologies. It is an approach that encourages students to manifest a responsible and critical analysis about the lectured concepts acknowledged in classes. And because of the fact that we live in a constant digital and connected society, the acknowledgment of the importance of the students' online performances allows both teachers and marketeers to develop specific performance strategies that can contribute to influencing students' future behaviors.

The symposium also included the presentations related to the importance of **corporative communication** in general institutions and health-related businesses. The research results illustrated that corporative communication is fundamental to define public perception of the institution. Digital technologies contribute to empowering consumers in the decision-making process and simultaneously helping to modify organizational identities. Exploration developments also demonstrated that influencers are considered the new opinion leaders (instead of the traditional media), and that social media platforms are the preferred channels.

The persuasive communication, media training and semantics panel discussed the aspects of communication focused on ludic and interactive content in publicity, the engagement of the audiences with the so called "advergames" as well as the creative process in order to build a creative branding strategy. Additionally, the panel highlighted the importance of sensorial branding, experience and cognitive marketing in digital marketing strategies including social media. Public platforms are also studied as an important technological tool, especially in matters of political promotion and in mediatic speech. These platforms have the power to strongly influence public mentalities and Facebook is considered the most privileged one of them.

On the **topic of media and political communication** the key ideas explored by the speakers focused on the political debates analysis as an important communication tool. From the field of gender studies comes a pragmatic reflection approach on televised political communication focused on the communication aspects of female politicians during a live TV debate. The examination concerned the objectives of the participants and the linguistic resources: morphological, lexical, pragmatic and other forms of expression. Also, the use of the

social networks by the regional parliamentarians in Spain is part of another research presented at the symposium. It proposed an understanding on how social media communication strategies are developed within an electoral context (during and after the political campaigns). Researchers believe that the role of media is changing due to political influence. A study developed in Germany and in Russia analyzed the mass media information. The political discourse on the elections period and in terms of its politically oriented vocabulary was the object of this research. The analytical criteria were based on the linguistic objectification (ideological orientation), lexis, semantic antagonisms, among other features.

Journalism, technology and innovation are the concepts that can be combined into one theme. The research results mention the use of a more technological approach to journalism. The use of technologies associated with artificial intelligence (AI), business intelligence, augmented (AR) and virtual reality (VR), beacons, neuromarketing, etc. are adding innovation to both journalism and the media industry. By means of mobile devices common citizens can become "amateur journalists" and collaborate with the journalists on content creation. This fact elevates the discussion to a higher level related to transparency problems associated with issues on both accountability and information. The fake news phenomenon is another concern that journalism faces. Consequently, the emergence of new platforms to fact-check the veracity of the informative contents in a digital ecosystem is acquiring public importance. Researchers and industry specialists have also referred to the problem that journalism is facing with the automated journalism, data mining and the impact it can cause on the informative content.

Further on, the discussion has led to the topic of journalism and advertising that are constantly straightening their relationship. One of the challenges of the media industry is to develop new and disruptive ways to finance journalistic practice. On the **"entrepreneurship, trends and communication strategies"** panel, the speakers mentioned the adoption of interfaces based on new technologies, the investment in digital formats, the creation of sources of revenue (subscriptions, paywalls and donations) to monetize the media and content-based business. Aspects related to the digitalizing

processes in the media sector were also discussed. The application of Big Data can help to characterize the digital audience. For that matter media groups are required to perform data management according to all the possibilities offered by this analysis tool.

From a **branded marketing** point of view, the researchers emphasized the concept of experience marketing inside corporations as a differentiative and competitive feature. It can also contribute to increasing of the clients' loyalty, the digital sharing and consequently generating recommendations. Branded content strategies, public relations, patronage or sponsorship are tools that can add value to the brands, generate good memories and engage the audiences.

The manifestation of gender equality in advertising is occupying a more representative space in advertisement. Previous research identified that gay consumers are a large and interesting niche market (with financial capacity), and for that reason a more significative attention should be paid at this market in advertisement campaigns. The changing representations of the male homosexuality in the past 20 years in Germany were analyzed and presented in the topic panel.

The event also unveiled themes about communication, media and sports. The presentations included some sports themes such as the ones on communication and power in football, and the relation between the Portuguese football organizations and social media. In Portugal, professional football organizations still prefer Facebook for promotion. However, Twitter is also conquering more space among the preferred communication platforms. The research examined Twitter posts from the largest NOS League clubs during the sport season (2017/2018): Benfica, FC Porto and Sporting.

Expert research submissions concerning **creative industries, clusters and marketing** focused essentially on innovative forms of financial resources for the sector to avoid dependency on public financing only.

Researchers also consider arts and culture essential to the society mainly because they can generate new territorial reflections and increase the content offering.

Another communication approached the expressiveness of lighting in television fiction, analyzing it from a technical and production points of view. The objective of this model of study is to understand the different distribution of the light according to the narrative demands of a scene. Positioning the lights correctly on the scenes influences the characters' expressiveness and increases the scene's emotional weight.

As new technologies are being developed in an accelerated pace, consumers are also adopting technological facilities into their living contexts. However, the massive adoption of the digitally mediated communication can result in "delegating individual's humanness". A problematic that also concerns the increasing "lack of humanity" and social abilities which could be a price that needs to be paid. This research underscores the importance of preserving one's cultural identity and values while being exposed to technology.

Throughout both XESCOM'19 symposium days, experts from around the world exchanged ideas, valuable insights and research results that were summarized in this report. The event was also an opportunity for everyone to expand their academic and professional networks, as well as socialize with their peers and (re)discover the city of Oporto and its culture.