Rumors about the Po Valley earthquakes of 20th and 29th May 2012

Although never validated and critically examined, the law on rumors postulated by Alport and Postman certainly seemed to us a good starting point for work on the subject.

The main criticism reported by some authors about the work of Alport and Postman was the collection of rumors was launched. The study of the media that substantiate the campaign (OGC, Emilia-Romagna, INGV Edurisk) Project—a web users were asked to provide some data (Name, Age, level of education, sex, occupation, province and municipality of residence) and answer a series of questions about the rumors.

Description of the rumor:

Who told you this story?

Have you told anyone?

To whom and how many people did you pass it on?

Do you believe it?

Have you checked it? If yes, how?

How important is it for you?

Do rumors collected between 14 June 2012 and 12 November 2012, and classified into 5 categories: conspiratorial, explanatory, categorical, personal and other effects. Furthermore, it made it possible to calculate the strength of rumors according to the formula of Alport and Postman (The Psychology of Rumors, 1947).

R = a + (b x t)

Strength of Rumor (R) = importance of the theme (i) x the degree of ambiguity (a).

The major theme of the investigation was the public concern with the earthquake, insular as the earthquake issue was deemed currently important for the population that had just suffered one. The ability of the individuals involved to address the public worry about what happens to people, and the spread of the rumor.

Rumor Classification

1. Consensually important: the rumor is believed by a majority of the population.

2. Personal: the rumor is believed by a minority of the population.

3. Categorical: the rumor is believed by a small minority of the population.

4. Exploratory: the rumor is believed by a very small minority of the population.

5. Consensually irrelevant: the rumor is not believed by the majority of the population.

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