I want to (dis)believe: political ideology and misinformation in the marketplace

ABSTRACT

The massive spread of misinformation, mainly through social media platforms, has become a ubiquitous phenomenon, affecting individuals, organizations and brands. As false and incorrect claims spread online, marketers must understand what makes consumers to believe in such messages, to protect their brands. This research investigates the role of political ideology on how consumers perceive a misinformation related to the marketplace. Previous research suggest that conservatives are more susceptible to misinformation regardless to the issue in question, as consequence of cognitive differences. However, since conservatives tend to defend the prevailing social and economic order, I posit that they will be less prone to believe in a misinformation that undermines a market actor, such as a brand. The hypotheses were confirmed through a survey with 235 participants recruited in the United States. Data were analyzed through partial least square Structural Equation Modeling.

Introduction

Accurate information is crucial either for the function of markets and for consumer's decision making. Under perfect condition, individuals would guide their choices purely based on true claims, and companies would never have to deal with falsehoods regarding their products or general activities. In the real world, however, false information is often endorsed even when all evidences indicate otherwise. What would explain, for example, the suggestion that McDonald's hamburgers are made of worm meat? That Monsanto was behind the surge of microcephaly cases among newborns in Brazil a few years ago? Or even that food giant producers use growth hormones in chicken? All these cases are examples of misinformation, defined here as a type of information, often false or inaccurate, that contradicts the best available evidence (Flynn, Nyhan, & Reifler, 2017).

As social media platforms turn into an integral part of our lives, misinformation can be easily created and spread through these networks. It has been shown, for instance, that false claims spread six times faster than facts on Twitter (Vosoughi et al., 2018). More recently, the surge of false news disguised as facts intentionally designed to cause public harm – the so-called fake news – has raised a wide discussion about the risks imposed by false information and how to cope with it (Wardle, 2017).

Misinformation has been investigated from different perspectives. For example, several studies have focused on how to cope with the problem, that is, the best strategies to deny or correct false claims (Gilbert, Krull & Malone, 1990; Bordia et al., 2005; Cook, Lewandowsky & Ecker, 2017). Others have explored the cognitive and psychological triggers that are likely to influence the acceptance of a message as true or false (Arkes, Boehm, & Xu, 1991). Previous research has shown, for example, that repetition tends to lead to a "feeling of familiarity", which in turns increases the likelihood that a message will be taken as valid (Hawkins et al., 2001).

There have been some suggestions that a person's political ideology may also influence whether she will evaluate a statement as true or false. This line of research assumes that a person is attracted to a given ideology that "matches" with her psychological needs and cognitive style (Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009). Following this rationale, previous studies have identified, for example, a negative correlation between conservatism and need for cognition, as well as a positive association with need for closure, dogmatism and cognitive rigidity, thus indicating low critical thinking (Stern, Sterling & Jost, 2017). These findings, in addition to recent anecdotal observation, have led to some speculation that conservatives (as compared to liberals) would be more susceptible to misinformation on cognitive grounds (Miller, Saunders, & Farhart, 2015; Narayanan et al., 2018). It is important to note that, in the political psychology literature, a person's political ideology is also referred to as political conservatism, meaning that those who score high in a single dimension are considered conservatives (or right-wing), while those who score low are taken as liberals (or left-wing) (Jost et al., 2009).

In contrast to the individual or "intrinsic approach" that focus primarily on cognitive and psychological factors, another group of researchers have proposed the "contextual approach". Rather than assuming that conservatives are innately more susceptible to misinformation in general, these authors have argued that both groups are equally susceptible to misinformation, as long as the message confirms their worldviews (Kahan, Jenkins-Smith, & Braman, 2011; Kahan, 2012; Hennes et al., 2016). This view is based on the premise that when processing an information, people are not purely influenced by cognitive bias, but also by motivational ones (Kunda, 1990; Pyszczynski & Greenberg, 1987). For Kahan (2012), a relevant motive for that is group affinity: when processing an information, individuals are also influenced by what their peers think about it. That is specially the case with high politicized issues since it is relatively clear what the group (e.g. Democrats or Republicans) think and say about it.

These approaches, however, have been primarily developed upon examples of misinformation embedded in highly controversial debates, somewhat related to the political debate, such as immigration, health policies and global warming. Far little is known on other types of misinformation, especially those that are not politically salient. This dissertation aims to extend the debate by analyzing another type of misinformation, that is, related to the marketplace.

Drawing on the intrinsic and the contextual approach, I propose an alternative explanation. I suggest that conservatives and liberals are equally susceptible to misinformation, that is, each political group will believe in a false clam insofar as the message is congruent with their worldview. In the case of a marketplace misinformation, I expect that conservatives will be less prone to believe in the message as compared to liberals. Because conservatives are market-oriented, they will be less likely to believe in a misinformation that denigrates a brand.

Previous studies suggest that liberals and conservatives differ in their approach to the social order: while conservatives are supportive of the status quo and protective to hierarchy, liberals are associated to social change and egalitarianism (Jost, 2017). It has been argued that conservatives are more likely to justify the system they depend on, be it related to the social system or the economic system. Following this reasoning, I predict that conservatives will be less prone to believe in a marketplace misinformation as a result of their tendency to justify and legitimize the economic order and its institutions, such as companies and brands. In other words, I expect that the relation between political conservatism and misinformation believability will be explained by Economic System Justification, defined as an individual tendency to legitimize and justify the prevailing economic order (Jost & Thompson, 2000).

Thus, the objective of the present study is to investigate: 1) the relation between a person's political ideology and whether she believes in a misinformation related to the marketplace and 2) whether this relation is mediated by Economic System Justification. The research will be carried through a quantitative study.

Relevance

Previous studies in the marketing field have demonstrated the influence of political ideology in contexts somewhat associated with the political debate, such as with donation (Kaikati et al., 2017) and sustainable behavior (Kidwell, Farmer, & Hardesty, 2013). What is less known is whether a consumer's political ideology is also likely to influence his attitudes and behavior in daily decisions, that is, when politics is not so salient. The question has been central to several studies in consumer behavior in recent years, in contexts such as variety-seeking (Fernandes & Mandel, 2014), brand choice (Khan, Misra, & Singh, 2013), service complaints (Jung et al, 2018); social differentiation (Ordabayeva & Fernandes, 2018); and service failure (Achar & Agrawal, in press). From a theoretical standpoint, the present dissertation may contribute to the ongoing investigations on how political ideology affect consumers' attitudes and behavior.

Investigations on misinformation is also likely to have practical implications for practitioners. A misinformed consumer may develop a negative attitude towards a brand or even stop buying that specific product, a negative scenario for both sides. While it is important that consumers have access to information and thus base their decisions on prior search, they may also fall for wrong or inaccurate information, restricting their consumption options and, in extreme cases, undermining their health. On the other side, companies are likely to have extra costs with communication strategies to keep their audience well informed. Understanding whether some consumers are more susceptible to misinformation than others may help marketing professionals on how they drive their communication to specific segments.

Theoretical Background

Defining misinformation

Misinformation has been applied in a broader sense, referred to as an incorrect or misleading information. While an uninformed individual has no access to a given information neither has the correct answer about a factual question, the misinformed relies on an unsupported belief about the answer (Kuklinski et al., 2000). Not rare, the term is used interchangeably with similar phenomena, such rumors, myths, conspiracy theories, misperceptions, and more recently, hoaxes and fake news (Berisnky, 2012; Nyhan & Reifler, 2015; Garret and Weeks, 2017; Vosoughi, Roy, & Aral, 2018; Tambuscio et al., 2015). More recently, the surge of false news disguised as facts intentionally designed to cause public harm – the so-called fake news – has raised a wide discussion about the risks imposed by false information and how to cope with it (European Commission, 2017; Wardle, 2017; West, 2017). As put by Wardle (2017, p. 4), we are dealing with "polluted messages in a global scale". For the purpose of this article, misinformation will be defined as a type of information, often false or inaccurate, that

contradicts evidences available in the public domain (Cook, Lewandowsky, & Ecker, 2017; Flynn, Nyhan, & Reifler, 2017).

Why do we believe? A psychological overview

It has been widely documented in the literature of social and cognitive psychology that individuals may take two different routes in order to process an information: while System 1 is intuitive, fast, based on heuristics, System 2 is slower, systematic and based on critical thinking (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Chen & Chaiken, 1999; Stanovich & West, 2000). When judging a message through System 1, which is our default setting for daily tasks, people tend to rely on peripheral cues, that is, they look for signs that would help them reach a conclusion without too much effort rather in the message itself.

Whether a statement will be judged through this route also depends on the receiver's characteristics, including his personality traits and cognitive style. One of the most relevant variables in this regard is need for cognition, a personal tendency to enjoy thinking and problem solving (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982). Individuals who score higher in need for cognition tend to scrutinize the message and its evidences, while those who are lower in this regard tent do rely on non-content or peripheral cues. DeBono and Klein (1993) found that individuals with high levels of dogmatism, a style associated to close mindedness and respect to authorities, are more likely to rely on source expertise rather than on the message itself.

Scholars have also emphasized the role of motivational factors. Its main assumption is that cognition is not that impartial and may be biased by affective and motivational factors. Individual's motives may also exert a significant influence on how a message is judged. Defined as "any wish, desire, or preference that concerns the outcome of a given reasoning task" (Kunda, 1990, p. 480), motivation can trigger a set of cognitive processes that leads a person to reach a conclusion, a process termed as motivated reasoning. Kunda (1990) points that our reasoning is likely to be motivated based on two different goals. A key feature of the motivated reasoning based on directional goals is that it is likely to exert an unconscious influence when processing an information. Often, people think they are being led by accuracy when in fact they are biased by a specific goal, what Pyszczynski and Greenberg (1987) termed "an illusion of objectivity". Some authors go further, asserting that all reasoning is affected by some level of motivation, meaning that our reasoning is always biased (Taber & Lodge, 2006). Some people, however, are more susceptible to motivated reasoning, such as those with strong attitudes and prior beliefs toward an issue (Dito & Lopez, 1992; Edwards & Smith, 1996). The process of motivated reasoning requires cognitive effort and resources, which explains why even the most knowledgeable individuals are also prone to be biased in reaching a preferred conclusion.

Ideologically motivated cognition

In the field of political psychology, scholars suggest that people tend to embrace a given ideology because of psychological needs to manage uncertainty, threat and social belongness (Hennes et al., 2012). This approach has been applied to the study of conservatism, which has been associated to resistance to change and the acceptance of inequality (Jost et al., 2003). These authors suggest that people are "attracted" to conservatism because this ideology resonates with their psychological and cognitive styles. Historically, conservatism has been associated to a unidimensional scale, meaning that those who score high are considered conservatives (or right-wing), while those lower are taken as liberals (Jost et al., 2009).

In a systematic review involving 134 different samples from 16 countries, Jost et al. (2017b) identified that conservatism is correlated to a number of cognitive variables associated to closed mindedness. According to the meta-analysis, conservatives (as compared to liberals) tend to score high in dogmatism and need for closure, a cognitive tendency to "freeze" on a given conclusion. The authors also found evidence of a positive association between conservatism and other dispositional motivations like intolerance for ambiguity and need for order. The authors found 40 tests of the hypothesis that liberals would be higher in need for cognition, a tendency that reflects an individual willingness to engage in effortful thinking. Based on these findings, Kemmelmeir (2010) conducted a correlational study linking authoritarianism, an individual difference highly associated to conservatism, to System 1(heuristic-intuitive) style of thinking. Because of these dispositions, it has been suggested that conservatives would be more susceptible to cognitive bias as compared to liberals (Mooney, 2012; Nam et al., 2013).

Albeit compelling, these findings have been challenged by a group of scholars on two different grounds. The first one is methodological: Kahan (2012), for example, argues that most of the studies linking conservatism to cognitive and psychological differences have been carried in western and rich countries, specifically in the United States, and thus should not be taken as universal. The author also challenges the assumption that conservatives would be more susceptible to motivational and cognitive bias as compared to liberals. Contradicting this premise, Nisbett, Cooper and Garrett (2015) demonstrated that both liberals and conservatives tend to equally engage in motivated reasoning when exposed to a message that is dissonant to their previous beliefs. In their study, conservatives tended to resist persuasion on climate change (conservative-dissonant message), while liberals demonstrated the same bias when told about the advantages of nuclear power (liberal-dissonant message). Swire et al. (2017) reached a similar conclusion based in an experiment in which both conservatives and liberals were presented with political misinformation: after a retraction, both political groups updated their beliefs to the same extent.

Advocates of the contextual approach have also proposed that people in both political spectrums would be biased not only because of their own beliefs, but because of identity-protection cognition. According to Kahan (2012), in this form of information processing, individuals tend to rely on the "perceptions of facts that are congruent with their membership in ideologically or affinity groups". In other words, people are likely to be influenced by their group's discourse. Kahan et al. (2011) also suggests that those disposed to rely on System 2, either for dispositional or contextual factors, are more likely to magnify ideological differences. For example, suppose a person is exposed to a misinformation regarding vaccination and she is informed that a representative of her affinity group (e.g.: liberals or conservative) is validating that misinformation. If this person relies on System 2 (effortful thinking), she will be more capable of making sense of complex issues; she will be able, for example, to answer counterarguments that undermines her group's beliefs. Still according to Kahan (2012), this person will understand the topic as a contested issue among competitive ideological groups and will thus be likely to magnify her position in order to defend not only her identity but also her group's.

Marketplace Misinformation

Though the mentioned findings are useful for understanding some of the mechanisms underlying the believability in a misinformation, they were based mostly based upon highly politicized issues. Because these are highly politicized issues, it is relatively easy to identify how a given ideological group (e.g. Democrats and Republicans) stands for them. In such cases,

a person might be influenced by the groups' opinion rather than her own belief, as suggested by Kahan (2012).

But, what if the message in question is not so politically salient? I propose an alternative explanation that brings together elements of both the intrinsic (psychological factors) and the contextual (group identity) approaches. The objective is to extend the research on misinformation believability by considering a non-politicized topic, that is, related to the marketplace. Following the contextual approach, I suggest that conservatives and liberals are equally susceptible to misinformation, and they will develop a biased judgment depending on the context. On the other hand, I also borrow from the intrinsic approach the concept of system justification. According to this line of reasoning, conservatives tend to preserve the social and economic order. So, the first hypothesis is:

H1: Conservatives are less prone to believe in marketplace misinformation as compared to liberals.

The mediating role of Economic System Justification

People are constantly facing cases of social and economic injustice, whether related to others or to themselves. What is this force that refrain people from rebelling, and even more, leads them to justify unfair situations? According to system justification theory, people are partly guided by a psychological tendency to defend and exaggerate the benefits of existing social arrangements, and eventually denying or rationalizing its problems (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost & Hunyady, 2002). A key element within system justification theory is the notion that people are "psychologically attached" to the system they depend on, which may lead them to defend this arrangement even at the expense of negative results. This tendency may be rooted, for example, in an individual need to reduce the stress related to the system they depend on. System justification can be viewed, thus, as a coping strategy, offering a "measure of consolation to those who are disadvantaged as well advantaged" (Jost & Hunyady, 2002, p. 147). In this context, systems can be regarded as any social, economic or institutional arrangements, from small groups such as families to larger and even subjective ones, such as the government and the political environment.

Because conservatives are more likely to endorse the status quo, it is assumed they will defend the prevailing economic system, including its institutions, such as companies and brands. Following this reasoning, I expect that a person's level of economic system justification will be the underlying mechanism between a person's level of conservatism and misinformation believability. Therefore:

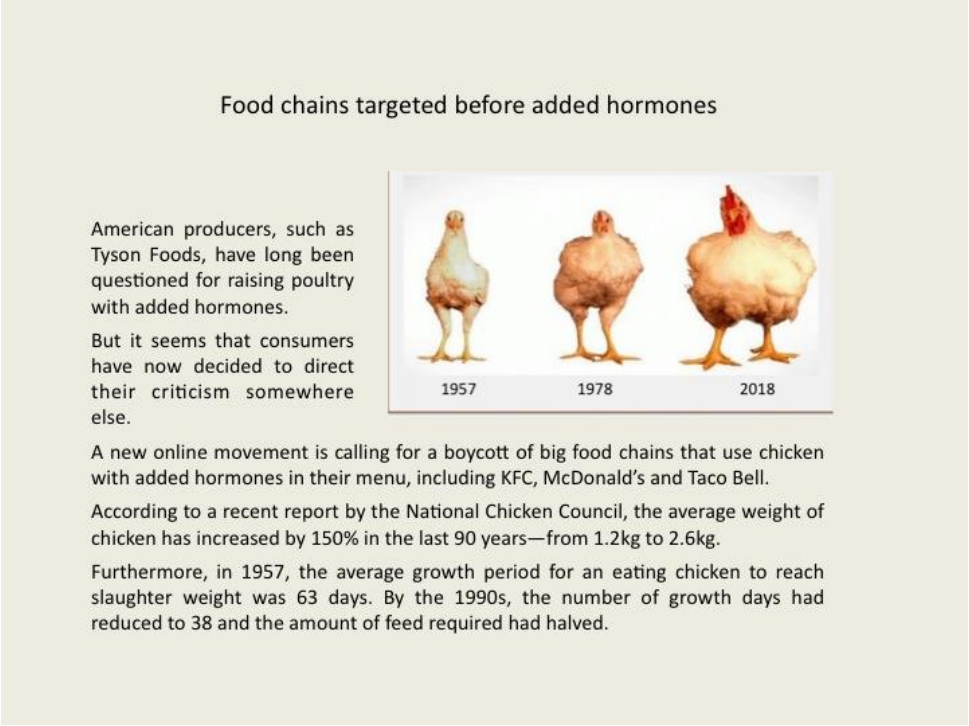
H2: The relation between political conservatism and the belief in a marketplace misinformation is mediated by the individual's level of economic system justification.

Methodology

Procedure

Participants (N= 235, 118 women; M_{age} = 41, range = 24-72) were recruited using Amazon's Mechanical Turk and compensated with 60 cents each for their participation. After confirming consent, participants were presented with a set of questions regarding their political ideology, followed by an article related to chicken hormone. The topic was chosen after a pretest in which 40 participants, also recruited using MTurk. No source of the article was cited, again to avoid possible confounding.

Figure 3: Stimulus applied in the study



Measures

Political Conservatism. Participants' political conservatism was assessed with seven items, including a self-report measure ranging from 1 (very liberal) to 7 (very conservative), adapted from Kaikati (2017). The other six items consisted of three questions related to social conservatism and three others related to economic conservatism, excerpted from a survey administered by the Pew Research Center (2018), considering the most polarized ones between liberals and conservatives. All items are described in table 1.

Economic System Justification. A 17-item scale developed by Jost and Thompson (2000) was used and is presented in table 1. Among other concepts, this scale assesses perceptions of economic inequality ("There is no point in trying to make incomes more equal") and system legitimacy ("Economic differences in the society reflect an illegitimate distribution of resources").

Misinformation believability. Participants were asked to rate the "chicken hormone" case believability using a 7-point semantic differential scale with three items (true/false, likely/unlikely, believable/unbelievable), adapted from Beltramini (1985).

Data Analysis

The data analysis was divided into two phases: Firstly, the measurement model was validated and secondly the structural model. The model was tested through partial least square structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). Smart PLS 3.0 was used in this study.

The results after running the PLS Algorithm are presented in table 1. For a model to present good properties, it is expected that all items loadings be greater than 0.70 threshold, although in social science values above 0.40 may also be kept. One item (JustifR02) had a poor loading and was therefore deleted prior to further analysis.

Table 1: Factor Loadings (modified model)

Scale items	Factor loading
Political Ideology	
Ideo01: Where would you place your political ideology (Lib-Cons, 7 points)	0.854
Ideo02: Abortion should be legal in all cases	deleted
Ideo03: There would be less crime if more Americans owned a gun	0.694
Ideo04: Government regulation of business usually does more harm than good	0.669
Ideo05: Racial discrimination is the main reason why many black people can't get ahead these days	0.796
Ideo06: The government should do more to help the needy Americans, even if it means goind deep into debt	0.735
Ideo07: Stricter environmental laws and regulations cost too many jobs and hurt the economy	0.687
Economic System Justification (ESJ)	
JustifR01: If people work hard, they almost always get what they want	deleted
JustifR02R: The existence of widespread economic differences does not mean that they are inevitable (R)	deleted
JustifR03: Laws of nature are responsible for differences in wealth in society	deleted
JustifR04: It is virtually impossible to eliminate poverty	0.703
JustifR05R: There are many reasons to think that the economic system is unfair (R)	0.765
JustifR06R: Poor people are not essentially different from rich people (R)	deleted
Justifr07: Most people who don't get ahead in our society should not blame the system; they have only themselves to blame	0.785
Justifr08R: Equal distribution of resources is a possibility for our society (R)	0.728
JustifR09: Social class differences reflect differences in the natural order of things	0.701
Justifr10R: Economic differences in the society reflect an illegitimate distribution of resources (R)	0.733
JustifR11: There will always be poor people, because there will never be enough jobs for everybody	0.625
JustifR12: Equal distribution of resources is unnatural	0.787

JustifR13: Economic positions are legitimate reflections of people's achievements	0.719
Justif14R: If people wanted to change the economic system to make things equal, they could ®	deleted
JustifR15R: It is unfair to have an economic system that produces extreme wealth and extreme poverty at the same time (R)	0.814
Justifr16: There is no point in trying to make incomes more equal	deleted
JustifR17R: There are no inherent differences between rich and poor; it is purely a matter of the circumstances into which you were born (R)	deleted
Misinformation Believability	
BeliefR01: In your opinion, the claim that chicken are given hormones is false/true	0.945
BeliefR02: In your opinion, the claim that chicken are given hormones is unlikely/likely	0.971
BeliefR03: In your opinion, the claim that chicken are given hormones is believable/unbelievable	0.964

To reach convergent validity, a construct must be more strongly related to its own measures than with any other construct in the model (Chin, 2010). It can be assessed by two measures: one of them is the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), which must be higher than 0.50 (meaning that the construct predicts more than half of its indicators variance). Because the construct ESJ did not meet this criteria, low factor loading items related to this construct were removed stepwise, until its AVE reach the threshold of 0.5. In total, three items were removed at this stage, all of them related to the construct ESJ (JustifR01, JustifR17R, and JustifR14R) and the PLS algorithm was run again, and the three constructs finally reached an appropriate AVE (Ideology = 0.551; ESJ = 0.551; Misinf_believ = 0.922), as shown in table 2.

A traditional measure of internal consistency is the Cronbach alpha, which is expected to be higher than 0.7, though in exploratory studies values between 0.6 and 0.7 is also acceptable. A second and complementary parameter is composite reliability, which should be above the 0.70 threshold, with values ranging from 0.6 to 0.70 often taken as satisfactory in exploratory studies (Hulland, 1999). The model was satisfactory in this regard, as shown in table 2.

Table 2: Modified model - reliability and validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	R^2	R^2 adjusted
Ideology	0.837	0.859	0.880	0.551		
ESJ	0.918	0.922	0.931	0.551	0.545	0.543
Misinf_Believ	0.958	0.963	0.973	0.922	0.100	0.092

A common measure of discriminant validity is the Fornel and Larcker criterion, which compares the square root of the AVE values with the latent variable's correlations. Another set of improvements in the model was needed in order to reach the recommended results. At this step, two other items were removed from the model (JustifR03, related to ESJ; and Ideol02, related to Ideology). None of the cross loadings exceeded the items outer loadings, another indication of good discriminant validity. Convergent validity can be assessed by examining the factor loadings. All estimated standard loadings (table 4) were > 0.50, suggesting good convergent validity (Lin and Ding, 2006).

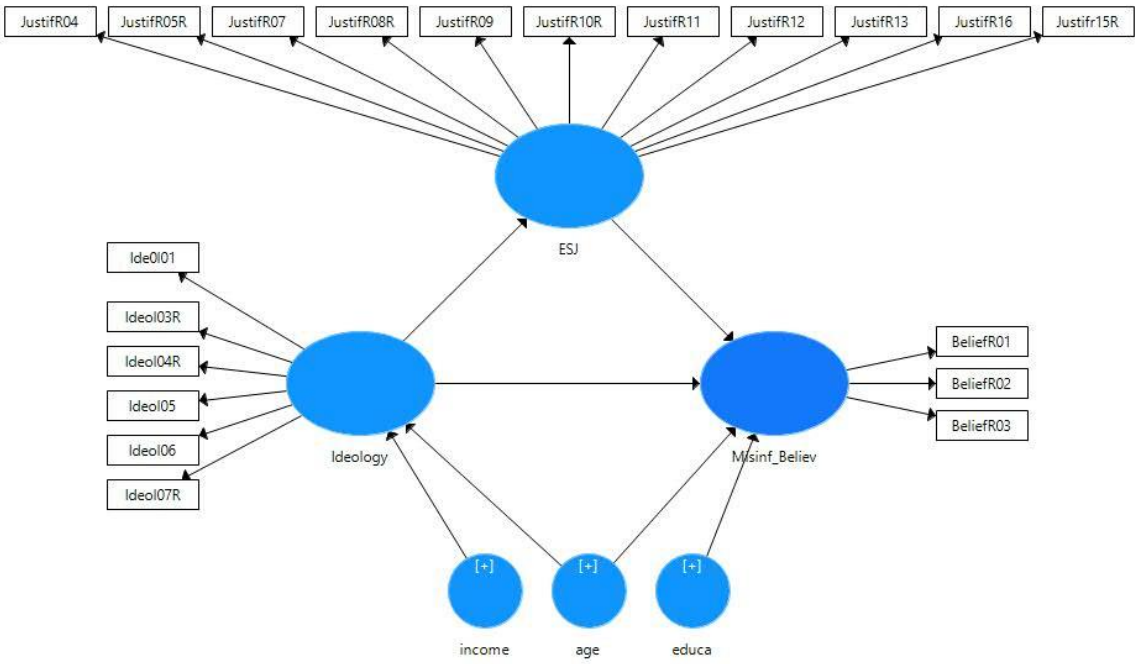
Table 4: Discrimant validity (Fornel-Larcker)

	ESJ	Ideology	Misinf_Believ
ESJ	0.742		
Ideology	0.738	0.742	
Misinf_Believ	-0.312	-0.200	0.960

Table 5: Discrimant validity (HTMT)

	ESJ	Ideology	Misinf_Believ
ESJ			
Ideology	0.816		
Misinf_Believ	0.332	0.222	

Figure 5: Modified model with control variables



Structural Model Analysis

The hypotheses were tested following two different procedures. Firstly, as suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986) the direct effect of Political Conservatism in Misinformation Believability was examined without the mediator variable (ESJ). The relation was significant ($p<0.001$), thus confirming H1. That is, conservatives are less likely to believe in a misinformation related to the marketing as compared to liberals. Another way to assess the relationship is through Pearson's coefficient of determination (R^2), which is a measure of the model's predictive power. It ranges from 0 to 1, with higher results meaning a strong predictive power.

The expected value for R^2 to be good is still debatable in the literature and may depend on the field of study (Hair et al., 2016). In social science, a common rules-of-thumb is one proposed by Cohen (1988), for whom R^2 of 0.02, 0.13, and 0.26 are considered weak, moderate and substantial, respectively. In the present study, when the mediator is not included, the main dependent variable exhibits a R^2 of 0.044, that indicating a weak predictive power. This result means that the model explains 4,4% of the variance in Misinformation Believability.

In order to test the mediation role of ESJ, the sampling was bootstrapped again, this time with the mediator included in the model (Zhao, Lynch Jr & Cohen, 2010). The results revealed that ESJ fully mediates the relationship between Ideology and Misinformation Believability ($p<0.001$), thus supporting H2.

Table 7: Direct effect and mediation

	Path relationship	Path coeff	SD	t-value	p-value	
Test 1: without ESJ	Ideology -> Misinf_Believ	-0.210	0.062	3.400	0.001	H1: supported
Test 2: with ESJ	Ideology -> ESJ -> Misinf_Believ	-0.266	0.083	3.230	0.001	H2: supported
	Ideology -> Misinf_Believ	0.066	0.110	0.598	0.550	

When the mediator is included in the model, there is an improvement in its predictive power, with a R^2 of 0.10. That is, a person's level of economic system justification not only explains why conservatives are less prone to believe in a misinformation, but also increases the model's overall quality.

General discussion and contributions

Past studies suggest that conservatives would be more likely to fall for a misinformation as compared to liberals as a result of cognitive bias. The present study, however, demonstrate otherwise, that is, liberals can be more susceptible to a false claim depending on the context. This finding enriches the literature on political ideology by pointing to a type of misinformation that has been neglected in the literature. Because conservatives are market-oriented, they tend to disbelieve a misinformation involving a brand. In the present study, however, it was demonstrated that, depending on the type of misinformation, liberals can be more biased. Theoretically, this dissertation extends the discussion on how political ideology may influence consumers' daily choices, that is, when the situation is not political salient. It follows a recent call for further consumer research in this regard (Jost, 2017; Crockett & Pendarvis, 2017). It provides insight into the reasoning style of conservatives and liberals and how it is likely to influence their behavior. It was shown that a person's level of economic system justification explains whether she believes (or not) in a marketplace misinformation. The concept of system justification is still ignored in the marketing literature, and its potential in explaining consumer behavior has great potential. A person that tends to justify the system, be it the social, economic, legal system, to mention a few – is more likely to be less critical and to engage in self-deception.

Limitations and future research

While this study proposes relevant implications from both theoretical and managerial standpoints, it has a few limitations. The results cannot be generalized to the whole population, since it relied in a convenience sample. Secondly, only one case of misinformation (chicken hormone) was shown to participants. In future research, it would be recommended to test different cases.

The scale used to measure Economic System Justification also deserve further analysis. Although the scale has been applied in different academic articles, none has investigated (at least not reported) any test regarding its validity or dimensionality. Another major limitation refers to the small effect size observed, which may suggest the influence of other unknown variables. Future research exploring different methodologies is also called for. Though correlational studies may offer important insights toward a given phenomenon, it does not imply causation. Manipulation a person's political ideology has proved a difficult task, representing a challenge in any study in this domain, but further attempts should be considered.

Even in the domain of marketplace, not all misinformation should be treated equally. In the present study, participants were presented with a misinformation about chicken hormone involving some brands. As shown here, because conservatives tend to justify the economic system and its institutions, they are less likely to believe in a misinformation. How would they react, then, if no brands were named, but only the chicken hormone? Another possible boundary condition is related to a possible threat, for example, when the message implies a highly hazard situation. Fessler et al. (2017) have demonstrated that conservatives tend to believe in misinformation involving a threat ("Kale contains thallium, a toxic heavy metal, that the plant absorbs from soil), which may be explained by conservatives' perception of the world as a dangerous place. The example of misinformation used in the present study also implies a threat (chicken hormone), but it was not explicit in the text. For example, if the consequences of eating chicken with added hormone to a person's health were described, would conservatives believe it? These questions could be addressed in future research.

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