

FUNDAÇÃO GETULIO VARGAS

ESCOLA DE ADMINISTRAÇÃO DE EMPRESAS DE SÃO PAULO

FABRÍCIA VOLOTÃO PEIXOTO

**I WANT TO (DIS)BELIEVE: POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AND MISINFORMATION IN  
THE MARKETPLACE**

SÃO PAULO

2018

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Dissertação apresentada à Escola de  
Administração de Empresas de São  
Paulo da Fundação Getulio Vargas,  
como requisito para obtenção do  
título de Mestre em Administração  
Empresas.

Campo de Conhecimento: Estratégias  
de Marketing

Orientador: Prof. Delane Botelho

Peixoto, Fabrícia Volotão.

I want to (dis)believe: political ideology and misinformation in the marketplace / Fabrícia Volotão Peixoto. - 2018.

56 f.

Orientador: Delane Botelho.

Dissertação (mestrado CMAE) – Fundação Getulio Vargas, Escola de Administração de Empresas de São Paulo.

1. Desinformação. 2. Ideologia. 3. Processamento da informação humana. 4. Modelos de equações estruturais. 5. Comportamento do consumidor. I. Botelho, Delane. II. Dissertação (mestrado CMAE) – Escola de Administração de Empresas de São Paulo. III. Fundação Getulio Vargas. IV. Título.

CDU 658.89:316.75

Ficha Catalográfica elaborada por: Isabele Oliveira dos Santos Garcia CRB SP-010191/O

Biblioteca Karl A. Boedecker da Fundação Getulio Vargas - SP

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## Acknowledgments

Those who claim that writing a dissertation or a thesis is a lonely work are missing the point. Putting words on a paper is almost a bureaucratic detail compared to the long journey that precedes it. And I challenge anyone to say that they have been through this process only by their own merits. In my case, I couldn't be luckier: no way in this world I would be able to accomplish the mission without the support from so many of you.

To my advisor Delane Botelho, thanks for letting me embark on the complexities of politics and ideology. Professors Lucia Barros and Rafael Goldszmidt, your suggestions and remarks have pushed me to become a better researcher. And professor Diógenes Bido, people like you make us want to become better human beings.

I also could not have come this far without the help of many friends who have offered great insights and lent me their ears and eyes throughout the past two years. I would like to offer my special thanks to Annaysa Salvador, Adriana Bastos, Artur Motta, Diego Guerra, Juliana Batista. I hope I will be able one day to reciprocate all the help and kindness.

And finally, this study is dedicated to my family. To my parents Sueli and Edison, and mainly to my husband Fabio, for supporting, reviewing, financing, and for being always on my side. And my little boys, Rafa and Pepê, I hope you didn't get scared of too much study. Believe me: it is fun.

This study was financed in part by the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior - Brasil (CAPES) - Finance Code 001

## **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.

**KEYWORDS:** misinformation, political ideology, information processing, motivated reasoning, structural equation modeling.

## **RESUMO**

A disseminação maciça de informações falsas, principalmente por meio de plataformas de mídia social, tornou-se um fenômeno onipresente, afetando indivíduos, organizações e marcas. Diante desse fenômeno, os profissionais de marketing deveriam compreender o que faz os consumidores serem mais ou menos propensos a acreditar em tais mensagens. Esta pesquisa investiga o papel da ideologia política na crença de informações falsas relacionadas a empresas e marcas. Pesquisas anteriores sugerem que conservadores, em função de questões cognitivas, seriam mais suscetíveis a informações falsas, independentemente do tema em questão. Entretanto, como os conservadores tendem a defender a ordem social e econômica vigente, eu proponho que eles serão menos inclinados a acreditar em uma informação falsa, o que denigre atores de mercado, como uma marca. As hipóteses foram confirmadas por meio de um levantamento com 235 participantes recrutados nos Estados Unidos. Os dados foram analisados por meio do modelo de equações estruturais.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** informação falsa, ideologia política, processamento de informação, raciocínio motivado, modelo de equações estruturais.

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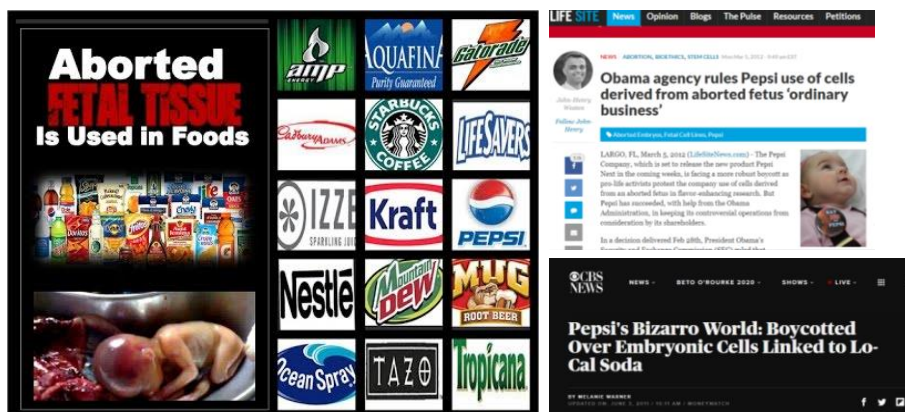
# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Context

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).

**Figure 1: Example of a misinformation in the marketplace**



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).

The literature on information processing also offers some important insights on the factors that may affect the judgment of a statement as true or false. It has been demonstrated, for example, that individuals who score high in need for cognition, a tendency to enjoy thinking, tend to scrutinize the arguments more deeply (Petty & Cacioppo, 1982). The same would apply with those who score lower in need for closure, an individual difference characterized by a tendency to seek a firm answer, avoiding ambiguities (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994).

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; Ingraham, 2016; 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 claim 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.

### **1.1. 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.

This introduction presented the context, objectives and relevance of the study. Next section presents the theories and concepts that explain the hypotheses; the subsequent section describes the methodology that will be used, followed by the results and final remarks.

## 2. THEORY

### 2.1 Defining misinformation

Misinformation was introduced as a research topic in the 1970s, following the works by Loftus and Palmer (1974) on memory distortion. In a series of experiments, the authors demonstrated that individuals' recall of an event could be influenced by a misleading information presented afterwards. Suppose, as an example, someone who witnesses a car accident in which the yellow car hit the blue one. In jury, she is exposed to a set of questions suggesting the yellow car smashed the blue one. Loftus and Palmer (1974) showed that the mere change of words (initially hit) by a misleading one (smash) was enough to change people's assessment (and accuracy) of what really happened. The reason why this kind of distortion occurs is still debatable. A possible explanation resides in source misattribution, which states that individuals fail to recall the source of each information: because they do not remember the misleading information came afterwards, they may take it as the original one (Belli, 1989).

The use of the term has slightly changed since then. Once a topic restricted to the field of cognitive psychology, misinformation is now being investigated from different domains, including social psychology, communications, political science and information systems. There seems to be no consensus in the literature on the exact definition of misinformation, with researchers following two different paths of meaning. From one side, there are a number of studies in which misinformation is conditioned to retraction. For example, Lewandowsky et al. (2012, p. 124), define misinformation as "any piece of information that is initially processed as valid but that is subsequently distracted or corrected". Therefore, such definition implies that the message must have been 1) received as true; and 2) denied somehow. The person who still believes in a claim that has been corrected is taken as misinformed.

In many other studies, 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). The

boundaries among these terms are quite subtle and despite efforts to distinguish them, they can indeed have the same meaning depending on the situation (Flynn, Nyhan & Reifler, 2017). Rumors, for example, have been defined as an unverified information, but the speed with which it is transmitted is usually faster than a misinformation. Additionally, rumors usually arise in ambiguous situations, especially in the absence of official or verified information, and tend to disappear as far as the evidences become clearer (DiFonzo, 2007). Sometimes, however, a rumor may persist despite extensive denials, as with the false case regarding McDonald's worm meat. As a result, some people may not even label it as a rumor: they just take it as true. In this case, they are misinformed.

Conspiracy theories have also been used as synonymous of misinformation in the literature (Cook, Lewandowsky & Ecker, 2017; Nyhan & Neifler, 2012). Both phenomena are related to alternative explanations, but conspiracy theories have been investigated under a different perspective, suggesting a specific individual predisposition to this kind of mentality (Bruder et al., 2013). Sustein (2009, p. 205) defines a conspiracy theory as an "effort to explain some event or practice by reference to the machinations of powerful people". For example, in a study conducted by Lewandowsky, Gignac and Oberauer (2013), participants were asked to rate the believability of a series of conspiracy theories (e.g. "Princess Diana's death was not an accident but an organized assassination"), as well as another set of questions related to climate change, vaccination, and genetic modified food. According to the results, those who scored high in conspiracist ideation also showed a predisposition in rejecting scientific findings in the three contexts.

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".

In this dissertation, I will follow the broader approach, defining misinformation 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). It is also important to note that misinformation has been mostly studied as a massive phenomenon. That is, although it happens in the individual level (after all, it depends on a person's willingness to believe it or not), researchers have been concerned with its widespread acceptance (Del Vicario et al., 2016).

## **2.2 Recent trends in the study of misinformation**

As a false belief that is held against the evidence, misinformation has been prevalent in society for centuries, and is perhaps as old as oral communication. Nevertheless, there has been an increased interest in the topic, especially in the face of new social technologies. The surge of Internet 2.0, with its creation platforms and social networking tools, changed the pattern of information consumption. Served with greater choice of news source, people can choose exactly what they want to see, a tendency known as selective exposure (Frey, 1986; Stroud, 2010). Also, social media platforms provide an environment in which people tend to interact mainly to similar others, the so-called echo chambers.

Such environment becomes especially harmful for the spread of misinformation: because people are primarily exposed to content that has been shared by their affinity group, chances are they will also believe in the same misinformation. Additionally, social media algorithms tend to feed us with information they expect is congruent with our profile, often avoiding different points of view (Pariser, 2011). In a massive quantitative study, Vosoughi, Roy & Aral (2018) analyzed the diffusion dynamics of 126,000 stories on Twitter, including true and false ones and in different domains, such as politics, business, and terrorism. The authors found that falsehood spread significantly faster than the truth in all domains analyzed.

In addition to the mechanism behind the spread of misinformation, scholars have also focused on inoculation strategies, that is, the best ways to dismiss a false claim. It has already been shown that simply rejecting a falsehood may not be effective: even when people believe in the retraction, it is likely to be forgotten (Lewandowsky et al., 2012). In some circumstances, denying a false statement may even reinforce the wrong version, especially when the latter is repeated, increasing its familiarity. The same may occur when the correction is too complex (Sanna, Schwarz, & Stocker, 2002).

So far, most of the research on misinformation has focused on issues related to politics (Flynn et al., 2017), scientific findings (Cook et al., 2017), and public health (Nyhan & Reifler, 2015). These studies have investigated, for example, the prevalence of false claims about vaccination, climate change, and other controversial issues including death panel and abortion. Even though misinformation is ubiquitous in different contexts, it has not yet been fully investigated under a marketing perspective. Despite real-world cases, far little attention has been paid to misinformation relating to brands, companies and products, that is, to the marketplace in



general. An exception is the work of Tybout, Calder & Sternthal (1981), who drew on theories of information processing to discuss a rebuttal strategy using the case of McDonald's worm meat rumor. In a set of experiments, the authors showed that a person does not necessarily need to believe in a rumor in order to be affected by it: the mere fact that people process the information may be enough to change one's attitude toward the object, in the case, about McDonald's. Similarly, Dubois et al. (2011) showed that consumers who initially believed in a rumor but was uncertain about it, may "lose" this uncertainty over time. As a result, only the belief remains, which may lead individuals to consider that message as true.

### **2.3 Why do we believe? A psychological overview**

The literature on persuasion and information processing identifies various factors, both dispositional and situational ones, that tends to influence how we judge a message as true or false (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Chaiken & Trope, 1999). Given that we are exposed to new messages in a daily basis, it would be unreasonable to expect that people would scrutinize every piece of information in order to assume its veracity. On the contrary: as put by Fiske and Taylor (1991), we are "efficiency experts" in this respect, meaning that we will put only the necessary effort in the task of reasoning and judgment, until we reach a conclusion that is perceived as reasonable. 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. Previous research has identified to several of these short-cuts (or heuristics) that people often rely on when judging a statement through System 1. One of them is repetition. It has been demonstrated, for example, that the more a person hears a message, the greater her willingness to take it as true (Brown & Nix, 1996). One of the explanations is that repetition leads to familiarity, which in turn facilitates fluency (Bacon, 1979; Begg, Anas, & Farinacci, 1992). Another common heuristic is source attribution. Previous studies have shown that people engaged in System 1 have difficulties in differentiating a weak from a strong argument, with a tendency to look at the source attractiveness (Petty &

Cacioppo, 1986). Other heuristics cues may include perceived consensus (“if the majority believes it, it might be true”) and the length of the message (Todorov, Chaiken & Henderson, 2002).

On the other hand, judging a message through System 2 requires time and effort. Therefore, people tend to rely on this route only in “special occasions”, such as when they are really motivated to do so or have the cognitive resources, for example when the issue is relevant to them or they are knowledgeable on that matter (Chaiken, 1980; Todorov et al., 2002). Whether a statement will be judged through this route also depend 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 tend to 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. It is worth noting that Systems 1 and 2 can co-occur sometimes. According to Chaiken (1980), it is likely to occur with ambiguous message: suppose, for example a person that processes an information using some heuristics, such as source attractiveness. Afterwards, when and if she judges that same message again, but in an effortful manner, it is likely to be biased by the heuristic cue.

While acknowledging the relevance of cognitive abilities in information processing, 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. One of the them is accuracy, which may result in any conclusion. In this case, people rely on their previous beliefs and knowledge in order to reach an accurate response, no matter what it would be. The other type of goal is directional: in this case, previous beliefs and knowledge do also play a role, but insofar as they yield a desired conclusion.

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.

## **2.4 Ideologically motivated cognition**

Since the term was coined, in late 18<sup>th</sup> century, it would be fair to say that ideology does not lend itself to any concise definition. According to Jost et al. (2009), the construct has been mainly examined through two different lenses: one is rooted in the Marxist tradition and takes a judgmental approach, in which ideology is regarded as a manipulation tool handled by the elites; the other takes a neutral approach, with ideology denoting a set of ideas, beliefs, opinions, and values that helps us to interpret the world we live in (Freeden, 2003). In this dissertation, the neutral approach is adopted.

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 belongingness (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, Kimmelmeier (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.

## **2.5 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.*

## **2.6 The mediating role of Economic System Justification**

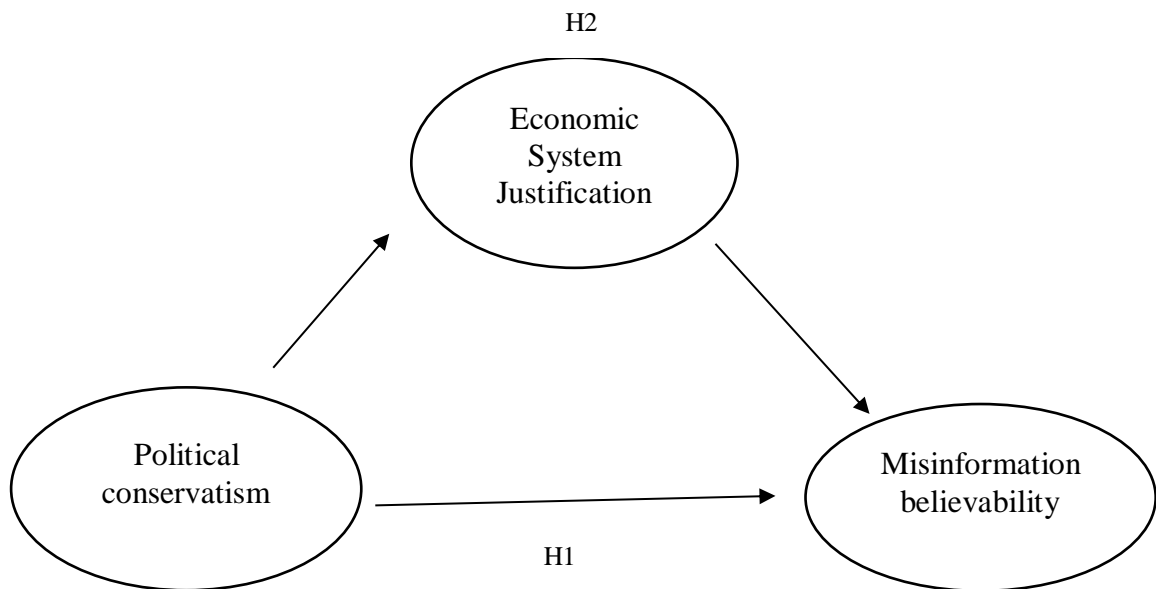
People are constantly facing cases of social and economic injustice, whether related to others or to themselves. What is this force that refrain people from rebelling, and even more, leads them to justify unfair situations? Social science researchers have long debated this "lack of

rebellion” from different perspectives, for example, as a result of elite manipulation and hegemony. Another line of research has stressed the role of self-interest, investigating the notion that disadvantaged people tend to justify the status quo because they believe they will be wealthy one day (Jost et al., 2009). Recently, a group of social psychologists have proposed an alternative approach, one that accounts individuals’ justifying tendencies from an unconscious level. 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 account has been proposed to explain, for example, why members of disadvantaged groups are also likely to defend and rationalize societal problems, such as economic inequalities. People may differ in their tendencies to justify the system according to both dispositional and contextual factors. 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.*

**Figure 2: Proposed model**

The next section describes the empirical procedures to test the above-mentioned hypotheses.

### 3. METHOD

This study adopted quantitative method in the form of a structured questionnaire to investigate the link between political ideology and believability in a marketplace misinformation (hypothesis 1) and the mediating role of Economic System Justification (hypothesis 2). Although it would be recommended to manipulate the independent variable in order to establish a causal relationship, the manipulation of an individual's political ideology in an experimental context is still debatable in the literature. For Jung et al (2018), ideology is a “deep held belief” thus difficult to manipulate. As a test, I recruited 40 participants through Amazon Mechanical Turk and replicated the same stimulus used by Ordabayeva and Fernandes (2018), in which respondents are asked to “recall a conversation with someone who had a more liberal (or conservative) stance than you” and to write it down in detail. The results, though, were non-significant, with the written reports suggesting that participants had misunderstood the instructions. Thus, for the purpose of the present dissertation, political ideology was measured instead.

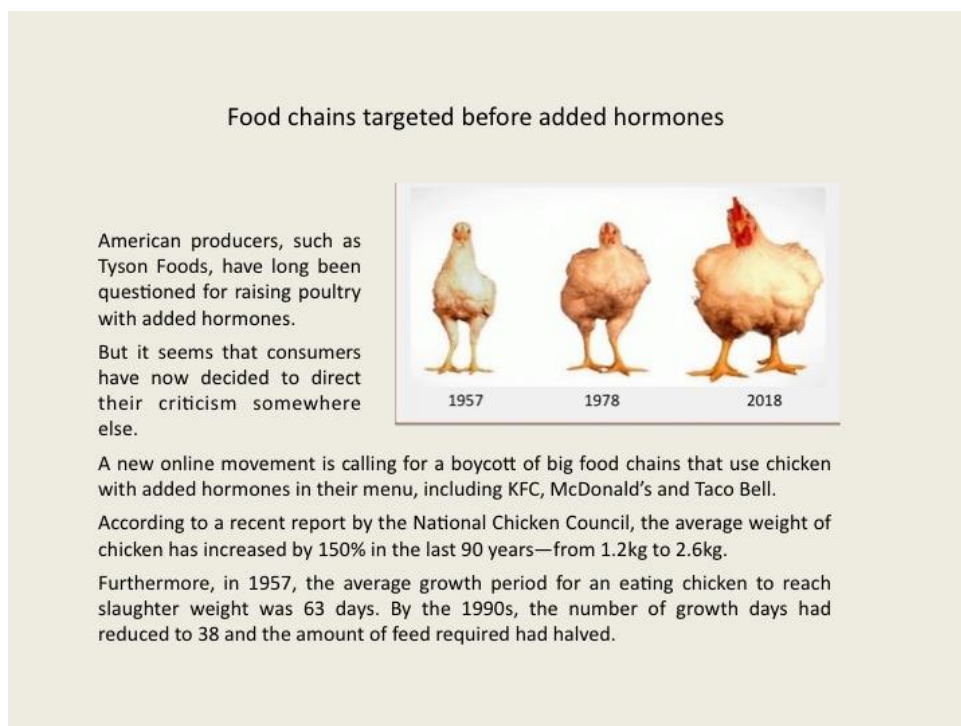
#### 3.1 Procedure

A questionnaire was designed on Qualtrics platform and distributed to respondents using Amazon Mechanical Turk, an online recruiting platform. Respondents were compensated with 60 cents for anonymously taking part in the study. 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 Amazon Mechanical Turk, were presented with four statements, each of them related to a real misinformation (“Facebook has been listening to people's phone conversation”; “The surge of microcephaly cases in Brazil has been caused by a larvicide produced by Monsanto”; “Coke and Nestlé are in talks with the Brazilian government to privatize a major underground water reserve in the country”, and “It has been found that KFC's farmers often inject poultries with hormones to make them grow faster.”), and asked to rate its believability on a scale ranging from 1 (“not at all believable”) to 7 (“highly believable”). The aim was to select



a misinformation that a believability rate close to the mean, and the “chicken hormone” one fit this criterion. Since I am interested in a specific type of misinformation (marketplace), the story was edited to include four companies (Tyson Foods, McDonald's, KFC, and Taco Bell). Whether just one company was mentioned, the risk of attitude bias toward this specific company would be enhanced. No source was cited, again to avoid possible confounding.

**Figure 3: Stimulus applied in the study**



**Ethics.** This study was approved by the Committee for Ethical Compliance in Research Involving Human Beings of Fundação Getulio Vargas (CEPH/FGV). In accordance with the Committee's guidelines, all participants took part on the study voluntarily and were informed about the researcher's identity and e-mail address. At the end of the questionnaire, they were also informed about the real goal of the study and debriefed about the fake story.

### 3.2 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). Although there has been a long debate on how many points include on a self-report political ideology measure (ranging from 5 to 10 points), scholars seem to agree on the importance of keeping the midpoint, that is, with an unequal number of points (Kroh, 2007). 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, in the Results section.

**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).

#### Control variables

**Age.** Due to cognitive loss, a person's age might influence the way he or she process an incoming statement. It has already been demonstrated, for example, that older adults are more susceptible to the "illusory-truth effect", which occurs when a person has the illusion that a statement is true as a result of repetition (Law, Hawkins, & Craik, 1998). Recent research suggests that older people (>65) are seven times more likely to share a false information on Facebook (Guess, Nagler, & Tucker, 2019). It is somewhat expected, thus, that older people would be more susceptible to misinformation. Furthermore, previous research has also pointed to a possible correlation between age and conservatism (Glenn, 1974).

**Income.** There has been some evidence, albeit controversial, suggesting a relation between a person's income and her political orientation. More specifically, it has been demonstrated that high income people tend to be more conservative than liberal (Powdthavee & Oswald, 2014).

**Education.** Whether a person's level of education influences her judgment of a misinformation is still debatable in the literature. From one side, it has been shown that less educated people tend to share more misinformation online (Glenski, Weninger & Volkova, 2018). From the other side, knowledge is also said to facilitate biased reasoning: those who have more knowledge on a given issue may have more ability in searching for the arguments that confirm their previous beliefs and preferences (Taber & Lodge, 2006).

### 3.3 Data Analysis

Given this study includes the measurement and relationship among independent, dependent and mediated variables, multivariate analysis was adopted. As a multivariate technique, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) has been regarded as combination of regression analysis with factor analysis (Klem, 2002). A main precondition of SEM is that it must be based on strong theoretical assumptions. As put by Kline (2015 p. 7), as in any other statistical technique, "you need first and foremost to be a *researcher*, not a statistician or a computer geek". The specification of the model, that is, the relation among variables and its arrows, is drawn from theory and previous empirical studies.

There are two types of SEM: covariance-based (CB-SEM) and partial least square (PLS-SEM), also referred to as PLS path modeling. While the first is primarily used as confirmatory technique, for example, when the researcher have considerable previous knowledge regarding the relationship between constructs, PLS-SEM is more exploratory in nature (Hair et al., 2016). This is so because PLS-SEM works with less distributional and sample assumptions, making this technique especially appropriate for studies in the behavioral science, when researchers often must deal with subjective observations and low information conditions (Roldán & Sánchez-Franco, 2012). Therefore, with SEM-PLS researchers must be careful before assuming causality; instead, it is more suitable to discuss predictability (although causality is still debatable in all non-experimental research). Despite the differences, CB-SEM and PLS should be viewed as complementary. In fact, in some situations, such as when the measurement model

has good properties, both approaches are likely to yield similar results (Reinartz, Haenlein, & Henseler, 2009). Further, when it comes to mediation analysis, PLS-SEM has been regarded as superior compared to other statistical techniques, such as PROCESS regression model (Hair, Sarstedt, & Ringo, 2019). All this being said, PLS seems more suitable to the present study since the phenomenon being discussed and its theoretical background are not well established in the literature.

In PLS-SEM, researchers are recommended to assess the model in two steps. Firstly, the measurement model, that is, the relationship between latent variables and their respective indicators, is examined in order to assure the scales used are valid and reliable. When a criterion is not met, the researcher can take some actions in order to improve the model, such as by removing low factor loading items. Only when all the validity and reliability criteria are met should researchers proceed to the second step, which consists in assessing the structural model. Two main criteria must be examined at this stage: relationships' statistical significance and coefficients of determinations ( $R^2$  values), a measure of the model's predictive power (Hair, Ringle & Starsdet, 2011).

## 4. RESULTS

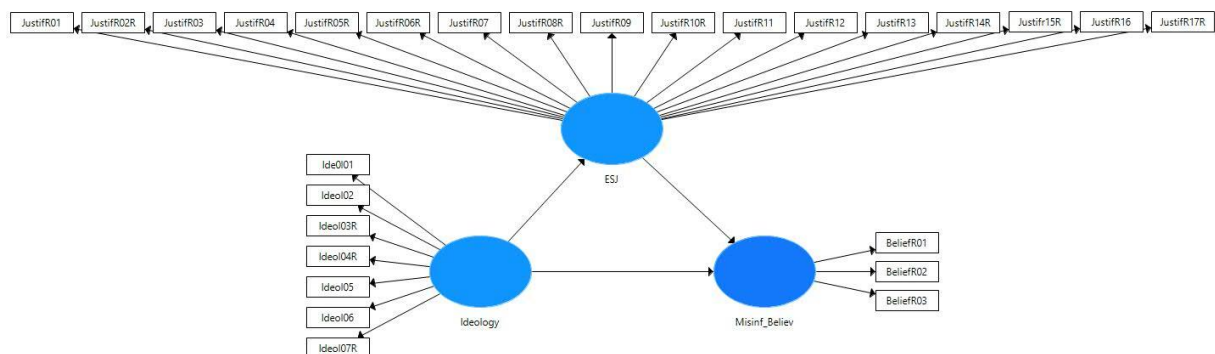
### 4.1 Descriptive statistics

Participants (N= 235, 118 women; M<sub>age</sub> = 41, range = 24-72) were recruited using Amazon's Mechanical Turk and compensated with 60 cents each for their participation. The survey was administered through Qualtrics software program and took 5.5 minutes on average to be completed. Thirty-five percent of the respondents have an annual income ranging from US\$ 25,000 to US\$ 50,000 and almost 61% have a college/university degree.

### 4.2 Measurement model analysis

Before analyzing the full structural mediation model, the measurement model (or outer model) was evaluated using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). Figure 4 shows the path diagram for the proposed model.

**Figure 4: Path diagram for the proposed model**



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. The algorithm was run again, and other criteria examined, as described in detail below. Because reliability depends on validity, it is recommended the analysis starts from the convergent validity, followed by discriminant validity and then reliability (Ringle, Silva, & Bido, 2014).

**Table 1: Factor Loadings (modified model)**

Scale items	Factor loading
<b>Political Ideology</b>	
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 going deep into debt	0.735
Ideo07: Stricter environmental laws and regulations cost too many jobs and hurt the economy	0.687
<b>Economic System Justification (ESJ)</b>	
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
JustifR14R: 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
<b>Misinformation Believability</b>	
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

**Convergent validity:** it is expected that a construct is 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.

**Table 2: Modified model - reliability and validity**

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> 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

**Discriminant validity:** is the extent to which a construct is distinctive of another construct in the model. In order to meet this type of validity, the items related to a given construct must correlate with that construct, and not to any other construct in the model. A common measure in this regard is the Fornell and Larcker criterion, which compares the square root of the AVE values with the latent variable's correlations (Hair et al., 2016). 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) and the algorithm run again. Another way to assess discriminant validity is through cross loading table in which indicators are exhibited in rows and constructs in columns. As shown in table XX, none of the cross loadings exceeded the items outer loadings, indicating the model has met the expected criteria.

**Table 4: Discriminant 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: Discriminant validity (HTMT)**

	ESJ	Ideology	Misinf_Believ
ESJ			
Ideology	0.816		
Misinf_Believ	0.332	0.222	

**Table 3 - Discriminant validity - Cross Loadings**

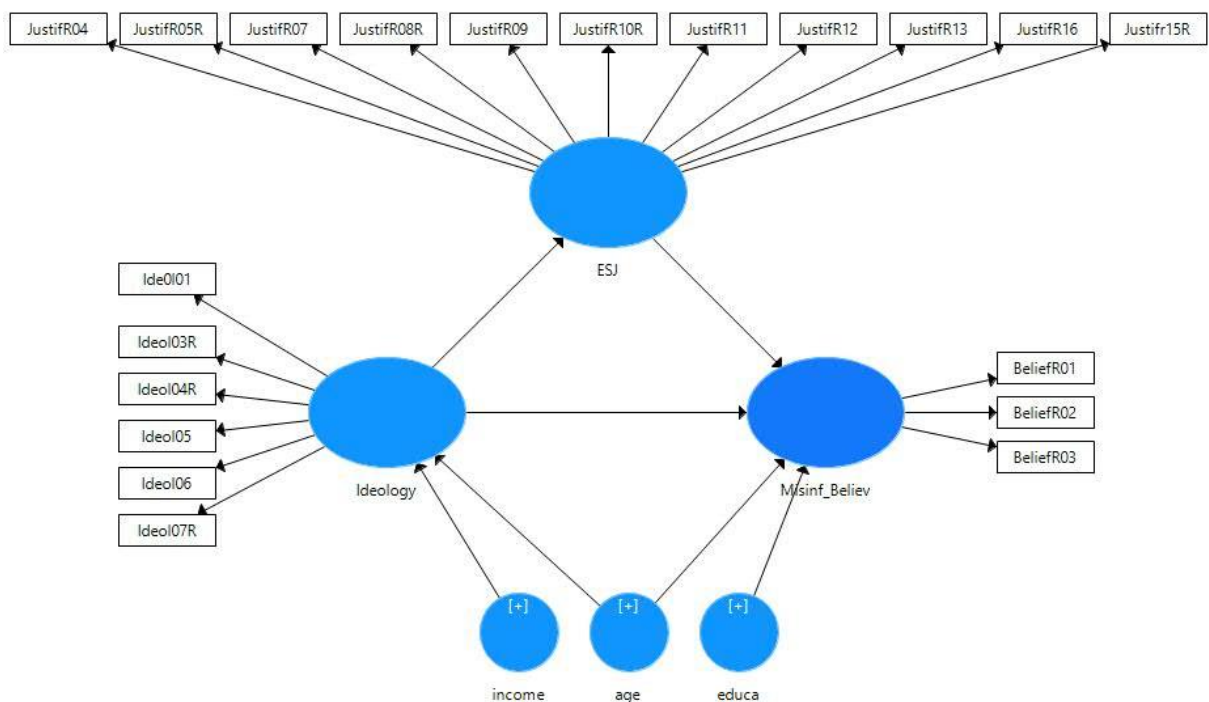
	Ideology	ESJ	Misinf_Believ
Ideol01	<b>0.854</b>	0.717	-0.191
Ideol03R	<b>0.694</b>	0.483	-0.077
Ideol04R	<b>0.669</b>	0.405	-0.181
Ideol05	<b>0.796</b>	0.587	-0.144
Ideol06	<b>0.735</b>	0.586	-0.145
Ideol07R	<b>0.687</b>	0.426	-0.151
JustifR04	0.559	<b>0.703</b>	-0.169
JustifR05R	0.553	<b>0.765</b>	-0.298
JustifR07	0.537	<b>0.785</b>	-0.242
JustifR08R	0.571	<b>0.728</b>	-0.130
JustifR09	0.498	<b>0.701</b>	-0.230
JustifR10R	0.544	<b>0.733</b>	-0.246
JustifR11	0.379	<b>0.625</b>	-0.264
JustifR12	0.597	<b>0.787</b>	-0.235



JustifR13	0.499	<b>0.719</b>	-0.170
Justifr15R	0.639	<b>0.814</b>	-0.274
JustifR16	0.601	<b>0.784</b>	-0.282
BeliefR01	-0.168	-0.275	<b>0.945</b>
BeliefR02	-0.206	-0.306	<b>0.971</b>
BeliefR03	-0.201	-0.317	<b>0.964</b>

**Internal consistency and composite reliability:** both are indicators of whether the items within a scale are all measuring the same construct. If the items are measuring the same construct, a level of correlation among them is expected. 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 can also be 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.

**Figure 5: Modified model with control variables**



### 4.3 Structural Model Analysis

Having established the appropriateness of the scales used in the model, the next step consists in examining the structural model. As mentioned earlier, the goal is to test the significance of the relationship between the constructs as hypothesized, and the model's predictive power. However, before discussing the hypothesis, it is important to check whether some of the control variables are affecting the overall model.

**Table 6: control variables**

	path coefficient	standard deviation	t-value	p-value
age -> Ideology	0,026	0.067	0.383	0.702
income -> Ideology	0.148	0.067	2.223	0.026
age -> Misinf_Believab	0.137	0.071	1.920	0.055
educ -> Misinf_Believab	-0.011	0.065	0.175	0.861

As shown in table 6, income exhibited a significant and positive influence in Ideology, that is, people with higher income tend to be more conservative, as predicted. However, this influence is rather low (0.148). The same applies to the influence of age in Misinformation Believability, which albeit significant does not impact the results.

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.

The present section presented the results, indicating that H1 and H2 were supported. Next, I discuss the implications of these findings, including managerial and theoretical contributions. Suggestions for future research and limitations related to the present study are also presented.

## **5. FINAL REMARKS**

### **5.1 General discussion and contributions**

Misinformation has become prevalent in different contexts, from marketplace to politics, from health to entertainment. It has the potential to fuel political instability, to misinform the population in health-related issues, to activate financial turmoil, to damage a brand or a company's reputation. Not rare, even the most unreasonable claims, such as the one regarding McDonald's "worm meat" hamburger, prevail despite denials. In this context, it is crucial to understand who are the least and most likely to believe in a misinformation. Drawing on previous studies bringing together political ideology and consumer behavior, the present study sought to investigate whether a person's political orientation influences the way she judges a misinformation as true or false. 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, demonstrates 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.

Should all misinformation be treated equally? The present study indicates that a "one type fits all" approach may not be appropriate. Based on examples of misinformation related to politics and scientific finds, previous studies have suggested that conservatives would be always susceptible to misinformation. 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 politically 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. As human beings, we all need a level of self-deception to cope with difficult situations. But as this tendency gets stronger, the consequences can be dangerous to society. Justifying a given system at all costs means ignoring possible negative impacts.

The present study may also be useful from a practical standpoint. As the United States become more politically divided (Pew Research Center, 2019), the tendency is that new topics will be included in the ideological dispute between the two main political groups. Besides, with massive use of social media platforms, people are subjected to algorithms that tend to reinforce a given point of view, the so-called filter bubbles (Flaxman, Sharad & Rao, 2016). Therefore, depending on the misinformation, marketers may consider this division when developing a refutation strategy.

## **5.2 Limitations and future research**

While this study proposes relevant implications from both theoretical and managerial standpoints, it has a few limitations. Firstly, 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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## APPENDIX

### Copy of the Survey (from Qualtrics)

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**Q2 Consent Form** You have been invited to take part in a web-based research designed to understand consumer's behavior and personal beliefs. It is being conduct by Fabricia Peixoto, a researcher at Fundação Getulio Vargas, Sao Paulo. Your participation is not mandatory and you can skip it at any time. However, your financial compensation depends on completing the survey. There are no right or wrong answers; we are merely interested in your beliefs. The responses you provide will be entirely anonymous, so please be honest when responding. No deception is involved, and the study involves no more than minimal risk to participants (i.e., the level of risk encountered in daily life. It takes no more than 6 minutes. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact the researcher Fabricia Peixoto (fabricia\_peixoto@hotmail.com). You may also reach the FGV' Ethical Committee at: Praia de Botafogo, 190, room 536 Botafogo, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, CEP 22250-900, Phone: +5521- 3799-6216. etica.pesquisa@fgv.br

☐ I wish to take part on the study



Q5- Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Entirely agree (1)	Mostly agree (2)	somewhat agree (3)	neither disagree or agree (4)	Somewhat disagree (5)	Mostly disagree (6)	Entirely disagree (7)
Government regulation of business usually does more harm than good (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Racial discrimination is the main reason why many black people can't get ahead these days (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q37 - Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Entirely agree (1)	Mostly agree (2)	somewhat agree (3)	neither disagree or agree (4)	Somewhat disagree (5)	Mostly disagree (6)	Entirely disagree (7)



The government should do more to help needy Americans, even if it means going deeper into debt (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stricter environmental laws and regulations cost too many jobs and hurt the economy (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q7 Please, read the following text carefully:





The existence of widespread economic differences does not mean that they are inevitable (2)

Laws of nature are responsible for differences in wealth in society (3)

It is virtually impossible to eliminate poverty (4)

There are many reasons to think that the economic system is unfair (5)

Poor people are not  
essentially different  
from rich people (6)

Most people who don't get ahead in our society should not blame the system; they have

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

only themselves to  
blame (7)

people's  
achievements (13)

If people wanted to  
change the  
economic system to  
make things equal,  
they could (14)

It is unfair to have  
an economic  
system that  
produces extreme  
wealth and extreme  
poverty at the same  
time (15)

There is no point in  
trying to make  
incomes more  
equal (16)

There are no  
inherent differences  
between rich and  
poor, it is purely a  
matter of the  
circumstances into  
which you were  
born (17)



Q13- Your gender:

- ☐ Male (1)
- ☐ Female (2)
- ☐ Other (3)

Q14- Please, indicate your highest level of education

- ☐ primary/grade school (1)
  - ☐ secondary/high school (2)
  - ☐ college/university graduate (3)
  - ☐ Postgraduate/Professional (4)
- 

Q15- What is your age?

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Q16- Which of these describes your income last year?

- ☐ US\$ 0 to US\$ 9,999 (1)
- ☐ US\$ 10,000 to US\$ 24,999 (2)

- ☐ US\$ 25,000 to US\$ 49,999 (3)
- ☐ US\$ 50,000 to US\$ 74,999 (4)
- ☐ US\$ 75,000 to US\$ 99,999 (5)
- ☐ US\$ 100,000 to US\$ 149,000 (6)
- ☐ US\$ 150,000 and greater (7)