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**The Impact of Positive/Negative Fake News
on Country Brand Equity**

Ph.D. Dissertation

Supervisor:

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Budapest, 2025

Institute of Marketing and Communication Sciences

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INTRODUCTION

The relevance of the research

In a globalized world, building a strong national brand is vital for shaping identity, attracting investment, and promoting tourism (Gilboa, 2008; Hankinson, 2007). A well-managed country brand brings economic, cultural, and political benefits, including increased tourism, foreign investment, and policy influence (Anholt, 2007; Kang & Yang, 2010).

With the rise of digital media, concerns have grown about how quickly both true and false information can spread. Vosoughi, Roy, and Aral (2018), in a landmark study, revealed that false news spreads significantly faster and reaches more people than true news. Given that news about countries—whether political, cultural, or tourism-related—often circulates on these platforms, this dynamic presents an acute risk to country brand equity (Bessi, 2017; Popat et al., 2017). Unlike traditional media, digital environments allow for algorithm-driven amplification of unverified content, leaving country brands vulnerable to large-scale, unmoderated reputational harm.

Country branding involves the strategic promotion of a nation's image to enhance its global perception (Knott et al., 2015; Fan, 2010). This country image is shaped by public beliefs about a country's politics, economy, people, and products (Pappu & Quester, 2010), making a positive and consistent image essential for successful branding (Hakala et al., 2013). Whereas, country brand equity (CBE) refers to the value associated with a country as a brand, especially in terms of consumer perceptions of products from that country (Zeugner-Roth et al., 2008). Drawing from corporate branding, CBE is often assessed through consumer-based approaches, focusing on dimensions like *brand awareness*, *loyalty*, *perceived quality*, and *associations* (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 1993; Yoo et al., 2000).

Country brand equity, as conceptualized by scholars such as Anholt (2007) and Dinnie (2008), is rooted also in symbolic, emotional, and cognitive associations formed through media representations. In this regard, fake news—whether negatively framed (e.g., associating a country with terrorism or corruption) or positively distorted (e.g., whitewashing human rights issues)—can significantly alter public perception. Misinformation framed with affective triggers may either falsely elevate expectations or deeply erode trust, leading to outcomes such as international boycotts, travel avoidance, diplomatic strain, or investor hesitation (Avraham, 2015; Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015).

In this study, the broad constructs of brand association and brand loyalty are narrowed to focus on *attitudinal brand loyalty* and *symbolic brand associations*, which are most susceptible to media influence. Attitudinal brand loyalty reflects emotional and cognitive attachment to a brand—beyond repeated behavior—and is shaped significantly by media exposure (Jacoby & Chestnut, 1978; Dick & Basu, 1994; Hofmeyr & Rice, 2000).

Similarly, symbolic brand associations convey the psychological, cultural, and social meanings attached to a brand, helping individuals express identity and values. These are often formed through symbolic cues and emotionally framed media narratives (Aaker, 1997; Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Avraham, 2015). In country branding, such associations (e.g., “corrupt,” “progressive,” “welcoming”) are less about direct experience and more about media framing (Fan, 2006; Yoo & Buzinde, 2012). Research in tourism and destination branding further demonstrates that individuals can develop strong, enduring attachments to countries they have never physically visited, with these attachments shaped primarily by mediated representations, cultural storytelling, and repeated exposure to persuasive imagery (Prentice & Andersen, 2003; Pike & Ryan, 2004).

Across both traditional and digital platforms, media operates as a proxy for lived experience, delivering a continuous flow of symbolic and affective cues that foster familiarity, emotional resonance, and trust—or, conversely, suspicion and aversion—toward a national brand (Hofmeyr & Rice, 2000; Avraham, 2015; Fan, 2006; Yoo & Buzinde, 2012). This dynamic underscores the critical role of mediated communication in shaping perceptions that are resistant to change, even in the absence of personal contact.

Focusing on these constructs enables this research to assess how fake news can shift public perception and loyalty toward a country brand, offering deeper insights into media-driven image formation.

Defined by Zhang and Ghorbani (2020, p.4), fake news encompasses “all types of false stories or news primarily disseminated on the Internet with the intent to deliberately mislead, deceive, or entice readers for financial, political, or other gains.” Unlike errors or satire, fake news is crafted with intentional deceit. In media research, the concept of *fake news frames* refers to the specific ways in which misinformation is constructed and presented—through emotional appeals, selective emphasis, exaggerated language, or fabricated narratives—to manipulate perceptions (Molina & al., 2019). These frames can be either negative (e.g., associating a country with terrorism or corruption) or positive (e.g., glorifying a regime or masking human rights abuses),

both of which can distort the audience's understanding and influence cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses toward a country or destination.

Despite the proliferation of studies examining the media's influence on country image and brand equity, there remains a critical research gap concerning the *specific effects of fake news frames—both positive and negative—on perceptions of country brand equity*, and the *role that source credibility plays as a moderating or mediating factor in this process*. While substantial literature has been a surge in academic interest regarding the extensive reach of fake news in recent years, most research focuses primarily on public policy and political communication aspects (Jones-Jang et al. 2021; Guo, L., & Vargo, C., 2020). There is a noticeable lack of studies (Berthon & Pitt, 2018; de Regt et al., 2019; Weidner et al., 2019; Visentin et al., 2019) that examine fake news in the context of brand management and communication, particularly regarding country branding.

In media psychology, credibility has long been established as a fundamental element in message evaluation. Metzger and Flanagin (2013) argue that, especially in digital contexts, credibility judgments now act as primary filters in users' engagement with content. Accordingly, if a message's credibility influences how fake news is internalized and acted upon—either intensifying or dampening its effects on brand perception—then credibility should be examined as both a moderating and mediating variable in empirical models of misinformation impact.

Despite these theoretical foundations, current studies largely neglect to operationalize credibility as a statistical variable within media-country branding models. This omission is significant because it limits understanding of the conditional effects of misinformation, particularly in high-risk communication scenarios where trust in media, governments, or influencers varies substantially across audiences (Johnson & Kaye, 2015; Tsfaty & Cappella, 2003).

While credibility has been studied in tourism media studies (e.g., Wang, 2014; Chi-Hua Li & Chi-Chun Liu, 2020), its application to fake news framing remains underexplored. The studies posit that credibility cues are especially impactful when audiences engage in peripheral route processing—common in social media contexts. Yet, the effect of false positive or false negative framing under different credibility conditions has not been empirically tested.

Similarly, Framing Theory, widely applied in country image research (Whyke et al., 2022; Han & Wang, 2015; Almeida-García et al., 2020), explains the influence of narrative structure and

emotional appeal, but it often assumes content factuality and does not differentiate between legitimate and illegitimate frames. This raises a gap in understanding how deceptive or fabricated frames uniquely shape perception compared to authentic, accurate portrayals.

Cultivation and Agenda-Setting theories provide strong macro-level explanatory frameworks for how repeated exposure and salience guide public perception (Gerbner & Gross, 1976; McCombs & Shaw, 1972), yet they do not isolate misinformation content or account for the credibility of the repeated message source—a crucial factor when interpreting online media’s influence.

Besides, one additional yet critically underutilized framework in this domain is Construal Level Theory (CLT) (Trope & Liberman, 2010), which posits that people interpret events or objects at varying levels of psychological distance—temporal, spatial, social, or hypothetical. When judging foreign countries, especially ones with which the audience has little direct contact, psychological distance is inherently high, and individuals tend to rely more on abstract, emotion-based, and stereotype-driven heuristics rather than factual assessments. In such contexts, framing effects and misinformation become even more potent, as individuals use simplified judgments to make sense of complex international narratives (Kim et al., 2020; Liberman & Trope, 2008). The combination of high psychological distance and low cognitive elaboration suggests that fake news about distant nations may disproportionately influence country brand and conative intentions such as travel, investment, or cultural openness.

China was chosen as the focal country due to its central role in global media narratives and the heightened polarization of international opinion, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic (Silver et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2021). As the world’s second-largest economy and a frequent subject of country image research (Su et al., 2024), China offers both high media visibility and strong preexisting perceptions—ideal conditions for assessing the impact of valenced fake news on country brand equity. Unlike lesser-known nations with limited media exposure, China provides a reliable baseline for attitude measurement.

Moreover, the fact that most respondents in this study had never visited China significantly strengthens the validity of the results. Their perceptions of the country were shaped almost entirely by mediated information and second-hand narratives rather than by personal, first-hand experiences. This is a crucial advantage for measuring the influence of fake news, as it eliminates the confounding effects of direct contact, which could dilute or override media-driven impressions (Avraham, 2015; Fan, 2006). In this way, changes in country brand equity observed after exposure

to valenced fake news can be attributed with greater confidence to the media stimuli provided in the study. Such conditions create a methodologically clean environment for isolating the persuasive power of fake news frames, aligning with prior research showing that brand-related attitudes, particularly symbolic associations and attitudinal loyalty, can be strongly constructed and reinforced in the absence of personal experience through repeated and emotionally charged media portrayals (Pike & Ryan, 2004; Prentice & Andersen, 2003; Hofmeyr & Rice, 2000).

The purpose of this research

In sum, the reviewed literature demonstrates that fake news framing and credibility effects remain major blind spots in country brand research. To fill this gap, the primary objective of this doctoral thesis is to assess the impact of fake news on a country's brand equity. Specifically, I aim to investigate whether credibility and cognitive image act as mediators in the relationship between the valence of fake news and brand equity. Additionally, I will explore whether construal-level dimensions moderate the relationship between the valence of fake news and credibility, potentially amplifying or mitigating the effect.

The main question addressed in the dissertation is as follows:

How does fake news of varying valence impact dimensions of country brand equity, and what moderating and mediating factors influence this exposure?

Sub-questions related to the primary research query:

1. How does the valence of fake news (positive vs. negative) influence the dimensions of country brand equity?
2. How do positive and negative fake news frames differ in their impact on various components of country brand equity (e.g., awareness, associations, loyalty)?
3. What role does message credibility play in mediating the relationship between fake news valence and country brand equity?
4. To what extent does perceived cognitive image mediate the relationship between fake news valence and country brand equity?
5. Do construal-level dimensions (e.g., psychological distance) moderate the effect of fake news valence on credibility perceptions?

Mapping the relationships and a conceptual framework

This chapter presents the conceptual framework underpinning the present study, which explores the relationship between fake news and country brand equity (CBE). The model is developed to examine how different *valences of fake news* (positive or negative) influence perceptions of a country and how this effect is mediated by *perceived credibility* and the *cognitive image* of the country. Furthermore, it investigates how this relationship is moderated by individuals' *construal level dimensions*, such as perceived psychological distance (spatial, temporal). The framework synthesizes multiple theoretical perspectives—*Framing Theory*, and *Construal Level Theory (CLT)*—to provide a comprehensive explanation of the cognitive and emotional pathways through which misinformation affects national reputation.

Key Constructs and Hypothesized Relationships

1. Fake News Valence (Independent Variable)

The independent variable in this study is the *valence of fake news*, defined as the emotional tone or direction (positive or negative) of deliberately fabricated news about a country. As conceptualized by Zhang and Ghorbani (2020), fake news refers to “all types of false stories or news primarily disseminated on the Internet with the intent to deliberately mislead, deceive, or entice readers for financial, political, or other gains.” When such content frames a country negatively or positively it can significantly alter audience perceptions and attitudes.

2. Mediating Variables

- *Perceived Credibility*

This refers to the extent to which audiences believe the fake news to be trustworthy or plausible. Credibility serves as a heuristic cue that affects whether individuals accept or reject information. In low-involvement processing conditions, perceived credibility often determines the persuasiveness of a message.

- *Cognitive Image of the Country*

The cognitive image reflects mental representations individuals hold about a country's tangible and intangible attributes—such as development level, governance, safety, or culture. Media frames can distort this image, and it often acts as a bridge between exposure to media content and attitude formation, making it a central mediating variable in this study.

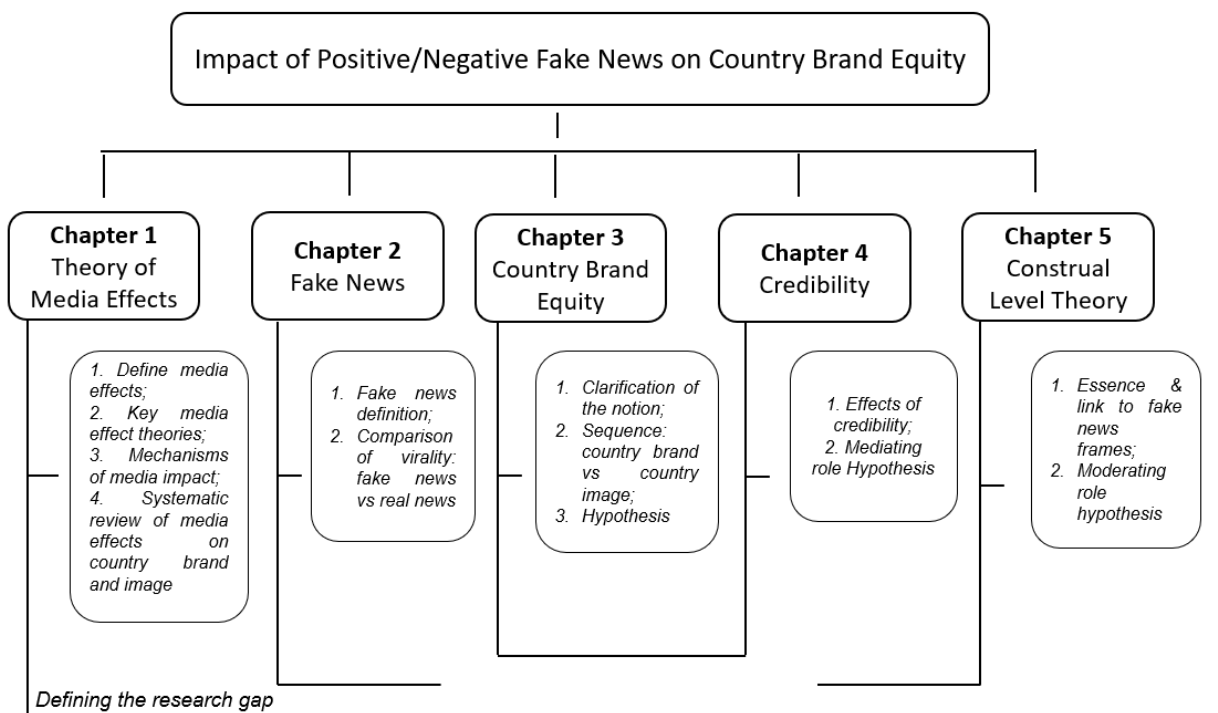
3. Country Brand Equity (Dependent Variable)

The dependent variable is **Country Brand Equity (CBE)**, which refers to the value derived from a country's brand as perceived by external audiences. As per Zeugner-Roth et al. (2008), CBE encompasses components such as **brand awareness**, **perceived quality**, **brand loyalty**, and **brand associations**. These dimensions are critical indicators of how countries are evaluated in global economic, political, and tourism contexts.

4. Construal Level Dimensions (Moderating Variable)

The **Construal Level Theory** (Trope & Liberman, 2003) posits that people perceive information differently based on psychological distance. These distances can be spatial (how geographically close or far a country is), temporal (how soon or far in time the event is perceived). These factors moderate how fake news is processed—individuals with high psychological distance may process news more abstractly and be less critical of its content, thereby impacting credibility judgments. Figure 1 illustrates the structural composition of the literature review, offering a clear roadmap of the key thematic areas discussed in the chapters. It provides an organized view of how core concepts—such as fake news, country brand equity, credibility, and construal level theory—are integrated to support the research framework.

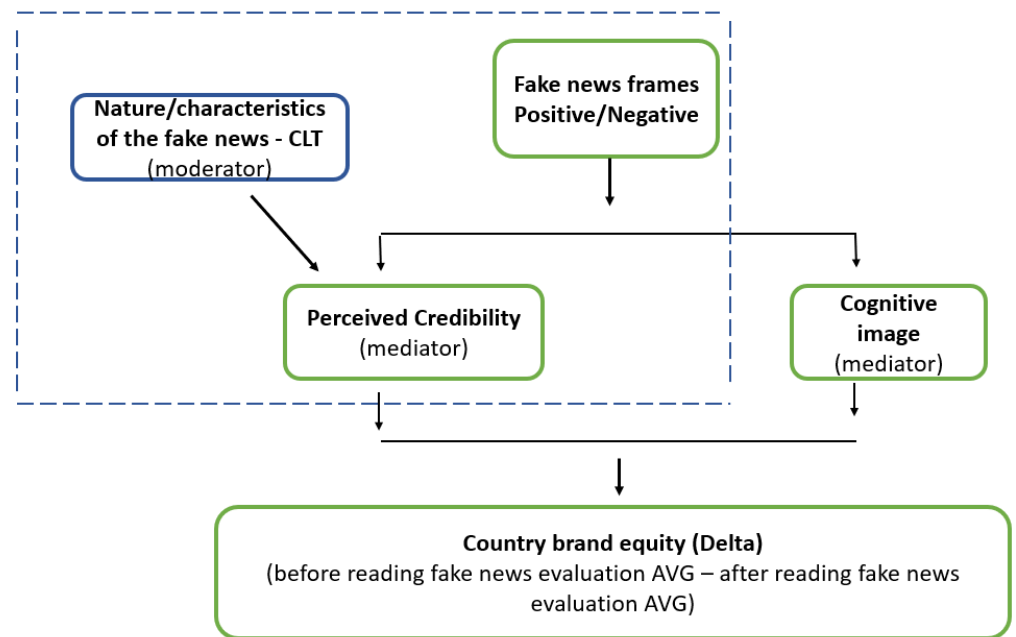
Figure 1. Structure of the literature review part.



Conceptual Model and Mapping of Relationships

The following diagram represents the conceptual model guiding the empirical study:

Figure 2. Conceptual model



Source: own elaboration, 2025

This mapping captures the hypothesized causal pathways and conditional effects. It shows that *fake news valence* influences *country brand equity* indirectly through *perceived credibility* and *cognitive image*, and that this influence is conditioned by individuals' *psychological distance* (i.e., construal level).

Theoretical Justification

A robust theoretical foundation is essential for explaining how and why fake news influences country brand equity. The framework for this dissertation draws on two complementary perspectives—Framing Theory and Construal Level Theory (CLT)—which together provide both the content-based and cognitive-process explanations for the observed effects.

Framing Theory

Framing Theory provides a powerful lens for understanding how fake news shapes perceptions

by emphasizing certain aspects of a story while downplaying or omitting others (Entman, 1993). In the context of this dissertation, valenced framing—whether positive or negative—serves not only to guide interpretation but also to evoke specific emotional and cognitive responses. Such frames influence how audiences assess credibility and form a cognitive image of a country, both of which are critical determinants of country brand equity. This makes credibility and cognitive image theoretically sound mediators in the proposed model, as they represent the primary pathways through which media framing translates into brand-related attitudes.

Construal Level Theory (CLT)

Construal Level Theory (Trope & Liberman, 2010) complements the framing approach by explaining how psychological distance affects how individuals mentally represent and evaluate information. Messages perceived as psychologically closer are processed more concretely, often increasing their perceived relevance and believability, while distant events are interpreted more abstractly, potentially reducing their persuasive power. Within this study's framework, CLT justifies the inclusion of construal level as a moderator, as it can significantly alter the impact of valenced fake news on credibility perceptions. By integrating CLT, the model accounts for not only *what* is being framed (valence) but also *how* audiences mentally construe the message based on perceived distance—thereby offering a more nuanced understanding of fake news influence on country brand equity.

I. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1. THE THEORY OF MEDIA EFFECTS

In the present day, media accessibility has significantly increased compared to previous decades, largely due to the widespread availability of the Internet. The rapid rise of social media platforms has transformed how information is consumed and shared, enabling swift and extensive news distribution to global audiences (Sun et al., 2023). As a result, individuals now rely heavily on these platforms as their primary source of information on current events and political matters, often surpassing traditional mass media outlets (Song et al., 2023). This shift holds critical implications for country branding, as the narratives and frames circulated through digital media play a central role in shaping public perceptions of national identity. In this environment, both accurate information and misinformation can strongly influence a country's image and brand equity—either enhancing its global reputation or causing lasting reputational damage.

Global populations are increasingly attracted to social media platforms and exhibit a heightened demand for news content (Ahmadi et al., 2023). The consumption habits of young individuals have progressively evolved over time, with a notable shift towards internet browsing for readily accessible information and news, reducing their dependence on traditional media channels (Turcotte et al., 2015). Researchers observe that social media platforms are becoming increasingly favored for information acquisition due to their engaging content and convenience, prompting individuals to rely more heavily on these platforms for staying informed and sharing news with others. Moreover, the accessibility and authenticity of information on social media have raised people's awareness, fueling a rapid increase in their need for news updates (Thompson et al., 2020).

While most surveyed adults indicated using social networks to remain informed about news and current events, a study conducted in 2018 by the Reuters Institute uncovered that social media ranked as the least trusted news source globally. The study found that fewer than 35 percent of adults across Europe deemed social networks trustworthy for news dissemination. However, over 50 percent of adults in Portugal, Poland, Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Slovakia, and Croatia reported obtaining news from social media platforms (Watson et al., 2024).

Digital media integration involves the amalgamation of various media forms, including text, images, and sound, into numerous existing modes of expression. This process, known as remediation, redefines the capabilities of each medium within a new online context. It gives rise to forms of network communication such as one-on-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many

interactions. Consequently, there is a reciprocal influence, absorption, and adjustment among various media platforms (Simić et al., 2019; Henry et al., 2016).

The advent of social media has significantly transformed the public sphere, reshaping how information is produced, shared, and consumed. The boundaries between private and public life have become increasingly blurred, while political and cultural discourse has grown more interconnected and accessible. In this new environment, social actors—both individuals and institutions—can engage with one another more easily and frequently, altering the dynamics of public communication (Bessi, 2017; Popat et al., 2017). This transformation has been further amplified by the growing influence of user-generated content, which now plays a central role in shaping the narratives presented in the digital news ecosystem (Domingo et al., 2008).

These changes have had profound implications for country branding. As audiences shift away from traditional mass media toward digital platforms, especially social media, the construction and perception of national image is increasingly driven by fragmented, fast-moving, and often emotionally charged media content. In this context, a country's brand can be elevated or damaged within hours, based on how it is portrayed and perceived online. The proliferation of unverified and viral content—ranging from influencer-driven storytelling to the rapid spread of fake news—has made national reputation more vulnerable than ever before. Social media no longer merely reflects public opinion; it actively shapes it, influencing how countries are judged on political, cultural, economic, and humanitarian grounds.

Given this shift, it becomes essential to understand not only what is being communicated about countries through media, but also how and why these messages affect public perception and behavior. Before investigating the body of literature devoted to media's impact on country image/branding, it is first necessary to clarify what constitutes a media effect and explore the key theories that explain how media influences audiences. This theoretical foundation is essential for accurately interpreting empirical findings and for guiding further *systemic literature review* of existing studies that investigate the nature and scope of media effects on country image/brand.

1.1. Definition of media effects

To understand the impact of media or news on consumer decision-making, it's crucial to first clarify the nature of these phenomena. Without a clear definition, assessing their influence and consequences on consumer decision-making becomes challenging.

The term "mass media effects" remains prevalent, although many media scholars grapple with the term "effect" due to the complexity of addressing conceptual issues surrounding the nature of these effects. Table 1 presents a synthesized overview of key definitions and conceptual frameworks related to mass media effects, highlighting the diverse theoretical perspectives and conceptual dimensions proposed across scholarly literature.

Table 1. Overview of definitions and conceptualizations of mass media effects.

Author(s)	Definition / Conceptualization	Key Dimensions / Types of Effects	Disciplinary Focus / Methodology
Potter (2011)	Media effect is a change in an outcome within a person or social entity due to media influence following exposure.	Gradual long-term change, reinforcement, immediate shift, short-term fluctuation.	Comprehensive overview across micro and macro levels.
Valkenburg et al. (2016)	Effects include intentional and unintentional changes in cognition, emotion, attitude, and behavior over time due to media.	Cognitive, emotional, attitudinal, behavioral; short and long term.	Updated for digital and social media contexts.
Grossberg et al. (1998)	Focused on effect types and theoretical framing of influence.	Cognitive, affective, conative.	Media and cultural studies.
Lazarsfeld (1948)	Defined media effects in terms of audience response categories.	Knowledge, attitudes, opinions, behavior.	Communication and political science.
Bryant & Zillmann (2009)	Expanded typology of media effects.	Behavioral, attitudinal, cognitive, emotional, physiological.	Psychological media effects research.
Krugman (1965)	Emphasis on attitude change as a key media effect.	Attitudinal shifts in response to significant issues.	Advertising and consumer psychology.
Jeffres (1997)	Mass media effects require definitions of communication process components.	Communication process focused.	Theoretical framing in communication studies.

Source: own elaboration, 2025

Scholars consistently focus on the type of effect observed (Grossberg, Jeffres, 1997). Potter (2011) notes in his examination of media effects literature that he identified nine conceptual issues.

The issues listed cover critical aspects of understanding the effects of media on individuals and society (Potter, 2011). The Type of effect issue delves into the breadth of impact, questioning whether media effects are confined to observable behaviours or extend to encompass thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, and physiological responses. The Level of effect issue contextualizes these impacts, examining whether they occur at the micro level of individual behaviors, the macro level of societal structures, or both. Meanwhile, the Change Issue considers whether media influence prompts alterations in existing phenomena or stabilizes prevailing conditions. The Influence issue

distinguishes between direct and indirect effects, shedding light on the mechanisms through which media shapes attitudes and behaviors. The pervasiveness issue explores the universality of media effects, questioning whether they affect everyone uniformly or vary based on individual differences. The type of media stimulus issue evaluates whether media's cultural influence stems from its overarching form and transmission channels or the specific content it conveys. The Intentionality issue probes whether scholars should analyze unintended effects alongside intended ones. The timing of effect issue raises questions about the temporal dimensions of media effects, while the measurable issue underscores the importance of discerning between latent and manifest effects in scholarly inquiry. These considerations collectively enrich the understanding of the complex interplay between media and society.

However, there is a range of perspectives among reviewers concerning the categorization of effects. For example, Grossberg et al. (1998) delineated three types: cognitive, affective, and conative. In contrast, Lazarsfeld (1948) proposed four types: knowledge, attitudes, opinions, and behavior. Bryant and Zillmann (2009) put forward five types: behavioral, attitudinal, cognitive, emotional, and physiological. Diverse classifications focus on distinct areas. Psychologists study effects on individuals, sociologists on effects on larger groups, and economists on effects on resources rather than individuals. Laboratory experimenters examine short-term effects immediately following exposure to specific messages (Heinbach, 2018; Hansen, 2018), while ethnographers explore effects that accumulate over a longer period and manifest in subtler ways (Marwick, 2018).

Psychologists focus on understanding how media impacts individuals, delving into the psychological mechanisms underlying behavioral changes, attitudes, and beliefs. Sociologists, on the other hand, broaden their scope to examine the effects of media on larger groups and societal structures, investigating how media influences cultural norms, social interactions, and collective behavior. Economists take yet another perspective, analyzing the impact of media on resources and economies, considering factors such as advertising expenditures, market trends, and resource allocation. In terms of research methodologies, laboratory experimenters typically conduct controlled experiments to examine short-term effects immediately following exposure to specific media messages (Heinbach, 2018; Hansen, 2018). Conversely, ethnographers take a more holistic approach, studying the cumulative effects of media over longer periods within naturalistic settings, and observing how media influences manifest in subtler ways within communities and cultures (Marwick, 2018).

However, there are multiple formal definitions applicable across various fields, including one proposed by Jeffres (1997). According to the scholar, defining effects requires first defining

concepts such as mass media, communication, encoding, channel, and decoding process. Krugman (1965) suggested that the "effects" of mass media typically involve changes in attitudes toward significant issues, which is the primary focus of empirical research in this domain. Nonetheless, both agree that defining what constitutes effects is challenging due to the varied interpretations by various individuals.

Potter (2011, p. 903) scrutinized existing definitions and identified the following: "A mass media effect is a change in an outcome within a person or social entity that is due to mass media influence following exposure to a mass media message or series of messages." Additionally, he proposed a conceptualization that classifies mass media effects into four general types: gradual long-term change, reinforcement, immediate shift, and short-term fluctuation. All mass media effects adhere to one of these four patterns.

Valkenburg et al. (2016) introduced a more contemporary definition to accommodate the rise of social media. According to this definition, media effects encompass both intentional and unintentional alterations in individual or collective cognitions, emotions, attitudes, and behavior, occurring over both short and long durations due to media consumption. However, another inquiry arises: what is the magnitude of the influence of media usage on cognitions, emotions, attitudes, and behavior?

1.2. Media effect on cognition and emotions

To address this inquiry, we must examine fundamental approaches dedicated to understanding the role of media. One primary approach regarding the idea that media shapes public perception suggests that its effects are minimal, or it merely influences the issues that the public considers most important, known as agendas. This perspective emerged in the 1980s, with the main assumption being that the audience forms its opinions relatively independently from the media (Neuman & et al., 2011; McGuire, 1986). However, an alternative assumption posits that while the media does exert significant influence, it is limited to a specific sphere. According to this viewpoint, the public's autonomy is not absolute, but its susceptibility to media influence is confined to agendas (Lau, 1985; Iyengar, 2010).

Later, additional researchers applied the theory of information processing to anticipate how much influence the media could have. They suggested that individuals have a mental framework called "schemas" that helps them organize their thoughts. These schemas contain important beliefs, attitudes, values, and preferences (Rokeach, 1989). According to the theory of information processing, individuals can be greatly affected by the media. In this perspective, when individuals encounter a media report, they first assess its salience. If they find it salient, they process the

information using the established patterns within their schemas. This processing may lead them to either remember or dismiss the information. If they remember it, it could lead to the formation of new beliefs or changes to existing ones. Consequently, if a media message is repeated often enough, it can break through the public's lack of interest and distractions (Entman, 1989). Iyengar and Kinder (1987) put forth the argument that although the media doesn't outright determine individuals' preferences, it significantly influences public opinion. They posit that the media plays a pivotal role in shaping public perception by serving as a primary source of information. Through the content they disseminate, the media not only dictates what topics people think about but also influences how they interpret and process that information.

While schemas can influence reactions to particular media content, individuals with different identifiers may interpret the same message in diverse ways. Entman (1989) introduces an interdependence model of media influence, which posits that the extent of media impact varies based on how each individual processes specific news messages. In this model, the interaction between the attributes of the message and the existing schemas or mental frameworks of the audience dictates the ultimate impact of the news. Entman emphasizes that information transmitted through the media encompasses not only factual data for cognitive processing but also symbols that fulfill emotional needs.

Recent research (Kelly, 2017; Verduyn et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2016) that considers the presence of social networks in examining cognitive changes underscores that the cognitive processing abilities of the audience play a crucial role in this process. The cognitive processing models proposed by Entman (1989) suggest that the audience's capacity to comprehend mediated news is influenced by their cognitive processing abilities. In today's fast-paced world, news narratives pose a cognitive challenge, as they convey complex information about rapidly unfolding events in a multifaceted manner. Within these narratives, recurring elements may serve a crucial function by enhancing viewers' memory retention. This repetition provides viewers with multiple opportunities to process and internalize the information presented. Research by Friedman et al. (2016), Peters et al., (2018), and Tomasi (2021) highlights the role of repetitive elements in aiding memory formation within news narratives. By reinforcing key details through repetition, news media potentially facilitate better comprehension and recall among audiences amidst the overwhelming influx of information in contemporary society.

New users create their own news filters, serving as cognitive tools that strengthen the organization of narrative elements in their memories. Engaging with news narratives online involves users temporarily storing fresh information in memory and utilizing their long-term understanding of the world to interpret the new content. The narrative structure of news stories

serves as a chronicle of broadcasted events and establishes a framework of interpretations that users can integrate into their memories (Lăzăroiu et al., 2017).

News reporting inherently follows specific narrative patterns, requiring news audiences to adopt a particular cognitive framework through their news filters, as noted by Tomasi et al. (2021). Phelps, J., & Thorson (1991) further delineates various individual difference factors, including motivation (involvement), ability, prior learning, and emotion, which shape how individuals process information from the media. These factors are intricately linked to the theoretical concept of selective exposure, which posits that individuals are predisposed to seek out and engage with communications that align with their existing beliefs, interests, or preferences, as articulated by Bryant and Zillman (2009). This selective exposure phenomenon underscores the complex interplay between individual characteristics and media consumption habits, ultimately influencing the construction of individuals' perceptions and attitudes towards news content.

Nonetheless, recent research (Fletcher et al., 2011; Bax, 2013) has identified methods to mitigate disparities in readers' cognitive processing. These studies reveal that the majority of news articles are crafted in a linguistic manner that minimizes unnecessary cognitive burdens and fosters reader engagement by facilitating connections with their existing knowledge (Dong et al., 2020). Both the substance and presentation attributes of news stories can sway public interest (Andrews et al., 2010; Shoemaker and Cohen, 2006). Specific formatting elements can gauge viewers' interest in particular stories and redirect their attention if it wanes. The writing style employed by news outlets can influence how effectively audiences process unbiased information. The inclusion of visuals can bolster information processing and potentially aid or impede comprehension and retention of the material (Gunter, 2015).

However, the bulk of research underscores that the level of information retention from news articles is influenced by individuals' information processing capabilities (Popescu, & Crama, 2016). Moreover, significant evidence suggests that individuals tend to selectively prioritize information based on its relevance to their immediate concerns or interests at a given moment. This assertion is supported by numerous studies, including those conducted by Krugman (1988), Tolley (1991), which contribute to the existing body of literature.

When analyzing media exposure, cognitive patterns are found to be vital. However, despite the focus on rational thinking, ample evidence suggests that elevated levels of emotion can greatly influence the process. Indeed, numerous studies have shown that heightened emotions can impair individuals' ability to think logically (Clore et al., 2007; Martel et al., 2020).

As emotional beings, we naturally adapt to experiencing various emotions, including love, anger, hope, or fear. We have a desire and necessity to engage with emotions in some capacity. For example, a study conducted by Ugazio, Lamm, & Singer (2012) found that experiencing explicit emotions influences specific judgments. They proposed that considering the motivational aspect of induced emotions can forecast their impact on moral judgments. This suggests that the media could present information in a manner that evokes a particular judgment by eliciting an emotion prior to introducing the subject to be judged. Recent research has emphasized the role of sound in enhancing visual perception and intensifying emotional responses (Kreetels & Vroomen, 2011). Vowel sounds have been shown to affect our cognitive representations (Maglio et al., 2014). Furthermore, studies indicate that the pace of presentation can enhance credibility. Consequently, experiencing information simultaneously through sight and sound can improve memory recall (Pavio, 2013).

There is a wealth of research exploring the effects of news on stock market movements (Liu et al., 2020; Smailović, 2013) and the emotions it elicits in the general public (Li et al., 2014d; Zhu, 2021). For instance, Veronesi (1999) utilized a rational expectations equilibrium model of asset prices to illustrate that stock prices tend to overreact to negative news during favorable market conditions and under-react to positive news during adverse market conditions. Chan (2003) conducted empirical research focusing on monthly stock returns in response to public news and discovered distinct patterns. Stocks associated with negative news displayed a downward trend for up to 12 months, while those linked with positive news exhibited less significant trends. Building upon this, Vega (2006) delved deeper into the impact of media on stock trends. He found that stocks influenced by private information showed minimal or insignificant trends, whereas those affected by public news experienced noticeable trends. Additionally, Li (2006) investigated the relationship between "risk sentiment" and stock performance. His findings revealed that heightened risk sentiment had a negative effect on stock returns. Specifically, companies facing increased risk sentiment tended to experience decreased returns, while those with lower risk sentiment saw more favorable returns.

Research indicates that emotions possess a significant capacity to impair cognitive processing (Clore, 2007; Martel, 2020). This implies that sensationalized news, particularly when presented through networks (Milburn et al., 1992), can hinder cognitive effectiveness. The dramatization of news stories by networks may inhibit thought among readers. This occurs because it triggers emotional, stereotypical schemas (knowledge structures) by selectively highlighting events that can be easily portrayed in brief segments with vivid imagery. The continuous display

of symbols and sequences of events can activate various schemas without the individual's awareness (Milburn and McGrail, 1992).

It's evident that the impact of media on cognitive complexity varies based on numerous factors, such as intelligence and individual background. However, emotions tend to homogenize these complexities across individuals (Milburn et al., 1992). According to Poggi and D'Errico (2010) and Hudson et al. (2015), content on social media platforms has the potential to evoke both positive and negative emotions, which can subsequently influence people's attitudes and behaviors (Al-Khazali et al., 2018; Li et al., 2014d; Siddiqui and Singh, 2016).

Table 2 summarizes the fundamental approaches to understanding media effects on cognition and emotion, offering critical insights into how media influences individuals.

Table 2. Approaches to media effects on cognition and emotion.

<i>Approach/Theory</i>	<i>Key Contributors</i>	<i>Core Focus</i>	<i>Effect on Cognition</i>	<i>Effect on Emotion</i>
Minimal Effects / Agenda-Setting	Neuman et al. (2011), McGuire (1986), Lau (1985), Iyengar (2010)	Media shapes agendas, not direct attitudes	Limited cognitive influence	Minimal emotional influence
Information Processing Theory	Rokeach (1989), Entman (1989), Iyengar & Kinder (1987)	Schemas structure the processing of media messages	Salience affects memory and belief change	Media symbols fulfill emotional needs
Narrative Structure and Repetition	Friedman et al. (2016), Peters et al. (2018), Tomasi (2021)	Narrative elements and repetition enhance recall	Boosts memory retention	Emotional salience improves encoding
Selective Exposure & Motivation	Phelps & Thorson (1991), Bryant & Zillmann (2009)	People choose media aligning with prior beliefs	Influences attention and interpretation	Motivated selection leads to emotional resonance
Media Language and Format	Dong et al. (2020), Gunter (2015), Shoemaker & Cohen (2006)	Style and presentation shape engagement	Affects information retention	Visual/audio elements amplify emotion
Emotion and Cognitive Disruption	Clore et al. (2007), Martel et al. (2020)	High emotion impairs rational thought	Distorts logical reasoning	Sensationalism amplifies affective responses
Social Media and Emotional Impact	Hudson et al. (2015), Poggi & D'Errico (2010)	Digital content evokes strong emotions	Affects judgment via schema activation	Triggers both positive and negative responses

Source: own elaboration, 2025

1.3. Media effects on attitude and behavior

Crano and Preslin (2006) define attitude as a comprehensive amalgamation of cognitive and affective responses, constituting evaluative judgments. They propose that these assessments possess varying degrees of persistence, resistance, and capacity to translate attitudes into actions. According to Ajzen and Fishbein (2000), an attitude is described as a learned positive or negative response towards an object that persists over time. Various studies have highlighted that an individual's attitude, whether it's implicitly held or explicitly expressed, plays a crucial role as a significant mediating factor between exposure to new information and subsequent changes in behavior (Fazio, 1990).

There are two primary theoretical explanations regarding how media can influence individuals' behavior. Firstly, media can shape individuals' beliefs by presenting relevant information that can sway their perspectives. Secondly, media can directly impact behavior through persuasion, regardless of individuals' level of knowledge or awareness, as proposed by DellaVigna and Gentzkow (2010).

Over the past five decades, numerous theories of attitude change and models of knowledge-attitude-behavior relations have emerged (Eagly and Chaiken, 1998; Petty and Wegener, 1998a). These theories aim to identify the variables that determine the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of media and the underlying processes through which media induce changes. However, previous studies have predominantly focused on measuring attitudes along a good-bad or favorable-unfavorable dimension. Recent research has shifted towards assessing attitude changes using measures that delve into the more automatic evaluations associated with objects, issues, and people, as highlighted by Petty et al. (2008) and Wittenbrink and Schwarz (2007). These measures, referred to as implicit measures, aim to evaluate attitudes, beliefs, and stereotypes that are not readily accessible through direct questioning. Implicit measures assess automatic estimations that rely on individuals' prejudices or stereotypes without their conscious awareness of what is being assessed. By employing implicit measures, researchers can gain insights into attitudes and beliefs that individuals may be hesitant or unable to report through direct questioning (Briñol et al., 2012; Maio et al., 2018).

In recent years, there has been considerable attention given to understanding the differences between attitudes measured through deliberate versus automatic methods (Gawronski and Bodenhausen, 2006; Petty and Brinol, 2014). This approach combines various measures to uncover potentially hidden effects of media messages. For instance, even if a persuasive message seems ineffective, there could still be changes in the underlying confidence associated with the

attitude – sometimes increasing and sometimes decreasing (Rucker et al., 2014). Therefore, these measures may reveal instances where there are no apparent changes in the positivity or negativity of attitudes (Bargh et al., 1996; Albarracin and Shavitt, 2018). However, persuasive messages might still influence automatic evaluation associations, even if they don't affect deliberative self-report measures like changes in characteristics or impressions.

Recent research has highlighted the significant influence of social media posts on various aspects of individuals' attitudes. These include their role in product marketing, as demonstrated by studies such as Jansen et al. (2012), as well as their contribution to maintaining brand reputation, as observed in research by Becker et al. (2013). Moreover, social media posts have been found to aid enterprises in crisis recovery, as evidenced by studies like Van Norel et al. (2014).

Once an individual's attitude undergoes a change, it is expected that their behavior will follow suit, reflecting the new attitude rather than their prior habits. The relationship between attitudes and behavior has been extensively studied, uncovering a range of situational and dispositional factors that influence the consistency between attitudes and behavior (Kapitan and Silvera, 2016; Briñol and Petty, 2012). However, research in this area generally follows two main directions.

The prevailing empirical evidence underscores two contrasting perspectives on the relationship between attitudes and behavior. Firstly, the "reasoned action" approach emphasizes the deliberate evaluation of personal costs and benefits, alongside one's perceived ability to control behavior. Conversely, alternative research suggests that behavior often occurs spontaneously, with attitudes influencing behavior through automatic processes. In this view, when a relevant attitude is activated, it is likely to prompt consistent behavior (Fazio, 1990). Researchers emphasize the importance of motivational and ability factors in determining whether individuals engage in reasoned action or automatic activation processes (Goodall and Slater, 2010; Banting et al., 2011).

In summary, Table 3 provides an overview of research on media effects, emphasizing the substantial influence that media messages exert on individuals' knowledge and perceptions of specific objects, issues, or people. However, it is important to note that gaining knowledge does not necessarily result in changes in attitudes or behavior.

Table 3. Approaches to media effects on attitude and behavior.

Approach/Theory	Core Concept	Mechanism of Influence	Key Scholars/Studies
Attitude Definition and Formation	Attitudes are evaluative judgments formed	Attitudes mediate the relationship between media exposure and behavior.	Crano & Preslin (2006); Ajzen & Fishbein (2000); Fazio (1990)

	through cognitive and affective responses.		
Direct and Indirect Media Effects	Media influences beliefs directly or through persuasion.	Media changes behavior by informing or persuading audiences, regardless of awareness.	DellaVigna & Gentzkow (2010)
Implicit vs. Explicit Attitude Measurement	Implicit measures uncover hidden or automatic evaluations.	Media can change confidence in attitudes or influence subconscious associations.	Petty et al. (2008); Wittenbrink & Schwarz (2007); Rucker et al. (2014)
Social Media Influence on Attitude	Social media posts affect product perception, brand reputation, and crisis management.	Media messages shape attitudes through constant interaction and exposure.	Jansen et al. (2012); Becker et al. (2013); Van Norel et al. (2014)
Attitude-Behavior Consistency	Attitude changes are expected to influence behavior under certain conditions.	Behavior follows from activated attitudes either through reasoned action or automatic processes.	Fazio (1990); Kapitan & Silvera (2016); Briñol & Petty (2012)
Motivation and Cognitive Processing	Motivation and ability determine effectiveness of media messages.	Motivated individuals are more likely to retain and integrate media messages.	Goodall & Slater (2010); Banting et al. (2011)

Source: own elaboration, 2025

Fundamental investigations into media effects have indicated that the information communicated through media channels is most effective in eliciting significant changes when individuals are motivated and capable of processing the information. For instance, individuals are more inclined to pay attention to and remember information presented if they have a vested interest in a particular topic.

Furthermore, it is vital to process the information in a manner that fosters positive thoughts and ideas, integrating them into an individual's enduring cognitive framework, which is essential for effecting lasting changes. When attitudes shift, translating these changes into behavioral adjustments may entail overcoming prior attitudes, fostering confidence in new ones, and acquiring new skills and perspectives. Hence, crafting media messages that are informative and captivating is imperative, as they can inspire individuals to engage with the information and instigate enduring alterations in attitudes and behaviour.

1.4. Media effects and social media

The increasing prominence of social media has led to a notable effort to unite media effects studies and Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) research, which were previously treated as distinct entities. These areas were treated as separate subfields within communication science. Media effects research focused on mass communication, while CMC research centred on interpersonal communication. They got used to developing independently and rarely intersected.

In the past, the term "media use" typically encompassed only a few forms of mass media like newspapers, radio, film, and television. However, in today's context media use has expanded to include a wide range of technologies. These technologies facilitate interactive exchanges between individuals or groups, such as gaming platforms or social media networks. These forms of media usage were traditionally associated with theories and research in Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC).

Such merging research provides examples of a media effect, where individuals (referred to as receivers) are engaged in an online medium (engaging in media use), and the content they encounter (messages) shapes their perceptions (media effect). For instance, a study conducted by Walther et al., (2008) revealed that individuals' perceptions of an online profile are influenced by the posts made by friends on that profile. Similarly, Tong, et al., (2008) investigated how the number of friends listed on online profiles (media use) significantly affected the thoughts and attitudes of profile viewers (media effect).

Thus, according to Gross (2017), modern media research should focus on reassessing communication approaches in light of evolving communication technologies. This proposition has sparked a series of studies investigating potential links with social media (Baran, 2013) and has initiated the adaptation of traditional media effects theories.

For example, Althaus and Tewksbury (2002) and De Waal and Schönbach (2008) utilize agenda theory to demonstrate that online newspapers, like their print counterparts, can influence public attention toward specific issues. However, readers of print newspapers tend to show greater interest in a wider spectrum of political and public affairs topics. Additionally, Meraz (2011) identified political news blogs as influential non-traditional online news sources capable of shaping the public agenda.

Recent studies demonstrate that the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) remains relevant in contemporary times, applicable not only to traditional media but also to digital platforms. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are analyzed through the lens of UGT to comprehend the diverse gratifications users seek from them. Scholars argue that UGT offers a user-centric perspective on the social and psychological motives behind utilizing a particular medium (Leung and Wei, 2000). Such studies encompass research examining internet and social media platform usage (Dhir and Tsai, 2017; Kaur et al., 2020; Shao, 2009; Flavián and Gurrea, 2008). Another group of studies explores the uses and gratifications of newer forms of social media (Dhir et al., 2019; Dhir et al., 2017; Smock et al., 2011).

Due to the prevalence of online media, researchers now use the term Web Third-person effect (WTPE) instead of Third-person effect or Third-person perception (Tal-Or et al., 2009). WTPE has been extensively studied across various online platforms, including blogs, online newspapers (Banning & Sweetser, 2007), and social media contexts (Schweisberger, Billinson, & Chock, 2014). Social media metrics like shares and comments have also been employed to examine how people form opinions about health information (Stavrositu & Kim, 2014). While some studies (Roiger & Geatz, 2002; Zhao, Zheng, & Wang, 2008) suggest that WTPE significantly influences individuals' perceptions and behaviors, others find little evidence of its effects. Despite these mixed findings, WTPE remains a crucial area of research, offering insights into the intricate dynamics between media, individuals, and society.

The research conducted by SanJosé-Cabezudo, et al., (2009) and Tang et al., (2012) delved into the examination of processing cues, such as the valence of persuasive messages like negative online reviews, to understand their impact in the context of social media. Tam and Ho (2005) and Fu and Chen (2012) also contributed to this field of study. Their findings revealed that web content featuring sorting cues tends to lead to greater elaboration of the persuasive message. At the same time, users are more likely to engage with web content that includes numerous recommended offers (Tam and Ho, 2005). Additionally, Fu and Chen (2012) asserted that negative blog reviews of a product can lead to unfavorable attitudes among customers toward it.

However, with the emergence of the Internet and social media, there has been a range of studies both supporting and contradicting some media effects theories. For instance, Moy, P., Domke, D., & Stamm, K. (2001) showed that the validity of the spiral of silence theory could be questioned due to the enhanced freedom of self-expression, selectivity, anonymity, and social connection offered by social media platforms. Similarly, Hampton, et al., (2014) discovered that previous findings on people's willingness to voice their opinions in different settings also hold true for users of social media.

At the same vein, the rapid expansion of social media has spurred the development of numerous theories concerning media technologies and their impact. Among these theories, one of the most prominent is the Diffusion of Innovation theory, formulated by Rogers (Miller, R. L. (2015). Commonly used in the realm of communication studies, this theory delves into the spread of novel concepts, technologies, and behaviors across diverse communities. It scrutinizes the factors that impact the acceptance of innovations, fresh ideas, products, or practices within a society. Within the multi-step diffusion model, while opinion leaders continue to wield influence over the behavior of adopters, other intermediaries also contribute to the decision-making process

between the media and the audience. Among these intermediaries is the change agent, whose role involves motivating opinion leaders either to adopt or dismiss an innovation (Infante et al., 1997).

To sum up, recent theories now recognize the interplay between media factors like usage and processing. They also understand that media effects are often indirect rather than direct, leading to a better understanding of media's complexities and effects on individuals and society. This highlights the need for further research to understand these interactions and their impact on media users better.

1.5. Application of media effects theories in country image/destination image area.

Understanding the powerful and far-reaching influence of media is essential for safeguarding country branding in today's world. The rapid dissemination of news—particularly the rise of misinformation and fake news—has significant implications not only for individuals but for the international perception of nations. For countries, reputations built over decades can be damaged in moments by misleading narratives or emotionally charged distortions. Therefore, deepening our understanding of media influence is not just an academic pursuit; it is a strategic necessity. Theoretical models of media effects provide crucial tools for analyzing how fake news shapes public attitudes and perceptions of national identity. By unpacking these mechanisms, scholars and practitioners can better anticipate, detect, and counter the negative effects of media manipulation. Such knowledge supports the development of effective strategies for media literacy, critical evaluation, and transparent communication—core components in preserving and strengthening a country's brand equity in the face of global information volatility.

Theories serve as pivotal components in the realm of media effects research. They offer conceptual frameworks for understanding how individuals, groups, or societies interact with media content and how such interactions may influence attitudes and behaviors (Valkenburg and Oliver, 2019). The emergence of the concept of "mass communication" in the 1920s marked the onset of systematic inquiry into media effects (McQuail, 2010). While the terms "mass communication" and "media effects theories" are occasionally interchanged, it's crucial to understand that mass communication theories cover a wider array of subjects. These include the role of media in shaping public opinions, its impact on culture and society, and its potential for driving social change. Alternatively, media effects theories focus on the detailed mechanisms by which media messages shape individual behavior and beliefs. (Valkenburg and Oliver, 2019).

Mass communication theories provide a wider lens for studying media effects, while media effects theories still hold importance in grasping the psychological and behavioral responses to media exposure. However, the emergence of Web 2.0 has necessitated substantial revisions to

conventional media effects theories in recent years, making contemporary viewpoints progressively obsolete (Chaffee and Metzger, 2001).

Baran and Davis (2012) assert that while the mass society theory initially aimed to tackle the adverse effects of media, it failed to account for the influence of the Internet. In contemporary society, large communities akin to those in cities or urban areas have emerged not only physically but also in online media realms. This observation is crucial as it highlights issues like social stratification, distorted perceptions of reality, and biased news interpretations prevalent in today's social media circles. These online groups often comprise individuals who echo similar opinions and beliefs, aggravating existing problems. Therefore, acknowledging the Internet's role in shaping these communities is vital, as it presents challenges to fostering a more diverse and inclusive society. (Baran and Davis, 2012).

Furthermore, the surge in interest surrounding the issue of fake news highlights the need for thorough investigations applying specific media effect theories to validate their applicability. This gap in research is particularly pertinent when considering its implications for country branding. Understanding how country branding influences the choice of media effect theory is crucial in devising effective strategies to combat the spread of fake news and its detrimental effects on public perception. A deeper comprehension of these concepts and their interconnectedness not only holds significance for academia but also carries implications for society as a whole. Therefore, it is imperative to develop meaningful and efficient strategies to address the issue of fake news and safeguard public perception.

Given the critical importance of comprehending the influence of fake news on country brand equity, we will delve deeper into two groups of theories identified in the study conducted by Valkenburg and Oliver (2019). They examined five bibliometric studies aimed at identifying the most significant media effects theories in scholarly communication research over the past two decades. This thorough analysis aimed to deepen understanding of the evolution of media effects theories over time and provide a comprehensive overview of the most prominent theories in this domain. By scrutinizing the bibliometric data, the researchers uncovered key trends and patterns in media effects research, shedding light on the most important theories that have emerged in this field. The studies under review were conducted by Bryant & Miron (2004), Chung, Barnett, Kim, & Lackaff (2013), Kamhawi & Weaver (2003), Potter (2012), and Walter, Cody, & Ball-Rokeach (2018). The authors presented an outline of the most frequently cited theories and tracked changes in these theories.

According to Valkenburg and Oliver's analysis in 2019, there are two categories of theories commonly applied (Table 1). The first group, labeled as "evergreen theories," includes Cultivation Theory (Gerbner, 1969), Agenda Setting Theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Rogers, 1962), Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973; Rosengren, 1974), Social Learning/Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), and Media System Dependency Theory (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976). The second group comprises Two-Step Flow Theory (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1948), Knowledge Gap Theory (Tichenor, Donohue, & Olien, 1970), Spiral of Silence Theory (Noelle-Neumann, 1974), Priming Theory (Berkowitz, 1984), Third Person Effects (Davison, 1983), the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), Framing Theory (Entman, 1993), and the Limited Capacity Model (Lang, 2000).

Table 4. Categories of theories commonly applied.

Evergreen Theories	Other Commonly Applied Theories
Cultivation Theory (Gerbner, 1969)	Two-Step Flow Theory (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1948)
Agenda Setting Theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972)	Knowledge Gap Theory (Tichenor, Donohue, & Olien, 1970)
Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Rogers, 1962)	Spiral of Silence Theory (Noelle-Neumann, 1974)
Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973 a 1973)	Priming Theory (Berkowitz, 1984)
Social Learning / Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986)	Third Person Effects (Davison, 1983)
Media System Dependency Theory (Ball-Rokeach & DeFlur, 1976)	Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986)
Media System Dependency Theory (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976)	Framing Theory (Entman 1993)
	Limited Capacity Model (Lang 2000)

Source: own elaboration, 2025

After exploring the core concepts of the two groups of theories identified in Valkenburg and Oliver's analysis (2019), I will further examine their relevance in the realm of country/destination image. Through this exploration, I aim to determine which theory is most applicable for understanding the influence of fake news on a country's brand and identify which one could be the most relevant for our study

1.5.1. Methodology of systematic literature review

To consolidate the existing research on the application of media effect theories to country/destination image, I employed the systematic literature review methodology proposed by

Transfield et al. (2003). This involved planning, conducting, and reporting stages. The review sourced studies from comprehensive databases, including Web of Science, focusing on scholarly literature published between 2012 and 2022. The emphasis was on investigating the effects of mass media using theories identified by Valkenburg and Oliver (2019). Specifically, the review examined patterns in country and destination image portrayal, the theoretical frameworks utilized to analyze audience exposure, the transmission of information and cultivation of beliefs resulting from such exposure, and the extent to which media influence alters perceptions of country and destination image.

The study selection criteria were as follows:

- 1) Each study must focus specifically on the effects of media on country/destination image. Therefore, studies concerning general media effects were not considered.
- 2) The study should be grounded in one of the media effect theories identified by Valkenburg and Oliver (2019).
- 3) The study must present empirical findings or discuss empirical results from other studies.
- 4) The study must be written in English.
- 5) Preference was given to studies published in academic peer-reviewed journals. Books, book chapters, and editorials were excluded.

The primary keywords used in the search included "media effect and country image," "media effect and destination image," "specific theory name and country image," and "specific theory name and destination image."

To expand the range of articles analyzed, the "snowballing" technique, as suggested in previous systematic reviews (Mingione, 2015), was employed. This involved not only examining the reference lists of the included articles but also reviewing their citation references. By scrutinizing the titles, further publications centered on media effects and country/destination image were identified. Once the eligible articles were identified, a cross-examination was conducted, and any duplicate papers found in both databases were eliminated. The searches across databases and the assessment of papers yielded a final selection of 52 articles.

It's important to acknowledge that this selection of articles isn't exhaustive, and there may be additional studies on the impact of media on country and destination image that weren't captured in this review. The main findings extracted from the articles were categorised based on various variables. Initially, I identified the research methodology employed in each study.

Using the approach of Paul and Rosado-Serrano (2019), we utilized the TCCM framework to synthesize the literature we gathered. This framework is commonly employed in literature reviews (Redine et al., 2023). Within the TCCM framework, "theories" refer to the established theories found in the reviewed studies, while "context" details the geographical focus of the research, determining in this study whether effects were observed at the micro-level, macro-level, or both. "Characteristics" denote the variables studied, and "methods" describe the research methodologies used.

The reason for selecting the TCCM (Theory–Context–Characteristics–Methodology) framework over other literature review approaches lies in its ability to deliver a structured and comprehensive analysis of the existing body of knowledge. Unlike traditional review methods that may focus solely on content or findings, TCCM facilitates a multidimensional evaluation by integrating theoretical foundations, contextual relevance, key research characteristics, and methodological approaches. This enables scholars to identify not only what has been studied but also how, where, and under which theoretical lenses. Such a holistic view supports the identification of research gaps, emerging trends, and future research directions in a more systematic and insightful manner (Paul et al., 2023).

1.5.2. Overview

The relationship between country image and media influence is well established in the literature, yet scholarly attention to this intersection has expanded considerably in the past decade. Based on the results of the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) conducted for this dissertation, Figure 3 traces the evolution of research in this field from 2012 to 2022, highlighting notable shifts in focus and publication activity. In the early years (2012–2017), academic output was limited and sporadic, indicating that the topic had not yet emerged as a prominent global concern. This period was characterized by isolated studies rather than a cohesive body of work, reflecting the relatively low prioritization of the issue at the time.

A noticeable shift began in 2018 and continued into 2019, with a modest but steady increase in publications. This period coincided with rising global awareness of the political and social consequences of digital social media. Events like Brexit, the U.S. presidential elections, and widespread discussions about media credibility began to draw more scholarly attention to how countries are represented and perceived through media narratives.

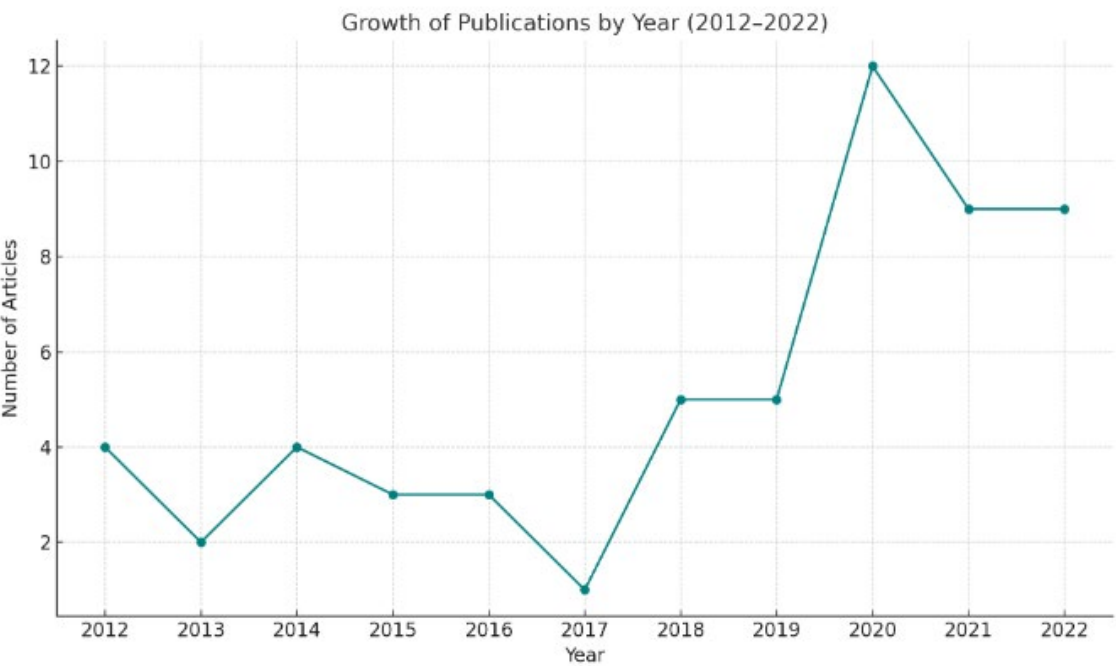
The most significant change occurred in 2020, with a dramatic rise in output. This peak, marked by the highest number of publications in the observed decade, directly corresponds to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The global crisis brought issues of misinformation, trust in media, public communication, and national image to the forefront. Researchers focused on how

media and online media affected public perceptions of countries, especially in the context of crisis response, healthcare systems, and international cooperation. The role of media framing and credibility became crucial in understanding how nations were viewed during the pandemic, influencing their reputations, tourism prospects, and diplomatic relations.

While the number of studies slightly decreased in 2021 and 2022, it remained significantly higher than in earlier years, suggesting that the pandemic sparked lasting interest in the topic.

Overall, the data suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic acted as a key turning point in academic inquiry into country image and media effect. The rapid rise in research highlights the increasing need to understand how misinformation and media portrayals influence global perceptions of nations, especially in an era where digital narratives have the power to shape international reputation and trust.

Figure 3. Year-wise distribution of the number of articles with total number 52.



Source: own elaboration, 2025

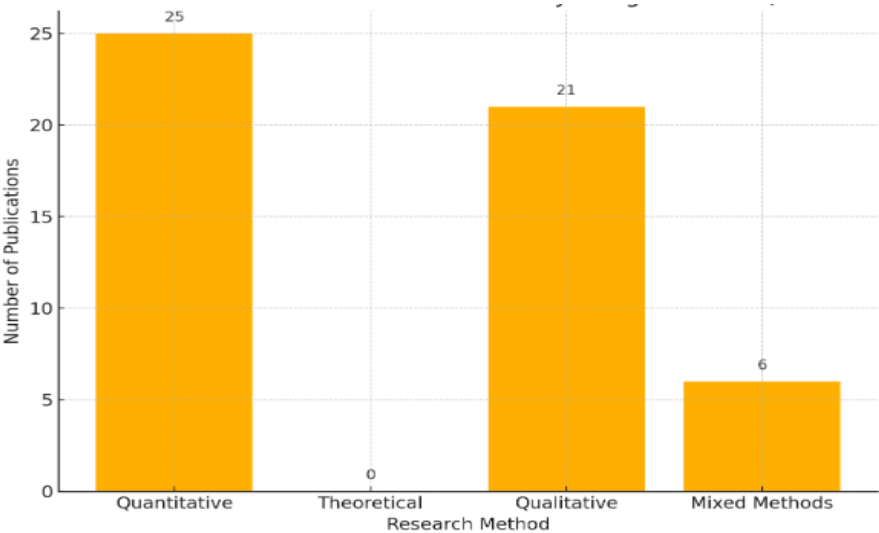
Table 5 illustrates the distribution of research methods used in studies related to country image and media influence. The analysis reveals that quantitative methods dominate the field, with 25 publications out of the total sample, indicating a strong trend toward empirical validation through statistical testing, survey-based research, and experimental designs. Qualitative methods are the second most prevalent, with 21 publications reflecting the importance of in-depth, context-

sensitive approaches in understanding perceptions, narratives, and framing mechanisms. These studies often explore media content, discourse, and interviews to investigate how countries are portrayed and how audiences interpret these portrayals. These studies provide measurable insights into variables such as media exposure, credibility, attitudes, and behavioral intentions.

Mixed-methods research accounts for 6 articles, showing that a growing number of scholars recognize the value of integrating both qualitative depth and quantitative rigor to produce comprehensive findings.

Strikingly, theoretical articles are completely absent (0 articles; 0%), highlighting a significant gap in conceptual development within the field. This absence suggests that while empirical studies are expanding, there is a lack of foundational theoretical contributions that could guide future empirical investigations and model development.

Table 5. Articles classification by methodology



Source: own elaboration, 2025

The analysis of 52 peer-reviewed articles on national image construction reveals a diversified distribution across academic journals. Table 6 presents the frequency and percentage of articles published in each journal within the sampled dataset.

The most frequently utilized outlet was *Tourism Management Perspectives*, accounting for 4 publications, which constitutes 7.7% of the total sample. This was followed by *The Journal of International Communication* with 3 publications (5.8%), and both the *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* and *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, each with 2 publications (3.8%

respectively). A significant proportion of the articles (63.5%) were published in journals that each hosted a single article from the sample.

The journals represented span a wide range of disciplines, including communication studies, tourism and hospitality, marketing, international relations, and media sociology. This indicates a strong interdisciplinary nature of research on country image and media influence, suggesting that the topic is of relevance across multiple academic fields.

The observed distribution suggests that while certain journals (e.g., *Tourism Management Perspectives*) serve as recurring platforms for this line of inquiry, the field remains highly dispersed. This dispersion may indicate a lack of consolidation in terms of a central scholarly outlet, or alternatively, a sign of the topic's broad applicability across domains such as public diplomacy, digital media, and strategic communication.

Table 6. Journals of publication country image/destination image area.

Journal	Number of Articles
<i>Tourism Management Perspectives</i>	4
<i>The Journal of International Communication</i>	3
<i>International Journal of Intercultural Relations</i>	2
<i>Journal of Vacation Marketing</i>	2
<i>International Journal of Strategic Communication</i>	1
<i>International Journal of Public Opinion Research</i>	1
<i>International Journal of Tourism Research</i>	1
<i>International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration</i>	1
<i>Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing</i>	1
<i>Journal of Systems and Information Technology</i>	1
<i>Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services</i>	1
<i>Human Behavior and Emerging Technologies</i>	1
<i>International Review for the Sociology of Sport</i>	1
<i>International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management</i>	1
<i>Annals of Tourism Research</i>	1
<i>Sustainability</i>	1
<i>Buildings</i>	1
<i>Malaysian Journal of Communication</i>	1
<i>Open Journal of Applied Sciences</i>	1
<i>Social Media + Society</i>	1
<i>Asian Journal of Communication</i>	1
<i>Chinese Journal of Communication</i>	1
<i>European Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies</i>	1
<i>Asian Journal of Law and Governance</i>	1
<i>European Scientific Journal</i>	1
<i>Journal of Advertising and Promotion Research</i>	1

Journal	Number of Articles
<i>The Journal of Asian Finance, Economics, and Business</i>	1
<i>JMM UNRAM - Master of Management Journal</i>	1
<i>Intercultural Communication Studies</i>	1
<i>Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management</i>	1
<i>Tourism Geographies</i>	1
<i>Others (Conferences, Book chapters, proceedings, etc.)</i>	7
Total	52

Source: own elaboration, 2025

1.5.3. THE TCCM FRAMEWORK

1.5.3.1. Theoretical perspectives

This section focuses exclusively on the theories categorized by Valkenburg and Oliver (2019) and considered in the present review. It synthesizes the theoretical frameworks utilized in studies addressing media's role in shaping country image and branding. The review reveals that many of these theories are seldom used—often appearing in just one or two publications—highlighting an inconsistency in the theoretical basis within the field. Consequently, attention is directed toward the most frequently applied theories (refer to Table 7), specifically those cited in three or more studies, following the criterion established by Rosado-Serrano et al. (2018).

Table 7. Theories employed in country image/destination image area.

Theory	Number of Articles	Sample Articles
Framing Theory	19 (13 standalone + 6 mixed)	Fung T. K. F. et al. (2018), Whyke et al. (2022), Yang & Yun (2020)
Elaboration Likelihood Model	11	Müller (2013), Wang (2014), Chi-Hua Li & Liu (2020), Yang et al. (2020)
Cultivation Theory	8 (5 standalone + 3 mixed: agenda, framing, reception)	Whyke et al. (2022), Yoo & Buzinde (2012), Alawode & Sunday (2013)
Uses and Gratification Theory	7	Koo et al. (2016) Silaban et al. (2022), Agyapong & Yuan (2022)
Agenda-Setting Theory	6 (3 standalone + 3 mixed with Framing)	Nazir et al. (2021), Hammett (2014), Lu & Atadil (2021)
Two-Step Flow Theory	2	Ingenhoff et al. (2021) Femenia-Serra et al. (2022)
Spiral of Silence Theory	2	Park & Kim (2015) Tinny & Soladoye (2019)
Priming Theory	1	Yang & Yun (2020)

Theory	Number of Articles	Sample Articles
Social Learning Theory	1	Dedeoğlu et al. (2020)
Third Person Effect Theory	1	Müller (2013)
Diffusion of Innovation Theory	0	—
Media System Dependency Theory	0	—
Knowledge Gap Theory	0	—
Limited Capacity Model	0	—

The findings underscore the diverse utilization of communication and media theories in examining the dynamics of country branding and the impact of fake news. The most commonly used theories—Framing Theory, the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), and Cultivation Theory—reflect a strong focus on how media messages are structured, how persuasive communication works, and how long-term media exposure shapes public perceptions. Overall, researchers tend to use these theories to examine how audiences process information about countries, how attitudes are influenced, and how certain narratives become dominant. Theories with fewer mentions were applied in more specialized contexts, showing the field's openness to varied analytical perspectives. A more detailed examination of these theoretical applications is presented below.

1.5.3.1.1. Elaboration Likelihood Model

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) is a dual-process theory of persuasion explaining how individuals process and respond to persuasive messages. The model distinguishes between two routes of persuasion: the central route, which involves thoughtful and analytical processing of information, and the peripheral route, which relies on superficial cues such as attractiveness or credibility of the source.

In the current review, ELM has been widely employed to understand how different types of media stimuli influence perceptions of country image and destination image, particularly within digital communication contexts. For instance, Wang (2014) and Effendy & Bakhri (2022) applied ELM to examine how e-WOM across printed and electronic media (e.g., journals and internet

content) affects the cognitive and conative components of image formation. Both studies utilized quantitative methods and adopted a macro-level approach to assess persuasion outcomes, particularly focusing on influence and measurability issues. Similarly, Chi-Hua Li & Chi-Chun Liu (2020) adopted ELM in the context of micro-movies, exploring how narrative story content can trigger cognitive and conative responses among audiences. The ELM framework was pivotal in identifying how involvement levels and message relevance determine whether audiences process travel-related content via central or peripheral routes.

In applying ELM, researchers have predominantly focused on the macro-level implications of media influence, often targeting the cognitive and conative dimensions of image perception. These applications support the theoretical premise that the effectiveness of persuasive communication is contingent on the nature of the message, the medium of delivery, and the degree of audience engagement. Consequently, ELM offers valuable insights for destination marketers and policy makers seeking to design targeted communication strategies that enhance positive destination images through tailored media campaigns.

1.5.3.1.2. Uses and Gratification Theory

The Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974) posits that media users are active agents who deliberately select media sources to satisfy specific needs such as information, entertainment, personal identity, or social integration. Unlike passive audience models, UGT emphasizes audience agency and the functional value of media in fulfilling psychological or social gratifications.

In the present review, UGT has been employed in studies analyzing how diverse media formats—ranging from traditional to digital platforms—shape perceptions and behaviors related to destination and country image. Notably, Koo et al. (2016) integrated UGT with the belief–desire–intention model to explore how travelers engage with both traditional and new media for travel information, particularly focusing on conative outcomes such as behavioral intentions. This macro-level, quantitative study demonstrated how different media platforms satisfy specific informational and motivational needs, ultimately influencing travel intentions. Similarly, Silaban et al. (2022) examined YouTube travel vlogs through the lens of UGT to evaluate how video content satisfies viewers' affective and conative needs. Their findings highlight the persuasive power of user-generated video content in fostering emotional engagement and intention to visit. Yi et al. (2021) and Prisgunanto (2020) extended the application of UGT to social media environments, analyzing how social media apps and platforms like Instagram are used to fulfill

informational and emotional needs, contributing to affective, cognitive, and conative dimensions of destination image formation. These studies reinforce UGT's assertion that gratification-seeking behavior drives users toward particular content types that align with their underlying motivations.

The theory also finds relevance in traditional media contexts. For example, Kim & Kim (2020) and Bi et al. (2021) investigated television programming—including travel reality shows and documentaries—highlighting how televised content delivers entertainment and education that fulfills emotional and attitudinal gratifications. The findings showed varied impacts across micro and macro levels, addressing both pervasive media influence and individual engagement patterns. Lastly, Agyapong & Yuan (2022) applied UGT to social media, emphasizing its pervasive and multi-functional nature. Their study illustrated how users seek gratification from interactive content, influencing conative and cognitive evaluations of destination image.

Overall, the reviewed studies show that UGT provides a robust framework for explaining how individuals selectively engage with various media to fulfill specific needs, with significant implications for affective, cognitive, and conative responses. This makes UGT a valuable theoretical lens in country and destination image research, particularly in understanding how evolving media consumption behaviors influence travel-related decision-making processes.

1.5.3.1.3. Cultivation Theory

Cultivation Theory, originally proposed by Gerbner and Gross (1976), posits that prolonged exposure to media content—particularly television—shapes viewers' perceptions of social reality. Media consumption, especially when frequent and sustained, gradually cultivates attitudes, beliefs, and expectations that reflect the symbolic reality presented in the media, rather than actual lived experience. In the realm of tourism and destination image, cultivation theory has been used to explore how repeated media portrayals influence audience perceptions of cultures, places, and identities.

In the present review, several studies draw on Cultivation Theory to investigate the macro-level impact of media exposure on audience cognition and affect. For instance, Whyke et al. (2022) applied both cultivation and framing theory to analyze YouTube vlogs that depict stories of rural life. Through content and discourse analysis, the study revealed how consistent narrative framing cultivates cognitive and affective perceptions of rural environments, reinforcing specific stereotypes and emotional associations. Yoo and Buzinde (2012), integrating reception theory, conducted an exploratory focus group study on televised travelogues related to post-9/11 news, finding that long-term media exposure contributed to the pervasiveness of certain destination fears,

highlighting cultivation's effect on shaping collective mental models through media stimuli. This reinforces the idea that the symbolic reality in news media can skew real-world evaluations of safety and desirability.

Similarly, Schallhorn (2019, 2020) utilized content analysis and surveys to assess the influence of news coverage from the 2014 FIFA World Cup and 2016 Olympics on viewers' perceptions of hosting nations. These studies explored type of media stimulus, change issues, and the timing of media effects, confirming that cumulative news exposure fosters enduring cognitive and emotional impressions of a country's image, consistent with cultivation theory's tenets. In a study by Aljammazi & Asil (2017), Turkish TV dramas were analyzed via surveys and interviews, illustrating how continuous viewing of culturally rich narratives cultivates cognitive and conative attitudes toward the portrayed nation. Viewers often internalized cultural values, lifestyles, and aesthetics, influencing travel desires and intentions.

Moreover, Song et al. (2023) and Suciati et al. (2018) employed Cultivation Theory to examine online media, specifically analyzing the effects of YouTube videos and Instagram content on tourism image formation through a quantitative approach. Their findings revealed that digital media, much like traditional television, can cultivate affective and cognitive perceptions over time, particularly through immersive and repetitive visual storytelling. Lastly, Sunday Alawode & Uduakobong Sunday (2013) coupled agenda-setting theory with cultivation analysis in a content study of TV video films, demonstrating how media not only tells audiences what to think about, but also gradually influence how they think about destinations and cultures.

Together, these studies underscore that Cultivation Theory remains highly relevant in contemporary media contexts—both traditional and digital. It offers critical insights into how repeated exposure to destination representations through various media formats can shape, reinforce, or alter the public's destination imagery, beliefs, and emotional reactions.

1.5.3.1.4. Agenda-Setting Theory

Agenda-Setting Theory, first proposed by McCombs and Shaw (1972), suggests that while media may not tell audiences what to think, it powerfully influences what to think about. By selecting certain topics, issues, or events for prominent coverage, media organizations shape public priorities and perceptions. In the context of tourism and international image, agenda-setting plays a crucial role in determining which destinations are visible, how they are framed, and what kind of associations audiences form.

Several recent studies have applied Agenda-Setting Theory, often in combination with Framing Theory, to analyze how media coverage influences cognitive, affective, and conative responses toward foreign countries or tourism destinations. For instance, Fung, Yan, and Akin (2018) examined domestic media coverage of foreign news using interviews, focusing on how agenda-setting combined with framing influences the micro-level perceptions of international audiences. Their findings revealed that national media emphasize certain global issues while omitting others, shaping how viewers cognitively and affectively process foreign affairs and travel-related narratives. Nazir et al. (2021) also integrated agenda-setting with framing analysis to assess how selective media coverage and emphasis can prioritize some destinations or crises over others, thus influencing perceptions, attention, and desirability.

Similarly, Walters, Mair, and Lim (2016) applied an agenda-setting lens to study the relationship between disaster media coverage and tourism recovery, finding that media salience of certain events directly impacted tourism demand by foregrounding risk, recovery, or resilience narratives. Their research underscores the affective and cognitive consequences of repeated exposure to negative or disaster-related content. Hammett (2014) also combined agenda-setting and framing theories to explore how global media present sociopolitical contexts in developing regions. The study showed that framed salience of instability or danger can significantly color international tourism perception, leading to reduced appeal and perceived safety.

In a more recent case, Lu and Atadil (2021) conducted a qualitative content analysis of CNN's tourism-related news coverage, identifying agenda-setting patterns in how international destinations are framed, particularly around issues like COVID-19, politics, or safety. The media's agenda strongly influenced cognitive beliefs, affective responses, and conative intentions (such as travel planning or avoidance), confirming the layered impact of both salience and framing in shaping destination image. Lastly, Cazzamatta and Garcia (2022) studied the German press, applying a mixed-methods approach with quantitative content analysis and qualitative interviews. Their research uncovered that major newspapers such as *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* strategically emphasized particular themes and tone, reinforcing specific cognitive and affective perceptions of foreign nations. The prominence of tourism, crisis, or cultural narratives proved critical in determining public prioritization and interpretive framing.

Collectively, these studies show that Agenda-Setting Theory, especially when combined with framing, provides valuable insight into how media salience and emphasis patterns guide public attention, influence emotional and cognitive responses, and ultimately shape travel-related attitudes and behaviors.

1.5.3.1.5. Framing Theory

Framing Theory, rooted in the work of Goffman (1974) and later expanded by Entman (1993), has become the most extensively applied theoretical framework in studies analyzing media representations of tourism, destinations, and international image construction. The theory posits that the way information is structured and presented—via selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration—profoundly shapes audience interpretation and response.

Across recent empirical research, Framing Theory has served as a central tool to unpack how media narratives influence cognitive, affective, and conative outcomes, especially in cross-cultural tourism and international perception contexts. For instance, Whyke, Chen, and Lopez-Mugica (2022), integrating Cultivation Theory, examined how YouTube vlogs frame stories of rural life to Western viewers. Their content and discourse analysis revealed framing mechanisms that activated cognitive and affective responses, particularly around authenticity and cultural difference. Similarly, Han and Wang (2015) used a quantitative analysis of newspaper stories to demonstrate that media framing significantly impacts cognitive and affective evaluations of international news, thus influencing destination perception and policy interest.

Zhang et al. (2018) adopted a quantitative approach to marketing materials, identifying multiple framing effects—influence, pervasiveness, and type of effect—which in turn shaped cognitive, affective, and conative responses. Their micro-level framing strategies were key to understanding how destination marketing materials manipulate emotional appeal and persuasive impact. Fung, Yan, and Akin (2018), while primarily framed within Agenda-Setting Theory, also emphasized the interplay between salience and framing in domestic media's portrayal of foreign countries, affecting micro-level cognitive and affective judgments. Yang and Yun (2020) incorporated Priming Theory alongside framing, studying MSNBC and FoxNews.com content. Their quantitative study underscored how framing style (e.g., crisis vs. progress) shaped audience cognitive assessments, emotional reactions, and behavioral intentions (conative effect).

Framing's pervasive role is also seen in Almeida-García et al. (2020), who analyzed secondary tourism image sources. Their findings confirmed that framed representations—whether induced, organic, or autonomous—elicited affective and cognitive responses, depending on content emphasis. The power of textual and visual framing is highlighted in studies such as Xu and Löffelholz (2021) and Zuo (2022), who analyzed how international news media (e.g., CNN, Twitter, Weibo) manipulate text-image relationships to convey affective messages about tourism or international affairs, largely influencing audience perception.

Other studies such as those by Gabbioneta and De Carlo (2019), Walters et al. (2016), Hammett (2014), Nazir et al. (2021), and Ozornina and Mannin (2020) confirm a common pattern: framing in print, online, and broadcast media prioritizes certain narratives—such as safety, crisis, cultural appeal, or sustainability—which directly correlate with affective and cognitive audience responses. Moreover, Kuan and Hasan (2021) and Chen and Gunster (2019) demonstrated that online media platforms, through selective and emotionally loaded frames, significantly affect how environmental and tourism issues are perceived, influencing both public attitudes and policy discussions.

Lastly, interview-based and qualitative studies (e.g., Przybylska & Townsend, 2021; Li, 2012; He et al., 2012) show that framing practices extend beyond published media into journalistic speech and editorial strategy, reinforcing framing theory's reach into media production processes as well.

Taken collectively, these studies affirm that Framing Theory remains the most consistently and widely applied theory in the study of media representations related to tourism, international image, and public perception. Its ability to dissect not only what is said but how it is said allows researchers to understand the emotional and cognitive pathways by which media shapes audience behavior. From qualitative discourse analysis to quantitative content surveys, framing offers the necessary flexibility and depth for analyzing diverse media environments and their global impact.

1.5.3.1.6. Other theories

While Framing Theory has dominated much of the academic discourse on media influence, several other theories have offered valuable insights into how media shapes perception, emotion, and behavior within tourism and public communication. Although these theories have been applied in a smaller number of studies, they nonetheless make meaningful contributions to the advancement of scholarly understanding in the field. These include Priming Theory, Social Learning Theory, Two-Step Flow Theory, Spiral of Silence Theory, and Third-Person Effect—each emphasizing different psychological and sociological mechanisms. Priming Theory explores how prior exposure to certain media cues influences audience perceptions and behaviors toward subsequent stimuli. It is particularly relevant in political and tourism discourse where news framing primes public attitudes. Yang & Yun (2020) conducted a quantitative study on MSNBC and FoxNews.com, illustrating how priming mechanisms in online news content influence macro-level audience reactions. Priming's strength lies in its capacity to reveal how consistent messaging

over time reinforces specific interpretations, subtly guiding how audiences make associations and judgments about issues like national image, safety, or cultural authenticity.

Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) posits that individuals learn behaviors, norms, and attitudes by observing others, especially in mediated environments such as social media. Dedeoğlu et al. (2020) used a quantitative analysis of social media sharing behaviors, revealing that exposure to travel-related content significantly influenced audience cognition. The study identified influence, pervasiveness, and effect type issues as critical themes, suggesting that users imitate perceived social norms, such as travel preferences or destination trust, based on influencers or peers. This theory is particularly impactful in tourism marketing and crisis communication, where observational learning from social platforms can amplify or mitigate public reactions.

Two-Step Flow Theory (Lazarsfeld & al., 1948) argues that media effects are mediated by opinion leaders, who interpret and pass along information to wider audiences. Ingenhoff et al. (2021) applied this framework in their qualitative Twitter analysis, showing that opinion leaders on social media (e.g., journalists, influencers) act as filters of international news, contributing to cognitive and affective media impacts at the macro level. Femenia-Serra et al. (2022) extended this with a qualitative Instagram study, exploring how COVID-era influencer visuals and captions affected public perception. Their results emphasized the importance of message interpretation and style, confirming the mediating role of influencers in the tourism image formation process. These findings underscore the layered nature of media influence, where the audience doesn't just consume media directly, but through socially embedded intermediaries.

Spiral of Silence Theory Proposed by Noelle-Neumann (1974), this theory holds that individuals tend to suppress dissenting opinions if they perceive their views to be in the minority, especially in public discourse contexts like tourism or political debates. Park & Kim (2015) explored this in the context of word-of-mouth and comment sections, using a quantitative approach. Tinny & Soladoye (2019) focused on message delivery by officials, illustrating how micro-level public messaging can suppress alternative narratives, reinforcing dominant views in public forums. This theory is essential in understanding why some narratives dominate media despite public disagreement or uncertainty.

Third-Person Effect This theory posits that individuals often believe media affects others more than themselves, which influences their behavior, especially regarding censorship or support for regulations. Müller (2013) applied this framework to news article analysis, showing that readers perceive media portrayals to affect public opinion more than personal views. This dual

perception creates a gap between media influence acknowledgment and self-assessment, shaping both public discourse and policy pressure. His findings, bridging micro and macro perceptions, reinforce how cognitive and affective dissonance can emerge from mediated messages, particularly in sensitive tourism and international reporting contexts.

In summary, different media theories offer valuable perspectives for understanding how country and destination images are shaped. *Priming Theory* is particularly effective in explaining long-term effects, such as how repeated media coverage of crises—like terrorism or public health emergencies—can gradually form negative associations with certain destinations.

Social Learning Theory and the *Two-Step Flow Theory* provide useful insights into today's digital and influencer-driven tourism landscape. These frameworks help explain how user behavior and opinion leaders on platforms like Instagram or Twitter play a greater role in shaping perceptions than traditional news media.

Spiral of Silence Theory adds a sociopsychological dimension by illustrating how individuals often withhold dissenting views when they believe those views are unpopular. This tendency contributes to the dominance of mainstream narratives and discourages alternative or negative representations of destinations.

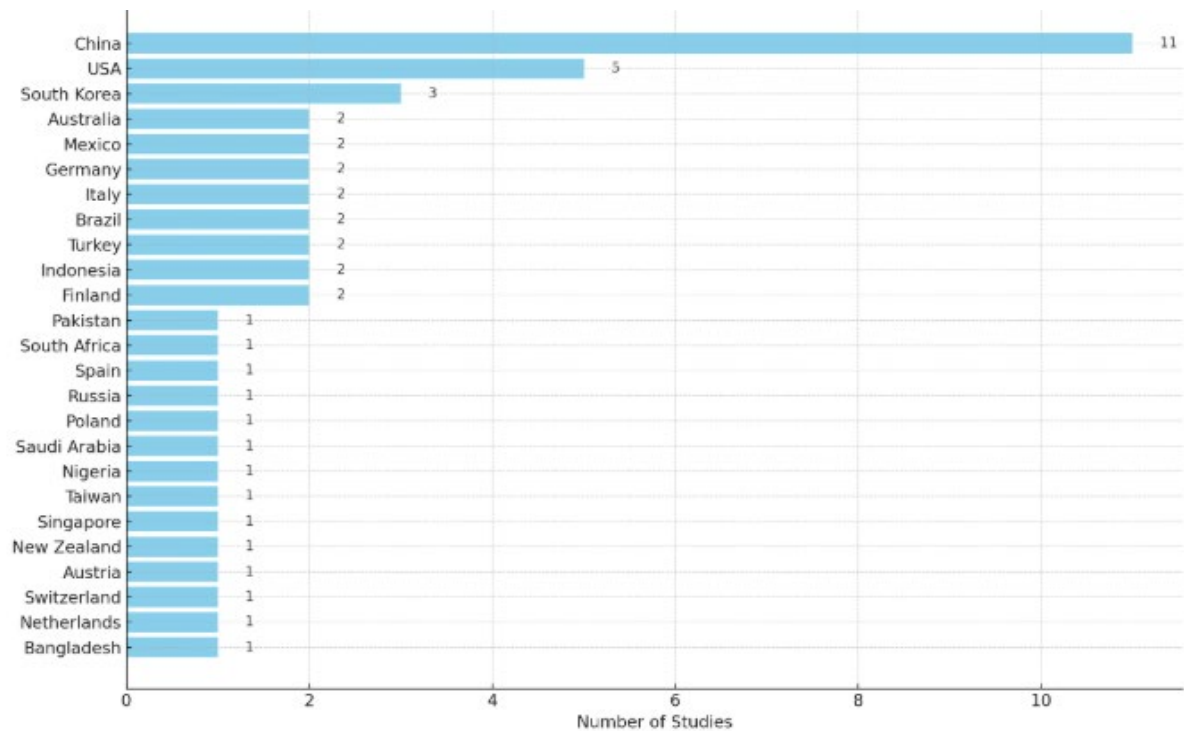
Finally, the *Third-Person Effect* helps explain the psychological gap between personal beliefs and perceived public opinion. It suggests that individuals may call for policy responses—such as censorship or travel restrictions—not because of their own views, but based on what they think others are influenced to believe by the media.

1.5.3.2. Context

Given that the research area is defined as the impact of media on country image and branding, we examined the literature with a focus on both the countries studied and the types of mass media analyzed. Table 8 presents a classification of the research by country, while Table 9 outlines the different types of media examined across the studies. Notably, some studies explored multiple countries or incorporated various forms of media, thereby broadening the contextual diversity and enhancing the generalizability of the findings.

1.5.3.2.1. Countries

Table 8. Country Focus in Nation Branding Research



Source: own elaboration, 2025

Figure 8 presents the distribution of countries examined in empirical studies related to the construction of country or destination image and branding. A clear imbalance emerges in the research focus: China and the United States receive the most scholarly attention, featured in 11 and 5 studies respectively. This prominence likely stems from their substantial geopolitical, economic, and cultural influence on the global stage, reinforcing their relevance in discussions surrounding soft power and international image. Notably, the concentration of studies on China aligns with the COVID-19 period, during which widespread misinformation circulated online—raising concerns about reputational damage and prompting increased academic scrutiny of the country’s global image.

Following at a distance are South Korea (3 studies), and a cluster of countries—Australia, Mexico, Germany, Italy, Brazil, Turkey, Indonesia, and Finland—each appearing in 2 studies. These countries, while regionally influential or prominent in tourism, receive relatively less systematic attention in image-building research compared to the global hegemons. A notable feature is the long tail of underrepresented countries, including Pakistan, South Africa, Spain, Russia, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Taiwan, Singapore, New Zealand, Austria, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Bangladesh, each mentioned in only one study. This reveals a significant geographical imbalance in the research, where much of the Global South and emerging nations

remain underexplored despite their efforts in destination branding, public diplomacy, and cultural export.

This disparity in research focus suggests not only an unequal scholarly gaze but also a potential blind spot in understanding the global dynamics of image construction. Overemphasis on major powers may limit theoretical generalizability and underrepresent how smaller or less dominant states manage international perception through media, events, or tourism strategies.

1.5.3.2.2. Mass medium

A review of empirical studies on country and destination branding reveals a strong concentration on specific types of media, as shown in Table 9. The majority of research focuses on social media platforms and influencer-generated content, particularly YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter, which appear in over 15 studies. These studies typically investigate user-generated content (UGC), online travel reviews, visual storytelling, and influencer impact—emphasizing the growing role of digital word-of-mouth and parasocial interaction in shaping public perceptions of place.

In contrast, traditional news media, including newspaper articles, editorials, and broadcast news coverage, remain a prominent subject, with 12+ studies analyzing their role in agenda setting, crisis portrayal, and geopolitical framing. These studies often focus on how print or televised journalism constructs national narratives, particularly in politically sensitive contexts.

Television programming, including travelogues, documentaries, and reality shows, is another key area, with 7 mentions. These forms of media are often explored for their entertainment-education value and their influence on perception through scripted or semi-scripted storytelling.

Despite the dominance of these areas, several under-researched domains emerge. Notably, event-based branding (e.g., mega-sporting events, food festivals) and tourism promotional materials (e.g., brochures, government websites, micro-movies) receive limited attention, with only 3–5 mentions each. These forms of content are typically produced with explicit branding intent but are underexplored in terms of audience reception and long-term impact.

Furthermore, academic and editorial publications (e.g., travel books, printed journals) and public commentary (e.g., social media comments, online reviews) are sparsely studied, despite their potential to reveal long-term image persistence or shifts in discourse. Similarly, there is

minimal exploration of media consumption behaviors and how individuals source or interpret country-related content across different platforms.

Table 9: Frequency of Media Types Studied in Country Image/Branding Research

Type of Media/Material	Examples	Frequency (approx.)
Traditional News Media	Newspaper articles, editorials, print news, CNN, British tabloids, etc.	12+
Social Media & Influencers	Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Weibo, TikTok, influencers, online comments	15+
Television & Programs	TV series, travelogues, documentaries, variety shows, drama series	7
YouTube/Vlogs	Li Ziqi, travel vlogs, homemade videos, influencer videos	6
Mixed/Combined Media	Traditional + new media, national & global media, online & offline mix	5
Tourism Promotion Materials	Brochures, websites, online campaigns, micro-movies, printed/electronic sources	5
Public Feedback	Comments, online reviews, public perception, opinion leaders	4
Events	Sporting events, food festivals, cultural performances	3
Academic/Editorial Publications	Books, journals, editorials from scholars or experts	3
Communication Channels (Generic)	Source of news, media consumption habits	2

Source: own elaboration, 2025

1.5.3.3.Constructs

The field of research on media effects in shaping country image has explored a wide range of constructs, examining how various factors—such as attitudes toward a destination, word-of-mouth (WOM) intentions, and travel intentions—are influenced by media exposure. This subsection outlines the key dependent, independent, moderating, and mediating variables identified across the literature. Table 8 provides a comprehensive summary of these variables, categorized into themes. The insights presented in Table 8 aim to support theoretical refinement and future model development, aligning with recommendations by Paul & Rosado-Serrano (2019).

1.5.3.3.1. Independent variables

A review of recent literature reveals several key categories of independent variables commonly examined in studies exploring the relationship between media and country image/brand (Table 10). These variables fall into seven main thematic areas: media exposure, content characteristics, audience traits, social influence, cognitive and affective constructs, cultural or

political framing, and technological or platform-specific factors. Each category contributes distinctively to our understanding of how media impacts perceptions, attitudes, and behavioral intentions related to country image.

Media exposure variables are the most frequently studied, appearing in 15 articles within the reviewed literature. These include the type of media (e.g., traditional vs. social media) (Koo, et al., 2016; Fung et al., 2018; Lu and Atadil, 2021; Pjesivac et al., 2018, etc.), frequency of exposure, and the specific platform used (such as television, online news outlets, YouTube, or Instagram) (Xu and Löffelholz, 2021; Whyke et al., 2022; Ingenhoff et al., (2021; Femenia-Serra et al., 2022 & etc.). Findings consistently show that both the type and frequency of media exposure significantly influence key destination image outcomes such as willingness to visit, perceived trustworthiness, and behavioral intention. Strong and repeated exposure through media channels enhances both cognitive evaluations (e.g., awareness, beliefs) and affective responses (e.g., emotional connection, desire to travel).

Closely related to media exposure are *content-related variables*, explored in 10 articles. These variables encompass the type of content (e.g., news, entertainment, disaster coverage, or vlogs) (Bi et al., 2021; Müller, 2013; Chen and Gunster, 2019; Kim, and Kim, 2020), the emotional framing employed (such as fear, pride, or nostalgia), and the use of rhetorical devices like metaphors (Tinny and Soladoye, 2019; Hammett, 2014; Zhang et al., 2018). Research in this area emphasizes the power of emotionally framed content in shaping audience perceptions. Specifically, content that evokes strong emotions has been found to significantly influence perceptions of safety, cultural authenticity, and the overall richness of a destination experience.

Audience characteristics constitute another important category, with 8 articles addressing variables such as individual motivation, prior knowledge, time pressure, food involvement, and patriotism (Ozornina and Mannin, 2020; Zuo, 2022; Yang, et al., 2020; Schallhorn, 2019). These characteristics often function as moderators or mediators of media effects, altering the strength or direction of media influence. For instance, individuals with higher involvement in travel-related topics or greater background knowledge tend to process media content more deeply, resulting in stronger persuasive effects and greater behavioral intention.

The role of *social influence variables* is explored in 6 articles, with a focus on constructs such as parasocial interaction, opinion leadership, and engagement with social media influencers (Ong, and Ito, 2019; Xu and Löffelholz, 2021; Kuan, and Mohd Hasan, 2021; Femenia-Serra et al., 2022). These studies highlight that influencer credibility and the strength of parasocial relationships can substantially enhance trust in the message and perceived destination appeal.

Moreover, both word-of-mouth (WOM) and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) emerge as powerful mechanisms for amplifying media effects and driving travel decisions.

In 12 articles, researchers examine *cognitive and affective constructs* as independent variables or as mediating factors. These include perceived destination image, attitude formation, and memory recall (Lu Q., Atadil H., A., 2021; Han G., Wang X., 2015; Schallhorn C. 2019; Bi et al., 2021). Findings underscore the central role of these constructs in linking media exposure to behavioral outcomes. Positive cognitive evaluations (e.g., destination familiarity or appeal) and affective reactions (e.g., emotional resonance with imagery or narrative) are crucial predictors of travel intention and destination choice.

Cultural and political framing variables are addressed in 5 articles and involve media portrayals related to national stereotypes, foreign policy narratives, and broader political contexts (Kuan, D., & Mohd Hasan, N. 2021; Li X., 2012; Cazzamatta and Garcia, (2022; Fung et al., (2018; Pjesivac et al., (2018). Such framing influences how international audiences form perceptions of a country's image. For example, politically charged media content can reinforce or challenge pre-existing stereotypes, thereby affecting the attractiveness or perceived safety of a destination.

Finally, *technological and platform-related factors*, covered in 5 articles, examine how specific media affordances—such as user-generated content, interactivity, and multimedia richness—shape user engagement and perception (Xu and Löffelholz, 2021; Wang, 2015; Suciati et al., 2018; Koo, et al., 2016; Silaban et al., 2022). Platforms that support visually immersive and interactive experiences (e.g., YouTube, Instagram) have been found to significantly increase user attention, emotional involvement, and ultimately, the perceived appeal of destinations.

Together, these seven categories illustrate the multifaceted nature of media effects on country image/brand context. Each variable group provides valuable insight into how different media mechanisms interact with audience characteristics and cognitive-emotional processes to shape country image-related perceptions and intentions.

Table 10: Summary of Independent Variable Categories in Country/Destination Image Research

Category of Independent Variable	Number of Articles	Examples of Variables	Key Findings
Media Exposure Variables	15	Media type (traditional vs. social), frequency of exposure, platform (TV, online, YouTube, Instagram, etc.)	Media type and frequency significantly influence destination image, perceived trust, and behavioral intentions. Strong media exposure correlates with enhanced cognitive and affective responses.

Category of Independent Variable	Number of Articles	Examples of Variables	Key Findings
Cognitive and Affective Constructs	12	Perceived destination image, attitudes, memory recall	Cognitive and affective evaluations are key mediators between media exposure and travel intentions.
Content Variables	10	Type of content (news, entertainment, disaster reporting, vlogs), emotional framing, metaphors	Emotionally framed content (e.g., fear, pride, nostalgia) shapes public perception of safety, authenticity, and cultural richness.
Audience Characteristics	8	Motivation, prior knowledge, time pressure, food involvement, patriotism	Audience traits moderate or mediate media effects; high involvement and knowledge amplify persuasion.
Social Influence Variables	6	Parasocial interaction, opinion leadership, social media engagement	Influencer credibility and parasocial interaction enhance trust and destination appeal. WOM and eWOM act as powerful mediators.
Cultural or Political Framing Variables	5	National stereotypes, framing of foreign policy, political news context	Framing influences national image formation; political news frames and stereotypes shape international perceptions.
Technological/Platform Factors	5	Web 2.0, user-generated content, multimedia elements	Interactive and visual-rich platforms (e.g., YouTube, Instagram) heighten engagement and destination attractiveness.

Source: own elaboration, 2025

1.5.3.3.2. Mediating variables

In the country image/brand and media research, mediating variables play a critical role in explaining the mechanisms through which independent variables influence behavioral outcomes such as intention to visit, satisfaction, and recommendation. These mediators often bridge psychological, emotional, and informational constructs between media exposure and country image/brand formation, offering deeper insight into causality and effect pathways.

Expanding on the complexity of mediation, Zhang et al. (2020) conducted an online experimental study integrating regulatory focus theory and self/other-referencing strategies. Their results revealed that the impact of regulatory-focused messaging on behavioral intention is serially mediated by perceived intrinsic motives and attitude toward the company's food waste reduction (FWR) practices. Notably, the study highlights how the mediating pathway varies based on reference framing, indicating that media messages invoking self-relevant comparisons can enhance message reception and ultimately shape intentions more strongly than other-referencing strategies.

From a more sociocultural lens, Yoo and Buzinde (2012) applied reception theory to examine how tourism media mediates intercultural relations. Their focus group findings underscored the role of media in constructing dominant social narratives and shaping intercultural

attitudes. Significantly, the study revealed that individuals interpret media messages differently depending on their cultural background and their relation to the content (i.e., whether the message is self-referential or other-referential). These interpretations, in turn, mediate cognitive and affective responses toward destinations and their people, showing that reception and cultural context are key mediating dimensions in the country image building process.

The mediating role of destination image in marketing outcomes is also reinforced by Ong and Ito (2019), who explored the effectiveness of social media influencers (SMIs). Their study demonstrated that destination image not only has a direct positive effect on behavioral outcomes but also acts as a significant mediator in the relationship between SMI campaigns and marketing effectiveness. In this way, destination image becomes a central conduit through which affective and cognitive responses to influencer content are transformed into travel intention.

A more nuanced view of media's mediating role is presented by Kakirala and Singh (2020), who investigated social media and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) as mediators in the tourism context. Their results revealed that eWOM fully mediates the relationship between destination satisfaction and involvement, and partially mediates the relationship between destination trust and involvement. Interestingly, in cases involving online reviews, eWOM served as a full mediator between trust and satisfaction, underscoring the potency of social influence mechanisms in digital environments. The authors also noted that the virality of content—as measured by involvement, review volume, and perceived credibility—significantly impacts travelers' likelihood to revisit or recommend a destination.

One of the key mediating variables extensively studied is the perceived destination image. Nazir et al. (2021) explored this in the context of international tourists' perceptions of Pakistan. Their findings revealed that destination image has a significant mediating effect on behavioral intention, particularly through the travel experience. Moreover, the study identified that media exposure moderates the relationship between destination image and travel experience, reinforcing the idea that higher levels of exposure intensify tourists' experiential interpretations. The research demonstrated a strong positive relationship between destination image and both travel experience and behavioral intention, establishing the relevance of media's role in shaping perceptions and guiding actions in various national and international contexts

Taken together, these studies highlight that mediating variables such as destination image, travel experience, perceived motives, attitude, and eWOM serve as crucial psychological and communicative bridges in media-country image/brand interactions. They not only help explain the

mechanisms by which media affects behavior but also underscore the importance of context, message design, and audience characteristics.

1.5.3.3.3. Moderating variables

Moderating variables are essential for understanding the conditions under which independent variables exert their effects on destination-related outcomes such as brand awareness, image formation, loyalty, and behavioral intention. Moderators do not directly cause outcomes but alter the strength or direction of the relationship between other variables. Recent studies emphasize how personal involvement, prior knowledge, and contextual factors such as country-of-origin (COI) image significantly influence the effectiveness of media messages in tourism contexts.

A key example of this is offered by Yang and Yun (2020), who explored how framing in advertising interacts with individual traits to influence culinary destination image and destination loyalty. Their research highlights that food involvement serves as a critical moderating variable in the advertising process. Individuals with higher food involvement tend to process culinary-related media messages more deeply, resulting in more favorable destination images and increased repatronage intentions. Additionally, variables such as motivation, time pressure, and prior festival knowledge play moderating roles in shaping how tourists interpret advertising content. These moderators influence the level of cognitive engagement with media, suggesting that audience characteristics determine how effectively a message is received and internalized.

This finding is echoed and expanded in the study by Yang et al. (2020), which confirms the moderating role of food involvement in enhancing the formation of culinary destination loyalty. Their results suggest that attendees with high motivation and prior knowledge engage in deeper message processing, often via the central route of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Such individuals are more likely to form lasting attitudes and loyalty toward a culinary destination due to their increased personal relevance and schema availability for interpreting the message.

The importance of news involvement and prior destination experience as moderators is explored by Gabbioneta and De Carlo (2019). Their study examines how exposure to news articles influences destination image formation, with findings indicating that the more news articles individuals consume, the more favorable their image of a destination becomes. Crucially, this relationship is moderated by both news involvement and prior destination experience. Individuals with high news involvement—those who consider the news content personally relevant—were more strongly influenced by media content. Moreover, even after accounting for prior travel

experience, the moderating effect of involvement persisted, suggesting that cognitive engagement with the content amplifies media impact beyond mere exposure.

Similarly, Dedeoğlu et al. (2020) identify the country-of-origin (COI) image—both at macro (national identity) and micro (brand image) levels—as a powerful moderator in the relationship between social media sharing, destination brand awareness, and perceptions of quality. Their findings show that participant-generated content (e.g., travelers sharing their own experiences) significantly enhances brand awareness, which in turn influences perceived destination natural and service quality. However, these effects are contingent on the COI image, which moderates the way brand awareness is translated into perceptions of quality. Tourists who hold a positive image of a country are more likely to perceive the shared content favorably and translate it into higher evaluations of the destination.

Collectively, these studies underscore that moderating variables such as food involvement, personal motivation, prior knowledge, news involvement, and country-of-origin image play a central role in shaping how individuals process and respond to media content in tourism contexts. The effectiveness of media strategies—whether advertising, news, or social media—depends not only on message content but also on audience predispositions and contextual perceptions.

1.5.3.3.4. Dependent variables

The current review highlights that the dependent variables examined in the existing literature can be categorized under several key thematic headings, with a strong emphasis on image-related and perception-based outcomes. These outcomes reflect the underlying focus of media and country image/brand studies on how media content shapes individual attitudes, cognitive evaluations, and behavioral intentions toward travel destinations.

The most prominent category is image-related constructs (38%), led by variables such as *destination image* and the more general *image*. These are central to understanding how individuals cognitively and emotionally form impressions of travel destinations based on media exposure. For example, studies by Fung et al. (2018), Lu and Atadil (2021), Nazir et al. (2021), and Yang et al. (2020) examined how framing, media exposure, and festival content influence overall destination image. Similarly, Gabbioneta and De Carlo (2019) explored how news article exposure and involvement affect national image formation. These image constructs often serve as precursors to further psychological or behavioral outcomes such as loyalty or intention to revisit.

Another major grouping involves perception-related variables (29%), including constructs such as *perception of quality*, *media perception*, and *perceived authenticity*. For instance, Dedeoğlu et al. (2020) examined how social media sharing impacts tourists' perceptions of natural and service quality of destinations, with country-of-origin image moderating these effects. Likewise, Fung et al. (2018) and Hammett (2014) studied how media narratives and stereotypes shape public perceptions of a destination's safety, identity, and cultural characteristics. These perception-based outcomes are critical in determining tourist satisfaction and shaping expectations.

A third significant category involves motivation and attitudinal responses (19%). Constructs such as *motivation* and *attitude* represent internal psychological reactions that mediate between media messages and eventual behavior. For example, Yang and Yun (2020) and Yang et al. (2020) demonstrated how festival attendees' motivation and prior knowledge contribute to favorable culinary destination images, which in turn promote loyalty. In the context of green event marketing, Zhang et al. (2020) found that regulatory focus and reference framing affected consumers' *attitudes* toward corporate practices via perceived intrinsic motives. These studies emphasize the role of deep message processing, particularly among highly involved individuals, in forming lasting attitudes.

Finally, behavioral intention-related outcomes were also noted across the dataset, although less frequently. These include constructs such as *repatronage*, *loyalty*, and *word-of-mouth intention*. For example, Nazir et al. (2021) established that destination image significantly impacts tourists' behavioral intentions in various contexts, while Yang et al. (2020) linked culinary image to destination loyalty and repatronage. Kakirala and Singh (2020) further illustrated how electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) mediates the relationship between trust, involvement, and satisfaction, which ultimately influences intentions to revisit or recommend a destination.

Taken together, the distribution of dependent variables suggests that research in media and country image/brand continues to prioritize how media shapes *image and perception*, followed by *attitude formation*, and eventually influences *behavioral outcomes*. This pattern reinforces the need for comprehensive models that integrate cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions to fully capture the media's impact on country brand formation.

1.5.3.4. Methodology

Table 11 summarizes the data collection methods used across the reviewed studies, revealing a diverse mix of approaches. Interviews (22.73%) and questionnaires (15.91%) were the

most common, often used to assess attitudes and behavioral intentions. When combined (11.36%), they provided structured insights into media and tourism-related perceptions. Content analysis (4.55%) was applied to examine media representations and user-generated content. Notably, 34.09% of studies employed other methods—including interviews, focus groups, and netnography—reflecting the growing use of mixed methods. This methodological diversity highlights the field’s balance between quantitative rigor and qualitative depth.

Table 11: Summary of Data Collection Methods Used in Reviewed Studies

Method	Number of Papers
Interviews	10
Questionnaire	7
Interviews + Questionnaire	5
Content Analysis	2
Other*	15

Source: own elaboration, 2025

*Note: "Other" includes mixed methods, qualitative approaches such as thematic or metaphorical analysis, netnography, panel surveys, experimental designs, and entries with insufficient detail for clear categorization.

Table 12 presents the distribution of data analysis techniques employed in the reviewed studies. The most commonly used approach was Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) (19.15%), reflecting a strong preference for testing complex relationships among latent constructs. Content analysis followed (10.64%), often applied in studies examining media framing and message interpretation. Techniques such as regression analysis and MANOVA were each used in 4.26% of the studies. Notably, nearly half of the studies (46.81%) employed other or mixed analytical methods, including ANOVA, discourse and rhetorical analysis, sentiment analysis, and cluster analysis, indicating a rich methodological diversity in tourism and media research.

Table 12: Summary of Data Analysis Techniques Used in Reviewed Studies

Data Analysis Technique	Number of Papers	Percentage (%)
Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)	9	19.15%
Content Analysis	5	10.64%
Regression Analysis	2	4.26%
MANOVA	2	4.26%
Other*	22	46.81%

Source: own elaboration, 2025

*Note: The "Other" category includes less frequently used or mixed approaches such as ANOVA, cluster analysis, rhetorical and discourse analysis, sentiment analysis, coding content, descriptive statistics, and advanced statistical modeling tools (e.g., corpus analysis).

1.5.4. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

1.5.4.1.Theories

Based on the comprehensive review and synthesis of 52 scholarly articles, this study proposes a structured research agenda for advancing the understanding of media effects on country image and branding. Employing the TCCM (Theory, Context, Characteristics, and Methodology) framework as suggested by Paul and Rosado-Serrano (2019), the review identifies key theoretical gaps, underexplored contextual settings, emerging constructs, and methodological limitations in the existing literature.

This agenda is designed to guide future inquiries by offering targeted recommendations across the four dimensions of the TCCM model. In doing so, it emphasizes the need for more theory-driven investigations, a broader diversity of geographic and cultural contexts, deeper exploration of constructs such as media trust, credibility, and digital engagement, as well as a more rigorous and innovative application of both qualitative and quantitative research methods.

While this review highlights several priority areas for future research, the directions presented should not be regarded as exhaustive. Scholars are encouraged to critically assess the relevance, feasibility, and timeliness of each proposed gap in light of evolving socio-political dynamics and technological developments. Ultimately, this research agenda seeks to stimulate robust academic dialogue and inspire empirically grounded studies that will contribute to the theoretical refinement and practical advancement of the media–country image/brand research domain.

1.5.4.1.1. Framing Theory as a Critical Lens for Studying Misinformation and Country Image

A critical research gap exists in understanding how misinformation framed in specific ways directly damages or distorts a country's image and destination branding efforts in the contemporary digital media landscape. While the rapid dissemination of both accurate and misleading content on digital platforms highlights the urgency of studying media narratives about countries, there remains a lack of comprehensive research explicitly linking the framing of misinformation to long-term reputational harm. Individuals overwhelmed by competing claims may rely on heuristic cues like visual appeal or perceived credibility rather than analytical evaluation, leading to widespread misconceptions fueled by emotionally evocative, repeated misinformation.

Among the various theoretical frameworks available, Framing Theory stands out as particularly suitable for examining the effects of misinformation and fake news on country image and destination branding. This theory, grounded in the foundational work of Goffman (1974) and expanded by Entman (1993), asserts that media does more than report events—it frames them by selecting certain aspects of reality and emphasizing, excluding, or elaborating on them in particular ways. This process fundamentally shapes how audiences interpret issues, construct emotional responses, and ultimately form behavioral intentions.

The relevance of Framing Theory in this context is underscored by the nature of misinformation itself: misleading or false narratives are not only a matter of content but of how that content is constructed and presented. Fake news rarely presents outright fabrications in isolation; instead, it often thrives on strategic framing, using emotionally charged language, selective omission, or exaggerated emphasis to distort perceptions (Chen, 2022; Ruston, 2017; Springer 2024). For this reason, understanding framing mechanisms is critical to deconstructing how misinformation gains traction, particularly in relation to national image, tourism, and public diplomacy.

Numerous empirical studies included in this review have demonstrated how framing mechanisms influence cognitive, affective, and conative outcomes among audiences exposed to country-related media. For instance, Whyke, Chen, and Lopez-Mugica (2022) showed how YouTube vlogs that frame rural life through specific narratives can shape perceptions of cultural authenticity and appeal. Han and Wang (2015) quantitatively assessed newspaper content and found that framing significantly altered readers' evaluations of countries and foreign policies. These findings illustrate framing's capacity to mold not only opinions but also emotions and intentions—a crucial factor in tourism behavior, investment decisions, and even geopolitical attitudes.

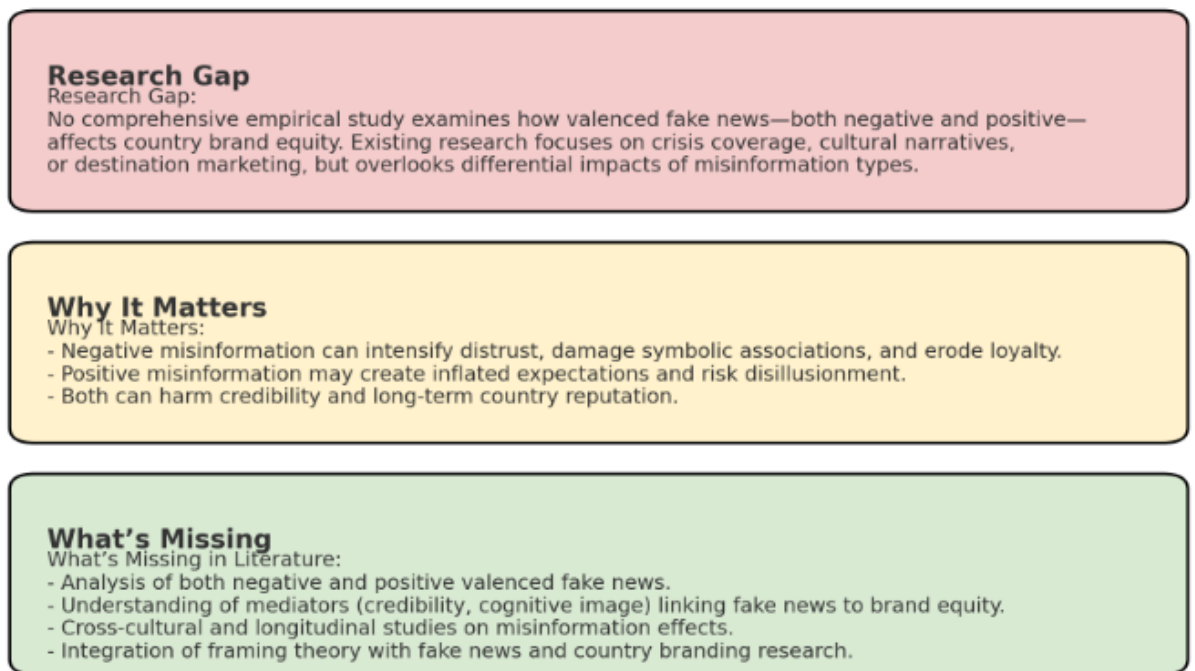
The importance of Framing Theory in the context of misinformation is also evident in its ability to explain how crisis events are portrayed. Studies such as those by Walters et al. (2016) and Nazir et al. (2021) reveal that media outlets often frame countries within narratives of crisis—such as natural disasters, political unrest, or health emergencies (e.g., COVID-19). These frames can induce long-term negative associations, undermining efforts at nation branding and damaging tourism industries. When misinformation is layered on top of such crisis narratives, the reputational risks multiply, making a framing-based analysis even more essential.

Moreover, in the digital age where social media dominates public discourse, framing has expanded beyond traditional journalism into user-generated content. Influencers, vloggers, and everyday users now participate in framing countries through visual and textual content on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. As seen in studies by Xu and Löffelholz (2021) and Zuo (2022), these digital framings—often emotionally charged and ideologically driven—can significantly sway public sentiment, especially when algorithms amplify misleading or polarizing content. Framing Theory thus provides a critical analytical toolkit for understanding how such narratives are constructed and circulated.

Despite the substantial body of research demonstrating the utility of Framing Theory in understanding media influence on cognitive, affective, and conative outcomes, a significant gap remains unaddressed: there is no comprehensive study that specifically identifies how misinformation—both negative and positive—directly harms or distorts country image and branding efforts. While many studies highlight the framing of crisis events, cultural narratives, or promotional content, they stop short of systematically examining how misinformation, when framed in particular ways, leads to measurable damage in the perception of a country. The distinction between negatively framed misinformation (e.g., fake news about corruption, insecurity, or health crises) and positively framed misinformation (e.g., exaggerated claims of success or safety) is critical, as both can lead to disillusionment, skepticism, or backlash if later disproven. This oversight points to an urgent need for future research that not only explores the mechanics of framing but also investigates the differential impacts of misleading narratives on a country's long-term image, trustworthiness, and brand equity. Filling this gap would offer vital insights for policymakers, tourism marketers, and communication strategists navigating the complex interplay between national image and media credibility in the digital age

The theory also offers methodological flexibility, allowing for both qualitative and quantitative applications. Content analysis, discourse studies, surveys, and interviews can all be employed to assess how different frames influence cognitive beliefs, emotional reactions, and behavioral tendencies toward countries and destinations. This adaptability makes Framing Theory uniquely positioned to address the multifaceted nature of misinformation and its psychological, social, and political consequences. Figure 4 presents the “Gap – Why It Matters – What’s Missing” diagram, which visually synthesizes the identified research gap, its significance, and the specific areas in the literature that remain underexplored.

Figure 4. “Gap – Why It Matters – What’s Missing” diagram.



1.5.4.1.2. Diffusion of Innovation Theory in Media Influence on Country Image and Brand

Another significant research gap exists in the application of Diffusion of Innovation Theory (DOI) (Rogers, 1962) to understand how media-generated narratives about countries or destinations are adopted, shared, and resisted within diverse societal segments. Although DOI has been extensively utilized in communication, marketing, and technology adoption fields (Rogers, 1995; Green et al., 2009), its potential remains underexplored in the context of national image formation and country branding, especially amidst the dynamic, participatory environment fostered by digital media and the proliferation of fake news.

In current media landscapes, representations of countries are not passively consumed but actively diffused through complex social networks, involving opinion leaders, influencers, and digital platforms. This calls for the use of DOI's core constructs—relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability—to examine why and how certain media-driven branding campaigns or national narratives succeed or fail to be accepted by audiences (Bass, 1969; Rogers, 1995). Influencers and content creators serve as early adopters and opinion leaders whose endorsements significantly affect the diffusion and acceptance of national images (Barker, 2004; Xu & Löffelholz, 2021).

Additionally, the role of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) and social media behaviors in facilitating or obstructing the viral spread of national narratives demands investigation through a DOI framework. The urgency of this research is further emphasized in crises contexts—such as pandemics, conflicts, or political instability—where countries seek to reposition their global perception via innovation in storytelling and digital diplomacy. DOI could illuminate the diffusion processes of such strategic communications and identify barriers to adoption, including cultural biases, political tensions, and media distrust (Nazir et al., 2021; Han & Wang, 2015).

Emerging branding innovations, such as virtual reality tourism, AI-generated content, and immersive storytelling, also present novel domains for examining adoption patterns. DOI enables a systematic study of how digital literacy, social trust, and user motivations influence the uptake of such technologies in shaping country image (Fine & Ellis, 2013; Shifman, 2013).

Moreover, DOI offers a valuable lens to investigate resistance to rebranding efforts, a phenomenon poorly understood but increasingly relevant as certain publics reject new narratives in favor of established or oppositional views informed by prior media exposure or political orientation (Harambam, 2015; Dundes, 1989). Understanding the mechanisms behind such resistance is critical to designing inclusive and culturally responsive nation branding strategies.

In summary, the integration of Diffusion of Innovation Theory into the study of media effects on country image and brand offers multiple urgent and meaningful pathways for future research. It responds to the pressing need to understand not just what messages are shared, but how, why, and by whom they are adopted or resisted in an era of fragmented media consumption and rising digital misinformation. Exploring these dynamics is critical for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners aiming to build credible, resonant, and resilient country brands in today's complex media landscape.

1.5.4.1.3. Media System Dependency Theory in Country Image and Branding Research

A clear research gap exists in the application of Media System Dependency Theory (MSDT) to the study of media influence on country image and brand perception, despite its acknowledged importance within the broader media effects literature. Originally developed by Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976), MSDT posits that individuals' reliance on media to fulfill their informational, emotional, and social needs—especially in times of uncertainty—heightens the

media's power to shape their attitudes, cognitions, and behaviors. However, its use in the context of nation branding and country image remains limited and underexplored.

This gap is especially relevant in the context of nation branding, where audiences often lack direct, first-hand experiences with the target country and instead rely heavily on mediated representations. MSDT suggests that such dependency peaks during global crises—such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Hall et al., 2020; Sigala, 2020), armed conflict (Ojala, 2017), or environmental disasters (Houston et al., 2012)—when uncertainty and information scarcity drive individuals toward mass media, social platforms, and user-generated content. In these moments, media become central gatekeepers and framers of national narratives, directly influencing perceptions of a country's safety, credibility, and desirability.

Moreover, in today's digital media ecosystems, dependency extends beyond traditional journalism to influencers, vloggers, and algorithm-driven content streams (Casero-Ripollés, 2020; Tandoc et al., 2018). This shift raises the need to examine how reliance on digital platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, or YouTube shapes symbolic brand associations and attitudinal brand loyalty toward countries, particularly among younger, globally connected audiences.

MSDT also foregrounds the affective and psychological functions of media use—such as anxiety reduction, identity affirmation, and community belonging—which are underexamined in the context of country branding. Research on affective dependency (Tsai & Men, 2013; Chung & Kim, 2021) suggests that emotionally framed portrayals of national crises, cultural celebrations, or political events may shape not only cognitive evaluations but also deep-seated emotional connections or aversions. Understanding these affective pathways is crucial for sectors like tourism, public diplomacy, and foreign investment, where emotional resonance often precedes behavioral intention.

1.5.4.1.4. Knowledge Gap Theory in Media Influence on Country Image and Branding

Although Knowledge Gap Theory (Tichenor, Donohue, & Olien, 1970) is widely recognized in communication scholarship for explaining disparities in information acquisition, its application to *country image* and *nation branding* research remains minimal. The theory posits that as mass media disseminates information, individuals with higher socio-economic status—characterized by greater education, income, and media literacy—tend to acquire information faster than those with lower socio-economic status, thereby widening the “knowledge gap”

(McFARLANE, 2023). This disparity not only reinforces existing social inequalities but also shapes how different audience segments interpret complex global narratives.

In the realm of nation branding and country image, this gap presents an important but underexplored avenue of inquiry: How do differences in media access, literacy, and interpretive capacity influence divergent perceptions of the same country across social strata? While existing studies acknowledge that national image is not monolithic but fragmented across audiences (Avraham, 2015; Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015), few have systematically examined the mechanisms through which knowledge gaps contribute to these perceptual divides, particularly in contexts of disinformation, crisis reporting, and tourism promotion.

Empirical evidence suggests that disparities in education and media literacy can lead to starkly different interpretations of international events (Alvermann & al., 2000). For instance, during crises such as pandemics, armed conflicts, or climate emergencies, audiences with high media literacy may develop nuanced, multi-sourced views, whereas those with lower literacy may rely on simplified, sensationalized, or inaccurate narratives (Tsfati & Ariely, 2014). This dynamic is particularly problematic in the context of fake news, where lower-literacy audiences are more vulnerable to emotionally framed or ideologically biased content that distorts perceptions of foreign nations (Pennycook & Rand, 2019).

The issue is further compounded by the digital divide. Contrary to early optimism, the rise of social media has not eliminated knowledge gaps; instead, algorithmic curation, echo chambers, and influencer-driven content may exacerbate them (van Deursen & Helsper, 2015; Napoli & Obar, 2014). Unequal digital skills affect not only the ability to critically evaluate information but also engagement in content sharing and participation in global conversations about countries (Boulianne, 2015). This suggests that knowledge gaps in the digital era may lead to increasingly polarized or fragmented country images both domestically and internationally.

Moreover, media system differences—such as those between authoritarian and democratic contexts—can influence how knowledge gaps form and are exploited. Controlled media environments may intentionally limit access to diverse international perspectives, thereby reinforcing state-sanctioned narratives (Stockmann & Gallagher, 2011). In contrast, open media systems may foster greater diversity of perspectives but also expose audiences to higher volumes of conflicting or misleading information, further complicating image formation.

Given these realities, applying Knowledge Gap Theory to country branding research could illuminate how informational inequalities affect the success of soft power strategies, destination marketing, and public diplomacy initiatives. This approach would enable scholars and practitioners to design targeted, inclusive communication strategies that bridge informational divides and reduce vulnerability to misinformation. Without addressing this gap, national branding efforts risk disproportionately reaching and resonating with only the most informed segments of the global population, leaving others with distorted or incomplete perceptions.

1.5.4.1.5. Limited Capacity Model and the Media's Influence on Country Image and Branding

The Limited Capacity Model of Motivated Mediated Message Processing (LC4MP), developed by Lang (2000), provides a robust cognitive framework for examining how individuals allocate finite mental resources to process mediated messages. According to the model, attention and processing capacity must be divided among encoding, storage, and retrieval tasks, meaning that when media content is overly complex, emotionally intense, or delivered in high volume, audiences risk experiencing *cognitive overload*. This can impair comprehension, reduce memory retention, and lead to biased or incomplete interpretations of messages (Lang, 2006; Fox et al., 2004).

Despite its extensive use in political communication (Bolls, Lang, & Potter, 2001; Lee & Lang, 2015) and advertising research (Lang, Newhagen, & Reeves, 1996), LC4MP remains largely absent in studies exploring how mediated content shapes country image and nation branding. This omission is notable given the rapidly evolving digital media landscape, where audiences encounter a constant stream of competing narratives—from government-led nation branding campaigns to crisis reports, influencer content, and user-generated media (Avraham, 2015; Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015).

The model's relevance becomes especially apparent in contexts where conflicting or sequentially delivered narratives may overload cognitive processing. For example, exposure to a promotional tourism video immediately followed by a negative crisis report could cause attentional shifts, message interference, and selective recall, ultimately skewing perceptions of a nation's credibility or attractiveness (Potter & Bolls, 2012). Yet, empirical research on such sequential or mixed-message effects in country branding is scarce.

Furthermore, LC4MP offers a valuable lens for analyzing the impact of emotionally charged content—such as natural disasters, pandemics, or political unrest—on the allocation of cognitive resources. Emotional stimuli, while increasing initial attention, can monopolize processing capacity and lead audiences to neglect more nuanced, factual, or long-term branding messages (Lang, 2000; Bradley et al., 2011). This phenomenon has been observed in crisis communication studies (Houston et al., 2012), but has rarely been applied to the reputational consequences for countries.

In the current fast-paced, multi-platform consumption environment, the model can also illuminate how media formats and multitasking behaviors influence message processing. Research shows that users frequently switch between platforms and tasks (Ophir, Nass, & Wagner, 2009), yet the cognitive efficiency of various formats (e.g., short-form videos vs. long-form articles, static images vs. interactive media) in conveying and retaining country-related information has not been systematically examined.

Given the saturation of media content, rising misinformation, and fragmented audience attention, integrating LC4MP into country image and branding studies is both theoretically significant and practically urgent. Doing so could uncover the cognitive bottlenecks and processing biases that determine whether nation branding efforts succeed or fail, especially under conditions of message competition, emotional intensity, or information overload. Without this perspective, branding strategies risk being designed for an idealized, fully attentive audience that no longer exists in today's digital reality.

1.5.4.2.Context

A critical examination of the literature in the domain of media influence on country image and branding reveals both valuable contributions and significant areas requiring further scholarly attention. Although the current body of research has grown substantially in recent years—particularly due to global crises such as COVID-19—it remains limited in scope when considering geographical coverage, diversity of media channels analyzed. This section outlines key research gaps and proposes directions for future investigation, structured around the thematic insights derived from the current review.

A clear gap in the current literature lies in its *geographical concentration*, with a disproportionate focus on major global powers such as China (11 studies) and the United States (5 studies). While this emphasis reflects their geopolitical and economic prominence (Zhang & Meadows, 2022; Huang et al., 2021), it results in an uneven scholarly lens that overlooks emerging

nations and countries in the Global South—such as Nigeria, Bangladesh, or Pakistan—despite their active engagement in tourism promotion, nation branding, and digital diplomacy (Anholt, 2020). This imbalance limits the understanding of how nations with different levels of global visibility, economic capacity, and soft power resources manage their international image, particularly in times of crisis or disinformation. Future research should conduct comparative studies between well-researched and under-researched countries to identify variations in media influence, resilience to negative framing, and the mechanisms of brand recovery (Dinnie, 2015; Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015).

A second limitation emerges from the *media-type bias* in existing scholarship. The majority of studies privilege social media and influencer-generated content—especially on platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter (Xu & Löffelholz, 2021; Zuo, 2022)—while traditional media is often examined only through framing or agenda-setting perspectives (Entman, 1993; McCombs & Shaw, 2001). Other potentially impactful media forms—such as government-sponsored tourism campaigns, mega-events (e.g., Olympics, expos), micro-movies, and branded entertainment—remain underexplored, despite their demonstrated influence in shaping perceptions of destinations and national identity (Månsson, 2011; Grix & Lee, 2013). Expanding research to include these underutilized formats would provide a more holistic understanding of how diverse communication channels contribute to country branding.

Third, there is a critical thematic gap regarding the role of *misinformation and fake news* in shaping country image. Although disinformation's global impact is increasingly recognized—particularly during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical conflicts (Egelhofer & Lecheler, 2019; Pennycook & Rand, 2021)—only a limited number of studies directly assess how false or misleading narratives affect perceptions of nations. Research rarely isolates the differential effects of negative versus positive misinformation, nor does it systematically examine their emotional, cognitive, and behavioral consequences. Future studies should focus on framing strategies, virality mechanisms, and the interplay between disinformation and preexisting national stereotypes to strengthen crisis communication and reputational management strategies (Avraham, 2015; Waisbord, 2018).

Moreover, the literature remains production-centric, prioritizing the creation and dissemination of media content while paying less attention to *audience reception and interpretation*. Yet, research in digital communication demonstrates that meaning is co-constructed, with audiences actively reshaping, resisting, or reinforcing media narratives through online discussions, reviews, and user-generated content (Papacharissi, 2015; Molyneux & Holton,

2015). To address this, future research should adopt audience-centered approaches—including discourse analysis, sentiment analysis, and netnography—to capture how publics engage with and influence country image narratives.

Finally, much existing research treats media channels as isolated entities, neglecting the reality of media convergence and *cross-platform information flows*. In practice, individuals navigate seamlessly between traditional news, social media, official statements, and entertainment content, often within the same consumption session (Jenkins, 2006; Chadwick, 2017). This convergence creates a hybrid media environment where narratives may reinforce or contradict one another, influencing credibility and trust. Future research should explore cross-platform synergies and contradictions to better understand how integrated media ecosystems shape national reputation and branding effectiveness.

In summary, advancing scholarship in this field requires a more inclusive and multidimensional research agenda. This entails broadening the geographical scope to incorporate underrepresented regions and countries of the Global South, thereby moving beyond the dominant focus on major geopolitical powers. It also calls for expanding the range of media examined to include underutilized yet influential communication formats such as government-sponsored campaigns, mega-events, and branded entertainment, which remain largely absent from current analyses. Furthermore, systematic investigations into the distinctive effects of misinformation and fake news—both negative and positive—are necessary to understand their emotional, cognitive, and behavioral implications for national image. Equally important is the need to center research on audience reception, recognizing the participatory nature of meaning-making in contemporary communication environments. Finally, examining cross-platform interactions within converged media ecosystems will provide a more holistic understanding of how narratives are constructed, reinforced, or contested across multiple channels. Addressing these gaps is crucial for the theoretical and practical advancement of nation branding, public diplomacy, and crisis communication, particularly in an era characterized by rapid digital dissemination, political polarization, and escalating information warfare (Waisbord, 2018; Chadwick, 2013).

1.5.4.3.Construct

The systematic review of literature related to media effects on country image and branding highlights the progress made across multiple research domains. However, several critical research gaps remain, particularly concerning underutilized variables, overlooked mechanisms, and the nuanced role of misinformation in shaping public perceptions.

1.5.4.3.1. Expanding the Variable Landscape

While existing scholarship on media effects and country image has made significant progress in examining categories such as media exposure, content characteristics, audience traits, social influence, and framing, several critical conceptual and methodological gaps remain. Notably, key psychological constructs—such as media literacy (Potter, 2018; Vraga & Tully, 2021), information overload (Bawden & Robinson, 2009), emotional fatigue (Osmundsen et al., 2021), and narrative transportation (Green & Brock, 2000)—are largely absent from empirical models. These variables are particularly relevant in today’s oversaturated media environment, where audiences often rely on cognitive shortcuts to process complex or conflicting messages. Incorporating such constructs would allow for a more granular understanding of how audiences engage with and interpret mediated portrayals of nations.

Another underexplored area concerns the influence of interpersonal trust, political ideology, and skepticism toward media sources (Tsfati & Cappella, 2003; Stroud, 2010). These predispositions can act as both moderators and antecedents, shaping how audiences interpret information in highly polarized or crisis contexts, often overriding factual accuracy. This is particularly critical in the context of nation branding during geopolitical conflicts, pandemics, or reputational crises, when audiences may process identical messages in diametrically opposed ways depending on their ideological alignment or trust in institutions.

The role of algorithmic curation and platform-driven personalization also remains a significant omission in most country image studies. As research in computational communication science shows (Beam, 2014; Thorson & Wells, 2016), exposure to mediated messages is increasingly shaped by algorithms that filter, prioritize, and personalize content. This algorithmic gatekeeping has profound implications for the visibility, framing, and repetition of narratives about countries—yet it is rarely treated as an explicit variable in nation branding research.

Moreover, despite the rising global concern over fake news, manipulated narratives, and strategic disinformation (Lazer et al., 2018; Egelhofer & Lecheler, 2019), few studies have systematically examined how misinformation—both negative and positive—impacts country image over time. Future research must distinguish between misinformation (false but non-malicious information) and disinformation (deliberately deceptive information), as both may produce distinct cognitive, affective, and behavioral consequences for destination perception. Longitudinal and experimental designs could be particularly valuable in exploring whether such

effects decay, persist, or intensify over time, especially when content circulates across multiple platforms.

An equally critical omission in current research is the insufficient focus on perceived media credibility—both as a mediator and a moderator of message effects (Metzger et al., 2003; Johnson & Kaye, 2015). In the misinformation context, high-credibility sources disseminating false content may amplify reputational damage more than low-credibility ones, while highly media-literate audiences may effectively discount dubious sources. Credibility assessments should also extend beyond the source to include message-level features, such as emotional tone, statistical citations, or visual cues, all of which can influence perceived accuracy and trust. (Metzger et al., 2003; Sundar, 2008; Luo et al., 2022). Furthermore, congruence between message and platform (e.g., hard news appearing on Facebook versus in a traditional newspaper) may alter credibility judgments and message processing outcomes.

Future research could advance the field by developing conditional process models that integrate both mediating and moderating variables—an approach that has proven effective in media and persuasion research (Hayes, 2013; Zhao, Lynch, & Chen, 2010). For example, a study could examine how the emotional framing of a travel vlog (independent variable) influences destination image (dependent variable) through affective trust (mediator), while perceived credibility acts as a moderator. Such moderated mediation models have been shown to offer deeper insight into complex communication processes, especially in contexts involving attitude change and brand perception (Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007; O’Keefe, 2015). Applying this framework to country branding would provide a more nuanced understanding of the psychological pathways through which audiences interpret and internalize media content about nations, helping to differentiate between direct framing effects and those filtered through trust and credibility mechanisms (Metzger et al., 2003; Johnson & Kaye, 2015).

Methodologically, there is considerable scope for innovation. Longitudinal panel data, experimental designs, and mixed-method approaches—such as combining netnography with large-scale surveys—could yield more robust causal inferences and richer contextual understanding. Additionally, the use of computational tools such as natural language processing (NLP) and sentiment analysis (Thelwall, 2017) could allow researchers to map the evolution of public sentiment in real time across multiple media ecosystems.

In sum, advancing research in this area will require expanding the current variable framework to include overlooked psychological, informational, and algorithmic factors;

systematically isolating the effects of misinformation; investigating credibility as a dual-role variable; and employing advanced, multi-method designs. Addressing these gaps will enable scholars to develop more sophisticated and context-sensitive models of media influence, providing a deeper understanding of how country images are constructed, contested, and transformed in today's fragmented and algorithmically mediated communication environment.

1.5.4.4.Methods

The methodological review reveals that while interviews (22.73%) and questionnaires (15.91%) dominate data collection in country image and branding research, their reliance limits causal inference and the examination of contextual factors (Veal, 2017). Content analysis remains underused (4.55%), despite its potential to unpack media portrayals across formats (Neuendorf, 2017). Qualitative approaches such as focus groups and netnography are growing, yet few studies integrate them with advanced statistical modeling to explain complex media effects.

Analytically, Structural Equation Modeling (19.15%) is the most common technique, yet regression (4.26%) and other multivariate methods remain rare. This indicates missed opportunities for dynamic, theory-driven analysis, especially when studying nuanced variables such as media framing and credibility (Hair et al., 2019).

It would also be valuable to employ advanced analytical tools such as the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018) to systematically capture mediation, moderation, and moderated mediation effects in media influence research. This is particularly relevant for misinformation research, where message framing, credibility, and user traits interact in shaping perceptions (Tandoc et al., 2018; Bode & Vraga, 2018).

Examples of promising future applications include:

- Testing how emotional framing moderates fake news effects on perceived national safety.
- Exploring how message credibility mediates the link between social media exposure and travel intentions.
- Examining conditional processes where both message features and user predispositions shape outcomes.

Such approaches would better reflect the complexity of today's cross-platform, user-driven media environment and produce insights directly applicable to tourism boards, governments, and public diplomacy practitioners.

2. THE THEORY OF FAKE NEWS

2.1. Fake news definition

Based on the previous comprehensive review and synthesis of 52 scholarly articles, it becomes unequivocally clear that media plays a pivotal role in shaping the image and brand of a country. Across diverse disciplines and methodological approaches, nearly every study confirms the media's influence as a powerful force in constructing and altering public perceptions of nations. This extensive body of literature demonstrates that media—particularly through mechanisms such as valenced framing, repetition, symbolic cues, and source credibility—can significantly enhance or damage a country's brand equity. These effects occur via key mediating constructs, including symbolic associations, attitudes, emotions, and cognitive image structures.

Importantly, the cumulative evidence—spanning both qualitative and quantitative methodologies (e.g., Yoo & Buzinde, 2012; Ong & Ito, 2019; Kakirala & Singh, 2020; Nazir et al., 2021; Traberg et al., 2022)—establishes that media influence is not only theoretically sound but empirically measurable in the context of destination marketing and nation branding. Yet, despite this robust foundation, a critical gap remains: very few studies have explicitly examined the role of fake news and misinformation in shaping country image and brand equity. Given the rising prevalence, virality, and persuasive power of fake news in the digital age—as demonstrated by Vosoughi et al. (2018), Bastick (2021), and Qiu et al. (2023)—it is essential to extend current research to understand how disinformation, especially in positively or negatively valenced frames, may distort public perception and influence long-term attitudes toward countries.

This is particularly important as a growing body of research highlights that the persuasive power of fake news presents both qualitative and quantitative threats to the integrity of democratic systems worldwide. The widespread dissemination of fake news through social media platforms and its prevalence have prompted various fields of science to delve deeper into understanding the specific consequences and impacts associated with fake news.

Contemporary online fake news is highly pervasive and multifaceted, spanning a broad array of topics, adopting various stylistic formats, and disseminated across numerous digital platforms (Shu et al., 2017). However, this dissertation does not aim to explore the formation mechanisms or typologies of fake news in depth. Instead, the primary objective is to examine whether and to what extent fake news affects a country's brand equity. Accordingly, this research does not seek to determine whether a piece of news is fake, but rather assumes its falsity and focuses on assessing its potential to harm a country's brand equity. Given that this is among the first studies addressing

this specific issue, the initial step will be to clarify existing definitions and conceptualizations of fake news as a foundation for further analysis.

Differentiating fake news from state- or industry-sponsored disinformation campaigns, as well as from instances of poor journalism and ideologically biased reporting, poses a significant challenge (Silverman, 2016). There is ongoing debate surrounding the criteria for classifying content as "fake news," with no consensus reached yet. Moreover, labeling content as false often requires aligning it with a universally accepted truth, a task that is complex and may require collective agreement (Southwell et al., 2017). Establishing a universally accepted definition for "fake news" remains an ongoing and intricate process that necessitates thorough investigation and analysis of the content under scrutiny.

Despite extensive research dedicated to detecting fake news, significant debates and controversies persist regarding the definition of "fake news" and how it differs from the traditional concept of "misinformation" (Lewandowsky et al., 2017). Table 13 provides a comprehensive overview of the key definitions and conceptualizations of fake news as presented in the literature. The ambiguity arises from the unclear delineation of this phenomenon, as its resemblance to other forms of misleading content, such as hoaxes, conspiracy theories, misinformation, and disinformation, remains undefined (Di Domenico et al., 2021). Some experts contend that the pivotal distinction lies in the intent behind the content, with fake news deliberately crafted to mislead or deceive readers (Jack, 2017), whereas misinformation may be disseminated unintentionally (Hernon, 1995). Alternatively, others suggest that the disparity lies in the degree of factual accuracy and the extent to which the content can be independently verified (Southwell, Thorson, and Sheble, 2017).

Table 13. Overview of fake news definitions

Author(s)	Year	Definition/Description
Allcott & Gentzkow; Shu et al.	2017	Fake news is defined as a news article that is deliberately and demonstrably false, often known as deceptive news.
Kshetri & Voas	2017	Fake news is any news article or message published through media containing false information, regardless of intent.
Southwell, Thorson, & Sheble	2017	Distinguish fake news from misinformation and disinformation; stress difficulty in establishing a universally accepted definition.
Jack	2017	Fake news is deliberately crafted to mislead or deceive readers.
Lazer et al.	2018	Fake news is information that deviates from objective truth, mimics real news, and is intended to mislead.
Bondielli & Marcelloni	2019	Classify fake news into humorous fakes, serious fabrications, and large-scale hoaxes.

Grech	2017b	Categorizes fake news into seven types: satire, false connection, misleading, false content, imposter, manipulated, and fabricated content.
Tandoc, Lim, & Ling	2018	Types include news satire, parody, fabrication, manipulation, advertising, and propaganda.
Conroy, Rubin, & Chen	2015	Three types: Serious Fabrications, Large-Scale Hoaxes, and Humorous Fakes.
Zhang & Ghorbani	2020	Fake news includes all types of false stories primarily disseminated online with intent to mislead for financial or political gain.

Source: own elaboration, 2025

To define fake news precisely, it has been characterized as "a news article deliberately and demonstrably false" (Allcott and Gentzkow, 2017; Shu et al., 2017 p. 35), commonly known as deceptive news. Additionally, it is characterized as "a news article or message published and disseminated through media, containing false information irrespective of the means and motives behind it," which overlaps with terms like false news, disinformation (Kshetri & Voas, 2017 p.21), misinformation (Kucharski, 2016), satire news (Rubin et al., 2015), or even narratives disliked by individuals (Golbeck et al., 2018). Lazer et al. (2018) identified several key components of this definition. To begin with, fake news consists of information that deviates from an objective reference, meaning it is untrue. Secondly, fake news exhibits a tendency to mimic genuine content, presenting itself authentically and sometimes even resembling truth in certain aspects. Therefore, not all inaccurate information meets the criteria for fake news (only false information pretending to be true does), but all fake news inherently involves falsehoods. Lastly, fake news is distinguished by its intent to mislead, driven by an underlying motive.

Several scholars have been instrumental in defining and categorizing "fake news." Southwell, Thorson, and Sheble (2017) have made a clear distinction between misinformation and disinformation, underscoring the importance of establishing truth as a basis for defining misinformation. On the other hand, Bondielli and Marcelloni (2019) proposed a simple classification of various types of misinformation. They identified fake news as consisting of humorous fakes, serious fabrications, and large-scale hoaxes, while rumors encompass breaking news, long-standing rumors, and a category labeled "other," which includes clickbait and social spam. Consequently, these scholars have distinguished fake news from rumors and delineated three crucial aspects: (1) its form as a news article, (2) its deceptive intent, which can be either satirical or malicious, and (3) the verifiability of its content as either completely or partially false.

In his study, Grech (2017b) has categorized fake news into seven distinct types:

Satire or parody: This category involves content that is created to be humorous or satirical, with no intention to cause harm, but which can still deceive or confuse readers.

False connection: This type of fake news occurs when headlines, visuals, or captions do not match the actual content of the message, leading to misinterpretation.

Misleading content: Here, information is manipulated in a cynical or hypocritical manner to frame an issue or individual in a certain light.

False content: This category includes genuine information mixed with false contextual details, leading to misrepresentation.

Imposter content: In this type, sources are impersonated by false, fabricated sources, creating a false sense of credibility.

Manipulated content: This involves news that is factually accurate but presented in a highly biased or partisan manner, skewing the interpretation of events.

Fabricated content: Consisting mainly of outright false information, this category encompasses content that is entirely fabricated to deceive readers (Grech, 2017b).

Tandoc, Lim, and Ling (2018) have similarly categorized various types of fake news, including "news satire," "news parody," "fabrication," "manipulation," "advertising," and "propaganda." Within categories like "fabrication" and "manipulation," the intent to deceive becomes increasingly apparent. However, Conroy, Rubin, and Chen have outlined three distinct types of fake news: Serious Fabrications (Type A), Large-Scale Hoaxes (Type B), and Humorous Fakes (Type C). In simpler terms, fake news refers to news articles intentionally and demonstrably false that have the potential to mislead readers.

Rather than examining the diverse manifestations of fake news, which encompass false stories, images, reviews, or polls (Berthon & Pitt, 2018), Xichen Zhang and Ali A. Ghorbani offer a relatively uncommon definition focusing on the primary aim of such misinformation (2020, p.4). They define fake news as "all types of false stories or news primarily disseminated on the Internet with the intent to deliberately mislead, deceive, or entice readers for financial, political, or other gains." However, from an economic standpoint, the discourse surrounding fake news can be reconceived as a discussion concerning quality issues within news markets. For instance, the proliferation of fake news can have substantial economic repercussions, as it undermines the credibility of news sources and leads to a decrease in readership. The decline in readership, caused by the spread of fake news, can have a significant impact on the revenue of news organizations, limiting their ability to produce high-quality journalism. Furthermore, fake news has the potential to shape the public's perception of the media, leading to a loss of trust, and ultimately affecting democracy and society at large. In this context, fake news refers to any piece of information

intentionally and demonstrably false or capable of misleading readers about a particular context or brand. (Tandoc et al., 2018).

2.2.The power of fake news in comparison with real news.

The majority of research on fake news acknowledges its potent ability to shape beliefs and subsequently impact behaviors (Gross, 2017; Levy, 2017), primarily attributed to the heightened prevalence of negative emotions in fabricated news compared to authentic ones (Newman et al., 2003; Bastick, 2021).

Various empirical studies on fake news have explored different aspects, including linguistic features (Yang et al., 2020), temporal patterns of reposting (Mendoza, 2021; Zeng et al., 2017), and user characteristics (Castillo et al., 2011; Qazvinian et al., 2011; Zollo et al., 2019). Researchers have also noted distinct propagation networks for fake news compared to real news (Vosoughi, 2018), with fake news exhibiting unique network topologies even in the early stages of dissemination. This differentiation is evident in various propagation mechanisms, such as layer ratios, characteristic distances, and heterogeneity (Zhao et al., 2020). Contrary to conventional belief, false news is found to spread as widely as reliable news and often has a higher potential for sharing compared to content from credible sources (Qiu et al., 2023; Guadagno & Guttieri, 2019).

Several studies have examined disparities in the content of genuine and fake news articles, revealing that authentic news articles tend to be notably longer than fake news articles (Horne and Adali, 2017). Fake news articles often contain less substantive information, characterized by a higher level of redundancy, an abundance of adverbs, fewer nouns, fewer analytic words, and fewer direct quotes. Consequently, fake content exhibits closer resemblance to satire rather than genuine news.

Numerous studies have highlighted the widespread prevalence of fake news compared to genuine news. For instance, in an examination of the speed of falsehood diffusion, Vosoughi et al. (2018, p. 2) found that "falsehood diffused significantly farther, faster, deeper, and more broadly than the truth in all categories of information," and attributed this phenomenon to human dissemination rather than bot activity. The extensive dissemination of fake news can be attributed to the novelty factor and the emotional responses of recipients, which may contribute to the observed differences (Vosoughi et al., 2018). Additionally, researchers suggest that fake news is emotionally persuasive, eliciting stronger emotional reactions from consumers compared to truthful news stories (Ekman, 1992), and evoking more high-arousal emotions than genuine news stories (Vosoughi et al., 2018).

Furthermore, repeated exposure to false information can lead individuals to perceive it as truthful, even when the credibility of the source is questionable. Consequently, trust in reputable news organizations may diminish due to repeated exposure to fake news (Roggeveen and Johar, 2002). Shin et al. (2018), in their analysis of fake news tweets representing rumors, observed their tendency to circulate and resurface multiple times after initial publication, whereas factual information does not exhibit the same recurrence.

In particular, studies have revealed distinct emotional patterns in fake news articles compared to genuine ones. Fake news articles tend to exhibit higher levels of anger and disgust, along with lower levels of joy, in their content compared to real news stories (Paschen, J., 2020). Moreover, the titles of fake news articles are notably more emotionally charged and less neutral in sentiment than those of genuine news articles (Horne & Adali, 2017; Horne et al., 2018; Bastick, 2021). Negative message framing appears to be a strategy employed by fake news to attract audience attention and enhance recall (Mandler, 1982). Various studies have demonstrated the significant impact of negative emotions on message processing, as noted by Dens et al. (2008). Such studies have shown that provocative or disturbing content can be particularly effective in grabbing attention and cutting through the "information clutter," thus increasing the likelihood of the message being remembered and recalled later on. Indeed, research conducted by Cotte and Ritchie (2005) and Dahl et al. (2003) suggests that negative emotions can aid in the retrieval and recall of messages by enhancing the encoding and storage of information in memory.

Figure 5 summarizes the distinguishing characteristics of fake and real news, highlighting the heightened persuasive power and emotional impact of fake news. Overall, these findings underscore the importance of considering emotional content when crafting messages and communication strategies, as it can profoundly influence how well the message resonates with and is retained by the audience.

Figure 5. The distinguishing characteristics of fake and real news



2.3.The impact of fake news on consumer

The issue of fake news and its impact on consumers is a complex and multifaceted subject that warrants thorough investigation. To gain a deeper understanding of this issue, it's crucial to examine the various studies conducted on media and its effects across different domains. Despite increasing awareness of the negative consequences of fake news, some companies are introducing fake fact-checking software solutions that inadvertently exacerbate the problem (Weidner et al., 2019). This is because fake news is not static; it continually evolves, taking on different forms and disguises that can be challenging to identify. It has adapted to various mediums and channels over time (Rojecki & Meraz, 2016; Paschen, 2020). Although Google and Facebook have actively sought to remove fake news websites from their ad revenue programs since 2016 (Anderson, 2021; Verstraete et al., 2021), and researchers have proposed different models to detect and mitigate fake news and misinformation spread (Kim et al., 2019), disinformation often outwits machine algorithms due to its complexity (Braun & Eklund, 2019).

Fake news has significant repercussions on businesses and brands, impacting their operations, values, and reputation. In today's world, reputational risk is a critical asset, particularly for industries such as financial institutions and banks, which can suffer substantial losses due to these risks (Fiordelisi et al., 2013).

Hence, fake news can impact businesses in two ways: directly and indirectly. Direct involvement occurs when a brand is targeted by fake news or when it directly supports a fake news website (Jahng, 2021). Conversely, indirect involvement happens when individuals share fake news, and the associated imagery becomes linked with a particular brand. This association can

lead to brand contamination, as consumers may unconsciously link the brand with the fake news item. Therefore, it is crucial for brands to recognize the potential for indirect involvement with fake news and take appropriate steps to safeguard their image and reputation. Berthon et al. (2018) emphasize that failing to address this issue can lead to considerable negative repercussions on a brand's long-term success and profitability.

Vafeiadis et al. (2019) elucidated that fake news carries a significant risk to reputation, particularly when it involves brands (Jahng, 2021). This reputational risk can lead to negative perceptions among stakeholders and economic agents, resulting in adverse effects on sustainability, corporate or brand image, and stakeholder engagement (Gonzalez Sanchez & Morales de Vega, 2018). Moreover, it's important to note that the influence of fake news in the digital realm extends beyond political or social issues to impact brand loyalty. Numerous studies have investigated brand loyalty, revealing that younger consumers demonstrate lower levels of loyalty compared to older generations due to factors like abundant choices and easy access to information. Consequently, younger consumers are more inclined to switch between brands and explore new ones, a behavior that has become commonplace among this demographic and poses a challenge for brands seeking to maintain customer loyalty (Walls, 2015). This heightened susceptibility of customer segments to negative brand association with unreliable sources presents an additional challenge for companies, rendering them more vulnerable to the diverse impacts of fake news (Valaei & Nikhashemi, 2017).

Understanding these threads has motivated researchers to intensify their scrutiny of the consequences wrought by fake news. Such investigations have revealed the potent ability of fake content to incite crises or crisis-like situations (Coombs & Holladay, 2012), affect human attitudes and behavior (Bastick, 2021; Isaak & Hanna, 2018; Johnson, 2018; Ioannidis, 2020; Kouzy et al., 2020), impacting not only individual decision-making processes but also entire populations, shaping their beliefs and biases (Di Domenico et al., 2021), and leading to negative economic ramifications (Fedeli, 2020). Moreover, in the business sector, fake news can paradoxically contribute to boosting a company's stock price and asset value (Laouiti et al., 2016).

Hence, marketing research has embarked on investigating the adverse impact of social media misinformation on brands (Berduygina et al., 2019; Berthon & Pitt, 2018). Some studies have proposed various response strategies for companies to maintain brand stability and mitigate the potential repercussions of fake news on brands (Mills & Robson, 2020; Vafeiadis et al., 2019). Other researchers have focused on improving fact-checking procedures, evaluating how presenting evidence of facts post fake news dissemination can influence individuals to reconsider their beliefs (Talwar et al., 2019; Wang, 2015). Scholars have also explored potential factors influencing

sharing behavior, such as media trust, self-efficacy, the abundance and consistency of available information (Chen & Cheng, 2019; Munzel, 2016). Additionally, in investigating the impact of associating fake news with a brand advertisement, Visentin and colleagues (2019) found that self-perceived efficacy in detecting deception does not significantly affect attitudes toward the brand.

3. COUNTRY AS a BRAND EQUITY

As the media serves as a conduit between brands and society, the impact and sensitivity of exposure to fake news can vary depending on the type of brands involved (Anholt, 2007, p. 39). These brands can be classified into private domain brands, which are managed by boards, own private domain brands, and public domain brands that belong to no specific entity (Beckett, 2000). Public domain brands encompass entities such as countries, cities, regions, races, demographic groups, and even individual people. Managing a country's branding program is particularly challenging due to centralized control and limited transparency, as countries are complex, multifaceted, and ever-changing entities shaped by public interests. As a result, the effects of exposure to fake news can extend beyond a country's business sector, influencing its diplomatic relationships as well. With this in mind, it is important to delve deeper into what defines a country brand.

3.1. Country brand

Despite the increasing academic and practical interest in country brand, a universally accepted definition remains elusive. An early definition by Kotler, P., & Gertner, D. (2007) emphasizes the crucial role of governments in shaping a country's brand. They argue that governments must actively create, promote, and manage the brand, aligning it with national interests and priorities. Aronczyk (2008) highlights the strategic purpose of a country brand, suggesting that it should attract investment, tourism, trade, and talent, thus directly contributing to economic benefits. Fetscherin (2010) notes that a country brand is complex, encompassing multiple levels, elements, and disciplines, and involving a wide range of stakeholders. It covers the country's overall image, including political, economic, social, environmental, historical, and cultural dimensions. Similarly, Fan (2010) and Dinnie (2008) describe a country brand as a multi-dimensional blend of elements that form a nation's image.

For this study, it is essential to focus on the idea that a country brand is strategically built and managed (Knott et al., 2015) to highlight its unique attributes (Pappu and Quester, 2010). This strategic differentiation helps consumers assess products from the country and shapes their purchasing decisions (Kotler and Gertner, 2011).

Branding as a process aims to shape how consumers perceive a brand, guiding them in forming their impressions and understanding of what the brand represents. A brand isn't just a product or service; it's something that stands out in the market due to its distinct positioning and personality. This personality blends practical aspects, such as the quality or features of a product,

with symbolic elements, like the feelings or values that the brand evokes (Hankinson, 2007). Essentially, a brand is built from a combination of tangible attributes—such as its design, performance, or packaging—and intangible qualities, like the emotions or beliefs people hold about it (Simoes & Dibb, 2001).

Montanari and Giraldi (2018) discovered that a country brand is shaped through a strategic process called country branding. Country branding extends branding concepts to geographical locations, treating countries as brands. The idea is to develop a unique identity for a place, emphasizing what makes it special and appealing. This involves creating a narrative or image of the country that combines practical aspects—such as infrastructure or attractions—with emotional and strategic elements, like its cultural vibe, values, and future vision. The goal of country branding is to shape how people perceive that location, whether it's potential tourists, investors, or residents. It aims to create a set of positive associations in the minds of the public, making the place stand out from others in a competitive global landscape (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005).

This process covers the entire journey from developing the country brand to effectively delivering its message to various target groups. Unlike the branding of products and services, country branding is more complex, involving elements like a nation's identity, positioning, and overall image. A central aspect of this process is the country's image, which reflects the perceptions that international consumers have about it. This image plays a crucial role in enhancing the strength and appeal of the country brand (Montanari & Giraldi, 2018)

3.2. Country image

A country image can be seen in different ways. Nagashima (1977) defines it as the reputation or stereotype attached to a country's products, shaped by factors like key products, national traits, and history. Martin & Eroglu (1993) describe it as the sum of all beliefs and information people have about a country, influenced by its geography, history, and famous figures (Kotler & Gertner, 2007). Verlegh (2005) views it as a mental network of emotional and cognitive associations. Another perspective sees it as the simplified sum of beliefs and impressions people form based on large amounts of information about a place (Kotler & Gertner, 2011).

This image consists of two key components: cognitive and affective (Campo & Alvarez, 2010). The affective component relates to emotions and feelings associated with a place (Maher & Carter, 2014), while the cognitive component involves the beliefs and opinions that people form about a destination (Beerlí & Martín, 2004). Scott (1965) defines the cognitive image component as an intellectual assessment of a product's known attributes, while Boulding (1956) describes it

as fact-based perceptions. This component reflects accumulated beliefs and attitudes, shaped largely by the amount of external information received. Studies indicate that in developed countries, the cognitive aspect tends to have a stronger impact on the overall image (Qu, Kim, & Im, 2011). However, in developing countries—especially those with negative perceptions or those not yet visited by tourists—the affective component becomes more important (Campo & Alvarez, 2014; Lepp, Gibson, & Lane, 2011).

In addition to the cognitive and affective dimensions, Roth and Diamantopoulos (2009) highlight a third element: the behavioural dimension. This dimension refers to people's actions or intentions, such as their willingness to visit a country, invest in it, or purchase products originating from that location.

Gunn (1988) outlined a seven-stage process for how a destination's image develops over time: (1) forming initial mental images based on general information (organic image), (2) refining these images through targeted information like ads (induced image), (3) deciding to take a vacation, (4) travelling to the destination, (5) experiencing the destination, (6) returning home, and (7) adjusting the image based on actual trip experiences (firsthand experience).

The critical stages in this image formation process are stages 1, 2, and 7, where perceptions of the destination are formed, refined, and ultimately reshaped. During stage 1, the traveller first develops an initial perception of the destination, influenced by their prior knowledge or general information. This perception is then altered in stage 2, as they receive more targeted information. After visiting the destination and returning home, stage 7 involves the final reshaping of the image based on the actual experiences during the trip, leading to a more comprehensive and realistic perception of the place. (Hassan, A., & Shabani, N. (2017))

Since the introduction of this framework, research has primarily focused on these stages, but only a few studies have examined how the destination image evolves over the entire travel experience, considering the before, during, and after stages of a trip (Croy & Wheeler, 2007; Matos et al., 2015). These studies suggest that a destination's image is not static; it continues to evolve as travelers progress through different stages of their journey, ultimately shaping a nuanced and dynamic understanding of the place.

3.3. Country image vs brand

Cai (2002) was the first to emphasize that image is just one component of a country's brand, albeit the most crucial one. His research centred on tourism and the development of countries as desirable destinations, and introduced the concept of "destination equity," which pertains to the

value a destination holds in travellers' minds. By extrapolating country brand equity, he laid the theoretical groundwork for this assertion. Subsequent scholarly investigations, such as those by Aaker (1996), Keller (1993), and Konecnik and Gartner (2011), have supported this notion and empirically demonstrated that image plays a pivotal role in shaping a country's brand.

In exploring the intricate relationship between a country's image and its brand, the marketing field distinguishes three key aspects: the country's true essence or "identity," how it is perceived by outsiders or its "image," and the desired reputation it seeks to establish in the global arena, known as its "brand" (Hospers, 2004).

While image is recognized as a component of a country's brand, the essence of country-branding definitions often revolves around the construction of this image (Fan, 2010). This country image is comprised of a variety of elements, including but not limited to history, geography, industry, culture, media, tourism, art and music, notable individuals, and commercial products (Kotler and Gertner, 2007; Kubacki and Skinner, 2006).

A well-established image is considered a valuable asset for country branding (Hakala, Lemmetyinen & Kantola, 2013), with a positive reputation being the desired outcome (Knott, Fyall & Jones, 2015). However, research indicates that a country's image can be shaped by various factors, including media coverage (Hall, 2003), major events (Heslop et al., 2013; Heslop, Nadeau, & O'Reilly, 2010), and political conflicts (Heslop, Lu, & Cray, 2008). These studies also reveal that people's perceptions of a country are often influenced by negative or inconsistent stereotypes, leading to a distorted image. As such, a strategic branding approach is essential to counteract these misconceptions and protect the value of a country's brand (Dinnie, 2008).

Some studies suggest that when negative events or media portrayals occur, changes to a country's image are typically slow and often temporary, affecting only certain aspects of the destination (Gartner and Shen, 1992; Ritchie and Smith, 1991). Without additional positive events to reinforce a new image, perceptions generally revert to their original state. Although previous research has not found substantial shifts in the overall image of a country, specific elements of the country's brand can be significantly influenced by negative or positive events. Therefore, these dynamics are closely linked and should be evaluated alongside competitive traits (Castro & Giraldi, 2018). For example, when developing a country brand's logo or slogan, understanding the country's external image can provide valuable guidance on key elements to emphasize (Montanari & Giraldi, 2018).

In addition, emphasizing a country's awareness and perceived quality is crucial in country branding efforts. For a country to build brand equity in the minds of consumers, it must first

achieve a certain level of recognition and awareness (Pappu & Quester, 2010). Awareness reflects how familiar people are with the country and its products, serving as a foundation for positive perceptions. Effective branding should aim not only to boost this awareness but also to reshape or enhance existing stereotypes (Hakala, Lemmetyinen & Kantola, 2013). This process is closely tied to shaping a positive country image, as increased awareness can influence how a country is viewed on a global scale. Through strategic branding, countries can better position themselves, alter outdated perceptions, and ensure that their strengths and values resonate with both international audiences and local stakeholders (Montanari & Giraldi, 2018).

In light of this, it's important to recognize that a country that manufactures a diverse range of products establishes distinct country equities for each product category and market. This leads to the development of a multi-tiered country brand structure (Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2002), wherein brand equity is present at both the national and product-specific levels (Douglas, et al., 2001).

There are two main methods for measuring a country brand, drawn from corporate branding: the consumer-based and the company-based brand equity approaches (Atilgan et al., 2009). The consumer-based approach focuses on how consumers perceive the brand and the value they attribute to it, typically using survey data to assess brand perception (Zeugner-Roth et al., 2008). The second is the company-based approach, often called the financial approach (Kim et al., 2003). It views brand equity as the brand's total value as a distinct asset (Atilgan et al., 2009). It uses a top-down method, assessing a country's performance through indicators like export levels (Kotler and Gertner, 2011), tourism attraction (Caldwell and Freire, 2004), and foreign direct investment (FDI) (Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2002).

Given its comprehensive scope, we have opted for the consumer-based equity approach, utilizing data for analysis. Many researchers consider country equity to be synonymous with the equity of a country brand, often applying consumer-oriented brand equity theory to understand it (de Chernatony et al., 1995; Papadopoulos, 2004; Pappu and Quester, 2010).

3.4. Country brand equity

The notion of brand equity has expanded to encompass the concept of country brand equity (CBE) (Zeugner-Roth et al., 2008), which refers to the collective brand equity of products originating from a particular country. Brand equity, as described in branding literature, is a multi-dimensional concept (Yoo et al., 2000) used to examine consumers' brand assessments, preferences, and purchase intentions (Christodoulides and de Chernatony, 2010). Kleppe, Iversen,

and Stensaker (2002, p. 2) defined "country equity" as the consumer affect toward a brand or product that originates solely from its associations with a specific country.

Consumer-oriented brand equity approach combines models by Aaker (1996) and Keller (1993) to measure brand equity across dimensions such as awareness, associations, perceived quality, brand loyalty, and other brand assets (Aaker, 1996). However, alternate studies propose dimensions like awareness and brand image (Keller, 1993); brand loyalty, perceived quality, and awareness/associations (Yoo and Donthu, 2001; Yoo et al., 2000). When tackling fake news targeting brands, a crucial aspect to consider when devising a response strategy is the level of consumer attachment to the brand. This attachment encompasses various factors such as loyalty to the country, perceptions of quality, associations and awareness related to the country, and the media narratives that influence the overall perception of the country brand.

Brand awareness encompasses both brand recognition and recall (Yoo and Donthu, 2001). In a manner similar to Aaker's (1992) concept of brand awareness, "country awareness extends beyond mere familiarity with the country; it involves the ability to recall the country's name when the product category is mentioned" (Pappu and Quester, 2010, p. 280).

Similarly, Netemeyer et al. (2004, p. 210) defined **perceived quality** as "the customer's assessment of the overall excellence, esteem, or superiority of a brand compared to other brands." Aaker (1992) suggests that **perceived quality** doesn't necessarily equate to actual quality; instead, it represents a mental perception held by consumers about quality. Kirmani, A., & Zeithaml, V. (2013) extends this concept to countries, asserting that perceived quality reflects the quality perceived by consumers of a product originating from a specific country. Thus, this perspective isn't merely a symbolic representation of perceived quality within country branding; rather, it denotes an impact at the product level stemming from the country-of-origin effect (Pappu and Quester, 2010).

Brand loyalty is widely recognized as a multidimensional construct that goes beyond simple repurchasing behavior. Traditionally, it has been defined as the intention to consistently choose a particular brand as the preferred option (Yoo & Donthu, 2001). Olson and Jacoby (1971) identified four types of brand loyalty: *behavioral*, *attitudinal*, *multi-brand*, and *general-brand loyalty*. Subsequent research has primarily focused on two dominant dimensions: *behavioral loyalty* and *attitudinal loyalty* (Bandyopadhyay & Martell, 2007; Dick & Basu, 1994; Ball et al., 2004). *Behavioral brand loyalty* is typically measured through observable actions such as repeat purchase, frequency of recommendation, or duration of customer relationship (Hallowell, 1996; Homburg & Giering, 2001). In contrast, *attitudinal brand loyalty* refers to the emotional and

cognitive attachment a consumer develops toward a brand, reflecting a more enduring and affective commitment (Kumar & Shah, 2004; Bennett & Rundle-Thiele, 2002; Shankar et al., 2003). This form of loyalty, often termed “emotional loyalty,” is considered more stable and long-lasting (Hofmeyr & Rice, 2000).

Importantly, *attitudinal brand loyalty* is largely shaped by media influence, especially in the context of brand communication and symbolic meaning creation. Media exposure plays a central role in constructing and reinforcing consumer perceptions, values, and emotional ties to brands (MacInnis & Jaworski, 1989; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Studies demonstrate that advertising, social media content, and news narratives contribute significantly to the development of brand-related beliefs and attitudes (de Vries et al., 2012). Emotional appeals and narrative storytelling in media are particularly effective in cultivating *long-term attitudinal loyalty* (Escalas, 2004; Heath, Brand & Nairn, 2006).

This dynamic also applies to country brands. *Attitudinal country brand loyalty*, as defined by Paswan et al. (2003), refers to the emotional attachment and psychological commitment individuals feel toward a country—whether as a place of origin, travel destination, or cultural identity. Like corporate brands, country brands are built on symbolic associations and narratives, often formed and perpetuated through media. Research shows that media exposure—especially in the form of news coverage, influencer content, and advertising—can significantly influence international audiences' affective and cognitive responses to a country (Avraham, 2020; Anholt, 2007). Therefore, in the context of this research, it is precisely *attitudinal loyalty toward a country brand* that will be investigated, as it reflects the deeper psychological mechanisms through which media—particularly fake news—shapes long-term perceptions and brand equity. Importantly, attitudinal loyalty can develop even in the absence of direct, first-hand experience with the country, being formed instead through mediated representations, symbolic associations, and repeated exposure to persuasive narratives (Prentice & Andersen, 2003; Pike & Ryan, 2004; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999).

Brand associations, as described by Keller (1993), comprise the beliefs and attitudes consumers have about a brand, including its benefits (Yoo and Donthu, 2001). Expanding on Keller's concept, country association refers to the mental images consumers hold about a country and how these influence decision-making. Country associations operate at both the country and product levels. Derived from country-of-origin image theory, the product level suggests that associations about products related to the country of origin also impact the country's image. Consequently, some authors term these concept country-of-origin associations (Kleppe et al.,

2002). Likewise, like the differentiation between micro and macro levels of country image, various authors make a clear distinction between micro and macro country associations (Pappu et al., 2007; Pappu and Quester, 2010).

The concept of *brand association* encompasses a broad set of constructs that define how consumers relate to and interpret a brand. Traditionally, brand associations are categorized into five key dimensions: *perceived quality*, *functional features*, *symbolic associations*, *emotional associations*, and *innovation* (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). Each of these variables plays a distinct role in shaping the consumer's holistic image of the brand. However, in the context of studying the impact of fake news on country brand, focusing on all five dimensions may dilute analytical clarity. Given that fake news primarily operates through symbolic cues, emotional manipulation, and identity-relevant narratives, *symbolic brand associations* are the most directly affected dimension (Berthon & Pitt, 2018).

Symbolic brand associations refer to the psychological, social, or cultural meanings consumers attach to a brand—meanings that help individuals construct and communicate their self-identity, group affiliation, and social values (Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Aaker, 1997). Unlike functional features, which are grounded in tangible product performance, symbolic associations are *primarily derived from mediated representations*, storytelling, and collective imagery. In the context of country branding, this is especially critical, as nations are frequently judged not on empirical data but on *symbolic meanings constructed and reinforced through media content* (Avraham, 2015; Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015).

Research shows that symbolic meanings—such as modernity, hospitality, corruption, or threat—are not intrinsic to a country's reality but are often *framed and disseminated through media coverage, films, tourism campaigns, and especially news narratives* (Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2002; Jansen, 2008). These representations shape the symbolic dimension of brand image by *repeating emotionally salient messages* that resonate with social identity and values. Media effects theory supports this view: agenda-setting, framing, and cultivation theories all demonstrate that *media not only tells us what to think about but also how to interpret a place or actor* symbolically (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Entman, 1993; Gerbner, 1998).

Moreover, *fake news and misinformation disproportionately target symbolic dimensions*, as these are more *emotionally charged, identity-relevant, and memorable* than factual content (Vosoughi et al., 2018; Bastick, 2021). As a result, the symbolic associations attached to country brands are particularly vulnerable to distortion, exaggeration, or erosion under media

manipulation. Given their media-dependency, symbolic brand associations are the most sensitive indicator of media impact in the national context and thus serve as the *most appropriate construct for examining how fake news affects country brand equity*. Prior research supports this choice, demonstrating that symbolic associations are more susceptible to media framing and misinformation than functional dimensions (Keller, 2008; Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2002).

A critical subcomponent of symbolic association is *personality congruence*, which refers to the perceived alignment between the symbolic traits of a country and the personal identity or values of the observer (Eisend & Stokburger-Sauer, 2013; Swaminathan et al., 2007). In essence, consumers tend to develop loyalty toward brands that align with their actual or ideal self-concept, reflecting how they see themselves or aspire to be perceived. (Ong et al., 2018; Abimbola et al., 2012). Moreover, exposure to emotionally engaging media representations enhances perceived similarity and identity fit, leading consumers to feel that the brand reflects “who they are” or “who they aspire to be” (Escalas & Bettman, 2005). Personality congruence is largely shaped by information consumers perceive, much of which is mediated through media exposure and brand communications. This alignment between a consumer’s self-concept and brand personality does not occur in a vacuum; rather, it is formed through *consistent messaging, symbolic cues, and emotional narratives* communicated across various media channels (Aaker, 1997; Escalas & Bettman, 2003).

3.5. Hypotheses on the Impact of Valenced Fake News Frames on Country Brand Equity

This study investigates the impact of fake news on Country Brand Equity (CBE) and its constituent dimensions, where CBE is defined as the value attributed to a country as a brand—particularly in relation to how consumers perceive products, services, and overall associations linked to that country (Zeugner-Roth et al., 2008). To ensure the accuracy and relevance of our research, we’re using widely accepted scales to measure CBE. In contrast to other research, such as that conducted by Pappu et al. (2007) and Sharma et al. (2017), which concentrates on applying CBE to product categories rather than individual country brands, our study takes a different approach. Furthermore, while Zeugner-Roth et al. (2008) examine CBE as a second-order factor and Pappu and Quester (2010) primarily measure CBE, they do not investigate the chain of effects proposed in our study.

To fill the gaps in existing research, our study will build upon the CBE concepts proposed by Boo et al. (2009) and Konecnik and Gartner (2007), which highlight the significance of brand loyalty, awareness, and quality dimensions. Additionally, we will draw on the insights from Yoo

and Donthu (2001) regarding perceived association to ensure a thorough analysis of CBE dimensions. By integrating these various perspectives, we aim to offer a more intricate and comprehensive understanding of how fake news affects CBE and its components.

Given that individuals' perceptions of foreign countries can be influenced by the emotional tone (valence) of social media (Manheim and Albritton, 1984, 1994), this study employs both positive and negative valenced fake news frames to examine their direct impact on country brand equity.

While there hasn't been an in-depth exploration of the direct relationship between news or fake news and the dimensions of country brand equity, according to the applicability effect (Cacciatore et al., 2016; Price & Tewksbury, 1997; Price et al., 1997), biased encoding results in the activation of positive or negative valenced knowledge that is then applied in subsequent estimations. In simpler terms, positive frames identify favourable associations leading to positive estimations, while negative frames lead to negative estimations. This phenomenon is referred to as a “valence-consistent shift” (Levin et al., 1998, p. 160), wherein negative frames do not evoke more positive evaluations than positive frames, demonstrating a consistent pattern where positive and negative frames predominantly produce positive and negative associations, respectively.

Hence, grounded in the theoretical framework, the initial two hypotheses focus on the direct impact of framing on participants' perceptions of country.

Hypothesis 1: Exposure to negatively framed fake news adversely impacts attitudes toward key dimensions of a country brand equity, including (a) brand awareness, (b) symbolic brand associations, (c) perceived brand quality, and (d) attitudinal brand loyalty.

Hypothesis 2: Exposure to positively framed fake news has a favourable effect on attitudes toward key dimensions of a country's brand, including (a) brand awareness, (b) symbolic brand associations, (c) perceived brand quality, and (d) attitudinal brand loyalty.

Based on an extensive body of research, it is suggested that negative and positive information exhibit asymmetry (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979), wherein negative information tends to have a stronger impact on individuals' attitudes than positive information (Peeters & Czapinski, 1990; Baumeister et al., 2001; Luo, 2009). Research dedicated to negative bias indicates that negative information receives greater attention in attitudes and cognition (Rozin et al., 2001), judgments and decisions (Kahneman et al., 2000), and is more salient and memorable (Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1991; Lau, 1985), with arguments against being more persuasive than arguments in favour (Cobb & Kuklinski, 1997).

Building on supportive research demonstrating the superiority of the negativity effect (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2003; Mittal et al., 1998), this study anticipates that negative-valenced fake news will have a stronger framing effect on judgments.

Hypothesis 3: The impact of negatively valenced fake news is stronger than the impact of positive ones on (a) *country brand awareness*; (b) *symbolic brand association*; (c) *brand quality*; (d) *attitudinal brand loyalty*

According to the majority of studies, it's recognized that the image of a country also plays a mediating role on consumer intentions by directly influencing perceptions of products and brands (Pharr, 2005). In line with this, Peterson and Jolibert (1995), as well as Pharr (2005), advocate for examining the conative and cognitive effects of the country image separately, considering the hierarchical ordering of consumer responses to the country of origin. Consequently, this study distinguishes between cognitive and affective country images, focusing solely on the cognitive image component (Gartner, 1993) due to the assertion that the framing process interacts with readers' cognitive structure through "meaning construction" or framing (Pan & Kosicki, 1997). Thus, it assumes that:

Hypothesis 4: Cognitive image component will mediate the relationships between valenced fake news frames and dimensions of country brand equity.

4. CREDIBILITY

Applying news credibility to fake news, the concept of message credibility has been borrowed from the communication area, where it is defined as the believability of some information (Hovland & al., 1953) assisting in shaping the judgments of recipients (Oyedeki, 2010).

Taking into account only credible information by the reader generates a substantial role of information credibility in every field (Gräfe & Maaß, 2015, p. 173) and especially in the areas acquiring the intangible nature of the product (which offers very limited physical cues for evaluation) and the economic and psychological risks associated with decision-making (Loda & al., 2009). As Flanagin and Metzger (2000) have shown, news is rated as more credible than any other media content, especially advertisements. Comparing different news channels, Kiouisis (2001) found that regardless of the media outlet, 85 to 92 percent of the respondents rated news as moderately or even highly credible.

Thus, credibility is an essential quality of a piece of news that influences readers' subsequent behavior. Believability can be a critical determinant of social media usage because when someone believes the information to be correct, they are more likely to engage with it or encourage its spread by sharing it themselves (Johnson & Kaye, 2015). Studies on news perceptions have shown that believability affects a variety of social media activities, including reading, liking, commenting, and sharing (Kim & Dennis, 2019; Kim et al., 2019; Moravec et al., 2019).

The vast majority of studies devoted to credibility and its impact on attitude have been undertaken in the marketing field, where the importance of information expertise and trustworthiness were identified as crucial factors in distinguishing attitudes and informational acceptance (Pornpitakpan 2004; Cheung et al., 2009; Jin et al. 2009). For instance, some studies have depicted credibility as having a positive influence on attitude change (Ohanian, 1990), and a positive relationship has been found between source credibility and information usefulness (Jin et al., 2009) and between source credibility factors and intention to purchase (Ohanian 1991; Cronin and Taylor 1992).

Due to the empirically established direct relationship between credibility and consumer attitudes (Jin et al., 2009), as well as between credibility and behavioral outcomes such as purchase intention (Ohanian, 1991; Cronin & Taylor, 1992), researchers have increasingly investigated how media framing—particularly in the form of positive or negative valence—interacts with perceived trustworthiness. Studies suggest that messages framed positively (e.g., highlighting a country's

innovation or hospitality) or negatively (e.g., associating it with corruption or conflict) can either enhance or undermine perceived credibility, which in turn affects brand associations and behavioral responses (Kim & Fesenmaier, 2008; Appelman & Sundar, 2016). This framing effect becomes especially salient in the context of fake news, where the credibility of the information source influences the extent to which audiences internalize and act upon the presented content (Tsfati & Cappella, 2003). Research also shows that low-credibility messages can still influence perceptions if repeated frequently or if they align with existing schemas, further complicating the relationship between framing, credibility, and consumer judgment (Berinsky, 2017; Pennycook et al., 2018). As such, understanding the interplay between message framing and perceived credibility is essential for evaluating how fake news can shape country brand equity through symbolic associations and trust-based judgments.

According to models of framing effects, such as the equivalence framing effects described by Levin et al. (1998) and Price & Tewksbury (1997), negative frames temporarily activate knowledge associated with negativity (such as high credibility), while positive frames increase the activation of positivity (such as low credibility) (Nelson, Oxley, and Clawson, 1997; Price et al., 1997). In line with this, two studies have addressed this research gap from a psychological perspective. Hilbig (2009, 2012a) presented participants with statements framed both positively and negatively and asked them to determine their veracity. Negatively framed statements, such as "20% of all marriages end in divorce within the first 10 years," received higher truth ratings than the equivalent positively framed statement that "80% of marriages last 10 years or longer" (Hilbig 2009).

Therefore, based on the theoretical rationale our current study claims that

Hypothesis 5: Negatively framed fake news has a greater impact on perceived news credibility compared to positively framed fake news.

The vast majority of studies devoted to credibility and its impact on attitude have been undertaken in the marketing field, where the importance of information expertise and trustworthiness were identified as crucial factors in distinguishing attitudes and informational acceptance (Pornpitakpan 2004; Cheung et al., 2008; Jin et al. 2009). For instance, some studies have depicted credibility as having a positive influence on attitude change (Ohanian, 1990), and a positive relationship has been found between source credibility and information usefulness (Jin et al., 2009) and between source credibility factors and intention to purchase (Ohanian 1991; Cronin and Taylor 1992).

Due to the empirically established mediating role of perceived credibility in misinformation susceptibility (Traberg et al., 2022; Traberg et al., 2024; Rijo & Waldzus, 2023), credibility is considered a pivotal psychological mechanism that influences how individuals interpret and respond to media content. Specifically, perceived credibility acts as a filter through which information is judged, either reinforcing or weakening the message's persuasive impact. When individuals perceive news—especially emotionally framed or controversial content—as credible, they are more likely to internalize the message, which in turn shapes their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors (Tsftati & Cappella, 2003). In the context of country branding, credibility mediates the relationship between media exposure (e.g., fake news) and evaluations of country brand equity. Individuals with higher levels of trust in media or particular information sources are more susceptible to shifts in perception based on the valence and framing of the content (Flanagin & Metzger, 2007). This mediating effect is especially critical when misinformation is present, as trust can amplify both positive and negative brand associations depending on the perceived authenticity of the message (Vraga & Tully, 2021). Consequently, in this study, credibility is modeled as a central mediator linking fake news exposure to country brand equity.

Hypothesis 6: Credibility will mediate the relationships between valenced fake news frames and country brand equity.

Many studies show that country image serves as a key mediator in shaping consumer intentions by influencing how people perceive a country's products, services, and brand reputation (Pharr, 2005). Consequently, we propose that *perceived credibility and cognitive image will sequentially mediate the relationship between valenced fake news frames and country brand equity*. This sequential mediation is supported by prior studies in media and destination branding, which underscore the combined influence of source trustworthiness and cognitive image components in shaping consumer evaluations and decision-making (Han & Hwang, 2018; Marine-Roig, 2017).

Hypothesis 7: Credibility and Cognitive image component will sequentially mediate the relationship between valenced fake news frames and country brand equity.

5. CONSTRUAL – LEVEL THEORY

5.1. Construal level theory framework

Construal-Level Theory (CLT) proposes that how we perceive and evaluate things is influenced by psychological distance. This distance can be understood in terms of various dimensions such as temporal (time-related), spatial (physical distance), and social (relationship-related). According to CLT, the further away something is psychologically, the more abstractly we tend to think about it, and vice versa. For example, if something is far away in time, space, or social relation, we may think about it more abstractly, focusing on its broader aspects rather than specific details. Conversely, when something is closer to us psychologically, we tend to think about it more concretely, paying attention to finer details. This theory helps to explain how our perceptions and evaluations of objects or events can vary depending on the perceived psychological distance (Trope and Liberman 2003).

At the heart of the proposed theory lies a functional approach to understanding construal levels. This perspective suggests that mental processes of construal help navigate psychological distances and shift between proximal and distant viewpoints regarding objects. Spatial dimension, or physical closeness, pertains to how far an individual is from where an event takes place (Stephan et al., 2010). Social proximity, on the other hand, concerns how intimately one perceives another person either individually or as part of a group (Nan, 2007). Temporal proximity refers to when an event occurs—whether it's imminent or in the future—and how this timing influences individuals' perceptions of the event (Trope & Liberman, 2010).

Studies indicate that how people interpret events significantly impacts their decision-making and assessments. Drawing from theories on categorization (Rosch, 1975), concept formation (Medin & Smith, 1984), and action identification (Vallacher & Wegner, 1987), researchers propose that high-level construals involve abstract, general, structured, overarching, and context-independent characteristics, whereas low-level construals consist of concrete, unstructured, specific, incidental, and context-dependent features (Liberman & Trope 1998; Trope & Liberman 2003, 2010).

Transitioning from a tangible depiction of an object to a more conceptual representation involves preserving essential characteristics while disregarding incidental ones. Abstract representations, by their nature, select one interpretation among several alternatives, simplifying the depiction, reducing ambiguity, enhancing coherence, embodying a schema, and embodying a prototype. It's worth noting that higher-level construals aren't merely vague or less detailed compared to lower-level construals (Smith, 1998). In fact, they often provide additional insights

into the value of the stimulus and its relationships with other stimuli, for instance, when contemplating a car at a higher level of abstraction, considerations might include its features and how it aligns with one's lifestyle, whereas at a lower level, the focus might be solely on its physical attributes. This distinction arises because higher levels of abstraction entail fewer concrete details about the specific action, objects, and immediate context, while offering more insights into the general meaning and significance of the action (Semin & Fiedler, 1988; Trope, 1989).

In simpler terms, according to Construal Level Theory (CLT), when we're thinking about events that feel emotionally or mentally close to us, we tend to use specific and detailed thoughts. But when we're considering events that feel psychologically distant, we're more likely to think in broader, more abstract terms (Trope & Liberman 2003, 2010). CLT suggests that as the distance, whether in time or space, from an object increases, we tend to use higher levels of abstraction to think about it. This is because these broader concepts are less affected by changes in our proximity to the object. So, when we're thinking about something far off in the future or happening to someone else, we're more inclined to focus on the big picture rather than the nitty-gritty details (Semin & Fiedler, 1988; Trope, 1989).

However, the relationship between construal level and distance is viewed differently when considering the impact of construal level on distance. Because high-level construals are more general, they tend to evoke more distant interpretations of objects. This means that even when the details aren't expected to change much with distance, a high-level construal can still evoke a sense of distance from the object. Similarly, a high construal level of an object can create a perception of distance from the object, even if it doesn't necessarily bring to mind particularly distant examples of the object (Liberman & Trope 1998; Trope & Liberman 2003, 2010).

It's important to note that while psychological distance and construal levels are connected, they're not interchangeable concepts. Psychological distance involves how an event is perceived in terms of when, where, to whom, and whether it happens. On the other hand, construal levels pertain to how we perceive what will happen—the mental processes involved in representing the event itself (Trope & Liberman 2003, 2010).

This study will focus exclusively on temporal and geographical proximity to examine how these psychological distances influence the acceptance of fake news frames as true or false. This approach is guided by Construal Level Theory (CLT), which suggests that the perception of distance can diminish the recognition of situational uniqueness and may even affect social categorization and stereotyping processes (Kwon et al., 2017). By concentrating on temporal and

geographical aspects, we aim to uncover how these specific dimensions of psychological distance shape individuals' judgments regarding the veracity of fake news frames.

5.2. Construal level theory in marketing

Construal Level Theory (CLT) has emerged as a highly useful framework for understanding the processes underlying evaluations, predictions, and behaviors. It connects the level of mental abstraction, termed construal level, with psychological distance. This linkage has led to a proliferation of research within the marketing domain, with numerous publications exploring the applications of CLT. These studies primarily center on two main areas: communication and consumer choice. Table 14 presents a comprehensive overview of the diverse applications of Construal Level Theory (CLT) within the marketing field. It highlights how CLT has been effectively employed across multiple domains—including advertising, consumer choice, message design, and tourism marketing—to explain how psychological distance and abstraction levels shape consumer perceptions, attitudes, and decision-making. By illustrating the theory's utility in both strategic communication and behavioral analysis, the table underscores CLT's relevance as a foundational framework for understanding how consumers mentally construe and respond to marketing stimuli in varying contexts.

Table 14. Overview of CLT application in marketing field

Marketing Area	Focus/Application	Key References
Advertising and Communication	Effectiveness of ad messages depending on abstract/concrete appeals and temporal orientation.	Fujita et al., 2008; Martin et al., 2009; da Costa Hernandez et al., 2015
Tourism Marketing	Influence of travel distance and psychological distance on destination perception.	Becken & Schiff, 2011; Bojanic & Warnick, 2012; Walmsley & Jenkins, 1993; Young, 1999
Message Framing and Persuasion	Impact of CLT on persuasiveness of public service announcements and news framing.	Lee et al., 2019; Kwon et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2008; Landau et al., 2019
Consumer Choice and Decision-Making	Role of CLT in shaping decisions, product rejection, self-control, and preference formation.	Tsai & McGill, 2011; Goodman & Malkoc, 2012; Meloy & Russo, 2004; Mourali & Nagpal, 2013; Xu et al., 2024
Message Design and Linguistics	Influence of abstract vs. concrete language and rhetorical strategies on processing and recall.	White et al., 2011; Eyal et al., 2009; Lutchyn & Yzer, 2011; Förster et al., 2004; Kille et al., 2017
Consumer Trust and Believability	Processing of messages about psychologically distant vs. close entities (e.g., foreign vs. local).	Zhao & Xie, 2011; Wang et al., 2018; Landau et al., 2019

Source: own elaboration, 2025

A common goal in examining the relationship between messages, interpretive levels, and consumer behavior is to determine the most effective way to align advertisements with consumers'

mindsets. Consequently, studies focused on consumer evaluations often employ Construal Level Theory (CLT) to assess how consumers perceive arguments endorsing products (Fujita et al., 2008). Research findings indicate that when arguments highlight primary and high-level features, consumers tend to evaluate advertisements more favorably, particularly when considering a purchase in the distant future. Additionally, Martin, Gnoth, and Strong (2009) investigated the impact of temporal construal in advertising and found that it influences advertisement evaluations, especially in conjunction with an individual's temporal orientation and the importance of product attributes. Subsequent studies have shown that advertisements receive better evaluations when there is alignment between an individual's chronic temporal orientation and the situational temporal construal portrayed in the advertisement.

The application of CLT in the tourism sector has been centered around the concept of travel distance, which is widely recognized as a significant factor in travel literature (Becken and Schiff, 2011; Bojanic and Warnick, 2012). Consequently, the findings of Young (1999) suggest that international tourists with an interest in nature tend to focus more on the abstract aspects of a destination, while domestic tourists are more likely to perceive detailed and concrete information about the destination. However, Walmsley and Jenkins (1993) contend that foreign tourists tend to evaluate destination attractions based on a smaller number of more abstract features compared to residents.

In the realm of message effects research, the core principles of this theory have been relatively underexplored in empirical studies. However, there are several studies where researchers have examined the impact of CLT on the persuasiveness of marketing messages (da Costa Hernandez et al., 2015), health campaign messages (Brennan et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2019), and news related to terrorism (Kwon et al., 2017). Other studies exploring CLT have investigated the interplay between message topics and design (White et al., 2011; Eyal et al., 2009; Lutchyn & Yzer, 2011), as well as the relationship between message design and processing (Lee, 2019).

Therefore, Kim, Rao, and Lee (2008) delved into how the construal level affects the effectiveness of message appeals within a voting context. Their research uncovered that individuals' assessments of a candidate improved when the temporal distance and the abstractness of the message were congruent and coherent. Likewise, in other studies concentrating on creative textual descriptions utilizing rhetorical devices such as metaphors and personification, it was observed that an abstract mindset assists recipients in comprehending metaphors in health communication (Landau et al., 2019).

In communication research, there's a significant focus on comparing diverse language styles in messages, whether testing abstract or concrete language. Researchers aim to uncover mediators or moderators that correlate with psychological distances. This avenue of study offers ample opportunities for further investigation and exploration.

Numerous studies have explored the influence of Cognitive Linguistics Theory (CLT) on consumer behavior, focusing on different facets of consumer choice such as decision-making processes and evaluations of choices. For example, the research conducted by Han et al. (2014) and Tsai and McGill (2011) delved into the effects of CLT on these aspects. By investigating the impact of CLT on consumer behavior, these studies offer valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of consumer decision-making and the diverse factors shaping it. Furthermore, they provide implications for marketing and advertising strategies, as well as for consumer well-being more broadly.

Numerous studies have delved into how different levels of interpretation influence decision-making processes. Furthermore, consumers frequently encounter the dilemma of choosing from a vast array of products, as observed by Xu et al. (2024), Godman & Malkoc (2012), and Lamberton & Diehl (2013).

In the field of consumer choice research, understanding how consumers mentally navigate their decision-making processes is essential. Studies suggest that these mental processes significantly influence the products consumers ultimately select (Meloy & Russo, 2004). However, there has been limited investigation into how consumers formulate their decisions to reject certain options. Consumers often adopt a rejection strategy, systematically eliminating choices until they settle on their preferred one (Mourali & Nagpal, 2013). Interestingly, this strategy can lead to different outcomes, even when presented with the same set of options. Araujo (2019) underscores the lack of research exploring this process and its relationship to levels of interpretation. Future studies could explore how consumers consider negative aspects when employing a rejection strategy to eliminate a product.

Research in this area explores how mental representations impact consumer decision-making, both prior to and following the purchase decision (Zhao & Xie, 2011; Tsai & McGill, 2011). The effect on decision-making can be followed by factors such as the degree of abstraction or the variety of products available (Goodman & Malkoc, 2012; Lamberton & Diehl, 2013). Previous studies have highlighted the personalized nature of decisions and the impact of emotions like indulgence and self-control (Zhao & Xie, 2011; Lamberton & Diehl, 2013; Xu et al., 2024; Kyung et al., 2017; Wan & Agrawal, 2011). Consumers may make decisions based on either

affective or cognitive factors, with their level of interpretation impacting their choices (Wang et al., 2018). However, the extent to which consumers trust their decisions and how interpretation levels intersect with this issue remains unclear. Further research is required to comprehend the cognitive processes involved in this multifaceted decision-making process.

In summary, CLT studies in marketing suggest that the use of rhetorical devices requires consumers to make abstract, creative, and flexible connections between a product's promises and its actual attributes (Landau et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2020). This process can potentially increase their likelihood of intending to purchase. Consumers with low construal levels typically possess concrete mindsets, prioritizing specific details over the broader conceptual connections between the product and its promises (Landau et al., 2019). As a result, they might fail to recognize these shared structures due to their less imaginative and adaptable processing approaches (Förster et al., 2004; Kille et al., 2017).

Hence, employing the concept of construal level is not just beneficial but crucial for broadening the scope of this study. Delving into construal-level theory allows this research to gain a deeper understanding of why fake news messages about foreign countries might be perceived differently. Construal level theory suggests that psychological distance—such as the distance between a reader and a foreign country—affects how information is processed. Messages related to distant places are often interpreted in more abstract terms, while those about closer places are understood in more concrete terms. By exploring these dynamics, the research can clarify how the perceived distance of a country influences the acceptance or rejection of fake news, providing insights into the cognitive mechanisms behind these judgments. Also, by applying construal level theory, the research can shed light on why people may view certain messages as more or less believable depending on the perceived distance of the country involved, revealing the cognitive processes that shape these judgments based on concreteness/abstractness of the news.

Construal level theory provides a valuable framework for analyzing the factors that contribute to the effectiveness of fake news messages. By examining how temporal, and spatial dimensions, influence people's interpretation and acceptance of such messages, it becomes possible to understand why certain narratives are more persuasive. This understanding can, in turn, inform the development of targeted strategies to counteract the impact of fake news, allowing for more effective communication approaches that take into account the cognitive processes shaping people's beliefs and perceptions.

5.3. The Moderating Role of Construal Level Theory in the Influence of Fake News Frames on Country Brand Equity

Connecting Construal-Level Theory (CLT) to framing research enables an exploration of how psychological distance influences the level of "abstractness" in fake news messages within the discourse of country image. Since this study primarily examines the persuasiveness of messages by comparing positive and negative framed messages, which is essentially the essence of valence (Block & Keller 1995; Maheswaran & Meyers-Levy 1990; Shiv et al., 2004), gain-loss framing, known as message framing, is utilized (Levin et al., 1998). In the realm of persuasive communication, a "positive" frame denotes a gain for the consumer, while a "negative" frame signifies a loss (Chang, 2007; Krishnamurthy et al., 2001; Loro, 2007; Yi & Baumgartner, 2008).

In line with CLT, individuals perceive the world through two types of construal: high-level construals, which encompass abstract and general information, and low-level construals, which consist of concrete and contextualized details (Trope & Liberman, 2010). Prior research has indicated that gain frames or positive frames are typically viewed as high-level construals, whereas loss frames or negative frames are associated with low-level construals (Nan, 2007; White et al., 2011; Pennington & Roese, 2003).

As previously discussed, we suggest that a key factor determining when negative versus positive frames will be more persuasive and enhance credibility is whether fake news regarding a foreign country is perceived at a lower versus higher level of construal (Liberman & Trope 1998; White et al., 2011). Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 8: Negative fake news will seem more credible to readers when it presents detailed, concrete information compared to when it is more abstract.

Hypothesis 9: Positive fake news will seem more credible to readers when it presents abstract information compared to when it is more concrete.

While psychological distances can be somewhat interchangeable (Pronin, Olivola, & Kennedy, 2008), this study solely investigates the influence of temporal proximity on the acceptance of fake news frames as true or false. The social dimension is not separately assessed as the news topic exclusively concerns a foreign country, thus automatically positioning it outside respondents' social boundaries or "out-groups" (Trope & Liberman, 2010). Evaluating the personal closeness between nations is not the primary aim of the study.

Rather than focusing on the comparative persuasiveness of positive versus negative fake news frames, this research adopts a Construal Level Theory (CLT) perspective, examining how the impact of each fake news frame differs based on temporal construal.

Since positive framing of compliance with a persuasive message aligns with a higher construal level compared to negative framing, research grounded in Construal Level Theory (CLT) and temporal construal (Trope & Liberman, 2010) suggests that positive framing becomes more persuasive when the target of judgment is psychologically distant. In other words, when individuals evaluate events that are perceived as distant—whether in time or space—positive frames tend to be more effective (Zhang et al., 2020; Zhao et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2024). This contrasts with situations where judgments involve more immediate, proximal entities, where the impact of framing may differ. Several studies support this idea, showing that positive framing works better when individuals are asked to assess distant events or abstract concepts, as opposed to nearby or concrete situations (Nan, 2007; Eyal et al., 2004; Pennington & Roese, 2003; Jaffe, & Greifeneder, 2020; Zhang et al., 2023).

Therefore, it is hypothesized that a negative fake news frame would be more persuasive when judgments are made for proximal events in foreign countries compared to distant ones. These hypotheses are summarized below.

Hypothesis 10: Positive fake news will seem more credible to readers when it's about distant events rather than near ones.

Hypothesis 11: Negative fake news will seem more credible to readers when it's about closer events rather than distant.

II. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

6. THE METHODOLOGY OF EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

In this chapter, we aim to explore the intricate connection between theory development and methodology in detail. Our primary goal is to clearly articulate our research framework by systematically outlining the research questions, hypotheses, and methodological strategy we employed. By doing so, we intend to establish a coherent and structured foundation for the study.

We start by providing an overview of the research context, drawing attention to the key theoretical concepts, prior studies, and major findings that form the basis of this research. This section is crucial in helping readers grasp the underlying premises of the study, positioning it within the broader academic discourse. By establishing this context, we set the stage for the detailed exploration of our hypotheses and methodology, ensuring that readers have a comprehensive understanding of both the theoretical background and the practical steps taken to conduct the research. This approach allows us to present our study in a logical, well-organized manner, ensuring clarity and depth throughout the chapter.

Subsequently, we will proceed to outline our initial theoretical framework. Following this, we will present the identified research problem and research questions. We firmly believe in the importance of structuring and presenting these elements of our research concept thoughtfully and cohesively. This approach ensures that readers can easily follow and comprehend our reasoning process, facilitating a deeper engagement with our research.

6.1. The research concept – background to the empirical research

Building on the review of existing literature, it becomes clear that understanding the implications of disinformation for a nation's brand is both timely and critical, particularly given the pervasive influence of online platforms and social media. The complexity of this phenomenon lies not only in the speed and reach of digital misinformation but also in the multifaceted and continuously evolving nature of countries as brands. Addressing this challenge, the central research question guiding this study is: *How does fake news of varying valence impact dimensions of country brand equity, and what moderating and mediating factors influence this exposure?*

To address this main question, the study further explores several sub-questions operationalised through hypotheses:

1. How does the valence of fake news (positive vs. negative) influence the dimensions of country brand equity?
2. How do positive and negative fake news frames differ in their impact on various components of country brand equity (e.g., awareness, associations, loyalty)?
3. What role does message credibility play in mediating the relationship between fake news valence and country brand equity?
4. To what extent does perceived cognitive image mediate the relationship between fake news valence and country brand equity?
5. Do construal-level dimensions (e.g., psychological distance) moderate the effect of fake news valence on credibility perceptions?

Through this lens, the present study extends prior studies by identifying critical mechanisms and conditions that shape how fake news distorts national image and brand equity. Having scrutinised the available literature, several key insights and theoretical gaps emerge, highlighting the need for deeper investigation and systematic scholarly inquiry.

To summarize the proposed hypotheses, we will present them again in the order of variables to ensure a clear and logical progression.

6.1.1. Valenced fake news frames and country brand equity.

Hence, building on the theoretical framework outlined in the preceding section, the initial hypotheses—already introduced in the theoretical discussion—concentrate on the direct effects of framing on participants' perceptions of China.

Hypothesis 1: Exposure to negatively framed fake news adversely impacts attitudes toward key dimensions of a country's brand, including (a) brand awareness, (b) symbolic brand associations, (c) perceived brand quality, and (d) attitudinal brand loyalty.

Hypothesis 2: Exposure to positively framed fake news has a favourable effect on attitudes toward key dimensions of a country's brand, including (a) brand awareness, (b) symbolic brand associations, (c) perceived brand quality, and (d) attitudinal brand loyalty.

Hypothesis 3: The impact of negatively valenced fake news is stronger than the impact of positive ones on (a) country brand awareness; (b) symbolic brand association; (c) brand quality; (d) attitudinal brand loyalty

6.1.2. Valenced fake news frames and credibility

Therefore, based on the theoretical rationale our current study claims that

Hypothesis 4: Negatively framed fake news has a greater impact on perceived news credibility compared to positively framed fake news.

6.1.3. Mediating role of credibility and cognitive image component

Hypothesis 5: Credibility will mediate the relationships between valenced fake news frames and country brand equity

Hypothesis 6: Cognitive image component will mediate the relationships between valenced fake news frames and country brand equity

Hypothesis 7: Credibility and Cognitive image component will sequentially mediate the relationship between valenced fake news frames and country brand equity.

6.1.4. Moderating role of construal level theory.

Therefore, it is hypothesized that a negative fake news frame would be more persuasive when judgments are made for proximal events in foreign countries compared to distant ones. These hypotheses are summarized below.

Hypothesis 8: Negative fake news will seem more credible to readers when it presents detailed, concrete information compared to when it is more abstract.

Hypothesis 9: Positive fake news will seem more credible to readers when it presents abstract information compared to when it is more concrete.

Hypothesis 10: Positive fake news will seem more credible to readers when it's about distant events rather than near ones.

Hypothesis 11: Negative fake news will seem more credible to readers when it's about closer events rather than distant.

6.2. Research concept

The main goal of this doctoral thesis is to investigate how the valence of fake news—whether positive or negative—affects a country's brand equity. It aims to uncover the factors that influence this relationship, either intensifying or reducing the impact of fake news on how a country is perceived. Alongside this, the thesis seeks to establish a comprehensive model (Figure 6) that

demonstrates how exposure to different valenced fake news frames changes various dimensions of country brand equity, such as awareness, symbolic association, quality, and attitudinal loyalty.

Drawing extensively from existing literature, the research examines several key factors that shape these relationships. Specifically, the model emphasizes the mediating roles of news credibility and cognitive image, capturing both the perceived trustworthiness of news content and the way it shapes individuals' evaluations of the country. To quantify these effects, the model employs DELTA values, which represent the difference between the average score of a brand equity dimension before exposure to fake news and the average score of the same dimension after exposure. In other words, the DELTA-value captures the degree of perceptual change attributable to the media stimulus by quantifying the difference between pre-exposure and post-exposure ratings.

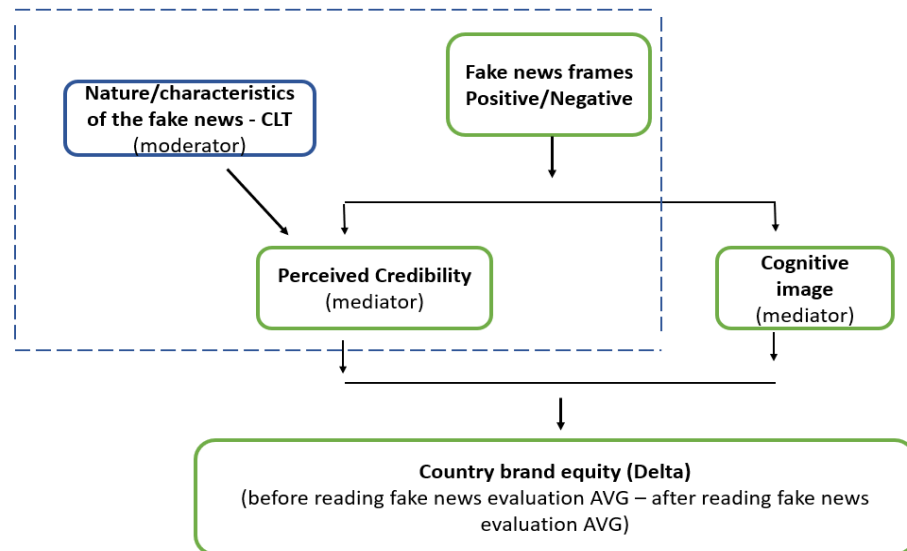
$$\text{DELTA} = \text{Mean (Dimension X before exposure)} - \text{Mean (Dimension X after exposure)}$$

Utilizing these DELTA-values enhances methodological rigor by moving beyond static evaluations and allowing researchers to isolate the specific impact of media content—such as fake news—on country brand equity. As Estrada (2019) points out, difference-based change statistics not only effectively quantify group-level shifts but also facilitate clearer interpretation and communication of results, especially in intervention-based designs

Additionally, the study explores the moderating role of construal level (Figure 7), which refers to how people interpret distant versus close events or objects, influencing how they react to fake news depending on their proximity to the country being portrayed. By addressing these complexities, the research aims to provide a deeper understanding of how fake news can shape a country's brand and what factors can mediate or moderate this influence.

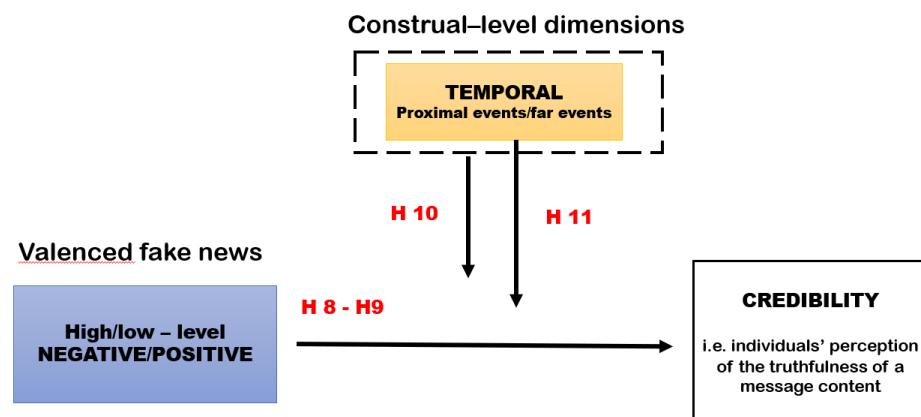
The aim of our empirical research is to examine all the relationships and hypotheses identified in the literature review and refined during earlier exploratory phases within the context of a comprehensive model. In addition to exploring the impact of fake news frames and the factors that influence this relationship, we seek to clarify how the effects differ based on the positive or negative nature of the news on credibility.

Figure 6: Model of exposure of valenced fake news frames on dimensions of country equity



Source: own elaboration, 2025

Figure 7. Thorough look at the model concerning to moderating role of construal-level theory.



Source: own elaboration, 2025

6.3. Research framework and design

6.3.1. Design

This study uses both perceived and projected approaches to examine how fake news influences country image from a methodological perspective. It aims to address a gap by exploring consumers' perceptions of a country's brand before and after being exposed to fake news, as well as its impact on the dimensions of country brand equity. In other words, the study assesses whether the images projected by fake news have a significant effect on changes in the perceived image of a country and how this relates to aspects like country awareness, symbolic associations, quality, and attitudinal loyalty (Boo, Busser, & Baloglu, 2009).

Projected images encompass the perceptions and ideas that potential visitors may form about a place or destination based on the information they receive (Bramwell & Rawding, 1996). These images play a crucial role in shaping how a destination is perceived before a visitor experiences it firsthand. They can significantly influence a destination's attractiveness and appeal. Such images are typically categorized into two types: induced and autonomous. Induced sources are actively crafted by entities promoting the destination, such as tourism boards, travel agencies, or marketing campaigns. These sources aim to create a favorable image of the destination to attract tourists by highlighting its unique attractions, culture, or natural beauty.

On the other hand, autonomous sources are more impartial and include information that is not directly controlled by those promoting the destination. These can consist of news articles, travel magazines, guidebooks, blogs, and online reviews. Autonomous sources often provide a more balanced perspective, offering insights into both positive and negative aspects of a destination. Because they are perceived as more independent, they can have a strong influence on potential visitors' perceptions, as audiences may view them as more credible than promotional materials (Ferrer-Rosell & Marine-Roig, 2020). Together, induced and autonomous sources create a composite image in the minds of potential visitors, which can either align with or differ from the reality of the destination itself.

Two online surveys (positive and negative surveys) were developed and launched separately in December 2021 to determine perceptions about the country brand of China. Both surveys were translated in Hungarian and Russian languages by native speakers (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2).

The questionnaire incorporates four sections. In the first section, respondents were asked to provide personal knowledge about the country, their experience, gender, and age. In the second part, the perceived image of the respondent was evaluated based on concepts of cognitive and affective country image and country brand equity dimensions, country awareness, associations, quality, and loyalty, which were assessed with the help of a 7-point scale. In the third section, respondents were given valenced fake news messages bearing negative or positive connotations about China, its people, and its products.

Finally, participants proceeded to the fourth section, where their projected image after reading fake news was assessed based on the same scale provided by Boo, Busser, & Baloglu (2009) but in random order with the help of the 7-point scale.

6.3.2. Rationale for Selecting China as the Country of Evaluation

China was selected as the focal country for evaluating shifts in consumers' perceptions of brand equity primarily due to its prominent presence in international media discourse and its growing polarization in global public opinion. According to Pew Research Center data, views of China have grown significantly more negative in recent years across many advanced economies (Silver et al., 2020). This trend is particularly pronounced following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, during which China became a central figure in media narratives—often framed through politically charged and emotionally provocative content.

Our systematic literature review confirms that China is frequently chosen in studies investigating the media's impact on country image and perception (e.g., Su et al., 2024). Many of these studies emphasize how China's global image has been especially susceptible to the influence of fake news and disinformation during crises, particularly COVID-19 (Verma, 2020; Hartig, 2021). This offers empirical confidence that fake news samples about China are not only present but have been widely disseminated, making China a methodologically sound choice for stimulus design and allowing the study to avoid complications related to sourcing credible and relevant fake news examples

In addition, China's global significance strengthens its suitability for this type of research. As the world's second-largest economy (World Bank, 2023), China holds a strong nation brand value, regularly appearing in global soft power and brand index rankings (Anholt, 2021; Brand Finance, 2023). This guarantees a baseline familiarity among international respondents. Even those who have never visited China are highly likely to have encountered media content about the country, enabling them to hold at least a preliminary cognitive and emotional stance. This prior exposure is critical, as our methodology requires respondents to report their pre-existing attitudes before being presented with fake news content.

In contrast, selecting a smaller or less globally visible country would raise concerns about participants' baseline awareness. In such cases, limited prior media exposure may prevent respondents from forming meaningful attitudes or associations, thereby undermining the validity of measuring any subsequent changes or media-driven influence in the study.

Thus, China provides an ideal case due to the richness of pre-existing media narratives, its centrality in global discourse, and the verifiable presence of valenced fake news frames—all of which align with the research goal of assessing the impact of fake news on country brand equity.

6.3.3. Respondents

Respondents were selected from Russia and Hungary for several strategic and methodological reasons. First, both countries maintain geographical proximity to China, yet offer limited opportunities for the general population, particularly students, to gain direct experience with the country. This creates a setting where public opinion is largely shaped by secondary information, such as news media and online narratives, rather than personal contact or first-hand experience (Dávid et al., 2003; Hofstede Insights, 2024). This characteristic is essential for isolating the effect of media—particularly fake news—on country brand equity, since it ensures that respondents' attitudes are primarily constructed through media exposure, rather than experiential biases.

Secondly, Russia and Hungary offer contrasting geopolitical and cultural contexts, yet both have been identified as key actors in fostering bilateral ties with China. Russia has long-standing political, economic, and ideological connections with China, amplified in recent years through the BRICS alliance and various strategic partnerships (Lo, 2021). Hungary, on the other hand, represents one of the most China-friendly nations within the European Union, actively participating in initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative and the 17+1 cooperation framework (Végh, 2021). These diplomatic dynamics have led to a greater volume of China-related media coverage in both countries, including both positive and negative narratives—thus offering a rich and relevant informational landscape for studying the influence of fake news.

Importantly, this selection also enables us to examine possible regional variations in susceptibility to fake news and media-framed attitudes. For instance, Hungary—as an EU member state—may reflect Western-aligned media tendencies, whereas Russian media often aligns with narratives closer to Chinese or state-influenced messaging. This divergence offers analytical depth to test how different media ecosystems may moderate the impact of fake news on country brand perception.

Finally, prior studies confirm that both Russian and Hungarian citizens often rely on *media sources for forming perceptions of foreign nations*, including China (Jakobson & Knox, 2010; Váry, 2019). The lack of direct experience, combined with *strong diplomatic narratives and high media penetration*, makes both populations *methodologically sound and practically relevant* for evaluating how *valenced fake news* may influence symbolic associations and attitudes toward a powerful country brand like China.

Students are chosen to be respondents based on the fact that they are the same age and education level which make it possible for them to read trustworthy and disinformation online on various social media. Therefore, 290 Russian students from different programs in Russian universities in exactly North-West part of the country and 132 Hungarian students took part in the first survey with negative fake news. In the second survey with positive fake news, the respondents were 224 Russian students of different programs from Russian universities in exactly North-West part of the country and 256 Hungarian students. They were students of Bachelor and Master programs, who mainly had not been to China, which strengthens the fact that they can only rely on information from the news but not previous experience.

6.3.4. Measurement scales

The scales of country brand equity (Table 15) were adapted from previous studies to ensure content validity: the scale for measuring country brand loyalty was developed according to Boo et al. (2009) and Konecnik & Gartner (2007), whereas the perceived association was developed according to Yoo & Donthu (2001). Country brand awareness and perceived country brand quality were measured through scales based on the works of Boo et al. (2009) and Konecnik & Gartner (2007). All of them were adapted to the specific field of travel as China brand equity. Cognitive country image was adopted from Orbaiz and Papadopoulos (2003) and Nadeau et al. (2008).

Table 15. Scales of country brand equity dimensions.

Brand awareness	Sort Abriviation
China has a good name and reputation	BA1
When I am thinking of an international holiday, China comes to my mind immediately	BA2
Characteristics of China come to my mind quickly	BA3
Perceived quality	
High-quality accommodation	PQ1
High levels of cleanliness	PQ2
High level of personal safety	PQ3
High-quality infrastructure	PQ4
Perceived symbolic association	
China fits my personality	PA1
My friends would think highly of me if I visited China	PA2
The image of China is consistent with my self-image	PA3
Perceived attitudinal loyalty	
China would be my preferred choice for a vacation	PL1
I would advise other people to visit China	PL2
I intend to visit China in the future	PL3
Cognitive image	
Quality of life	
Quality of wealth	
Technology level	
Education level	

Source: own elaboration, 2025

To measure the perceived truth (credibility variable) in the statistical fake news, participants were asked after reading each fake news to indicate to what extent they think content of this news to be true or false (previously used by Koch & Peter, 2017). Respondents answered on 7-point scales (Ahluwalia & Gurhan-Canli 2000) ranging from 1 = *news is not true at all* to 7 = *completely true*. After this, to measure the perceived abstractness and concreteness in the statistical fake news, respondents were asked to what extent they think content of this news to be concrete or abstract (“Generally, I think that the information about China is” measured with a 7-point scale where 1 = *very concrete*; 7 = *very abstract*).

6.3.5. Stimulus materials

Fake news was selected for the experimental and control conditions (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2). Two conditions were included in the design. One represented a negative frame, and the other a positive frame. The original fake news articles were selected from the fact-checking database of the website Snoops.com, which had already been checked and identified as fake news – totally created news.

To measure framing effects, 19 negative and 19 positive fake news items on societal issues about China were determined, the titles of which are represented in Table 2 and Table 3. All fake news was translated into Hungarian and Russian languages by native speakers to avoid the problem of respondents' misunderstanding due to language barriers.

To clarify how positive or negative they are, we first relied on the definition of these types, where negative news is “those items that report social conflicts and disorganization,” including stories involving international tension, civic disruption, crime and vice, and accidents and disasters (Gieber, 1955, pp. 311–312), whereas positive news stories are “one for which the majority of the local paper's readers would be satisfied or pleased that the event had happened or happened as it did. The tone of the story will be generally positive or upbeat” (Hartung and Stone, 1980, p. 21).

To check our assumption, we manipulated sentiment analysis by applying MeaningCloud software. It is an online sentiment analysis tool supporting most European languages, namely, English, Spanish, French, Italian, etc. It supports the extraction of sentiment at a document or aspect-based level. This tool also has the feature of feeding user-defined dictionaries and models for performing analysis. This analyzer provided us with the following data per article, which are presented in Table 5 and Table 6:

- SCORE: The sentiment score can be one of the following values: none (no sentiment), N+ (very negative), N (negative), neutral, P (positive), P+ (very positive). As well, there is the presence of evaluation of Subjectivity (S) and Objectivity (O).

Table 16. Results of sentiment analysis of chosen fake news items with negative connotations.

Article title	Polarity
1.DHS Report: China Hides an appearance of new Virus' Severity to Hoard Supplies	N
2.Is China Building a hospital in 10 Days to Treat new stamp Coronavirus Patients?	N
3.'Corrupt' Politicians are going to be executed in China	N
4.Chinese Restaurants Granted Permission to Sell Dog Meat	N+
5.Teriyaki sauce in couple years will be made from hairs in China	N
6.Is China Seeking Approval to Kill 20,000 Coronavirus Patients since 2023?	N+

7.Have Health Experts ‘Predicted’ New Coronavirus Could Kill 65 Million People 2023?	N+
8.Hong Kong Shop will offer ‘Tear Gas’ Flavor Ice Cream in mass production by 2024	N
9.Is China Genetically Engineering ‘Super Soldiers’?	N
10.Activists are skeptical and concerned about reports of China's "emotion monitoring" technology implementation by 2030.	N
11.Will China’s Three Gorges Dam Slow Rotation of Earth by 2035?	N
12.Will Clone Monkeys by Chinese scientists will bring new types of viruses by 2035?	N
13.Driven to Kill: Why Drivers in China Intentionally Kill the Pedestrians They Hit 14.Cat in Chinese Food	N+
15.Was Charles Lieber Arrested for Selling the COVID-19 Coronavirus to China?	N
16.No, China Isn’t Amassing Troops in Canada To Invade the US	N
17.Are People Collapsing in the Street from Coronavirus?	N
18.Are Crabs Imported from China Injected with Formalin?	N+
19.CDC Warns Hair Bands from China Made of Used Condoms	N

Source: own elaboration, 2025

Table 17. Results of sentiment analysis of chosen fake news items with positive connotations.

Article title	Polarity
1. “Communist China” will have been an owner of DreamWorks by 2023	P
2. Pandas in China will Devour Ice Cake to Celebrate 50 Years at National Zoo	P
3.Space Junk on 5,800-MPH Collision Course with Moon will be prevented by Chinese rocket	P
4 Will China’s ‘Panda Bear Solar Farm’ be launched?	P
5.China will have Launched an Artificial Sun by 2030?	P
6. 2030 model Chinese Aircraft Carrier	P
7. How China will Get Blue Skies	P
8. Are Robots Ballroom Dancing at Shanghai Disneyland?	P
9. Will the Great Wall of China become Visible from the Moon?	P
10. Will a Pagoda Flower be used in treatment of cancer That Only Blooms Once Every 400 Years?	P
11. Will Garlic Water Cure Coronavirus?	P

12. China is going to prohibit animal Testing Conducted by cosmetics companies by 2030?	P
13. Chinese government provide a \$3.7 Million Grant to laboratories worldwide?	P
14. Are Chinese children the most talented in playing Ping-Pong?	P
15. Did Corona Beer Sales Increased Sharply in China Due to cure the Coronavirus?	P
16. China Halts Work by Team on Gene-Edited Babies	P
17. Was a Chinese Miner Found Alive After 17 Years Underground?	P
18. Do Thousands of People in China Witness a Floating City Mirage regularly?	P
19. Ice Cream Treating COVID-19 have appeared in China?	P

Source: own elaboration, 2025

Temporal distance in fake news was manipulated by the timing of the events described in the news. Specifically, fake news is labelled as *near future*-encompassed events that are projected to occur in 2022 (the same year as the survey), while fake news is labelled as *far future*-encompassed events that are projected to occur in 2030. Each pair of fake news - concrete and abstract - shared a common topic, the same dates, and some constituting pictures. The experiment produced the following types of fake news: 8 near future (concrete vs abstract), 8 far future (concrete vs abstract).

Furthermore, two existing frames are pertinent to address the level of abstractness: episodic and thematic frames (Iyengar, 1994) where episodic frame the news narrative provides concrete information on how the event occurred and evolved and in the thematic frame, fake news is more abstract, providing generic views on the event. Besides, the message was formulated in either a concrete, detailed style (e.g. “to be executed on 07 February 2022, where 11 prisoners”, or “The restaurant is allowed to slaughter up to 35 dogs per week”) or an abstract, less detailed way with vague wording (e.g., “punishment for those who would follow the pro-democracy movement”, or “they found numerous tins with harmful food”) to manipulate construal level (in line with previous research, see e.g. Yang et al., 2015).

To ensure the technical accuracy of these construal levels, all fake news articles were checked using MeaningCloud software for sentiment analysis based on their subjectivity and objectivity scores. To control for the variables of concreteness and abstractness from the respondents' point of view, the survey included a question that asked participants to rate the level of abstractness or concreteness of their thoughts about China. Thus, the respondents are asked to indicate to what extent they think the content of each piece of news is concrete or abstract. This is measured with a 7-point scale where 1 = "very concrete" and 7 = "very abstract". This question is phrased as "Generally, I think that the information about China is".

6.3.6. Method of analysis

Paired sample T-test analysis is used to assess valenced fake news frame effects on dimensions of country brand equity. To assess the mediation effects, a test is conducted using model 6, the PROCESS macro (v3.5) in SPSS 27 software with the bootstrap sampling method (sample size = 5,000), as recommended by Hayes (2013). Bootstrap sampling is used to generate asymmetric confidence intervals (CIs) for the mediating effects. Additionally, the present study is going to use confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to assess the measurement model, and the validation of the data is confirmed by Cronbach's alpha, common method variance tests and descriptive statistics. Whereas, the moderating role of CLT is measured with the application of repeated-measures ANOVA.

Given the relatively small sample size of our study, we employed the *Bootstrap method* to test sequential mediation effects, which is widely regarded as one of the most robust and reliable techniques for mediation analysis, particularly under conditions where traditional assumptions may not hold. Unlike the Sobel test or other parametric approaches, bootstrapping does *not require the assumption of normality* of the sampling distribution of the indirect effect, making it especially suitable for small or moderately sized samples (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). This non-parametric resampling procedure repeatedly draws samples from the data to estimate the indirect effects and construct confidence intervals, thereby increasing the *accuracy and statistical power* of mediation tests (Hayes, 2013). Moreover, bootstrapping has been demonstrated to provide more *stable and valid results* for complex models involving *multiple mediators or sequential mediation* (MacKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams, 2004). Therefore, by applying bootstrapping, this study enhances the *reliability and credibility* of its findings regarding the pathways through which fake news influences country brand equity.

7. CONFIRMATORY RESEARCH: exposure of valenced fake news frames on dimensions of country equity

7.1. Questionnaire of the research

The structure of the questionnaire in the quantitative phase was based on well-established constructs and measurement scales drawn from the existing literature. Each section was carefully designed to align with validated theoretical frameworks, ensuring both reliability and relevance to the research objectives.

1st section: respondents were asked to provide their gender, age and if they ever visited the country.

2nd section: measurement scales to study the perceived image of the country before reading fake news. The theoretical model developed for this research incorporated both unidimensional and multidimensional constructs, making it essential to use a variety of established measurement scales to capture the complexity of the concepts involved (Boo, Busser, & Baloglu, 2009, Konecnik & Gartner, 2007, Yoo & Donthu, 2001). As a result, multiple scales were integrated into the questionnaire to ensure the accurate exploration and identification of all relevant dimensions. The combined use of these validated instruments allowed for a more robust and multidimensional analysis, aligning with the theoretical depth and empirical rigor required by the study. All of them were adapted to the specific field of travel as country brand equity. Cognitive country image was adopted from Orbaiz and Papadopoulos (2003) and Nadeau et al. (2008).

3rd section: Respondents were presented with valenced fake news messages containing either negative or positive connotations related to a country, its people, and its products. All fake news were identified as fake by ScoopFollowing each message, participants completed a credibility scale to assess how believable they found the news. Additionally, a separate scale was included to measure the extent to which the news was perceived as abstract or concrete.

4th section: participants proceeded to the fourth section, where their projected image after reading fake news was assessed based on the same scale provided by Boo, Busser, & Baloglu (2009), Konecnik & Gartner, 2007, Yoo & Donthu, 2001 but in random order.

Table 18 serves as a comprehensive reference for understanding the structure of the questionnaire, highlighting the empirical foundations of each variable and justifying their inclusion in the model to support the study's objectives.

Table 18. Characteristics and sources of scale variables.

Variable	Source	No. of items, scale type
Cognitive image	Orbaiz and Papadopoulos (2003) and Nadeau et al. (2008)	4 items, 7-point Likert

Country attitudinal brand loyalty	Boo et al. (2009) and Konecnik & Gartner (2007)	3 items, 7-point Likert
Country symbolic brand association	Yoo & Donthu (2001)	3 items, 7-point Likert
Country brand awareness	Boo et al. (2009) and Konecnik & Gartner (2007)	3 items, 7-point Likert
Country brand quality	Boo et al. (2009) and Konecnik & Gartner (2007)	4 items, 7-point Likert

Source: own elaboration, 2025

I would like to highlight the key variables employed to analyze consumer perceptions of country brands, with an emphasis on their cognitive image and country brand equity dimensions. These variables were assessed using well-established scales from the relevant literature, ensuring the robustness and validity of the data obtained.

The *Cognitive Image* of a country is measured by the mental representations and perceptions consumers hold about that country. This construct was operationalized using a 7-point Likert scale with four items, based on the work of Orbaiz and Papadopoulos (2003) and Nadeau et al. (2008). The cognitive image is crucial for understanding how consumers form general perceptions about a country, influencing their attitudes toward its products, services, and overall brand.

Country Attitudinal Brand Loyalty refers to the emotional loyalty that consumers exhibit toward a country's brand. This was assessed using a 7-point Likert scale consisting of three items, drawing on the frameworks provided by Boo et al. (2009) and Konecnik & Gartner (2007). This variable helps in understanding how committed consumers are to a country as a brand.

The *Country Symbolic Brand Association* variable captures the symbolic meanings and associations that consumers make with a country. It reflects the perceived alignment between a country's symbolic traits and the personal identity or values of the observer. Measured with a 7-point Likert scale and three items, this variable was based on the scale developed by Yoo & Donthu (2001). Symbolic associations play a critical role in shaping consumer preferences, as they reflect deeper, more abstract connections that go beyond functional attributes.

Country Brand Awareness was measured to assess how well consumers are able to recognize or recall a country's brand. This construct was measured using three items on a 7-point Likert scale, with sources from Boo et al. (2009) and Konecnik & Gartner (2007). Brand awareness is a foundational element of brand equity, as it is essential for consumers to be able to identify a country before they can form opinions or make decisions related to its products and services.

Finally, *Country Brand Quality* is concerned with how consumers perceive the overall quality. This variable was measured using four items on a 7-point Likert scale, again referencing Boo et al. (2009) and Konecnik & Gartner (2007). Brand quality perceptions are key drivers of consumer behavior and can strongly influence purchasing decisions, as consumers tend to favor countries that are associated with high-quality products.

By using these variables, this dissertation aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the various dimensions that contribute to country brand perceptions. The use of established measurement scales ensures that the findings are both reliable and applicable to real-world consumer behavior contexts, offering valuable insights into the ways in which countries are perceived as brands. These variables and their corresponding measures will allow for a detailed analysis of how cognitive, attitudinal, symbolic, and awareness-related factors shape consumer perceptions of country brands.

7.2. Reliability of the measurement model of the research framework

Before proceeding with hypothesis testing, it is essential to validate the structure, dimensionality, and reliability of the measurement model within the proposed research framework. To achieve this, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was employed as a preliminary analytical step. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is a rigorous statistical method used to evaluate the extent to which observed data align with a hypothesized measurement model, as derived from theoretical assumptions and prior empirical research. In this study, CFA was conducted using SPSS software, ensuring that the proposed constructs are both statistically valid and theoretically consistent (Hair et al., 2014).

The purpose of applying CFA in this context was twofold. First, it allowed for the verification of the construct validity of latent variables, ensuring that the observed indicators appropriately represent the underlying theoretical concepts—such as symbolic brand association, attitudinal brand loyalty, perceived credibility, and country image. Second, it facilitated the assessment of model reliability, including internal consistency (via composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha) and convergent and discriminant validity (via average variance extracted and inter-construct correlations).

Establishing a valid and reliable measurement model is critical for ensuring that subsequent structural model analysis and hypothesis testing yield meaningful and interpretable results. Therefore, only after confirming that the measurement model demonstrated acceptable fit indices

and met all reliability and validity criteria did the analysis proceed to test the hypothesized relationships between variables

Table 19 presents the characteristics of the measured items, indicating that all constructs exhibit sufficient reliability and were permitted to correlate freely within the confirmatory factor analysis model.

Table 19. Item factor loadings and fitness assessment of the measurement model

Item	Loading	Chi-square	RMSEA	SRMR	CFI	RFI	NFI	TLI
BA 1	0.768***	172,597/53 = 3,2	.057	.035	.978	.960	.971	.970
BA 2	0,881***							
BA 3	0,700***							
PQ 1	0,819***							
PQ 2	0,695***							
PQ 3	0,748***							
PQ 4	0,621***							
PSA 1	0.814***							
PSA 2	0.819***							
PSA 3	0,844***							
PAL 1	0.873***							
PAL 2	0.908***							
PAL 3	0.729***							

Source: own elaboration, 2025

The results from the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) demonstrate that the measurement model exhibits strong reliability and a good overall fit to the data. Each item loaded significantly onto its corresponding latent construct, with standardized factor loadings ranging from *0.621 to 0.908*, all significant at the $p < .001$ level. This indicates strong convergent validity across the four constructs measured: *Brand Awareness (BA)*, *Perceived Quality (PQ)*, *Perceived Symbolic Association (PSA)*, and *Perceived Attitudinal Loyalty (PAL)*.

- *Brand Awareness (BA)* items loaded between *0.700 and 0.881*, suggesting solid internal consistency within the construct.
- *Perceived Quality (PQ)* items showed moderately high to high loadings (*0.621 to 0.819*), with slightly lower loading for PQ4 (*0.621*), but still above the commonly accepted threshold of *0.60* (Hair et al., 2014).
- *Perceived Symbolic Association (PSA)* demonstrated high loadings (*0.814 to 0.844*), indicating excellent measurement reliability.
- *Perceived Attitudinal Loyalty (PAL)* exhibited the highest item loadings overall (*0.729 to 0.908*), confirming the strength of the indicators for this construct.

Regarding model fit indices - the CFA results demonstrate an acceptable model fit:

- Chi-square/df = 3.2: This ratio is below the commonly accepted threshold of 5.0, suggesting an acceptable level of model fit.
- RMSEA = .057: The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation is below the 0.06 threshold (Hu & Bentler, 1999), indicating a close fit.
- SRMR = .035: The Standardized Root Mean Residual is well below the acceptable cutoff of 0.08, showing excellent fit.
- CFI = .978, TLI = .970, NFI = .971, RFI = .960: All incremental fit indices exceed the recommended threshold of 0.95, which indicates a very good comparative model fit.

Therefore, these results suggest that the measurement model is *well-fitting, statistically robust, and theoretically sound* (Hair et al. 2014; Ahmad et al. 2016). The factor structure aligns with expectations from the literature, and the items used in the questionnaire demonstrate strong psychometric properties. This robust measurement foundation allows for reliable structural modeling and hypothesis testing in subsequent analysis phases.

To evaluate the presence and severity of common method variance (CMV) in the survey data, Harman's single-factor test was conducted, following the procedure recommended by Podsakoff et al. (2003). The results of the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) revealed that the first unrotated factor accounted for 44.9% of the total variance—well below the commonly accepted threshold of 50%. This indicates that CMV is unlikely to pose a significant threat to the validity of the findings.

Table 20 presents the descriptive statistics and reliability analysis for the measured items, including their mean scores, standard deviations, and Cronbach's alpha coefficients. These values provide insights into the central tendencies and variability of participant responses, as well as the internal consistency of each construct. The Cronbach's alpha values indicate that all scales demonstrate acceptable to high reliability, supporting the robustness of the measurement model.

Table 20. Country brand equity scales

Scale items	Mean	StD Dev	Cronbach Alpha
Brand awareness			
BA1	4,23	1,69	0,701
BA2	2,11	1,56	
BA3	2,27	1,68	
Perceived quality			
PO1	3.99	1.37	0.807

PQ2	3,81	1,7	
PQ3	3,96	1,53	
PQ4	5,18	1,34	
Perceived symbolic association			
PSA1	2,29	1,56	0,818
PSA2	3,75	1,98	
PSA3	2,30	1,68	
Perceived attitudinal loyalty			
PAL1	2,05	1,55	0,781
PAL2	3,66	1,88	
PAL3	4,47	1,96	
OVERALL			0,901

Source: own elaboration, 2025

Each construct is represented by multiple items, with their respective mean scores and standard deviations indicating the central tendencies and variability in respondents' perceptions. The Cronbach's alpha values are reported for each scale to assess internal consistency. All dimensions demonstrate acceptable reliability, with Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.701 (brand awareness) to 0.818 (symbolic association), and an overall reliability coefficient of 0.901—indicating excellent internal consistency across the full scale set (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988).

Notably, perceived quality items exhibit relatively higher mean values (e.g., PQ4 = 5.18), suggesting more favorable evaluations in this dimension. In contrast, attitudinal loyalty and symbolic association show more varied and moderate-to-low mean scores, which may indicate lower affective commitment and symbolic alignment with the evaluated country—an important finding given the context of media influence on perceptions.

To facilitate a clearer understanding of how fake news exposure influences different aspects of country brand equity, composite scores were calculated by averaging the items within each construct. Given that each dimension (e.g., brand awareness, perceived quality, symbolic association, attitudinal loyalty) comprises multiple scale items, analyzing individual items would make it difficult to identify meaningful differences or trends across dimensions. Therefore, aggregating scores allows for a more streamlined and interpretable analysis.

Table 21 presents the descriptive statistics—including mean values and standard deviations—of these composite variables, as well as their intercorrelations. This approach not only enhances the clarity of the results but also provides insight into the strength and direction of relationships among the core components of country brand equity in the context of fake news influence.

Table 21. The means, Std deviation and interrelations of the composite variables

Composite variable	Mean	StD Dev	1	2	3
Brand awareness (avg)	3,28	1,14	1		
Perceived quality (avg)	4,23	1,18	,502**	1	
Perceived symbolic association (avg)	2,77	1,50	,742**	,460**	1
Perceived attitudinal loyalty (avg)	3,39	1,51	,733**	,381**	,784**

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: own elaboration, 2025

According to Table 21, the composite variables include *Brand Awareness*, *Perceived Quality*, *Perceived Symbolic Association*, and *Perceived Attitudinal Loyalty*, each calculated as the average score of their respective items.

- The mean values range from 2.77 (Symbolic Association) to 4.23 (Perceived Quality), indicating moderate to high perceptions across dimensions.
- Standard deviations suggest notable variability in responses, particularly for symbolic association and attitudinal loyalty, both above 1.50, reflecting diverse consumer perceptions.

The correlation matrix reveals statistically significant and positive relationships between all composite variables at the 0.01 level:

- Brand Awareness strongly correlates with both Symbolic Association ($r = .742^{**}$) and Attitudinal Loyalty ($r = .733^{**}$), indicating that higher awareness is associated with stronger emotional and symbolic ties.
- Perceived Symbolic Association shows the strongest correlation with Attitudinal Loyalty ($r = .784^{**}$), supporting the theoretical link between emotionally loaded brand meaning and consumer commitment.
- Perceived Quality also correlates moderately with other variables, particularly Brand Awareness ($r = .502^{**}$) and Symbolic Association ($r = .460^{**}$), suggesting that perceptions of quality enhance brand-related evaluations but to a lesser extent than symbolic meaning.

7.3. Outcomes of the Empirical Investigation

7.3.1. Characteristics of the respondents

The total number of respondents exposed to *positively framed fake news* amounted to 475 participants, comprising 257 Hungarian students (49% female, 51% male) and 218 Russian students (51% female, 49% male). The Hungarian cohort was primarily drawn from universities

in Budapest, whereas the Russian participants represented a diverse range of geographical regions within the country, reflecting Russia's vast territorial and demographic spread. Notably, 93% of Russian respondents and 98% of Hungarian respondents reported never having visited China, which is a critical factor ensuring that their perceptions were shaped primarily by mediated representations rather than personal experience.

For the *negative fake news group*, 414 participants took part in the survey. This included 280 Russian students (with a gender composition of 78% female and 22% male) and 134 Hungarian students (82% female and 18% male). As with the positive group, the majority of respondents had not traveled to China—91% of Russian and 98% of Hungarian participants—further reinforcing the validity of the study's focus on media exposure as a key determinant of country brand perception. *This high level of non-visitation ensures that attitudinal and symbolic brand associations with China are not confounded by firsthand experience but are instead the result of external information sources, such as news and social media.*

To gain a clearer understanding of respondents' baseline attitudes toward China prior to exposure to fake news, it is essential to assess the degree of negativity in their initial perceptions. This step is particularly important because any observed shifts in attitude after exposure must be interpreted in relation to the respondents' starting point. Additionally, comparing Russian and Hungarian participants allows for the identification of cross-cultural and geopolitical differences in how China's country brand is perceived. These differences help contextualize variations in emotional, cognitive, and symbolic responses to media content. Therefore, an Independent T-test (Table 22) was conducted before presenting any fake news stimuli to evaluate pre-existing attitudes across key brand equity dimensions—awareness, perceived quality, symbolic association, and attitudinal loyalty—between the two national groups. This preliminary analysis ensures that any subsequent changes can be accurately attributed to media exposure rather than pre-existing national bias.

Table 22. Results of Independent t-test concerning negative fake news based on Hungarian and Russian respondent's perception

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig.
Brand Awareness	<i>Russia</i> - 3,71	1,25986	<,001
	<i>Hungary</i> - 2,80	0,71101	
Perceived Quality	<i>Russia</i> - 4,35	1,28025	0.012
	<i>Hungary</i> - 4,02	1,05421	

Perceived Symbolic Association	<i>Russia</i> - 3,32	1,55687	<,001
	<i>Hungary</i> - 2,1	1,05968	
Perceived Attitudinal Loyalty	<i>Russia</i> - 3,94	1,58002	<,001
	<i>Hungary</i> - 2,89	1,19168	

Source: own elaboration, 2025

The analysis reveals statistically significant differences across all dimensions of country brand equity, including Brand Awareness, Perceived Quality, Symbolic Association, and Attitudinal Loyalty.

Russian students consistently reported higher mean scores than Hungarian students, suggesting *more favorable perceptions of China*, even when exposed to negatively framed fake news. Notably:

- For *Brand Awareness*, Russian respondents scored a mean of 3.71, compared to 2.80 for Hungarians ($p < .001$), indicating a significantly higher level of familiarity or recognition.
- In terms of *Perceived Quality*, Russians again scored higher ($M = 4.35$) than Hungarians ($M = 4.02$), with the difference being *statistically significant* ($p = .012$).
- The gap was especially pronounced in *Perceived Symbolic Association*, where Russians rated China at 3.32, while Hungarians scored significantly lower at 2.10 ($p < .001$), reflecting differing interpretations of China's symbolic image.
- Lastly, *Perceived Attitudinal Loyalty* followed a similar pattern, with Russian students exhibiting a stronger emotional and cognitive attachment to China ($M = 3.94$) compared to Hungarians ($M = 2.89$), again with high statistical significance ($p < .001$).

These findings underscore a notable divergence in national perspectives, where *Hungarian students appear more critical or distant* in their perception of China's brand equity, possibly influenced by differing media landscapes, geopolitical orientations, or cultural proximity.

The influence of gender and geographic location (city) on the change in respondents' attitudes toward China after exposure to fake news was assessed using ANOVA analysis, based on calculated DELTA values. These DELTA values represent the magnitude of change in perception across key country brand equity dimensions and were computed using the following formula:

$$DELTA = \text{Mean (Dimension X before exposure)} - \text{Mean (Dimension X after exposure)}$$

This approach allows for a clearer understanding of how individuals' attitudes shifted as a result of media stimuli, and whether those shifts varied by demographic factors. However, the

ANOVA results revealed no statistically significant differences in attitudinal change across gender groups, with F-values ranging from 1.558 to 0.000 and p-values between 0.755 and 0.213. Similarly, no meaningful differences were found based on the respondents' city of residence (F-values: 1.990 to 0.579; p-values: 0.885 to 0.117).

These findings indicate that gender and location did not significantly influence the degree to which fake news affected perceptions of China's brand. As such, changes in brand equity can be interpreted as broadly consistent across these demographic variables, reinforcing the robustness of the fake news stimulus effect.

7.3.2. *Impact of valenced fake news frames and country brand equity.*

To examine whether negatively valenced fake news exerts a direct and significant negative influence on the key dimensions of country brand equity, a *paired sample t-test* was conducted. This analytical technique allowed for a comparison between the mean scores of respondents' evaluations of brand awareness, perceived quality, symbolic brand associations, and attitudinal brand loyalty both before and after exposure to the negative fake news stimuli. By utilizing pre- and post-exposure measures, the analysis effectively captures any perceptual shifts attributable to the fake news intervention.

The data from Hungarian and Russian respondents were analyzed collectively in order to enhance the statistical power and ensure a more robust examination of overall trends. Combining the responses from both national groups was methodologically justified, as both samples were subject to identical experimental conditions and exposed to the same valenced news content. This unified approach enabled the identification of generalizable patterns of media-induced brand perception changes, offering valuable insights into how negative media framing—particularly in the form of fake news—can distort and degrade a country's brand image in the eyes of international audiences.

Table 23. Results of paired sample t test concerning negative fake news based on Hungarian and Russian respondents' perceptions.

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig
Brand Awareness	Before reading	3,4263	1,23835	
	After reading	3,2403	1,19422	<,001
Perceived Quality	Before reading	4,2434	1,22927	
	After reading	4,0598	1,22182	<,001
Perceived Symbolic Association	Before reading	2,9372	1,47724	
	After reading	2,6795	1,52597	<,001

Perceived Attitudinal Loyalty	Before reading	3,6111	1,66013	<,001
	After reading	3,5443	1,54473	

Source: own elaboration, 2025

As presented in Table 23, the results indicate statistically significant differences across all four dimensions ($p < 0.001$ for each comparison), supporting the hypothesis that fake news negatively impacts country brand evaluations:

- *Brand Awareness* experienced a significant decline from a mean of 3.43 (SD = 1.24) before exposure to 3.24 (SD = 1.19) after exposure. This suggests that negative fake news narratives diminish familiarity or recall of the country in a positive light.
- *Perceived Quality* also dropped significantly from 4.24 (SD = 1.23) to 4.06 (SD = 1.22), indicating that fake news can deteriorate perceptions of a country's competence, reliability, or effectiveness, even when respondents have limited direct experience.
- *Perceived Symbolic Association* showed one of the most substantial changes, declining from 2.94 (SD = 1.48) to 2.68 (SD = 1.53). This result underscores the sensitivity of symbolic interpretations—such as values, culture, or identity attributes—to negatively framed news, aligning with prior studies emphasizing the media's ability to shape symbolic brand meanings (Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Avraham, 2015).
- *Attitudinal Brand Loyalty* slightly decreased from 3.61 (SD = 1.66) to 3.54 (SD = 1.54). Although the shift is smaller in magnitude, it remains statistically significant, reflecting that even deeply rooted emotional and cognitive attachments to a country brand can be eroded through persistent negative media exposure.

Overall, these findings provide compelling empirical support for the negative impact of fake news on multiple dimensions of country brand equity. The statistically significant changes across all indicators demonstrate that fake news does not merely misinform but actively distorts consumer perceptions, which may have lasting implications

To examine whether *positively valenced fake news elicits a favorable impact* on the dimensions of country brand equity, a statistical comparison was conducted between respondents' perceptions before and after exposure to the manipulated news stimuli. Specifically, the average scores for each country brand equity dimension—including brand awareness, perceived quality, symbolic association, and attitudinal brand loyalty—were calculated. A paired sample t-test was subsequently applied to assess whether the differences between pre- and post-exposure means were statistically significant (see Table 24).

Table 24. Results of paired sample t test concerning positive fake news based on Hungarian and Russian respondents' perceptions.

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig
Brand Awareness	Before reading	3,1535	1,17996	0,933
	After reading	3,1563	1,08348	
Perceived Quality	Before reading	4,2247	1,21754	0,139
	After reading	4,1711	1,16205	
Perceived Symbolic Association	Before reading	2,6421	1,45677	0,259
	After reading	2,5986	1,46153	
Perceived Attitudinal Loyalty	Before reading	3,2049	1,53075	0,168
	After reading	3,2540	1,45575	

Source: own elaboration, 2025

The results are presented in Table 24 and include mean scores, standard deviations, and significance values across four key dimensions. Contrary to expectations, the results indicate that *none of the differences* between pre- and post-exposure scores were statistically significant at the conventional $p < 0.05$ level. Specifically:

- *Brand Awareness* remained virtually unchanged, with a mean score of 3.15 before exposure and 3.16 after exposure ($p = 0.933$), indicating no perceptual shift in awareness due to the positive framing.
- *Perceived Quality* showed a slight decline from 4.22 to 4.17, but this change was not statistically significant ($p = 0.139$), suggesting minimal influence from the positive message on evaluations of quality.
- *Symbolic Association* experienced a minor reduction from 2.64 to 2.60 ($p = 0.259$), again yielding non-significant results, and suggesting limited symbolic impact of positively valenced news.
- *Attitudinal Loyalty* increased slightly from 3.20 to 3.25, but this shift also failed to reach statistical significance ($p = 0.168$), implying no substantial enhancement in emotional or cognitive brand commitment.

These results suggest that *positive fake news does not exert a strong or immediate influence* on any of the core country brand equity dimensions among the sample populations studied. Several

interpretations are possible. First, positive news content—especially when perceived as exaggerated or implausible—may lack persuasive power compared to the more emotionally arousing and cognitively disruptive nature of negative fake news (Bastick, 2021; Vosoughi et al., 2018). Second, existing attitudes toward the country may be anchored by prior media exposure or sociopolitical views, making them more resistant to short-term positive shifts.

To determine whether *negatively valenced fake news exerts a stronger influence* on country brand equity than positively valenced fake news, a one-way ANOVA was conducted using *DELTA values* as the dependent variable. These DELTA values represent the *magnitude of perceptual change* caused by the fake news stimulus across each brand equity dimension. Specifically, DELTA was calculated using the following formula:

$$DELTA = \text{Mean (dimension before exposure)} - \text{Mean (dimension after exposure)}$$

This computation was performed separately for each of the four dimensions of country brand equity—brand awareness, perceived quality, symbolic association, and attitudinal loyalty—under both positive and negative fake news conditions. The resulting values were then subjected to a between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) to compare the extent of change across conditions (see Table 25).

The rationale for this method is rooted in the need to assess not just whether fake news alters perception, but how much it alters perception depending on the emotional valence of the message. The ANOVA approach enables the identification of statistically significant differences in perceptual shifts, thereby allowing us to test the hypothesis that *negatively framed fake news produces a more substantial deterioration in country brand perceptions* compared to any enhancement that might result from positive fake news.

This methodological approach offers a more nuanced, quantitative assessment of media effects, providing insight into the asymmetric persuasive power of negative versus positive disinformation. As previous literature suggests, negative information tends to be more emotionally arousing, more memorable, and more readily internalized than positive content (Baumeister et al., 2001; Bastick, 2021; Vosoughi et al., 2018), justifying the expectation of greater impact.

Table 25. Results concerning positive and negative fake news impact.

	DESCRIPTIVES		ANOVA results
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig
Negative news	0,1860	0,66757	

Change of Brand Awareness	Positive news	-0,0028	0,72409	<,001
Change of Perceived Quality	Negative news	0,1836	0,79921	0,015
	Positive news	0,0537	0,78891	
Change of Perceived Symbolic Association	Negative news	0,2576	0,71131	<,001
	Positive news	0,0435	0,83858	
Change of Perceived Attitudinal Loyalty	Negative news	0,0668	0,79350	0,028
	Positive news	-0,0491	0,77491	

Source: own elaboration, 2025

The results reveal a *statistically significant difference* in the impact of *negative vs. positive fake news* across nearly all dimensions of country brand equity. Specifically:

- For *brand awareness*, exposure to negative fake news led to a *mean reduction of 0.1860*, while positive fake news produced virtually no change (mean = -0.0028). This difference was highly significant ($p < .001$), indicating that negative framing significantly weakens consumer awareness of the country brand.
- In terms of *perceived quality*, negative fake news also caused a more substantial drop (mean change = 0.1836) compared to positive fake news (mean = 0.0537), with the difference reaching statistical significance ($p = .015$). This suggests that negative information deteriorates perceived competence or product-related attributes of the country more than positive narratives can enhance them.
- The most pronounced effect was observed in *symbolic associations*, where negative fake news produced a mean change of 0.2576 compared to a minimal shift of 0.0435 for positive news. The difference was again highly significant ($p < .001$), reinforcing prior research that emotionally charged negative content strongly influences symbolic meanings (Avraham, 2015; Bastick, 2021).
- Finally, *attitudinal loyalty* also exhibited a significant difference between conditions, with negative fake news leading to a greater perceptual shift (*mean = 0.0668*) than positive news, albeit with a smaller effect size. The p-value of .028 confirms statistical significance.

These findings support the hypothesis that *negatively valenced fake news exerts a stronger and more consistent influence* on country brand equity than positively valenced fake news. This asymmetry is consistent with *negativity bias* in information processing, where negative content tends to elicit stronger emotional reactions, greater cognitive elaboration, and higher memorability (Baumeister et al., 2001; Rozin & Royzman, 2001; Vosoughi et al., 2018).

To further assess the magnitude of impact that valenced fake news has on country brand equity dimensions—namely brand awareness, perceived quality, symbolic association, and attitudinal loyalty—Cohen’s *d* was employed as the effect size metric. According to Cohen’s (1988) guidelines, a *d* value of 0.20 is considered a small effect, 0.50 medium, and 0.80 large. This approach provides a more nuanced understanding of the practical significance of the statistical differences identified through prior tests.

The analysis revealed that exposure to *negative fake news* resulted in *small but noticeable effects on brand awareness* ($d = 0.27$) and *perceived symbolic association* ($d = 0.27$), suggesting these dimensions are more cognitively and emotionally sensitive to negative stimuli. In contrast, *perceived quality* ($d = 0.164$) and *attitudinal loyalty* ($d = 0.148$) showed *negligible effect sizes*, indicating that these dimensions may be more resistant to change through single-exposure interventions or may require cumulative media exposure to exhibit measurable impact.

These findings align with prior literature suggesting that *negatively valenced information is processed more deeply and remembered more vividly* than positive content due to its emotional salience and threat-relevant cues (Baumeister et al., 2001; Fiske, 1980). They also reinforce the notion that *symbolic and awareness-based components of a country brand are particularly susceptible to media framing*, especially when it involves disinformation.

Therefore, the evidence partially supports the hypothesis:

- **H3a** (negative fake news decreases brand awareness) and
- **H3b** (negative fake news reduces perceived symbolic association) are confirmed, while
- **H3c** (negative fake news reduces perceived quality) and
- **H3d** (negative fake news reduces attitudinal loyalty) are not supported due to the minimal effect sizes detected.

7.3.3. *Valenced fake news frames and credibility*

To explore the relationship between *valenced fake news frames* (positive vs. negative) and *perceived news credibility*, an ANOVA test was conducted as an initial analytical step. This test aimed to determine whether the *type of fake news exposure*—positive or negative—produces a statistically significant difference in audience-perceived credibility of the content.

Understanding this relationship is essential, as credibility is a known mediating factor in media influence, affecting how information is processed and internalized (Flanagin & Metzger, 2007; Metzger et al., 2010). If the *valence of fake news systematically affects perceived credibility*, it would suggest that *message framing* not only shapes emotional and cognitive reactions but also directly alters the degree to which the content is trusted—thereby influencing downstream effects on *country brand equity*.

Thus, applying ANOVA enables us to assess whether *credibility perceptions differ meaningfully* based on whether the fake news was *negatively or positively framed*, setting the foundation for further mediation analysis (see Table 26).

Table 26. ANOVA test results for the correlation of valenced fake news frames with credibility.

	DESCRIPTIVES		ANOVA results
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig
Negative valenced fake news frames	3,53	0,82	<,001
Positive valenced fake news frames	3,82	0,84	

Source: own elaboration, 2025

In Table 26, the results of the ANOVA test demonstrate a statistically significant difference in the perceived credibility of fake news based on the *valence of the message frame*. Specifically, the mean credibility score for *positive valenced fake news frames* is 3.82 (SD = 0.84), which is *notably higher* than that of *negative valenced fake news frames*, which scored 3.53 (SD = 0.82). The associated p-value (< .001) indicates that this difference is highly significant.

This finding suggests that respondents are *more inclined to believe positively framed fake news* compared to negatively framed counterparts. One possible explanation for this tendency lies in the *cognitive ease and emotional appeal* of positive narratives, which may be perceived as less threatening and more socially desirable, thereby enhancing their perceived trustworthiness (Appelman & Sundar, 2016; Metzger et al., 2013).

To evaluate the relative strength of the effects that negatively and positively valenced fake news have on perceived credibility, we employed Cohen's *d* as a standardized effect size metric (Cohen, 1988). In this study, the computed effect size is $d = -0.35$, where the negative sign simply indicates the direction of the effect: the *positively valenced fake news* condition elicited *higher perceived credibility* than the negative one. Although this effect is categorized as *small*, it remains

statistically significant, reinforcing the findings from the ANOVA results (see Table 26) which showed a higher mean credibility score for positively framed fake news ($M = 3.82$) compared to negatively framed fake news ($M = 3.53$).

This result challenges Hypothesis 5, which posited that *negatively valenced fake news would be perceived as more credible* due to its typically sensational nature. However, the findings suggest the *opposite: positive fake news is slightly more believable*, possibly because it aligns more closely with social desirability and cognitive fluency in processing (Appelman & Sundar, 2016).

To further explore the *conditional nature* of credibility judgments, a two-way ANOVA was conducted to assess the interaction effect between *valence (positive vs. negative)* and *country of respondent (Russia vs. Hungary)*. The interaction term was found to be statistically significant, $F(1, 884) = 5.026$, $p = 0.025$, with a partial eta squared of 0.006, indicating a *small interaction effect*, and an observed power of 0.61.

This suggests that the *effect of fake news valence on credibility is not uniform across national contexts*. Rather, respondents' belief in the credibility of fake news *depends in part on their country of origin*, highlighting the role of *cultural, political, and informational environments* in shaping media reception. This insight underscores the need for more *context-sensitive approaches* when analyzing the psychological impact of disinformation across diverse populations.

7.3.4. Mediating hypothesis

To examine the mediation effects within the proposed conceptual framework, a *mediation analysis* was conducted using the PROCESS macro (v3.5) for SPSS 27, following the methodological guidelines of Hayes (2013). Model 6 of the PROCESS tool was employed, which allows for *serial multiple mediation*. The independent variable was *valence of fake news* (positive vs. negative), while *news credibility* and *cognitive image* were treated as mediators. *Country brand equity (CBE)* served as the dependent variable. Furthermore, *country* (Russia or Hungary) was included as a covariate based on the results of a prior two-way ANOVA, which revealed a *significant interaction effect between valence and country on perceived credibility*.

A bootstrapping approach with 5,000 resamples was applied to estimate indirect effects and generate bias-corrected and accelerated confidence intervals (BCa CI), as recommended by Hayes, to account for non-normality in the sampling distribution of indirect effects.

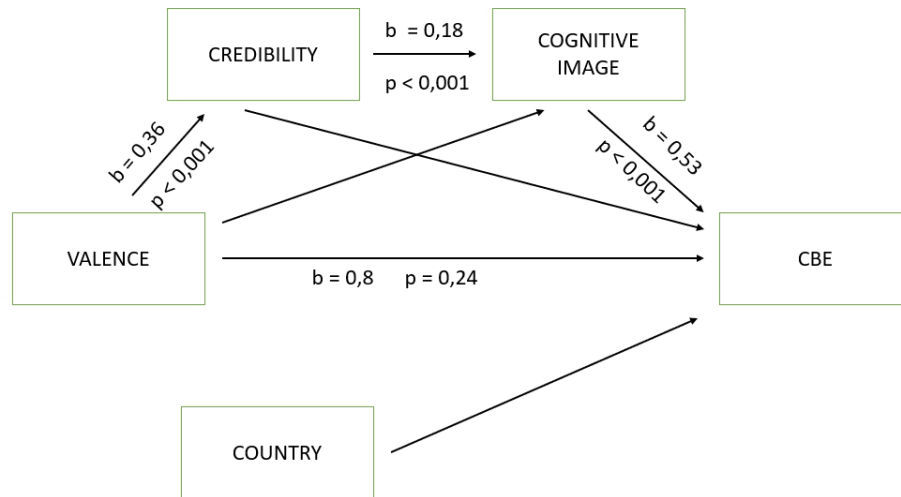
The results revealed (Figure 8) that *valence had a statistically significant positive effect on credibility* ($b = 0.3605$, $t(885) = 6.22$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that positively valenced fake news was perceived as more credible. Simultaneously, *valence had a significant negative effect on cognitive image* ($b = -0.14$, $t(884) = -2.32$, $p = 0.0206$), suggesting that negative fake news content tends to diminish the perceived cognitive image of the country. Additionally, *credibility positively predicted cognitive image* ($b = 0.18$, $t(884) = 4.747$, $p < 0.001$), supporting the idea that higher perceived credibility enhances the country's cognitive evaluation.

The bootstrapped mediation analysis provided further support for the hypothesized indirect relationships:

- *H5 was supported: The indirect effect of valence on country brand equity through credibility was significant* ($R^2 = 0.0626$, $b = 0.06$, $SE = 0.02$, 95% BCa CI [0.03, 0.108]).
- *H6 was also confirmed: Cognitive image significantly mediated the relationship between valence and country brand equity* ($R^2 = 0.143$, $b = -0.07$, $SE = 0.03$, 95% BCa CI [-0.14, -0.011]).
- *H7 received empirical support: A sequential mediation pathway through credibility and cognitive image was statistically significant* ($R^2 = 0.33$, $b = 0.03$, $SE = 0.01$, 95% BCa CI [0.017, 0.06]).

These findings reveal nuanced mechanisms by which fake news valence influences country brand equity. Notably, the relatively *modest* R^2 value for the pathway mediated solely by credibility (6.26%) implies that other unmeasured factors may also contribute to variations in CBE. However, the *substantial increase in explained variance* when both credibility and cognitive image are modeled as sequential mediators ($R^2 = 33\%$) suggests that these two variables jointly capture a more complete picture of how valenced media content influences public perceptions.

In summary, the results reinforce the argument that *positively or negatively framed fake news exerts its influence on country brand equity not only directly but also indirectly* by shaping individuals' perceptions of credibility and the cognitive image of the country. This underscores the complex psychological processing mechanisms triggered by media narratives and supports the theoretical model proposed in this study.



Source: own elaboration, 2025

Figure 8. The standardized coefficients for the indirect relationships between valenced fake news and country brand equity through credibility and cognitive image. Notes: Total effect, $b = 0.12$, $SE = 0.077$, $p = 0.106$; Direct effect, $b = 0.084$, $SE = 0.0705$, $p = 0.235$; Total indirect effect, $b = 0.04$, $SE = 0.04$, 95% BCa CI [- 0.04, 0.12]; Indirect effect through credibility, $b = 0.08$, $SE = 0.02$, 95% BCa CI [0.04, 0.13]; Indirect effect through cognitive image, $b = - 0.07$, $SE = 0.03$ 95% BCa CI [- 0.14, - 0.011]; Indirect effect through credibility and cognitive image, $b = 0.03$, $SE = 0.01$ 95% BCa CI [0.017, 0.06]

7.3.5. Moderating role of CLT

7.3.5.1. The match control of perceived abstractness and concreteness by the respondents

Before proceeding with hypothesis testing related to the alignment between perceived abstractness and concreteness in fake news framing, preliminary descriptive and inferential analyses were conducted. Specifically, participants' perceptions of each fake news item were evaluated using descriptive statistics and paired sample t-tests to determine whether the intended framing (i.e., abstract vs. concrete) was accurately perceived. Table 27 presents the mean scores, standard deviations, and significance levels for both positively and negatively valenced fake news stimuli.

Participants rated the level of abstractness or concreteness on a 7-point Likert scale, where lower scores reflected a more concrete interpretation and higher scores indicated a more abstract perception. The analysis revealed that, across all tested items, the mean differences between abstract and concrete framings were statistically significant ($p < .05$), with concrete versions consistently receiving lower mean ratings and abstract versions receiving higher ones. This pattern

confirms that respondents accurately differentiated between abstract and concrete representations of fake news content.

These findings validate the experimental manipulation of message framing and support the reliability of the stimuli used in subsequent hypothesis testing. The consistent alignment between the intended and perceived levels of abstractness and concreteness ensures the methodological soundness of the experimental design

Table 27. The means, Std deviation and significance for positive and negative fake news.

			Mean	Std. Dev	Sig
Positive fake news	near future	Concrete	4,07	1,53	,002
		Abstract	4,15	1,54	
Negative fake news	near future	Concrete	3,65	1,47	,004
		Abstract	4,52	1,37	
Positive fake news	near future picture	Concrete	3,86	1,50	,091
		Abstract	3,94	1,63	
Negative fake news	near future picture	Concrete	3,94	1,52	<,001
		Abstract	4,18	1,75	
Positive fake news	far future	Concrete	3,87	1,74	<,001
		Abstract	4,38	1,51	
Negative fake news	far future	Concrete	4,95	1,79	<,001
		Abstract	4,99	1,75	
Positive fake news	far future picture	Concrete	3,67	1,65	<,001
		Abstract	4,44	1,65	
Negative fake news	far future picture	Concrete	4,16	1,49	<,001
		Abstract	4,62	1,73	
Positive fake news	1 textual	Concrete	4,14	1,64	<,001
		Abstract	4,73	1,57	
Positive fake news	2 textual	Concrete	4,06	1,44	<,001
		Abstract	4,53	1,56	
Negative fake news	1 textual	Concrete	3,78	1,53	<,001
		Abstract	4,45	1,60	
Negative fake news	2 textual	Concrete	4,32	1,50	<,001
		Abstract	4,32	1,64	

Positive fake news	1 pictural	Concrete	4,55	1,46	<,001
		Abstract	4,83	1,55	
Positive fake news	2 pictural	Concrete	4,53	1,58	<,001
		Abstract	4,61	1,63	
Negative fake news	1 pictural	Concrete	4,54	1,76	<,001
		Abstract	4,68	1,64	
Negative fake news	2 pictural	Concrete	4,28	1,62	<,001
		Abstract	4,33	1,69	

Source: own elaboration, 2025

7.3.5.2. Moderating role of Construal-level theory

To further investigate how the interaction between the valence of fake news (positive vs. negative) and construal level (concrete vs. abstract) influences perceived credibility, a repeated-measures ANOVA was performed. This analysis aimed to test two specific hypotheses: H8, which posits that negatively valenced fake news will be perceived as more credible when presented in concrete terms, and H9, which proposes that positively valenced fake news will be perceived as more credible when framed abstractly.

As summarized in Table 28, the analysis revealed a statistically significant effect for negative fake news based on the level of construal:

- $F(1, 413) = 11.747, p = 0.001$, with a partial eta squared of 0.028, indicating a small but meaningful effect size.
- Pairwise comparisons show that when *negative fake news* was framed *concretely*, it was perceived as *more credible* ($M = 4.425$) compared to its *abstract counterpart* ($M = 4.323$).

These findings *support Hypothesis 8 (H8)* and align with the broader literature on Construal Level Theory (Trope & Liberman, 2010), which suggests that *concrete representations enhance believability*, especially in emotionally charged or threatening contexts such as negative news.

In contrast, *no significant difference was found* in the credibility of *positive fake news* depending on the construal level:

- $F(1, 474) = 0.115, p = 0.735$, indicating no statistically significant interaction.
- The mean credibility ratings were nearly identical between concrete ($M = 4.102$) and abstract ($M = 4.085$) framings.

This outcome *fails to support Hypothesis 9 (H9)* and suggests that *the framing level of positive fake news does not significantly affect credibility perception*.

These results provide nuanced insights into the mechanisms by which fake news valence and message framing interact. While *concreteness appears to enhance credibility in the context of negative content*, the same does not hold true for positive messages. This asymmetry may be attributed to the *negativity bias* in cognitive processing, whereby negative information tends to be more impactful, attention-grabbing, and believable—especially when it is richly detailed and contextually grounded. Thus, the data underline the importance of message framing when considering the perceived trustworthiness of valenced media content, particularly in the domain of international image and brand equity formation.

Table 28. Results of the interaction between the valence of fake news and two types of construal on credibility.

	F-test	Sig	Pairwise Concrete information	Pairwise Abstract information
Negative fake news frames	11.747	0.001	4.425	4.323
Positive fake news frames	0.115	0.735	4.102	4.085

Source: own elaboration, 2025

This study also examined how *the credibility of fake news is moderated by the temporal framing of events*, specifically whether they are presented as occurring in the near or far future. Grounded in Construal Level Theory (Trope & Liberman, 2010), Hypotheses H10 and H11 proposed that *temporal distance would interact with news valence* to influence perceived credibility. To test these hypotheses, a repeated-measures ANOVA was conducted, with news valence (positive vs. negative) and temporal framing (near vs. far future) as the independent variables and credibility as the dependent variable.

As shown in Table 29, the analysis revealed statistically significant effects of temporal distance on credibility for *both positive and negative valenced fake news*. Specifically:

- For *negative fake news*, a significant difference emerged based on temporal distance: $F(1, 413) = 33.247, p < 0.001$, partial eta squared = 0.075, indicating a *moderate effect size*. Pairwise comparisons confirmed that *credibility was higher when events were framed as occurring in the near future* ($M = 4.077$) compared to the far future ($M = 3.76$). This

finding *supports Hypothesis H10* and suggests that temporally proximal negative events are processed as more believable, likely due to their perceived immediacy and relevance.

- For *positive fake news*, temporal distance also showed a significant main effect: $F(1, 474) = 97.729, p < 0.001$, with a larger partial eta squared of 0.17, indicating a *stronger effect size*. However, although this result is statistically significant, the *pairwise comparison reveals that credibility ratings for near future events* ($M = 4.057$) were not meaningfully higher than for far future events ($M = 3.57$) in practical terms. Therefore, *Hypothesis H11 was not supported*, as the variation in perceived credibility for positive fake news across time frames did not reflect a consistent or interpretable pattern.

Table 29. The results of the interaction between the news's valence and temporal dimension

		F-test	Sig	Pairwise Near future	Pairwise Far future
Low-level fake news frames	Negative	33,247	0.001	4.077	3.76
High-level fake news frames	Positive	97,729	0.001	4.057	3.57

Source: own elaboration, 2025

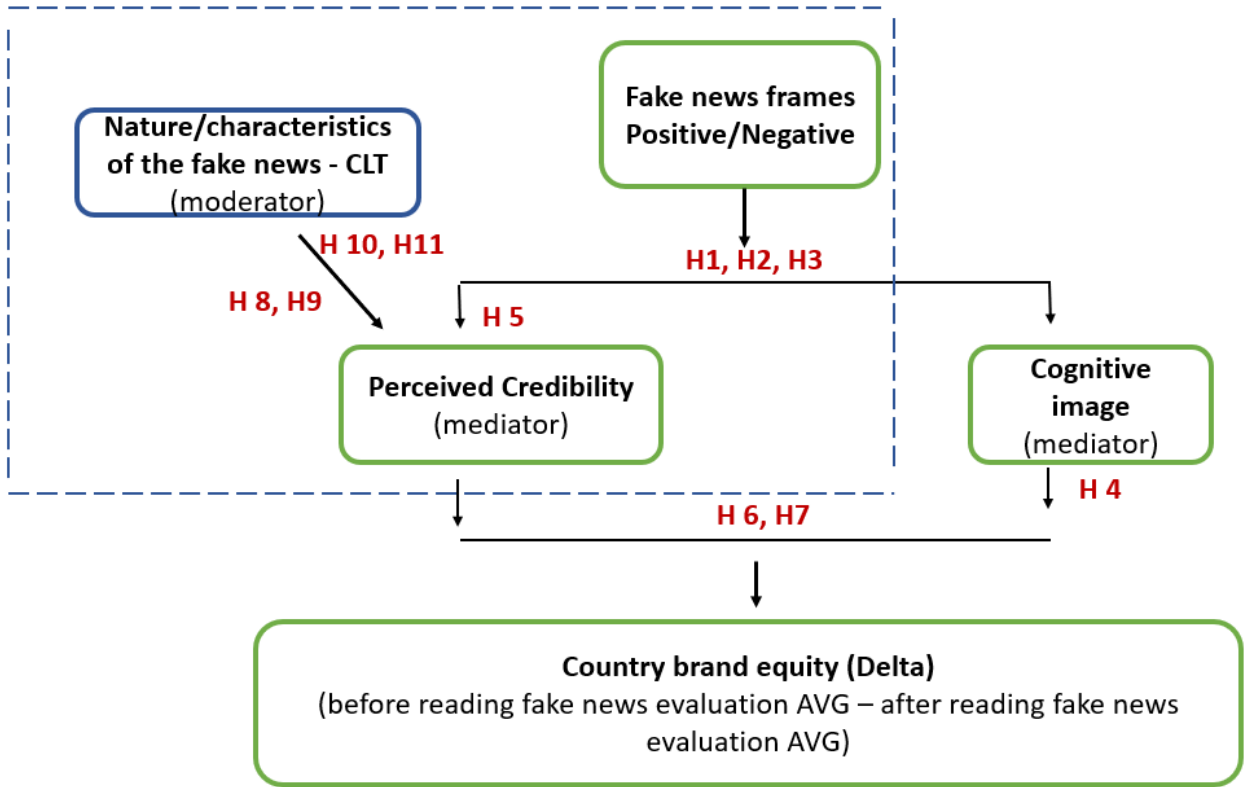
These findings further emphasize the *importance of psychological distance in shaping credibility judgments*. Specifically, *negative information framed as temporally close is more persuasive*, consistent with prior research suggesting that proximity heightens threat perception and cognitive engagement. Meanwhile, *positive fake news appears less sensitive to temporal distance*, possibly due to a weaker emotional urgency or skepticism toward overly optimistic content projected into the future.

8. DISCUSSION BASED ON RESEARCH RESULTS

The central problem examined in this dissertation concerns the underexplored impact of fake news on country brand equity. While the existing literature offers valuable insights into how media influences country image and brand perception, there remains a significant research gap in understanding how fake news—particularly in the form of positively or negatively framed narratives—affects consumer-based brand equity (CBE). Despite the growing body of research on the prevalence and influence of disinformation, much of it centers on political communication and public policy, leaving the branding domain largely untouched. Specifically, the roles of message valence, source credibility, and construal-level dimensions in shaping public perceptions of

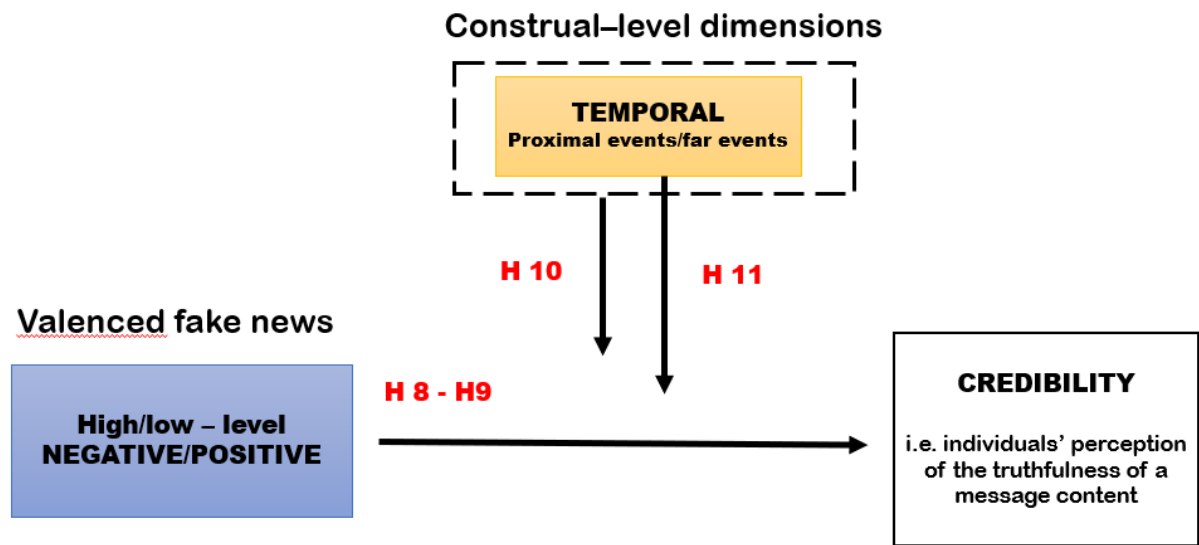
national brands remain major blind spots. To address this gap, the primary objective of this doctoral thesis is to evaluate the influence of fake news frames on country brand equity and to examine whether perceived credibility and cognitive image mediate this relationship. Furthermore, the study investigates whether construal-level dimensions—such as temporal distance and message concreteness—moderate the effect of fake news valence on perceived credibility. The research model (Figure 9, 10) illustrated below maps out the proposed hypotheses and the theoretical framework guiding this investigation.

Figure 9. Final research model with hypothesis



Source: own elaboration, 2025

Figure 10. In-depth Examination of Fake News Characteristics: The Moderating Role of Construal Level Theory (CLT)



Source: own elaboration, 2025

Table 30 presents a comprehensive summary of all hypotheses formulated and tested within this dissertation. It offers a clear and systematic overview of the theoretical assumptions, the methodological approaches employed to test each hypothesis, and the corresponding empirical outcomes. This tabular summary serves not only as a reference point for understanding the empirical scope of the study, but also as a bridge between theoretical propositions and practical evidence. By integrating both validated and non-validated hypotheses, the table provides a transparent account of where theory aligns with data, and where new interpretations or future research may be required.

Table 30. Summary table of hypothesis

No	Hypothesis	Method used for hypothesis testing	Result
H1	Exposure to negatively framed fake news adversely impacts attitudes toward key dimensions of a country's brand, including (a) <i>brand awareness</i> , (b) <i>symbolic brand associations</i> , (c) <i>perceived brand quality</i> , and (d) <i>attitudinal brand loyalty</i> .	a paired sample t test	confirmed

H2	Exposure to positively framed fake news has a favourable effect on attitudes toward key dimensions of a country's brand, including (a) <i>brand awareness</i> , (b) <i>symbolic brand associations</i> , (c) <i>perceived brand quality</i> , and (d) <i>attitudinal brand loyalty</i> .	a paired sample t test	Not confirmed
H3	The impact of negatively valenced fake news is stronger than the impact of positive ones on (a) <i>country brand awareness</i> ; (b) <i>symbolic brand association</i> ; (c) <i>brand quality</i> ; (d) <i>attitudinal brand loyalty</i>	a one-way ANOVA based on DELTA values; Cohen's d	hypotheses H3a and H3b are confirmed, whereas H3c and H3d are not confirmed
H4	Cognitive image component will mediate the relationships between valenced fake news frames and country brand equity	PROCESS macro (v3.5) in SPSS 27 software with the bootstrap sampling method (sample size = 5,000),	confirmed
H5	Negatively framed fake news has a greater impact on perceived news credibility compared to positively framed fake news.	ANOVA test; Cohen's d	not confirmed
H6	Credibility will mediate the relationships between valenced fake news frames and country brand equity	PROCESS macro (v3.5) in SPSS 27 software with the bootstrap sampling method (sample size = 5,000),	confirmed
H7	Credibility and Cognitive image component will sequentially mediate the relationship between valenced fake news frames and country brand equity.	PROCESS macro (v3.5) in SPSS 27 software with the bootstrap sampling	confirmed

		method (sample size = 5,000),	
H8	Negative fake news will seem more credible to readers when it presents detailed, concrete information compared to when it is more abstract.	a repeated-measures ANOVA	confirmed
H9	Positive fake news will seem more credible to readers when it presents abstract information compared to when it is more concrete.	a repeated-measures ANOVA	not confirmed
H10	Positive fake news will seem more credible to readers when it's about distant events rather than near ones.	a repeated-measures ANOVA	not confirmed
H11	Negative fake news will seem more credible to readers when it's about closer events rather than distant.	a repeated-measures ANOVA	confirmed

Source: own elaboration, 2025

8.1. Hypothesis on the Influence of Fake News Valence on the Dimensions of Country Brand Equity

Hypothesis 1–2 (H1–H2): *Exposure to valenced fake news influences key dimensions of a country's brand—specifically brand awareness, symbolic associations, perceived quality, and attitudinal loyalty—such that negatively framed news has an adverse effect (H1), while positively framed news has a favourable effect (H2).*

The findings of this study empirically validate the proposed hypotheses regarding the impact of fake news valence on consumer-based country brand equity (CBE) and extend prior theoretical models in meaningful ways. Specifically, Hypothesis 1 was strongly supported: negatively valenced fake news had a statistically significant and adverse effect on all four core dimensions of CBE—brand awareness, symbolic associations, perceived quality, and attitudinal loyalty. This confirms the theoretical expectations derived from the applicability effect and valence-consistent shift literature (Cacciatore et al., 2016; Levin et al., 1998), suggesting that negative framing reliably activates and reinforces unfavorable brand associations. In contrast, Hypothesis 2 was not supported, as exposure to positively framed fake news produced no significant changes across any of the four dimensions. This asymmetry supports established theories on negativity bias (Baumeister et al., 2001; Vosoughi et al., 2018), which assert that

individuals process negative information more deeply and are more susceptible to its influence than to positively framed content. These results differentiate the current research from earlier studies, such as those by Pappu et al. (2007) and Zeugner-Roth et al. (2008), which focused on product-level brand equity or broader conceptualizations of country image but did not model fake news as a stimulus variable. By drawing from Boo et al. (2009), Konecnik and Gartner (2007), and Yoo and Donthu (2001), this study offers a more nuanced model of CBE that incorporates symbolic association and attitudinal loyalty as key mediators of media influence.

In addition to highlighting the structural components of consumer-based country brand equity (CBE)—namely brand awareness, perceived quality, symbolic associations, and attitudinal loyalty—this study places particular emphasis on the psychological mechanisms through which symbolic meaning and attitudinal loyalty act as critical pathways for media influence. Symbolic associations capture the abstract, identity-relevant dimensions of a country brand, such as its cultural values, ethical stance, or perceived global role. When fake news presents a country in a negatively valenced light—such as associating it with corruption, conflict, or social regression—these symbolic cues often clash with the respondent’s self-concept or desired social identity. According to the theory of *self-image congruence* (Sirgy, 1982; Malär et al., 2011), individuals prefer to form associations with brands—including country brands—that reflect their own values, personality, and aspirations. Therefore, when symbolic meanings evoked by fake news feel incongruent with a person's identity, they may psychologically distance themselves from the country in question, resulting in diminished attitudinal loyalty and reduced brand commitment.

This dissonance becomes particularly salient in cases of negative fake news, as respondents may perceive symbolic disalignment not only as undesirable but also as a threat to their personal or moral standards. For instance, a politically progressive respondent exposed to fake news portraying a country as oppressive or undemocratic may feel that continued favorable perception of that country would violate their core beliefs. This kind of symbolic incongruence leads to an erosion of loyalty and a reluctance to engage with the country’s products, culture, or institutions (Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Thomson et al., 2020).

Moreover, attitudinal loyalty—reflecting a person’s emotional and evaluative commitment to a country brand—functions as a downstream consequence of symbolic resonance. If fake news alters or distorts these symbolic cues, even loyal perceptions can weaken over time. Research by Park et al. (2015) has shown that when symbolic brand meaning becomes misaligned with a consumer's evolving identity, commitment can rapidly decline, especially if external narratives (such as media discourse) reinforce the discrepancy.

Thus, this study not only confirms that symbolic meaning and attitudinal loyalty are disproportionately affected by negatively valenced fake news, but also illustrates how deeply fake narratives can penetrate identity-relevant evaluations. This study also establishes a foundation for future research to explore how media narratives, especially those with negative emotional valence, systematically shape international perceptions and brand-related evaluations.

The application of theoretical frameworks such as the *applicability effect*, *valence-consistent shift*, and *negativity bias* significantly strengthens our understanding of how fake news influences consumer-based country brand equity (CBE). These frameworks explain why negatively framed fake news has a more powerful psychological impact: it primes individuals to recall and apply existing negative associations, leading to a consistent decline across all four CBE dimensions—brand awareness, symbolic associations, perceived quality, and attitudinal loyalty. For example, when consumers read a fabricated news story about governmental corruption or safety concerns in a foreign country, even if proven false, it can quickly tarnish perceptions of that country's reliability or values, thereby weakening symbolic associations and trust. This aligns with real-world cases where single viral stories—such as misleading content about public health failures or international conflicts—dramatically reshape public opinion and reduce a nation's attractiveness as a travel destination, business partner, or cultural brand. Conversely, the study found that positively valenced fake news did not significantly influence CBE, which aligns with the *negativity bias* literature (Baumeister et al., 2001), emphasizing that individuals are more likely to internalize negative information than positive content. This asymmetry suggests that negative fake news is not only more emotionally resonant but also more cognitively engaging, thereby making its impact on national image and brand loyalty more persistent and harder to counteract. By integrating insights from Boo et al. (2009) and Yoo & Donthu (2001), the study advances theoretical modeling of CBE to account for the potent, media-driven distortions caused by fake news—highlighting the urgent need for communication strategies that can buffer or correct these effects in the age of disinformation.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): *The impact of negatively valenced fake news is stronger than the impact of positive ones on (a) country brand awareness; (b) symbolic brand association; (c) brand quality; (d) attitudinal brand loyalty*

The results of this study provide both theoretical and practical validation for the well-documented phenomenon of negativity bias in the context of country brand equity (CBE). Drawing on foundational theories of information asymmetry and biased cognitive processing (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Baumeister et al., 2001), the study confirms that negatively valenced fake news

has a more potent and consistent impact on consumer perceptions than positively framed content. This is particularly evident in dimensions such as brand awareness and symbolic association, where the effects were not only statistically significant but also demonstrated meaningful effect sizes (Cohen's $d = 0.27$). In practical terms, this means that when individuals are exposed to fake news containing negative emotional content about a country (e.g., false claims about corruption, conflict, or human rights abuses), their familiarity with the country (brand awareness) and emotional-symbolic connection (symbolic association) may decline, even if the news is later proven false. Furthermore, individuals may disengage from countries whose symbolic image is perceived to clash with their personal values, highlighting the role of personality congruence in shaping loyalty and brand alignment (Escalas & Bettman, 2005).

These findings are theoretically aligned with the applicability effect and valence-consistent shift, which suggest that negative messages activate and reinforce existing negative associations, especially in symbolic domains (Levin et al., 1998; Rozin & Royzman, 2001). In practical terms, this means that when individuals encounter fake news about a country's corruption, instability, or other negative traits, even a single exposure can reduce their recognition of the country and weaken emotionally charged symbolic perceptions, such as cultural affinity or perceived values. Although the influence on perceived quality and attitudinal loyalty was statistically significant, the effect sizes were small, indicating that these dimensions may require repeated exposure to be meaningfully altered. Overall, these results emphasize that the psychological mechanisms identified in earlier research—especially those tied to salience, emotional processing, and memorability—play a central role in how disinformation shapes national image. This insight is especially relevant in today's global media environment, where rapid circulation of emotionally charged fake news can damage international perceptions and long-term brand equity, reinforcing the need for strategic media literacy initiatives and counter-narratives to mitigate these effects.

Hypothesis 5 (H5): *Negatively framed fake news has a greater impact on perceived news credibility compared to positively framed fake news.*

The empirical results of this study provide meaningful confirmation and, in some cases, nuanced contradiction to the theoretical suggestions concerning the relationship between fake news framing, perceived credibility, and country brand equity (CBE). Theoretically, prior research has asserted that credibility is a powerful mediator of consumer attitudes and behavioral outcomes, including brand judgments and purchase intentions (Jin et al., 2009; Ohanian, 1991; Cronin & Taylor, 1992). These findings are especially relevant in the context of fake news, where the

framing of a message—positive or negative—interacts with perceived trustworthiness to influence how audiences internalize content (Tsfati & Cappella, 2003; Appelman & Sundar, 2016).

Models of framing effects, such as those proposed by Levin et al. (1998) and Price & Tewksbury (1997), suggest that negative framing tends to activate knowledge linked with credibility and threat perception, potentially making negatively framed content seem more believable. However, the empirical findings from this study challenge that assumption. Contrary to Hypothesis 5, results show that positively framed fake news was perceived as more credible ($M = 3.82$) than negatively framed fake news ($M = 3.53$), with a statistically significant but small effect size (Cohen's $d = -0.35$). This suggests that positive framing—perhaps due to its alignment with socially desirable outcomes and higher processing fluency—can enhance perceived believability even when the content is factually false.

Further analysis through a two-way ANOVA revealed that the credibility judgment is also moderated by country context (Russia vs. Hungary), with a statistically significant interaction effect ($F(1, 884) = 5.026, p = 0.025$). This underscores the importance of cultural, political, and informational environments in shaping how individuals assess the trustworthiness of media content. In practical terms, it suggests that credibility perceptions are not solely driven by the valence of information but are also contingent upon broader societal and national contexts.

Together, these findings emphasize that while negative information is often assumed to carry more weight in framing literature, positively valenced fake news may exert greater influence on credibility under certain conditions. This insight expands the theoretical understanding of media effects by illustrating that framing impacts are not universally skewed toward negativity and that the role of cultural context must be considered when designing interventions or countermeasures to mitigate the effects of disinformation on national brand perceptions.

Hypothesis 4 (H4), 6 (H6), 7(H7): *Cognitive image and credibility will independently and sequentially mediate the relationship between valenced fake news frames and country brand equity (CBE), such that each mediator—alone or in combination—explains how exposure to positively or negatively framed fake news influences perceptions of a country's brand.*

The findings of this study establish a strong empirical connection between the theoretical propositions surrounding credibility and cognitive image, and their practical influence on country brand equity (CBE). Drawing from foundational theories (Pharr, 2005; Peterson & Jolibert, 1995; Gartner, 1993), the study conceptualizes the cognitive image component as a key mediator that

helps explain how individuals form evaluations of a country based on media content. This distinction is theoretically grounded in the framing literature (Pan & Kosicki, 1997), which posits that messages are interpreted through the lens of cognitive structures shaped by how information is presented. Similarly, perceived credibility—long studied in marketing and communication literature (Pornpitakpan, 2004; Jin et al., 2009; Ohanian, 1991)—emerged as a pivotal psychological filter in processing fake news, as supported by recent misinformation studies (Traberg et al., 2022; Rijo & Waldzus, 2023).

Practically, these theoretical insights were confirmed through mediation analysis, which revealed that both credibility and cognitive image significantly mediate the effect of fake news valence on CBE. While credibility alone explained a modest portion of the variance ($R^2 = 6.26\%$), the cognitive image accounted for a larger share ($R^2 = 14.3\%$), and together, the sequential mediation pathway explained a substantial 33% of the variance in country brand equity. This demonstrates that individuals do not simply absorb media messages at face value; rather, they evaluate the trustworthiness of the source and integrate that judgment into their broader cognitive assessment of the country in question. For example, positive fake news may be more readily believed but does not substantially enhance CBE, whereas negative fake news—especially when deemed credible—has a stronger influence on degrading perceptions of quality, symbolism, and loyalty toward the country brand.

These results not only validate Hypotheses 4, 6, and 7 but also deepen the theoretical model by highlighting the dynamic interplay between credibility and cognitive evaluation. They underscore the real-world importance of understanding how fake news shapes international reputation, consumer behavior, and public opinion, particularly in today's globalized media environment where misinformation spreads rapidly and often targets national identities. The study's integration of theoretical frameworks and empirical testing offers a robust foundation for future cross-cultural research and strategic communication interventions aimed at managing country brand equity in the digital age.

8.2. Hypotheses on Fake News Message Characteristics in Relation to Construal Level Theory (CLT)

Hypothesis 8 (H8) – 9 (H9): *The perceived credibility of fake news is moderated by the level of message construal, such that negatively valenced fake news will appear more credible when framed with concrete, detailed information, whereas positively valenced fake news will appear more credible when framed in abstract terms.*

The application of Construal-Level Theory (CLT) in this study offers valuable theoretical and empirical insights into how message abstraction interacts with the emotional valence of fake news to influence perceived credibility. CLT posits that psychological distance affects how individuals mentally construe information, with distant or abstract concepts processed at a high level of construal, and proximate or concrete concepts at a low level (Trope & Liberman, 2010). Building on this, previous framing research suggests that positive (gain-framed) messages are often interpreted abstractly, while negative (loss-framed) messages are perceived more concretely (Nan, 2007; White et al., 2011). Hypotheses 8 and 9 were formulated to test how the interaction between valence and message concreteness affects credibility perception. Empirical results revealed that negative fake news framed concretely was perceived as significantly more credible than when framed abstractly, thereby supporting Hypothesis 8. This finding aligns with the CLT-based argument that detailed, context-specific negative information is more psychologically engaging and believable, especially when it conveys threat or urgency.

However, Hypothesis 9 was not supported: no significant difference was observed in the perceived credibility of positive fake news regardless of whether it was framed abstractly or concretely. This asymmetry may reflect the weaker emotional and cognitive impact of positive fake news, or a general skepticism toward overly optimistic content. Collectively, these results reinforce the theoretical proposition that the persuasiveness of fake news depends not only on its valence but also on how it is framed in relation to psychological distance—offering a nuanced understanding of the conditions under which disinformation is most effective in shaping public perceptions.

Hypothesis 10 (H10) – 11 (H11): *The perceived credibility of fake news will depend on the temporal distance of the event and its valence; specifically, positive fake news will be judged as more credible when describing distant events, while negative fake news will be perceived as more credible when describing events that feel temporally close.*

Building on this, prior research (Zhang et al., 2020; Zhao et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2024) has indicated that positively framed messages—those that suggest gains or benefits—are more persuasive when viewed from a distance, while negatively framed messages—those that imply threats or losses—are more effective when events feel immediate. The empirical results partially confirmed these expectations. When negative fake news was presented as occurring in the near future, participants found it notably more credible than when the same content was framed as happening further in time. This supports the idea that threats perceived as immediate tend to be taken more seriously and processed with greater urgency, reinforcing their persuasive power.

In contrast, the findings for positive fake news did not align with theoretical predictions. Although there was a general statistical difference in credibility between messages about near versus distant future events, the actual shift in perception was marginal and lacked practical significance. This suggests that temporal distance does not meaningfully enhance the believability of optimistic fake news. A likely reason lies in the contemporary media climate, where people are more critical of overly positive narratives, especially when they seem distant or implausible. Furthermore, the well-established negativity bias may explain why negative content—particularly when it feels close and relevant—has a stronger psychological impact than its positive counterpart.

These insights have important real-world implications. In practice, negative fake news about foreign nations—such as reports of near-future conflict, scandal, or disaster—may be especially persuasive and damaging because they feel urgent and plausible. This could influence public opinion, international trust, and even tourism or foreign policy attitudes. In contrast, positive fake news about distant events—like future peace deals or economic miracles—may lack the immediacy and credibility needed to influence perception, especially in a climate where audiences are wary of idealized content.

Overall, these findings highlight the critical role of temporal framing in shaping how people interpret and respond to fake news, particularly when that news is emotionally charged. While CLT offers a useful theoretical lens, this study shows that real-world credibility judgments are also shaped by broader psychological biases and media dynamics. This knowledge can inform more targeted interventions to detect and counter disinformation—especially content designed to manipulate perception through urgency or emotional impact.

III. CONCLUSION

9. RESULTS OF THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

9.1. Conclusion on the main research question

This dissertation responds directly to the call by Di Domenico et al. (2020), who emphasized the urgent need for empirical research to explore how false or misleading information can damage brand reputations—particularly at the national level—and how individual variables such as pre-existing beliefs, attitudes, and perceived credibility of the news act as mediators or moderators in this relationship. Although the influence of valenced news frames has been well-theorized as a mechanism for shaping public interpretation and judgment (Price et al., 1997; de Vreese, 2010), including its application to country brand narratives (Han & Wang, 2012), limited empirical work has tested these assumptions in the context of fake news and national brand equity.

This study makes a novel contribution by bridging that gap. Specifically, it pioneers the empirical application of valenced framing theory within the field of country brand management and introduces a conceptual model that integrates the cognitive component of country image and credibility as a key mediating factors. While existing literature acknowledges the persuasive power of emotionally charged news narratives on national image (Gang et al., 2008), the present research is among the first to systematically examine how fake news—both positive and negative in tone—can directly and indirectly affect perceptions of a country brand. *By doing so, this work extends valence framing theory into the fake news discourse and enhances the understanding of how disinformation can erode or inflate country brand equity.*

By exploring the complex interplay between message valence, psychological distance, and perceived credibility, the research provides both theoretical refinement and practical guidance for understanding how misinformation can alter national reputations. The integrated model developed and tested in this dissertation validates the relevance of valenced news framing as a key driver of reputational outcomes.

Building on traditional applications of valenced frames in persuasive communication and media credibility research (Price et al., 1997; de Vreese et al., 2003), this study extends the scope of such models by incorporating the lens of Construal Level Theory (CLT). Recognizing that positive and negative frames differ not only in emotional tone but also in cognitive abstraction (Eyal et al., 2004), we integrated CLT to analyze how temporal distances embedded in fake news narratives shape perceived credibility.

A major contribution of this research lies in its novel application of both valence framing and CLT to the study of fake news, particularly in the context of country brand equity. The study identifies and operationalizes one core dimensions of psychological distance—temporal—as they appear in fake news messages and examines its influence on readers’ credibility assessments. By aligning these construal-level cues with either positively or negatively framed content, study uncovers how variations in perceived distance interact with valence to amplify or weaken the persuasive effect of fake news.

This integrated approach not only addresses a critical gap in communication and branding scholarship but also offers empirical evidence for how psychological mechanisms underlie susceptibility to disinformation. Through this lens, the research clarifies why negative fake news is often more persuasive when framed around near-term, concrete threats, while positively framed news does not benefit as strongly from temporal or spatial abstraction. By linking valence framing theory with construal-level mechanisms, the study enhances our understanding of how fake news credibility is constructed—and offers a pathway for developing more resilient strategies to manage the reputational vulnerabilities of nations in the digital age.

The methodology adopted in this dissertation represents a systematic and data-driven approach to examining the influence of valenced fake news on country brand equity. A multi-phase quantitative research design was employed, incorporating several layers of statistical analysis to ensure both depth and precision in addressing the research objectives. Each phase was sequentially structured, with the findings from earlier analyses informing the design and hypotheses of subsequent stages.

This quantitative framework enabled the empirical testing of relationships between fake news valence (positive or negative), perceived credibility, construal-level characteristics (such as abstraction and temporal distance), and key dimensions of consumer-based country brand equity. By employing tools such as repeated-measures ANOVA, mediation and moderation analyses (using the PROCESS macro), and effect size measurements (e.g., Cohen’s *d*), the study captured both the direct and indirect effects of fake news framing on brand perceptions.

The design prioritized methodological rigor and theoretical alignment, ensuring that each statistical test contributed to a clearer and more nuanced understanding of how emotionally framed misinformation shapes public attitudes toward nations in measurable, data-supported terms. Each phase—whether experimental or analytical—served a dual function: to both validate the assumptions of the prior phase and inform the direction of the next. For example, initial exploratory

analyses guided the construction of valenced fake news stimuli, which were later tested for perceived credibility and influence on brand equity metrics. Additional phases assessed the moderating effects of construal-level theory and temporal framing, enabling the dissertation to bridge a theory with real-world media effects.

The outcomes of the hypothesis testing are systematically presented in the following table 31, offering a clear and concise overview of the empirical support for each proposed relationship.

Table 31. Summary of Research Findings in Relation to Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Description	Notes
H1	Negative fake news decreases country brand equity (CBE) across brand awareness, symbolic association, quality, and loyalty.	Significant negative effects on all four dimensions.
H2	Positive fake news increases CBE across the same four dimensions.	No significant positive changes found.
H3	Negative fake news has a stronger impact than positive fake news across CBE dimensions.	Stronger effects for awareness and symbolic association; weaker for quality and loyalty.
H4	Cognitive image mediates the relationship between fake news valence and CBE.	Cognitive evaluation is significantly linked to CBE.
H5	Negatively framed fake news has a greater impact on perceived news credibility.	Positive fake news has a greater effect
H6	Perceived credibility mediates the relationship between fake news valence and CBE.	Credibility plays a meaningful mediating role.
H7	Credibility and cognitive image sequentially mediate fake news impact on CBE.	Combined mediation explained more variance.
H8-9	Negative fake news appears more credible when framed concretely; positive when framed abstractly.	Only the negative-concrete pairing was significant.
H10-11	Fake news about distant events is more credible when positive; near events more credible when negative.	Only negative-near framing showed significant credibility gains.

Source: own elaboration, 2025

The methodology employed in this dissertation adheres closely to established scholarly recommendations, ensuring both analytical depth and empirical robustness. By applying a carefully structured, multi-phase quantitative research design, the study achieves a dual-layered validation of its findings. This methodological rigor not only enhances the credibility of the research process but also strengthens the reliability and validity of the conclusions drawn.

As a result, the methodology does more than simply test hypotheses; it offers a comprehensive validation framework that reinforces the interpretive power of the results. This methodological integrity ensures that the insights generated are not only theoretically grounded

but also empirically sound—contributing a meaningful and reliable advancement to the fields of media effects, branding, and misinformation studies.

9.2. Conclusions on the sub-questions

To address the first sub-question of this dissertation—*"How does the valence of fake news (positive vs. negative) influence the dimensions of country brand equity?"*—a combination of theoretical analysis and empirical investigation was undertaken. Drawing upon an extensive review of the literature and supported by the findings from the exploratory and initial quantitative research phases, this section outlines how the valenced framing of fake news impacts consumer-based country brand equity (CBE).

The empirical results demonstrate that *negatively valenced fake news significantly impairs all four core dimensions of country brand equity*: brand awareness, symbolic associations, perceived quality, and attitudinal loyalty. In contrast, *positively valenced fake news does not produce any statistically significant change across these same dimensions*, indicating an asymmetrical effect of fake news valence. This result confirms the *negativity bias* extensively documented in psychological and media studies literature. As Manheim and Albritton (1984) initially argued, the emotional tone of international media coverage plays a pivotal role in shaping public perceptions of foreign nations. Subsequent studies further elaborate that affective framing—especially with negative content—substantially alters people's evaluations, judgments, and behavioral responses (Chang, 2008; Wang, 2007).

The observed patterns in the data also highlight a *greater cognitive engagement elicited by negatively framed fake news*. Participants exposed to negative content appeared more likely to adjust their cognitive representations of a country's image, consistent with what Chang (2008) describes as deeper information processing triggered by emotionally threatening content. However, while negative fake news frames had significant effects across CBE dimensions, the *effect sizes were relatively modest*, particularly for *brand awareness* and *symbolic associations*. This suggests that, although impactful, a single exposure may not drastically change entrenched national perceptions, aligning with previous research indicating that such changes often require *cumulative exposure* (Bastick, 2021).

These findings are theoretically grounded in the *"valence-consistent shift"* model proposed by Levin, Schneider, and Gaeth (1998, p. 160), which posits that negative framing consistently leads to less favorable judgments compared to positive framing but that *positive frames are*

generally less persuasive. In practical terms, this implies that even when fake news is explicitly positive in tone, it is unlikely to counteract the more enduring effects of negative news, especially in the absence of repeated or strongly credible messaging.

Moreover, the fact that *positive fake news failed to significantly influence CBE* supports existing work on *information skepticism and cognitive fluency*, where overly optimistic narratives are often viewed with suspicion (Appelman & Sundar, 2016). The public's wariness toward unrealistic or hyperbolic content appears to dull the persuasive power of positive valence—particularly when the source lacks established credibility or when the content lacks emotional urgency.

In summary, this study confirms that *negative valence in fake news exerts a disproportionately larger effect on public perceptions of a country*, reinforcing theoretical expectations from framing theory. The absence of comparable influence from positive fake news further highlights the *asymmetric nature of media framing*, contributing new empirical evidence to a growing body of literature that explores how countries are perceived and evaluated in an era of global information manipulation.

To address the second research question—*"How do positive and negative fake news frames differ in their impact on various components of country brand equity (e.g., awareness, associations, loyalty)?"*—a series of quantitative analyses were conducted using pre- and post-exposure assessments across four key dimensions of consumer-based country brand equity (CBE): brand awareness, perceived quality, symbolic brand associations, and attitudinal brand loyalty.

The findings provide compelling empirical evidence that *negatively valenced fake news has a significantly stronger and more consistent influence* on country brand equity than its positively framed counterpart. Across all four dimensions, exposure to negative fake news resulted in noticeable declines in public perception. This stands in contrast to *positively valenced fake news*, which did not generate any statistically significant improvements in brand evaluations.

Brand Awareness

Negative fake news caused a marked decrease in brand awareness, suggesting that emotionally charged or sensationalist content can undermine the public's general recall or familiarity with a country. Rather than enhancing visibility, such coverage appears to *distort or suppress the salience of the country brand*, likely by shifting attention toward negative associations or controversies. Positive fake news, in contrast, produced *no measurable change* in brand

awareness, suggesting that uplifting or flattering narratives do not significantly alter how memorable or familiar a country appears in the public mind—particularly after a single exposure.

Perceived Quality

Perceptions of a country's competence, reliability, or functionality—what is measured here as perceived quality—also deteriorated following exposure to negative fake news. However, while the decline was statistically significant, it was relatively modest in magnitude. This implies that *perceived quality may be somewhat more resilient* to negative media influence, possibly because it is often based on more objective or functional considerations (e.g., economic stability, infrastructure, governance). Conversely, positively framed fake news *did not enhance* perceptions of quality in any meaningful way. These results align with prior research indicating that *negative information tends to outweigh positive information* in evaluative processing (Fiske, 1980; Chang, 2008).

Symbolic Brand Associations

One of the most pronounced findings of this study was the stark difference in *how negative and positive fake news frames influenced symbolic brand associations*—those aspects of a country brand that represent perceived values, cultural identity, and personality traits. Specifically, exposure to negatively valenced fake news significantly deteriorated respondents' symbolic associations with the target country. This outcome underscores that *symbolic dimensions of country brand equity are particularly susceptible to emotionally charged, disinformation-laden content*.

A compelling explanation for this vulnerability can be explained in self-congruity theory (Sirgy, 1982; Sirgy et al., 2000), which posits that individuals are more likely to engage with, trust, or form attachments to brands that reflect their own self-concept or ideal self-image. Symbolic brand associations serve as identity markers, allowing consumers to express who they are or aspire to be (Aaker, 1999; Escalas & Bettman, 2005). When negative fake news frames portray a country as corrupt, aggressive, or morally compromised, these portrayals clash with individuals' need for *self-consistency* and *positive self-image*. As a result, people may *distance themselves from the country*, rejecting or revising previously held symbolic associations to avoid psychological discomfort (Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967; Sirgy et al., 2000).

Moreover, studies on *negativity bias* (Baumeister et al., 2001; Rozin & Royzman, 2001) suggest that people are evolutionarily wired to give more cognitive weight to negative information,

especially when it pertains to moral or social transgressions. This makes *negative symbolic messages not only more believable but also more emotionally resonant*, leading to stronger and more enduring shifts in brand perceptions.

Attitudinal Brand Loyalty

Finally, attitudinal loyalty—referring to emotional and cognitive commitment toward a country brand—was *slightly weakened* by negative fake news. Although the change was statistically significant, its magnitude was smaller compared to the other dimensions. This suggests that while disinformation can erode affective bonds with a country, *attitudinal loyalty may require sustained or repeated exposure to be meaningfully altered*. Positive fake news again failed to produce significant changes, reinforcing the notion that short-term exposure to flattering content is insufficient to strengthen attitudinal loyalty.

Comparative Analysis: Negative vs. Positive Impact

A between-group comparison of perceptual changes under each condition revealed that *negative fake news consistently triggered stronger shifts* in perception than positive fake news. This was confirmed through delta value analysis and ANOVA tests across all four dimensions. The asymmetric impact highlights a critical insight for both scholars and practitioners: *fake news harms more than it helps*, and *positive misinformation is not an effective antidote* to the damage inflicted by negative content. This observation supports the “valence-consistent shift” phenomenon described by Levin, Schneider, and Gaeth (1998), whereby negative frames systematically reduce evaluations more than positive frames enhance them.

Furthermore, *small-to-moderate effect sizes for brand awareness and symbolic associations—while not large—were significant enough to suggest real-world implications*. These two components are cognitively and emotionally sensitive to framing and may act as early indicators of reputational risk. In contrast, *quality perceptions and attitudinal loyalty may require more persistent media reinforcement to shift meaningfully*, reflecting their deeper anchoring in public attitudes.

Concerning to the third research question: *"What role does message credibility play in mediating the relationship between fake news valence and country brand equity?"* To explore this, the dissertation applied a quantitative research design focusing on how audiences perceive the trustworthiness of positively and negatively framed fake news and how this perception, in turn, influences evaluations of country brand equity.

Credibility is a well-established factor in media effects literature, frequently shown to influence how individuals process, accept, and act on information (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000; Metzger et al., 2010). In the context of disinformation, credibility acts as a psychological filter, affecting whether the audience engages with a message critically or adopts its implications at face value. When fake news is perceived as credible, its capacity to influence cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses is considerably amplified (Tsfati & Cappella, 2003).

While earlier research often assumed that negatively valenced content would be seen as more credible due to its emotional urgency and sensational appeal (Hilbig, 2009; Pennycook et al., 2018), this study finds otherwise: *positively framed fake news was consistently rated as more credible than negatively framed fake news*. This suggests a more nuanced dynamic in which *positive content benefits from greater cognitive fluency and social desirability*, making it easier to believe (Appelman & Sundar, 2016).

The analysis revealed that *credibility judgments are sensitive to message valence*. Contrary to the initial hypothesis, participants perceived positive fake news as more trustworthy than negative fake news. This contradicts the assumption that the emotionally heightened nature of negative information automatically enhances its believability. Instead, participants appeared more skeptical of negatively framed content—possibly due to overexposure to alarming narratives in the digital space, which may have reduced their credibility over time (Vraga & Tully, 2021).

Importantly, the study also found that *perceived credibility mediates the impact of message valence on country brand equity*. That is, valenced fake news exerts its influence not solely through the emotional tone of the content, but through the audience's trust in that content. Positive fake news only contributes to enhancing a country's brand perception when it is seen as credible.

These findings support past research indicating that credibility is not simply a background variable, but a central determinant of media influence (Pornpitakpan, 2004; Jin et al., 2009). This study reinforces that *credibility is not uniformly distributed across all types of fake news*, and that audiences engage in differential processing based on message tone, cultural context, and perceived authenticity.

The results also showed that perceptions of credibility vary slightly across different national contexts. Specifically, the interaction between message valence and respondents' country of origin revealed that *credibility is not experienced uniformly*, suggesting that cultural and political environments shape how people judge the trustworthiness of news content (Strömbäck et

al., 2020). This calls for more culturally sensitive approaches when analyzing fake news effects, particularly when evaluating country-specific brand perceptions in an international context.

The fourth sub-question—*"To what extent does perceived cognitive image mediate the relationship between fake news valence and country brand equity?"*—was addressed through a combination of theoretical insights and empirical investigation carried out during the later stages of the study.

Drawing on the conceptual grounding of media framing (de Vreese, 2005) and the country image literature (Gartner, 1993; Pharr, 2005), this study posited that the *cognitive image of a country*—that is, people's rational assessment of its attributes, such as development, governance, or international relevance—serves as a key intermediary between exposure to fake news and the evaluation of a country's brand equity. This proposition aligns with findings from previous research, which underscores that consumers' cognitive perceptions are not merely reflective but *actively shaped by media content*, particularly when the content is emotionally valenced (Han & Wang, 2012; Avraham, 2015).

To test this proposition, a mediation analysis was conducted using an advanced statistical framework. The results provide compelling empirical evidence that *cognitive image significantly mediates* the relationship between fake news valence and brand equity. Specifically, exposure to *negatively valenced fake news led to a deterioration in the perceived cognitive image* of the country, which in turn lowered evaluations of its brand equity. This supports the idea that fake news does not influence brand equity in a vacuum—it first reshapes how individuals *cognitively interpret and evaluate a country's characteristics*, thereby indirectly influencing their attitudes and associations with the national brand.

Importantly, the mediation analysis also revealed that the impact of valence on brand equity is *not fully explained by credibility alone*, although credibility itself plays a crucial mediating role. When both *credibility and cognitive image* were modeled together as sequential mediators, the influence of valenced fake news on brand equity became substantially more pronounced. This *sequential pathway highlights a layered decision-making process*, reinforcing the idea that fake news exerts its power not just through emotional manipulation, but also through *cognitive restructuring of national images*—especially when the information is perceived as believable. The study thus responds to calls from scholars like Tsfaty & Cappella (2003) and Metzger et al. (2010), who emphasize the pivotal role of credibility in the processing and internalization of media messages.

Moreover, this layered impact underscores why fake news—especially when emotionally negative and seemingly credible—can pose significant *reputational risks for countries*. It also confirms the observation made by Bastick (2021), who noted that *negative information spreads faster and is more influential* than positive content, particularly when it aligns with pre-existing cognitive biases or geopolitical narratives.

In conclusion, the findings clearly demonstrate that *the cognitive image of a country is not only vulnerable to media framing but also central to how people translate fake news exposure into brand-related attitudes*. This mediating role, especially when paired sequentially with perceived credibility, provides a *robust explanatory model* for understanding how fake news can subtly and powerfully alter perceptions of national reputation.

The fifth sub-question—“*Do construal-level dimensions (e.g., psychological distance) moderate the effect of fake news valence on credibility perceptions?*”—is addressed through empirical analysis grounded in Construal Level Theory (CLT) (Trope & Liberman, 2010). This theoretical framework posits that individuals mentally construe events differently depending on their psychological distance, with *proximal events being interpreted more concretely and distant events more abstractly*. These mental representations influence how information is processed and how credible it is perceived to be.

To investigate this relationship, this dissertation examined two primary construal dimensions: *concreteness vs. abstractness* and *temporal proximity vs. distance*, both of which were evaluated in relation to *fake news valence (positive vs. negative)*. The goal was to determine whether the *structure of the message (its psychological framing)* moderates the influence of fake news valence on perceived credibility.

Empirical findings revealed a clear interaction between *valence and construal style in the case of negative fake news*. When negative information was presented in a *concrete and detailed manner*, it was perceived as *more credible* than when framed abstractly. It suggests that emotionally charged or threatening content gains persuasive strength when accompanied by *low-level, concrete details* (Liberman & Trope, 2008). In contrast, *positive fake news* did not benefit from being framed abstractly, suggesting that *positive messages are less influenced by the level of construal* in terms of credibility.

A similar pattern was observed when evaluating the *temporal construal* of fake news. Negative events described as happening in the *near future* were perceived as *more credible* than

the same events projected into the *distant future*. This finding further supports CLT, as *temporally near information is processed with more urgency and realism*, especially when it suggests a potential threat or risk (Eyal et al., 2004; Pennington & Roese, 2003). Such findings underscore that *psychological immediacy heightens cognitive engagement and trust in the message*, particularly for negatively valenced news.

Interestingly, the same *temporal manipulation* had *little effect on the credibility of positive fake news*, again reflecting a broader resistance to optimistic content in the context of contemporary media skepticism. As prior studies suggest (Appelman & Sundar, 2016; Bastick, 2021), audiences tend to *scrutinize overly positive narratives*, especially when they appear exaggerated, detached from current events, or lacking immediate relevance.

Together, these findings affirm that *construal-level dimensions act as important moderators* in how fake news valence is perceived in terms of credibility. The *combination of negative valence and concrete or proximal framing consistently leads to higher credibility ratings*, while *positive fake news remains relatively unaffected* by changes in construal level.

This has profound implications for understanding the *mechanisms through which disinformation spreads* and gains traction. It suggests that *not all fake news is processed equally—its psychological distance and linguistic framing* play a decisive role in how believable it is perceived to be. In line with prior research (Nan, 2007; Zhang et al., 2020; Zhao et al., 2023), these results emphasize the need for scholars and policymakers to attend to *not only the content of disinformation but also the cognitive framing strategies* that make such content persuasive.

Table 32 represents a structured summary table that connects each research sub-question from your dissertation with its corresponding evidence-based answer, capturing both theoretical underpinnings and empirical findings

Table 32. Summary of Research Findings in Response to the Dissertation’s Sub-Questions

Research Sub-Question	Answer Based on Findings
1. How does the valence of fake news (positive vs. negative) influence the dimensions of country brand equity?	Negative fake news significantly impairs all dimensions of country brand equity—brand awareness, symbolic associations, perceived quality, and attitudinal loyalty—while positive fake news has no statistically meaningful impact. This asymmetrical influence confirms the negativity bias (Baumeister et al., 2001) and the valence-consistent shift model (Levin et al., 1998), where negative content is processed more deeply and has greater persuasive power. Positive

Research Sub-Question	Answer Based on Findings
	content is often viewed skeptically and fails to counterbalance the effect of negative narratives (Appelman & Sundar, 2016).
2. How do positive and negative fake news frames differ in their impact on various components of country brand equity (e.g., awareness, associations, loyalty)?	Negative fake news consistently triggers perceptual declines across all brand equity dimensions. Symbolic associations are most vulnerable due to their emotional and identity-laden nature (Sirgy, 1982; Escalas & Bettman, 2005). Brand awareness and perceived quality also decline, although to a lesser extent. Attitudinal loyalty is somewhat more resistant but still affected. Positive fake news, by contrast, does not significantly shift any dimension, indicating an inherent asymmetry in the influence of valence on brand perception.
3. What role does message credibility play in mediating the relationship between fake news valence and country brand equity?	Message credibility acts as a key mediator between fake news valence and brand equity. Surprisingly, positive fake news was perceived as more credible than negative fake news , contradicting prior assumptions about the emotional potency of negative content (Hilbig, 2009). This is likely due to cognitive fluency and social desirability (Appelman & Sundar, 2016). When perceived as credible, positive fake news can influence brand equity, but only indirectly. Credibility thus filters the impact of fake news , validating its role as a psychological gateway in media influence (Flanagin & Metzger, 2007; Metzger et al., 2010).
4. To what extent does perceived cognitive image mediate the relationship between fake news valence and country brand equity?	Cognitive image serves as a critical mediator in the pathway from fake news valence to country brand equity. Negative valence reduces the cognitive image, which in turn lowers brand evaluations. When combined with credibility in a sequential mediation model , the impact becomes significantly stronger. This layered effect demonstrates that fake news influences public perception not only emotionally but through rational, cognitive mechanisms as well, confirming insights from media framing theory (de Vreese, 2005) and country image research (Gartner, 1993; Avraham, 2015).
5. Do construal-level dimensions (e.g., psychological distance) moderate the effect of fake news valence on credibility perceptions?	Construal-level dimensions moderate the impact of fake news valence on credibility, but asymmetrically. For negative fake news , concrete (low-level) and proximal (temporally near) framings increase perceived credibility, consistent with Construal Level Theory (Trope & Liberman, 2010). Positive fake news, however, is unaffected by changes in construal level. This pattern reflects the negativity bias and suggests that proximity and specificity amplify the believability of harmful content, but do not similarly enhance the credibility of positive narratives.

Source: own elaboration, 2025

10. THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DOCTORAL RESEARCH

10.1. Theoretical contribution

This dissertation makes several important theoretical contributions at the intersection of country branding, media effects, disinformation studies, and communication psychology. By integrating and extending existing theories—such as valenced framing, credibility mediation, and Construal Level Theory (CLT)—this research not only addresses existing gaps in the literature but

also provides a foundation for future scholarly inquiry into the reputational risks posed by fake news in a digitally mediated world.

Extending Valenced Framing Theory into the Disinformation Domain

One of the most prominent theoretical contributions of this dissertation lies in its application and expansion of *valenced framing theory* within the specific context of disinformation. While framing theory, and especially the emotional valence of media messages, has been widely studied in political communication and issue perception (de Vreese, 2005; Price et al., 1997), its relevance to *fake news and country brand equity* has been largely overlooked. This study represents a novel step in addressing this gap by demonstrating how positively and negatively framed fake news stories can produce asymmetrical effects on key dimensions of a country's brand.

In doing so, the research broadens the scope of valenced framing beyond traditional domains—such as voting behavior or policy attitudes—into the underexplored field of *national image and branding*. The findings support earlier work on negativity bias, yet go further by empirically documenting how such framing affects public perceptions of brand awareness, symbolic association, quality, and loyalty toward a country, introducing new theoretical relevance to country branding literature.

Introducing an Integrated Mediation Model

This dissertation also proposes a *comprehensive mediation model* that explains how the valence of fake news influences country brand equity through two key psychological variables: *perceived credibility* and *cognitive country image*. While both constructs have been individually associated with consumer perceptions of brands and destinations (Pharr, 2005), they have rarely been integrated into a single, process-oriented framework that addresses the role of *fake news*.

The model developed here shows that the relationship between message valence and country brand equity is not simply direct; rather, it is significantly shaped by the perceived *truthfulness* of the message and the subsequent *rational interpretation* of the country's image. This insight contributes to a more layered understanding of media influence and supports calls in communication psychology to move beyond stimulus-response models, toward more *cognitively nuanced explanations* of persuasive effects.

Applying Construal Level Theory to Fake News and Country Image

A further theoretical advancement is the application of *Construal Level Theory (CLT)* in the context of disinformation and country branding. While CLT has been primarily employed in consumer behavior and decision-making contexts (Trope & Liberman, 2010), this research demonstrates its explanatory power in shaping the *credibility and persuasive strength* of fake news. Specifically, the findings reveal that fake news is perceived as more credible when framed with *low psychological distance*—that is, when events are presented as temporally or spatially close and described in a concrete manner.

This has two important theoretical implications. First, it shows that psychological distance moderates the relationship between message valence and perceived credibility. Second, it expands the scope of CLT by demonstrating how it operates in emotionally charged, reputation-based scenarios—an area not previously well explored. By combining CLT with valenced framing theory, this dissertation offers a *hybrid theoretical approach* for understanding how individuals process emotionally and structurally diverse forms of media content.

Reframing the Role of Emotion vs. Structure in Media Effects

This research also contributes to ongoing debates about what drives the persuasiveness of fake news: *emotional content* or *message structure*. While earlier research often emphasized emotional valence—assuming that negative news is more powerful simply because it evokes stronger reactions—this study offers a more refined view. It shows that *message structure*, including the level of *concreteness* and *psychological proximity*, plays a crucial moderating role. In other words, negative or positive content becomes influential only when it is delivered in a cognitively resonant form.

This challenges the simplistic binary of “positive vs. negative” news and instead positions *cognitive processing depth* as a critical determinant of media influence. Such insights align with and extend prior work on message framing in advertising and CSR communication (Chang, 2008; Wang, 2007), yet bring these ideas into a new and more socially consequential domain—the *reputational management of countries* in the age of disinformation.

Bridging Disciplinary Silos

In its theoretical scope, this dissertation bridges several scholarly domains that are often siloed: media psychology, branding theory, political communication, and international relations.

It introduces concepts from marketing into media effects research, applies psychological theories to communication problems, and reframes fake news not just as a political or journalistic challenge, but as a *strategic branding issue* with long-term implications for how countries are perceived on the global stage.

This interdisciplinary approach is theoretically significant because it encourages researchers in each of these fields to rethink established models in light of a rapidly changing information ecosystem. It also encourages new lines of inquiry into how *disinformation, emotional manipulation, and perceived credibility* interact to shape public attitudes—not only toward individuals or policies, but toward entire country.

10.2. Methodological contribution

The study of disinformation—particularly in the context of its effects on country brand equity—stands at the threshold of a new methodological era. As the proliferation of fake news across digital and social media accelerates, scholars face a critical challenge: how to systematically measure its impact on complex, multidimensional constructs like country image, cognitive perception, and brand loyalty. Despite the societal urgency of this issue, the academic field remains methodologically underdeveloped, with limited precedents and few empirically grounded frameworks available. This dissertation contributes significantly to addressing this methodological gap by offering a comprehensive, multi-dimensional research design that integrates theoretical insights with empirical rigor.

To operationalize the conceptual framework, this study introduces a *multi-stage experimental design* combining *pre- and post-exposure assessments, valence manipulation, construal-level framing, and mediator/moderator testing*. Unlike traditional survey research or qualitative approaches often used in media studies, this design allows for *causal inference* about the relationship between fake news exposure and changes in public perception of a country's brand. Furthermore, the application of *sequential mediation analysis* via the *PROCESS macro (Model 6)* and *repeated-measures ANOVA* offers an advanced statistical strategy for evaluating complex indirect effects. By modeling *credibility* and *cognitive image* as sequential mediators between message valence and country brand equity, the research introduces a *layered analytical logic* that captures both emotional and rational dimensions of fake news processing. This methodological advancement reflects an understanding that disinformation does not work in isolation but is *filtered through trust and interpretation*, aligning with dual-process models of persuasion (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

One of the most original aspects of this dissertation lies in its *experimental manipulation of psychological distance—temporal*—in conjunction with *valenced news frames*. Drawing on Construal Level Theory (CLT) (Trope & Liberman, 2010), the study constructs a stimulus set in which fake news is framed as either *concrete or abstract*, and situated in either the *near or far future*. This required the development of highly controlled, linguistically balanced fake news materials that vary only along the dimension of psychological distance. The *use of MeaningCloud sentiment and objectivity analysis tools* further validates the framing structure and ensures internal reliability of the experimental conditions.

In doing so, this research pushes the methodological boundary of how *CLT can be applied to media manipulation studies*, offering a rare operationalization of construal framing in a political and reputational communication context. The integration of episodic and thematic news structures for manipulating abstraction levels (Iyengar, 1994) is also methodologically innovative, as it allows for a granular examination of how cognitive processing shifts based on message structure.

The use of *authentic, verified fake news content*—sourced from fact-checking databases and systematically translated into Russian and Hungarian—grounds the study in real-world information environments. This ensures ecological validity, as the news items resemble the type of content that respondents might realistically encounter online. Unlike studies relying on hypothetical or fabricated scenarios, this dissertation prioritizes *realistic stimuli*, thereby increasing both *external validity and the transferability* of results to policy and communication practices.

Additionally, the study incorporates *both positive and negative fake news*, a dimension often neglected in disinformation research that tends to focus solely on threat-based or alarming content. This *valence-based design* is key to uncovering asymmetric effects, expanding the scope of what kinds of misinformation should be studied and how.

This research also makes a significant methodological contribution through its *cross-national sampling* strategy. By selecting Hungarian and Russian university students—two populations with distinct geopolitical alignments, differing exposure to Chinese media narratives, and limited direct experience with China—the study isolates *media-driven perception effects* in a way that more heterogeneous or experience-rich samples could not. The sample design reflects an *intentional methodological alignment with the informational context* of the study, reinforcing the internal logic of the experimental setup.

Recognizing the challenges of conducting mediation analysis with moderate sample sizes, the study employs *bootstrapping with 5,000 iterations*, a method widely acknowledged for its *power and reliability in indirect effect estimation* (Preacher et al., 2007; Hayes, 2013). This approach avoids the restrictive normality assumptions of parametric tests and increases the *statistical confidence* in the mediation results.

Given the *nascent state of empirical disinformation research*—particularly in the context of country branding—this dissertation sets a *foundational methodological precedent*. It offers a *blueprint for future studies* wishing to test complex conceptual models *involving psychological mediators, emotional framing, and credibility effects*. The triangulation of multiple methods—experiment, cross-national survey, bootstrapping, ANOVA, and CLT manipulation—demonstrates how future research in this area can maintain *rigor without sacrificing relevance*.

10.3. Practical contribution

This dissertation holds considerable practical value, particularly for practitioners working in the fields of *country branding, strategic communication, public diplomacy, and tourism marketing*. In an era of digital media saturation and heightened vulnerability to disinformation, the findings offer actionable insights into how fake news—especially when emotionally charged and cognitively resonant—can shape public perceptions of country branding, credibility, and desirability.

By illuminating the mechanisms through which *valenced fake news* influences *consumer-based country brand equity (CBE)*, this research contributes to the development of *anti-crisis communication strategies* that aim to preserve a nation's reputation and safeguard its economic and socio-cultural assets. The study emphasizes the need for governments, tourism authorities, and brand managers to take a more *proactive and data-driven approach* to managing a country's image in the global information environment.

Informing Strategic Country Branding and Communication Management

One of the most immediate managerial implications of this study is the confirmation that *negative valenced fake news frames significantly impair all dimensions of country brand equity*—including awareness, perceived quality, symbolic associations, and attitudinal loyalty—whereas *positive frames have no statistically meaningful impact*. This asymmetry challenges traditional assumptions in strategic branding and underscores the importance of prioritizing *defensive reputation management* over simply promoting positive narratives.

Managers responsible for building and protecting country brands must recognize that *the threat from negative disinformation is real, measurable, and unevenly distributed* across the brand dimensions. In particular, symbolic brand associations—which encapsulate how people perceive a country’s values, culture, and personality—are most vulnerable to erosion by emotionally charged disinformation.

Enhancing Crisis Response Frameworks

The results of this study contribute to the *development of anti-crisis communication strategies* by offering a clear understanding of the *indirect pathways* through which fake news exerts its influence. Specifically, this research finds that fake news does not impact brand equity directly; rather, it acts through the *mediating roles of credibility and cognitive country image*.

This has two important implications. First, efforts to mitigate reputational damage must *focus on strengthening message credibility and reinforcing favorable cognitive perceptions* of the country. Second, brand managers need to regularly monitor how their country is cognitively perceived across international audiences and design interventions that reinforce *stable and resilient perceptions*. Doing so can buffer the impact of fake news exposure and maintain a positive brand image even under reputational threat.

These insights are particularly timely given the growing evidence that fake news can trigger public health, political, or tourism crises (Ewing & Lambert, 2019; Ioannidis, 2020; Kouzy et al., 2020). Yet, until now, *few studies have identified which specific features of fake news generate stronger or weaker effects*. This dissertation fills that gap by pointing to the role of valence, message structure (concreteness vs. abstractness), and psychological proximity as decisive factors in shaping consumer response.

Implications for Tourism Marketing and Destination Management

Tourism is one of the sectors most susceptible to reputational shocks. Misleading or false information about a country's safety, culture, or people can quickly derail its attractiveness as a destination. The findings of this study underscore the importance of *protecting tourism-dependent economies* from the ripple effects of negative fake news.

For destination marketers, this research advises a more nuanced approach to *media monitoring and content analysis*. Rather than merely tracking media sentiment, practitioners should assess the *structure of messages*, including the level of detail and concreteness in the fake

news being circulated. This is particularly important given the finding that *only negative fake news presented in a concrete, detailed manner significantly shifts public perception*. Abstract, vague messaging—whether positive or negative—has limited persuasive power.

Thus, crisis communication strategies in tourism should aim to *deconstruct and neutralize specific, emotionally provocative narratives*, rather than relying solely on broad positive storytelling. At the same time, marketers can potentially *leverage the visibility generated by fake news* (without endorsing its content) to draw attention to more accurate and engaging portrayals of their country's brand.

Guidance for Internationalization and Policy Development

The indirect influence of fake news through cognitive image also suggests that *countries should develop differentiated internationalization strategies* based on how they are perceived in specific regions or among distinct cultural groups. Since perceptions are partly shaped by the consumer's own *cultural background and informational ecosystem*, public diplomacy efforts must tailor messaging to *cognitive baselines* in each market.

For instance, countries aiming to engage with new international audiences must first understand the *existing cognitive image* these audiences hold. Only then can communication strategies be designed to align with—or carefully challenge—these perceptions. Moreover, understanding that *positive fake news lacks the power to significantly improve brand perceptions* underscores the need for *long-term, credibility-based strategies*, rather than superficial campaigns focused solely on emotional appeal.

Table 33. Summary of Key Significance Findings from the Doctoral Dissertation

Type of Significance	Direction of Significance
Theoretical	Extension of valenced framing theory into the disinformation domain, especially in relation to country brand equity.
	Development of a new mediation model linking fake news valence to country brand equity via credibility and cognitive image.
	Application of Construal Level Theory to assess fake news credibility in national branding context.
	Clarification of emotional vs. structural drivers in persuasive media effects.
	Bridging media psychology, branding theory, and international relations to offer interdisciplinary insights.
	Introduction of a multi-stage experimental design combining pre/post-exposure analysis and valence manipulation.

Methodological	Use of sequential mediation analysis (PROCESS macro) and repeated-measures ANOVA for robust testing.
	Experimental manipulation of psychological distance (temporal/spatial) with validated stimulus materials.
	Incorporation of authentic, fact-checked fake news ensures ecological validity.
	Inclusion of both positive and negative valenced news broadens scope of disinformation studies.
	Cross-national sampling (Russia and Hungary) to test media-driven perception effects.
	Application of bootstrapping for more reliable mediation analysis in smaller samples.
	Operationalization of episodic vs. thematic framing within Construal Level Theory framework.
Practical	Insight into the managerial need for anti-crisis communication strategies addressing valenced fake news.
	Strategic guidance on defending symbolic country brand associations from negative frames.
	Implications for tourism marketing in countering the effects of emotionally charged disinformation.
	Advising regionally tailored communication strategies based on localized cognitive image baselines.
	Evidence that positive fake news lacks the persuasive impact needed for strategic country branding.

Source: own elaboration, 2025

11. LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH AND OF THE RESULTS

While this dissertation offers valuable insights into the relationship between fake news valence and country brand equity, several limitations must be acknowledged. These constraints highlight areas where caution is necessary in interpreting the results and point toward opportunities for future research. As with all empirical studies, certain methodological, theoretical, and contextual boundaries inevitably shape the scope and generalizability of the findings.

A major limitation of this study lies in its exclusive focus on *China* as the target country. Although China represents a strong and globally recognized nation brand—ranked second in the Nation Brand Index 2020 (Anholt, 2020)—its brand strength may offer a form of reputational insulation from the detrimental effects of fake news. This resilience may not be equally observed in countries with weaker international reputations or lower public awareness. Therefore, while China serves as a valuable and relevant case study—particularly given its central role in global media during the COVID-19 pandemic—the findings cannot be uncritically generalized to countries with less prominent or less stable brand images. Further, the selection of China may introduce cultural and political nuances that differ significantly from other national contexts. The interaction between fake news, public trust, and country brand equity may manifest differently in

Western democracies, emerging economies, or politically unstable regions. Replicating this study using alternative countries—both high-profile and low-profile—would enhance the generalizability and cross-cultural robustness of the conclusions.

Another limitation of this research concerns the *sample population*, which consisted exclusively of university students from Russia and Hungary. While the rationale for this choice was methodologically sound—given that both countries are geographically and politically relevant to the case of China—the findings may not extend to populations from other nations with different media ecosystems, geopolitical stances, or levels of media literacy. The reliance on student populations also introduces potential *age and education biases*, as young adults are more likely to use digital media, exhibit critical media literacy, and interact with international news content. While this demographic is suitable for gauging the digital consumption of fake news, it may not fully capture the views or behaviors of older or less media-savvy populations. Including more diverse age groups and socioeconomic backgrounds in future studies would enrich the representativeness of the findings.

This study primarily evaluates *credibility* and *cognitive image* as mediators between fake news valence and country brand equity. While these are well-established constructs in media and branding research, they represent only a partial view of the full psychological and behavioral response to fake news. Several other variables—such as *message comprehension*, *emotional reaction*, *knowledge acquisition*, *recall*, *attitudinal resistance*, and *stereotyping or prejudice*—were not measured but could provide significant explanatory power.

For instance, the degree to which audiences understand or misinterpret fake news messages (comprehension), remember them over time (recall), or integrate them into broader belief systems (stereotyping) would offer deeper insights into the disinformation process. Including such variables in future models would help researchers better understand why and how fake news influences perceptions, not just that it does.

This research evaluates the *short-term effects* of fake news exposure. Respondents were exposed to approximately 20 fake news articles in a single session, after which country brand equity dimensions were immediately reassessed. While this design captures the immediate cognitive and emotional responses, it does not account for *longitudinal effects*—such as sustained attitude change, delayed behavior, or cumulative media exposure.

Research has shown that the effects of disinformation may *accumulate over time*, gradually reshaping opinions through repetition or reinforcement across multiple platforms (Pennycook et al., 2018; Bastick, 2021). Therefore, future research should employ *longitudinal designs*, tracking responses over several weeks or months to assess the *durability and persistence* of fake news influence.

Although the experimental design allowed for the controlled manipulation of *valence*, *temporal distance*, and *concreteness*, real-world fake news dissemination is rarely so neat or isolated. In the digital ecosystem, audiences are constantly bombarded by mixed content, algorithmic filtering, peer commentary, and competing narratives—all of which shape interpretation and persuasion. Therefore, while the experimental approach provides internal validity, it does so at the cost of *ecological validity*. Moreover, participants may respond differently in naturalistic settings, where distractions, emotional priming, or selective attention can influence how they engage with fake news. Future studies might consider using *field experiments* or *naturalistic media tracking* to better simulate authentic exposure environments.

The application of *Construal Level Theory (CLT)* and *valenced framing* in this study highlighted meaningful patterns, particularly concerning how psychological distance (temporal) interacts with message valence. However, other *cultural, social, or psychological variables*—such as *national identity salience, political orientation, cultural cognition, or prior attitudes toward the country in question*—may also moderate fake news effects. For instance, audiences who already harbor negative stereotypes about a country may be more susceptible to fake news reinforcing those biases. Conversely, highly favorable prior attitudes may inoculate individuals against disinformation. Future studies should incorporate *moderating variables* such as *media trust, information literacy, and national sentiment* to provide a more nuanced model of influence.

Nonetheless, these limitations do not undermine the value of the research but rather offer a clear roadmap for future investigations. Expanding the scope to different national contexts, employing longitudinal designs, and incorporating broader psychological constructs will significantly enrich the academic and practical understanding of disinformation's impact on country branding and global reputation management.

12. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This dissertation opens several promising avenues for future scholarly inquiry in the intersecting fields of country branding, disinformation studies, media psychology, and international communication. The research presented here contributes to the growing body of

literature on how fake news, particularly through the lens of *valenced framing*, *credibility perception*, and *psychological distance*, shapes public attitudes toward countries. However, the complexity and evolving nature of these phenomena suggest that much remains to be explored. The following sections outline key theoretical and empirical directions for further research.

One of the core contributions of this dissertation is the application of valenced framing theory to the context of fake news and country brand equity. Future research could extend this work by exploring *other content domains* beyond national image, such as *corporate reputation*, *political figures*, or *social movements*, to examine whether similar mechanisms of influence apply. Additionally, future studies could *refine the operationalization of valence* by considering not only the positive or negative tone but also the *emotional intensity*, *moral framing*, or *threat level* conveyed in fake news. Examining how different types of valence—such as fear, anger, hope, or admiration—interact with recipient traits (e.g., personality, ideology, prior attitudes) may provide a more nuanced understanding of media persuasion.

The integrated model proposed in this dissertation—featuring credibility and cognitive country image as mediators—has proven effective in explaining the indirect influence of fake news on country brand equity. Yet, other mediating variables warrant attention. Future studies may investigate how *affective image*, *trust in media*, *message engagement*, or *emotional contagion* function as alternative or complementary mediators.

Similarly, the use of Construal Level Theory (CLT) as a moderating framework provides a compelling lens through which to interpret how spatial and temporal framing influences credibility judgments. However, future research should explore *additional moderators* such as: *media literacy and digital competence*, which may buffer or amplify susceptibility to fake news; *political ideology*, which often shapes media selectivity and message interpretation; *cultural dimensions*, such as uncertainty avoidance or collectivism, which may influence how fake news is cognitively processed across different societies.

This dissertation measured *short-term perceptual changes* immediately following exposure to fake news. Future work should examine the *long-term effects* of repeated or cumulative fake news exposure over time. Longitudinal designs could help identify whether initial credibility assessments evolve into more durable attitude changes, or whether they dissipate with time, correction, or alternative messaging.

The empirical phase of this dissertation focused on Hungarian and Russian respondents. To deepen theoretical insights and ensure broader applicability, future research should explore how *audiences from different regions* interpret and respond to fake news. Comparative studies between *Western and non-Western countries, developed and developing nations, or democracies and authoritarian regimes* could reveal meaningful differences in how media content is received and internalized.

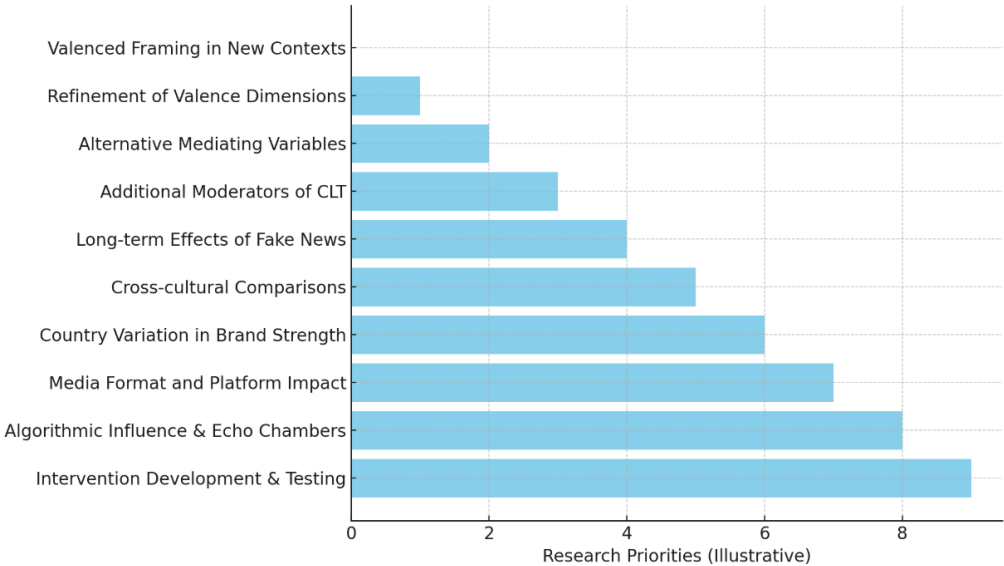
Moreover, the *target country* in this study was China. While China offers a compelling and globally relevant case, future research could replicate the study across *countries with varying brand strength*, political systems, or international roles. Examining how fake news affects perceptions of *lesser-known, conflict-ridden, or emerging countries* would provide valuable contrasts and test the generalizability of the theoretical model.

A fruitful avenue for future research involves investigating the *form, format, and platform* through which fake news spreads. This study primarily examined text-based online news stories; however, fake news is increasingly disseminated through *visual memes, videos, deepfakes, and influencer content* on platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter. Understanding how different content formats affect perception and engagement is a critical next step. Additionally, the role of *algorithmic amplification* and *echo chambers* in shaping exposure to fake news warrants further investigation. Future studies could examine how *platform-specific features* (e.g., recommendation systems, trending tags, or virality metrics) impact the reach and credibility of valenced fake news content.

Looking ahead, future research should not only continue exploring the effects of fake news but also begin *developing and testing strategies to mitigate its impact on public perception*. One promising direction involves examining the effectiveness of intervention methods designed to reduce susceptibility to disinformation. For example, experimental studies could test the benefits of warning people beforehand about common fake news tricks, so they become more resistant when they encounter them. Additionally, *media literacy initiatives* tailored to specific cultural or demographic groups may enhance critical thinking skills and reduce vulnerability to fake news. Another avenue worth exploring is *the use of corrective messaging*, including real-time fact-checking and endorsements from credible sources, to counter false claims as they arise. Testing the effectiveness of these interventions would not only enrich academic understanding but also offer practical tools for governments, media institutions, and country brand managers seeking to safeguard national reputations in an increasingly complex information environment.

Table 34 is a summary table of the key future research directions based on my dissertation. It outlines research focuses alongside their corresponding directions, offering a structured roadmap for continued inquiry in the areas of fake news, country branding, and media psychology.

Table 34. Summary of Future Research Directions in Fake News and Country Branding



Source: own elaboration, 2025

In summary, the findings of this dissertation lay a strong theoretical and empirical foundation for continued research on fake news and its influence on public perception. The integration of valenced framing, credibility assessments, and construal level dimensions offers a robust model for understanding the mechanisms of disinformation impact. However, the complexity of fake news and its consequences demands ongoing inquiry—across contexts, cultures, timeframes, and media platforms. By advancing this line of inquiry, future studies can contribute to a more resilient, informed, and critically engaged global public.

13. APPENDIX

13.1. Appendix 1. Questionnaire of negatively framed fake news in the Hungarian language

FELMÉRÉS:

Vonzó ország Kína?

Kedves Kitöltők!

Jelen kérdőív egy nemzetközi tanulmány része, amelynek célja az országok, jelen esetben Kína megítélésének a vizsgálata. A kérdőív Kínáról, mint turisztikai és oktatási ország megítéléséről szól, valamint az országgal kapcsolatos híreket is tartalmazza.

A felmérés mindössze 30 percet vesz igénybe, és nagyban hozzájárul a tudományos ismeretek formálásához.

Köszönjük, hogy kitöltésével segíti a munkánkat!

Demográfiai adatok

1. Életkor
2. Nem: nő/ férfi
3. A lakóhely szerinti ország
4. Lakóhely: megye székhely/ város/ község
5. Legmagasabb iskolai végzettség (érettségi/ főiskola/ egyetem/ PhD / egyéb)

Ország imázs

6. Járt már Kínában ?(igen / nem)

7.

Értékelj Kínát az alábbi dimenziók mentén	Nagyon alacsony - Nagyon magas						
Az életminőség Kínában	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A jólét Kínában	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A technológiai szint Kínában	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Az oktatás színvonala Kínában	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

8.

Értékelj Kínát az alábbi dimenziók mentén	Egyáltalán nem érték egyet ezzel - Teljes mértékben egyetérték ezzel						
Kína egy kellemes ország	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kína egy barátságos ország	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kína egy biztonságos ország	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kína egy megbízható ország	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

9.

Értékelj a Kínával kapcsolatos állításokat	Egyáltalán nem érték egyet ezzel - Teljes mértékben egyetértek ezzel						
Kínának jó hírneve van	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kína egyetemeinek jó híre van	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ha külföldi nyaralásra gondolok, egyből Kína jut eszembe.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ha a nemzetközi tanulmányok folytatására gondolok, rögtön Kína egyetemei jutnak eszembe.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Rengeteg hirdetést láttam nyaralásról ebben az országban	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Nagyon sok hirdetést láttam Kína egyetemeiről	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kína egyetemei nagyon híresek	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Magas színvonalú életkörülmények vannak Kínában	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Magas szintű köztisztaság Kínában	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Magas szintű a személyi biztonság Kínában	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Minőségi az infrastruktúra Kínában	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A felsőoktatásban nyújtott tudás magas színvonalú Kínában	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ez az ország megfelel a személyiségemnek	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A barátaim nagyra értékelnék, ha meglátogatnám Kínát	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ennek az országnak a képe megegyezik a magamról alkotott képpel	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kína egyetemei kiemelkedőek a más országbéli hasonló egyetemek között	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gyorsan eszembe jut Kína legnépszerűbb egyetemének néhány jellemzője	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gyorsan eszembe jut néhány egyetem jelképe vagy logója ebből az országból	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kína a kedvenc célpontom nyaralásra	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kínát előnyben részesíteném a tanulás szempontjából	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tanácsolnám másoknak, hogy látogassák meg ezt az országot	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Javasolnám másoknak, hogy kínai egyetemen folytassák tanulmányaikat	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A jövőben meglátogatom Kínát	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A jövőben tervezem, hogy Kínában fogom folytatni egyetemi tanulmányaimat	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gyorsan eszembe jutnak Kína jellegzetességei	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Vonzó helyi étel (konyha)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A kínai látogatás tükrözi azt, aki vagyok	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Szeretek Kínába látogatni	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Összességében hűséges vagyok Kínához	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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10. Második rész

Kérjük, értékeld az általános hozzáállásod a Kínával kapcsolatos hírek valóságára.

1. A Belbiztonsági Minisztérium jelentése: Kína eltitkolja az új vírus megjelenését, hogy készleteket halmozhasson fel.

Amerikai tisztviselők úgy vélik, hogy Kína eltitkolja egy új koronavírus-törzs terjedésének mértékét, amely 2022 elején szélesebb körű, világméretű járványkitöréshez vezet, hogy felhalmozza a szükséges gyógyszereket az ellene való küzdelemhez.

A Associated Press (AP) hírügynökség által megszerzett titkosszolgálati dokumentumok szerint, a kínai vezetők "tudatosan eltitkolják" egy új, fenyegető globális világjárvány súlyosságát, amely már 2022 januárjában elkezdődhet – derül ki a Nemzetbiztonsági Minisztérium december 1. napján kelt négyoldalas jelentéséből. A jelentés szerint Kína tudatosan nem tájékoztatja az Egészségügyi Világszervezetet arról, hogy a koronavírus új törzse "még fertőzőbb", így rendelhet külföldről egészségügyi termékeket, valamint hogy az arcmaszkok, sebészeti köpenyek és kesztyűk importja meredeken növekszik.

A jelentés szerint ezek az eredmények 95%-os valószínűségen alapulnak, hogy a kínai import és export változásai sokkal nagyobbak, mint a normál fogyasztás. A kínai tisztviselők megakadályozzák az orvosokat, hogy szót emeljenek és figyelmeztessenek a vírusra valamint következetesen lekicsinylik a járvány kitörésének veszélyét. Úgy tűnik azonban, hogy a kínai kormány számos hibáját a bürokratikus akadályok, az információk szigorú ellenőrzése és a tisztviselők tétovázása okozza, hogy rossz híreket közöljenek.

A hír egyáltalán nem igaz							A hír teljes mértékben igaz
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Összességében úgy gondolom, hogy ebben a hírben a Kínára vonatkozó információk

nagyon konkrétak							nagyon elvonataknak
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

2. Kína 10 nap alatt kórházat épít az új koronavírusos betegek kezelésére?

A kínai kormány 10 napon belül kórházat tervez építeni a koronavírus új törzsének kezelésére. Mivel a koronavírus új törzse rohamosan terjed a kínai városokban, a kínai kormány ígéretet tett arra, hogy 10 napon belül 1000 ágyas kórházat építenek a fertőzés új áldozatainak. Bár ez a bravúr egyesek számára hihetetlennek hangzik, de ez nem az első alkalom, amikor a kínai kormány kórházat épített a járvány leküzdésére. 2003-ban Peking már épített kórházat egy hét alatt a SARS-betegek kezelésére.

Körülbelül 45 millió ember van karanténban Kínában, miközben az ország megpróbálja megfékezni az új vírus terjedését. A jelenlegi, 2022-AnCoV névre keresztelt új vírus törzs Kínában már 425 ember halálát követelte.

A hír egyáltalán nem igaz						A hír teljes mértékben igaz
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Össességében úgy gondolom, hogy ebben a hírben a Kínára vonatkozó információk

nagyon konkrétak						nagyon elvonatok
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

3. Korrupt politikusok kivégzése Kínában.



A kínai rendőrség egy csoport elítélt személyt mutat be a kelet-kínai Vencsou városában tartott ítélelhirdetésen, akiket 2022. február 7-én végeznek ki. 11 foglyot végeznek ki különféle korrupciós bűncselekmények miatt. Az Amnesty International moratóriumot kért a halálbüntetésre Kínában, mondván, hogy a nem hatékony büntető igazságszolgáltatás miatt sok ártatlan embert végeztek ki, miután egy magas rangú kínai képviselő azt javasolta, hogy Kína évente legalább 10 000 embert végezzen ki, ami körülbelül több, mint ötszöröse a világ többi részén kivégzetteknek együttvéve.

A hír egyáltalán nem igaz						A hír teljes mértékben igaz
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Össességében úgy gondolom, hogy ebben a hírben a Kínára vonatkozó információk

nagyon konkrétak						nagyon elvonataak
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4. A kínai éttermek engedélyt kapnak kutyahús árusítására.



Az egyik főváros kínai éttermei 2022 januárjától már kutyahúst is árulhatnak. A népszerű kínai étterem engedélyt kapott arra, hogy kutyahúst áruljon vásárlóinak 2022 januárjától. Az étterem sikeresen bebizonyította, hogy a kutyahús betiltása sérti a vallási és kulturális jogait. Az étterem 2022 elejétől az ügyekben a Legfelsőbb Bíróság jogerős döntéséig ideiglenes engedélyt kapott a kutyák levágására, a kutyahús értékesítésére és fogyasztására.

Az étterem hetente legfeljebb 35 kutyát ölhet meg, feltéve, hogy a kutyák elpusztítása megfelelően és humánusan történik.

A hír egyáltalán nem igaz						A hír teljes mértékben igaz
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Össességében úgy gondolom, hogy ebben a hírben a Kínára vonatkozó információk

nagyon konkrétak						nagyon elvonataak
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

5. A Teriyaki szósz néhány év múlva hajból fog készülni Kínában.

Az olcsó szójaszószt a kínai foglyok hajából fogják készíteni. Az Internet Journal of Toxicology arról számolt be, hogy néhány éven belül a kínai Hongshuai Soy Sauce cég felhagy a szójából és a búzából származó aminosavak használatával, és áttér az a fodrásztokból és kórházakból származó emberi haj felhasználására a gyártási folyamathoz. A Hongshuai szóvivője szerint "az emberi hajban található aminosavakból olyan fűszereket lehet készíteni, amelyek íze megegyezik a hagyományos szójabab ízével."

A gyártási eljárás ilyen fajta újítására egy televíziós oknyomozó riporter derített fényt. Az olcsó szójaszószt a kínai Hubei tartomány egyik gyárából vásárolt, emberi haj felhasználásával előállított aminosavporból vagy szirupból készítik majd. Ez elgondolkodtató minden Kínából származó élelmiszer kapcsán, beleértve a „bio” címkével ellátott élelmiszereket is.

A hír egyáltalán nem igaz						A hír teljes mértékben igaz
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Össességében úgy gondolom, hogy ebben a hírben a Kínára vonatkozó információk

nagyon konkrétak						nagyon elvonatok
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

6. Kína 2023-tól 20 000 koronavírusos beteg megölésére vár engedélyt?

Az új koronavírus terjedésének megakadályozása érdekében, kínai tisztviselők 20 000 fő lemeszárlásához próbálnak jóváhagyást szerezni. Kínai tisztviselők engedélyt kértek a Legfelsőbb Népbíróságtól a koronavírus új törzsével fertőzöttek lemeszárlásának megkezdéséhez a betegség terjedésének megfékezése érdekében. Kína több mint 20 000 koronavírusos beteg megölésére kér bírósági jóváhagyást, hogy elkerülje a vírus további terjedését.

Kína legfőbb bírósága, a Legfelsőbb Népbíróság várhatóan januárban jóváhagyja, mint a halálos vírus terjedését megakadályozó biztos eszközt, a koronavírusos betegek lemeszárlását Kínában 2024-től. Az állam azt állítja a bíróságnak, hogy Kína az egészségügyi dolgozók elvesztésének küszöbén áll a koronavírus miatt, mivel naponta legalább 20 egészségügyi dolgozó fertőződik meg a vírussal.

A hír egyáltalán nem igaz						A hír teljes mértékben igaz
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Össességében úgy gondolom, hogy ebben a hírben a Kínára vonatkozó információk

nagyon konkrétak						nagyon elvonatak
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

7. Megjósolhatták-e az egészségügyi szakértők, hogy az új koronavírus 65 millió ember halálát okozhatja 2024-ben?



Egészségügyi szakértők előrejelzése szerint az új koronavírus 65 millió ember halálát okozza 2024-ben. 2021 októberében a John Hopkins Egészségbiztonsági Központ „Activity 201” néven járványgyakorlatot hajtott végre partnereivel, a Világgazdasági Fórummal és a Bill & Melinda Gates Alapítvánnyal. Az Egészségügyi Biztonsági Központhoz nemrégiben arról érkeztek kérdések, hogy a gyakorlatok figyelmeztetést jelentenek-e a 2024-es új koronavírus-járvány kirobbanására Kínában.

Az Egészségügyi Biztonsági Központ szerint a koronavírusok „a vírusok nagy családját jelentik, amelyek számos különböző állatfajban gyakoriak, beleértve a tevéket, szarvasmarhákat, macskákat és denevéreket”. Ritka esetekben, de előfordul, hogy az állati koronavírusok megfertőzhetik az embereket, majd elterjedhetnek az emberek között, mint például a MERS és a SARS vírusok esetében.” Következésképpen egy új típusú koronavírus megjelenése, amely még fertőzőbb lesz, nyilvánvaló.

A koronavírus, amelyet először a kínai Hubei tartományban, Vuhanban jelentettek, egy 2019-nCoV névre keresztelt légúti betegség, amelyet az Egészségügyi Világszervezet globális vészhelyzetnek nyilvánított. A kínai hatóságok, eddig példa nélküli mértékben, 50

millió embert helyeztek karanténba a vírus terjedésének megfékezésére. A különböző típusú fejlesztések statisztikái szerint közülük a legveszélyesebbet 2024-re fejlesztik ki, és körülbelül 65 millió ember halálát okozzák.

A hír egyáltalán nem igaz						A hír teljes mértékben igaz
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Össességében úgy gondolom, hogy ebben a hírben a Kínára vonatkozó információk

nagyon konkrétak						nagyon elvonataak
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

8. Egy hongkongi üzlet 2024-től könnygáz ízű fagylaltot vesz fel a kínálatába.



A fagylalt fő összetevője a szemes, fekete bors lesz, ami a rendőrség által, egy félautonóm kínai város utcáin használt maró, éles lövésekre emlékeztet. A könnygáz ízesítésű fagylalt lesz az egyik legújabb íz a kínai fagylaltozóban, amelyet a kormány arra tervezett, hogy emlékeztessen a Hongkongban, egy félig autonóm kínai városban, a zavargások résztvevőit a rendőrök által a város utcáin leadott éles lövésekre. „Könnygáz íze van. Eleinte nehezen kapsz tőle levegőt, nagyon fanyar és irritálja a torkot. Szomjas leszel tőle, sok vizet akarsz inni”- mondta a nő, aki először tesztelte a fagylaltot. „Azt hiszem, ez emlékeztet arra, hogy mekkora fájdalmat éreztem az autó volánja mögött azon a nehéz napon, és ezt nem szabad elfelejtenem.” A könnygáz fagylalt illata, a büntetés jele azoknak, akik szeretnék követni azt a demokratikus mozgalmat, amely a koronavírus-járvány idején is igyekszik megerősödni.

A tiltakozások egy olyan törvényjavaslat miatt kezdődtek, amely lehetővé tenné a bűnözéssel gyanúsított személyek kiadatását a szárazföldi Kínának vádemelés céljából. Noha a törvényjavaslatot visszavonták, a tüntetések tovább folytatódtak attól a félelemtől vezérelve, hogy Peking aláássa az egykori brit gyarmatnak biztosított polgári szabadságjogokat, amióta Hongkong 1997-ben visszakerült a kínai uralom alá. „Olyan illatot,

aromát szeretnénk létrehozni, amely emlékezteti az embereket arra, mi történhet, ha nem engedelmessékednek a jelenlegi kormány szabályainak” – mondta egy tisztviselő.

A hír egyáltalán nem igaz						A hír teljes mértékben igaz
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Össességében úgy gondolom, hogy ebben a hírben a Kínára vonatkozó információk

nagyon konkrétak						nagyon elvonataknak
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

9. A kínai géntechnológia azon dolgozik, hogy „szuperkatonákat” állítson elő?

A kínai kormány kísérleteket végez katonáival, hogy genetikailag „feljavítva” őket 2030-ra "szuperkatonát" alkossanak. A genetikailag módosított szuperkatonák ötlete aligha új, de mindig is a sci-fi vagy a fantasy birodalmába tartozott. Úgy tűnik azonban, hogy Kína titkos amerikai védelmi technológiákat is lop, hogy elősegítse Hszi Csin-ping elnök agresszív tervét, aki Kínát 2030-ra a világ vezető katonai hatalmává kívánja tenni. Az amerikai hírszerzés szerint Kína még emberkísérleteket is végzett a Népi Felszabadító Hadsereg tagjain, abban a reményben, hogy biológiailag megerősített katonákat fejleszthet ki. Peking törekvésében a hatóságoknak nincsenek erkölcsi aggályai, etikai határai.

A hír egyáltalán nem igaz						A hír teljes mértékben igaz
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Össességében úgy gondolom, hogy ebben a hírben a Kínára vonatkozó információk

nagyon konkrétak						nagyon elvonataknak
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

10. Az aktivisták szkeptikusan viszonyulnak ahhoz a hírhez, hogy Kínában 2030-ra bevezetik az "érzelemfigyelő" technológiát.

2030-ra a kínai kormány az ország összes gyárában és üzemében bevezeti az "agyfigyelő" technológiát, ami riadalmat és aggodalmat kelt az aktivista csoportokban, akik szerint ez a kínai munkavállalók magánéletének biztonságát veszélyezteti. „A nemzetközi jogban léteznek olyan korlátozások, amelyek meghatározzák, hogy a helyi vagy nemzeti hatóság milyen információkat gyűjthetnek és hogyan használhatják azokat fel, a felhasználás rendkívül óvatos és mindig arányban van a az információk által megakadályozandó veszély mértékével. " - mondta Sophie Richardson, a Human Rights Watch kínai igazgatója. " Ezek közül a korlátozó eszközök közül nagyon keveset alkalmaznak Kínában. „A munkavállalók érzelmeinek mérésére használható technológia fejlesztéséről először a South China Morning Post számolt be, amely szerint a kormány „a gyárak, tömegközlekedési eszközök, állami

tulajdonú vállalatok és katonai intézmények példátlan tesztelésére fogja alkalmazni, az iparágak versenyképességének növelése és a társadalmi stabilitás támogatása érdekében”.

A hír egyáltalán nem igaz						A hír teljes mértékben igaz
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Össességében úgy gondolom, hogy ebben a hírben a Kínára vonatkozó információk

nagyon konkrétak						nagyon elvonataknak
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

11. Lelassítja-e a föld forgását 2035-re a kínai Három-szoros gát?

A Kínában épülő Három-szoros gát tározója elegendő vizet fog tartalmazni ahhoz, hogy lelassítsa és megfordítsa a Föld forgását. Ez a víz több mint 39 billió kilogrammot (42 milliárd tonnát) fog nyomni.



Egy ekkora tömeg elmozdulása hatással lesz a Föld forgására a "tehetetlenségi momentum" néven ismert jelenségen keresztül, amely egy szilárd forgó test tehetetlensége a forgásához képest. Egy tárgy tehetetlenségi nyomatéka egy adott tengely körül azt írja le, hogy milyen nehéz megváltoztatni a tengely körüli szögmozgását. Minél nagyobb a távolság a tömeg és a forgástengely között, annál lassabban fog forogni. Lehet, hogy ezt Ön nem tudja, de a mindennapi életben lát erre példát. Például egy korcsolyázó, aki gyorsabban próbál pörögni, szorosan a testéhez nyomja a karját, ezáltal csökkenti a tehetetlenségi nyomatékokat.

Hasonlóképpen, egy bűvár, aki gyorsabban próbál fejest ugrani, hajlított helyzetbe hozza a testét. 39 billió kilogramm víz 175 méterrel a tengerszint fölé emelése 2035-re növeli a Föld tehetetlenségi nyomatékát, és ezzel lassítja a forgását. A NASA tudósainak számításai szerint ennek a tömegnek az eltolódása 0,06 mikromásodperccel növelné a nap hosszát, és a Föld közepén kissé kerekesebb, felül laposabbá válna. Ezenkívül körülbelül két centiméterrel (0,8 hüvelyk) eltolja a pólusok pozícióit. Vegye figyelembe, hogy a Földön található bármely tárgy tömegének a forgástengelyhez viszonyított elmozdulása megváltoztatja a tehetetlenségi nyomatékát, bár az elmozdulások többsége túl kicsi ahhoz, hogy meg lehessen mérni.

A hír egyáltalán nem igaz						A hír teljes mértékben igaz
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Össességében úgy gondolom, hogy ebben a hírben a Kínára vonatkozó információk

nagyon konkrétak						nagyon elvonataak
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

12. Vajon a kínai tudósok által klónozott majmok hoznak-e új típusú vírusokat 2035-re?



A Cell folyóirat szerdán megjelent cikkében a sanghaji Kínai Tudományos Akadémia bejelentette, hogy sikeresen létrehoztak két makákót. A 7 és 8 hetes korú nőstény majmokat Zhong Zhongnak és Hua Huának nevezték el. A cél az, hogy 2035-ig sok genetikailag azonos majmot hozzanak létre az orvosi kutatásban való felhasználásra, ahol különösen értékesek lesznek, mivel jobban hasonlítanak az emberre, mint más laboratóriumi állatok, például egerek vagy patkányok. Kínai kutatók azonban azt mondták, hogy az embrionális sejtek klónozása kombinálható génszerkesztési technikákkal, így nagyszámú majmot lehet előállítani bizonyos genetikai hibákkal, amelyek emberben megbetegedést okoznak. Az állatok ezután felhasználhatók az ilyen betegségek tanulmányozására és a kezelések tesztelésére. Az Ethical Treatment of Animals elítélte a majmok klónozásával végzett kísérleteket, és aggodalmát fejezte ki a veszélyes következmények miatt, úgy mint új vírusok megjelenéséhez vezetnek. "A klónozás egy horror show: életek, idő és pénz pazarlása, és az ilyen kísérletek által okozott szenvedés elképzelhetetlen" - mondta Katy Guillermo, a PETA alelnöke.

A hír egyáltalán nem igaz						A hír teljes mértékben igaz
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Össességében úgy gondolom, hogy ebben a hírben a Kínára vonatkozó információk

nagyon konkrétak						nagyon elvonataak
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

13. A gyilkosság felé vezető út: Kínában miért ölik mega sofőrök az általuk elütött gyalogosokat?

Kína nem vezet statisztikát az emberöléssel kapcsolatos incidensekről (vagy bejelentésekről), de a közúti közlekedési balesetek statisztikái elég érdekesek.



Olyan ez, mint egy őrült városi legenda: Kínában a gyalogosokat megsebesítő sofőrök néha megpróbálják megölni őket. Pedig ez nem csak igaz, hanem elég gyakori is. A CCTV kamerák rendszeresen felveszik, ahogy a sofőrök oda-vissza át hajtanak az áldozatokon, hogy megbizonyosodjanak arról, hogy meghaltak. Van még egy kínai közmondás is erről a jelenségről: "Jobb ütni és megölni, mint ütni és megsebesíteni."

Ez a 2008-as tévériport CCTV-felvételeket tartalmaz, amint egy poros fehér Passat nagy sebességgel tolat, és nekiütközik egy 64 éves nagymamának. A Passat hátsó kerekei az idős asszony fején és testén ugrálnak. A sofőr, Zhao Xiao Cheng egy pillanatra leállítja az autót, majd lenyomja a gázpedált, amitől első kerekei átgurulnak a nőn. Zhao ezután mozgásba lendül, a kerekek a nőt a járdához szorítják az asszonyt. Zhao folytatta. Még kétszer vált a menet és a hátramenet között, és minden alkalommal eltalálja a nagymama testét. Aztán elhajt.

Hihetetlen módon Zhaót nem találták bűnösnek előre megfontolt gyilkosságban. Elfogadva Zhao állítását, miszerint úgy gondolta, hogy szemeteszsákon hajtott át. A Zhejiang tartomány tájsui bírósága csak három év börtönre ítélte "hanyagságért". Zhao esete csak annyiban volt szokatlan, hogy videóra is rögzítették. Ahogy a televíziós műsorvezető megjegyezte: "Az interneten végtelen történetek folyamát láthatjuk, amelyek az ehhez hasonló esetekről mesélnek."

A hír egyáltalán nem igaz						A hír teljes mértékben igaz
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Össességében úgy gondolom, hogy ebben a hírben a Kínára vonatkozó információk

nagyon konkrétak						nagyon elvonatak
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

14. Macska a kínai konyhában

Kínálnak macskahúst a kínai éttermek?

Egy tizenháromezer lakosú városban, amely fokozatosan várossá változott, volt egy étterem, amelyet három kínai vezetett. Ez volt a környék legnépszerűbb étkezési helye, ahol reggel, délben és este üzletemberek és városlakók étkeztek. ak. Mindenki egyetértett abban, hogy az étel és a kiszolgálás is jó volt.

Egy este néhány barát elment a kínai étterembe egy ünnepi vacsorára. Az étkezés közepén az egyik résztvevő hirtelen köhögni és fuldokolni kezdett. Nagyon riadtan szállították kórházba a 36 éves nőt, Xiang Zhu-t, és kisebb műtéten kellett átesnie, hogy eltávolítsák a torkában megakadt kis csontot. A sebész, Zhu Huang, aki eltávolította a csontot, tanácstalan volt, mivel nem ismerte fel a talált csont típusát. Ezért elküldte elemzésre, és a jelentés szerint macskacsont volt.

Az Egészségügyi Osztály azonnal ellátogatott az étterembe, hogy átvizsgálja a konyhát, és a hűtőszekrényben tucatnyi macskahússal teli edényt, egy fél elzászi kutyát és több feldolgozásra várakozó patkányt találtak. Ám amikor az egészségügyi felügyelők elmentek ellenőrizni az üzletet, 40 ketrecet találtak macskákkal. Szóval azt mondták, rendben, majd kinyitották a fagyasztót. MINDENHOL FAGYASZTOTT MACSKA!!!!

A hír egyáltalán nem igaz						A hír teljes mértékben igaz
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Össességében úgy gondolom, hogy ebben a hírben a Kínára vonatkozó információk

nagyon konkrétak						nagyon elvonatak
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

15. Letartóztattak egy angol tudóst, amiért eladta a COVID-19 koronavírus Kínának?

Ha esetleg lemaradt volna, a szövetségi ügynökök ma letartóztatták Dr. Charles Liebert, a Harvard Egyetem Kémiai és Biokémiai Tanszékének elnökét, aki hazudott a Védelmi Minisztériumnak Kína titkos havi 50 000 dolláros fizetéséről és további milliókról, amelyeket egy vegyi anyagok létrehozását elősegítő kínai Biokémiai "Kutatási" laboratórium létrehozásáért kapott. Két kínai "diákot" is letartóztattak, akik kutatóként dolgoztak, egyikük valójában a kínai hadsereg hadnagya volt, a másikat pedig a Logan repülőtéren tartóztatták le, amikor megpróbált felszállni egy Kínába tartó járatra a járatra csempészve - 21 "érzékeny biológiai minta" fiolával – jelentette az FBI.

Ó, majdnem elfelejtettem említeni, a kutatólabor, amelynek létrehozásában a jó professzor segített a Vuhani Műszaki Egyetemen található. Vuhan (Kína) a koronavírus néven ismert potenciálisan globális világjárvány epicentruma, amely gyorsan terjed, és egyúttal embereket is öl.

A hír egyáltalán nem igaz						A hír teljes mértékben igaz
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Össességében úgy gondolom, hogy ebben a hírben a Kínára vonatkozó információk

nagyon konkrétak						nagyon elvonataak
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

16. Nem, Kína nem gyűjt csapatokat Kanadában, hogy megtámadja az Egyesült Államokat.

Kínai katonák ezrei gyülekeznek Kanadában, és készülnek az Egyesült Államok megszállására.

2020 őszén a közösségi média különféle felhasználói megosztottak egy videót, amelyben azt állították, hogy Kína csapatokat gyűjtött Kanadában az Egyesült Államok elleni invázió előkészítéseként. Úgy tűnik, hogy az összeesküvés-elmélet Hal Turnertől, a fehérek felsőbbrendűségét hirdető rádióadó műsorvezetőjétől és bloggertől ered.

Turner üzenete tüzes főcímet visel: Fegyverkezzetek és Készüljetek: Kína "több tízezer" katonát összpontosít a kanadai Prince Rupertben és Vancouverben. Megtámadni az USA-t? "A nyilatkozatot különféle platformokon terjesztették, és többen bizonyítékként megosztottak egy rövid videót a YouTube-on." A videón egy autós férfi azt állítja, hogy kínai csapatok haladnak egy úton a vancouveri Salt Spring Islanden.

A hír egyáltalán nem igaz						A hír teljes mértékben igaz
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Össességében úgy gondolom, hogy ebben a hírben a Kínára vonatkozó információk

nagyon konkrétak						nagyon elvonataak
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

17. Emberek esnek összes az utcán a koronavírus miatt?

Wuhan Kína.

Koronavírus hírek.

A kiszivárgott videón az látható, hogy az emberek szó szerint összeesnek amikor megfertőződnek koronavírussal.

10 város, 33 millió lakossal van karanténban.

Ma reggel a karanténzónán kívül 1 esetet találtak.

Video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uf4-Vzf1CyM>



A hír egyáltalán nem igaz						A hír teljes mértékben igaz
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Össességében úgy gondolom, hogy ebben a hírben a Kínára vonatkozó információk

nagyon konkrétak						nagyon elvonataak
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

18. A Kínából importált rákok formalinnal vannak töltve?

Az Egyesült Államok bizonyos mennyiségű rákot Ázsiából importál. A elszórt híradások 2011-ben, 2012-ben és 2014-ben az állították, hogy Kínában a húst és egyéb élelmiszereket formalinnal vannak kezelve.

Legyen óvatos, amikor ez idő alatt rákot vásárol, mert hiteles jelentések szerint a hasüregbe való formalin fecskendezéssel érik el, hogy a rák friss maradjon és hizzon.



A hír egyáltalán nem igaz						A hír teljes mértékben igaz
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Össességében úgy gondolom, hogy ebben a hírben a Kínára vonatkozó információk

nagyon konkrétak						nagyon elvonatak
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

19. A Centers for Disease Control arra figyelmeztetnek, hogy Kína használt óvszerből készít hajgumit

A Centers for Disease Control figyelmeztetést adott ki a használt óvszer hajgumiként való használatára vonatkozóan.

A Center for Disease Control (CDC) arra figyelmezteti az amerikaiakat, hogy a használt óvszereket állítólag gumiszalagokká és hajkötőkké dolgozták fel, és értékesítették az Egyesült Államokban, ami közegészségügyi aggályokat vet fel. Az újrahasznosított óvszert nem csak a helyi boltokban és bolhapiacokon árulják, hanem a helyi szépségszalonokban is országszerte. A CDC szerint veszélyezteti az ezeket a termékeket használó fogyasztók egészségét, és aggódik amiatt, hogy ezeknek a hajkötőknek és gumiszalagoknak a használata az AIDS, a genitális szemölcsök és más betegségek terjedéséhez vezethet.

A CDC a következő közleményt adta ki:

„A baktériumok és a potenciális vírusok mennyisége ezeken a használt óvszerekből készült hajgumikon négyszer nagyobb, mint a nyilvános WC-kben található baktériumok mennyisége. A fogyasztók AIDS-szel, szemölcsökkel, herpeszsel és más szexuális úton terjedő betegségekkel is megfertőződhetnek, ha hajformázás közben ilyen gumiszalagot vagy hajgumit tartanak a szájukban. Figyelmeztetjük a fogyasztókat, hogy ne vásárolják meg ezeket a termékeket, ha azokat Kínában gyártják.”

A hír egyáltalán nem igaz						A hír teljes mértékben igaz
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Össességében úgy gondolom, hogy ebben a hírben a Kínára vonatkozó információk

nagyon konkrétak						nagyon elvonataak
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

11. Ország imázs

Értékelj a Kínával kapcsolatos állításokat	Egyáltalán nem érték egyet ezzel - Teljes mértékben egyetértek ezzel					
Kínának jó hírneve van	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kína egyetemeinek jó híre van	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ha külföldi nyaralásra gondolok, egyből Kína jut eszembe.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ha a nemzetközi tanulmányok folytatására gondolok, rögtön Kína egyetemei jutnak eszembe.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Rengeteg hirdetést láttam nyaralásról ebben az országban	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Nagyon sok hirdetést láttam Kína egyetemeiről	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kína egyetemei nagyon híresek	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Magas színvonalú életkörülmények vannak Kínában	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Magas szintű köztisztaság Kínában	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Magas szintű a személyi biztonság Kínában	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Minőségi az infrastruktúra Kínában	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A felsőoktatásban nyújtott tudás magas színvonalú Kínában	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ez az ország megfelel a személyiségemnek	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A barátaim nagyra értékelnék, ha meglátogatnám Kínát	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ennek az országnak a képe megegyezik a magamról alkotott képpel	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kína egyetemei kiemelkedőek a más országbéli hasonló egyetemek között	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gyorsan eszembe jut Kína legnépszerűbb egyetemének néhány jellemzője	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gyorsan eszembe jut néhány egyetem jelképe vagy logója ebből az országból	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kína a kedvenc célpontom nyaralásra	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kínát előnyben részesíteném a tanulás szempontjából	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Tanácsolnám másoknak, hogy látogassák meg ezt az országot	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Javasolnám másoknak, hogy kínai egyetemen folytassák tanulmányaikat	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A jövőben meglátogatom Kínát	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A jövőben tervezem, hogy Kínában fogom folytatni egyetemi tanulmányaimat	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gyorsan eszembe jutnak Kína jellegzetességei	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Vonzó helyi étel (konyha)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A kínai látogatás tükrözi azt, aki vagyok	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Szeretek Kínába látogatni	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Összességében hűséges vagyok Kínához	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

13.2 Appendix 2. Questionnaire of positively framed fake news in the Hungarian language

FELMÉRÉS:

Vonzó ország Kína?

Kedves Kitöltők!

Jelen kérdőív egy nemzetközi tanulmány része, amelynek célja az országok, jelen esetben Kína megítélésének a vizsgálata. A kérdőív Kínáról, mint turisztikai és oktatási ország megítéléséről szól, valamint az országgal kapcsolatos híreket is tartalmazza.

A felmérés mindössze 30 percet vesz igénybe, és nagyban hozzájárul a tudományos ismeretek formálásához.

Köszönjük, hogy kitöltésével segíti a munkánkat!

Demográfiai adatok

1. Életkor
2. Nem: nő/ férfi
3. A lakóhely szerinti ország
4. Lakóhely: megye székhely/ város/ község
5. Legmagasabb iskolai végzettség (érettségi/ főiskola/ egyetem/ PhD / egyéb)

Ország imázs

6. Járt már Kínában?(igen / nem)

7.

Értékelj Kínát az alábbi dimenziók mentén	Nagyon alacsony - Nagyon magas						
Az életminőség Kínában	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A jólét Kínában	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A technológiai szint Kínában	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Az oktatás színvonala Kínában	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

8.

Értékelj Kínát az alábbi dimenziók mentén	Egyáltalán nem érték egyet ezzel - Teljes mértékben egyetérték ezzel						
Kína egy kellemes ország	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kína egy barátságos ország	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kína egy biztonságos ország	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kína egy megbízható ország	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Értékeld a Kínával kapcsolatos állításokat	Egyáltalán nem érték egyet ezzel - Teljes mértékben egyetértek ezzel						
Kínának jó hírneve van	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kína egyetemeinek jó híre van	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ha külföldi nyaralásra gondolok, egyből Kína jut eszembe.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ha a nemzetközi tanulmányok folytatására gondolok, rögtön Kína egyetemei jutnak eszembe.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Rengeteg hirdetést láttam nyaralásról ebben az országban	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Nagyon sok hirdetést láttam Kína egyetemeiről	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kína egyetemei nagyon híresek	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Magas színvonalú életkörülmények vannak Kínában	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Magas szintű köztisztaság Kínában	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Magas szintű a személyi biztonság Kínában	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Minőségi az infrastruktúra Kínában	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A felsőoktatásban nyújtott tudás magas színvonalú Kínában	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ez az ország megfelel a személyiségemnek	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A barátaim nagyra értékelnék, ha meglátogatnám Kínát	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ennek az országnak a képe megegyezik a magamról alkotott képpel	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kína egyetemei kiemelkedőek a más országbéli hasonló egyetemek között	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gyorsan eszembe jut Kína legnépszerűbb egyetemének néhány jellemzője	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gyorsan eszembe jut néhány egyetem jelképe vagy logója ebből az országból	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kína a kedvenc célpontom nyaralásra	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kínát előnyben részesíteném a tanulás szempontjából	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tanácsolnám másoknak, hogy látogassák meg ezt az országot	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Javasolnám másoknak, hogy kínai egyetemen folytassák tanulmányaikat	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A jövőben meglátogatom Kínát	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A jövőben tervezem, hogy Kínában fogom folytatni egyetemi tanulmányaimat	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gyorsan eszembe jutnak Kína jellegzetességei	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Vonzó helyi étel (konyha)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

A kínai látogatás tükrözi azt, aki vagyok	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Szeretek Kínába látogatni	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Összességében hűséges vagyok Kínához	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

10. Második rész

Kérjük, értékeld az általános hozzáállásod a Kínával kapcsolatos hírek valóságára.

1. 2023-ra a „kommunista Kína” lesz a DreamWorks studio tulajdonosa.

A Li Ruigang által vezetett CMC Capital Partners konzorcium 2023-ban átveszi a sanghaji székhelyű Oriental DreamWorks animációs stúdiót és Pearl Studio néven újraindítja. A Universal, amely megörökölte a vegyesvállalat 45%-át, amikor a Comcast anyavállalat 2016-ban felvásárolta a DreamWorks Animationt, igyekezett kiszabadítani érdekeltségeit. Az újonnan létrehozott stúdiót Frank Zhu vezérigazgató és Peilin Chou kreatív igazgató vezeti majd. A felsővezetői csapat tagja még a Studio vezetője Dagan Potter, a kiegészítő üzletág vezetője PC Xu és Cindy Zhou műveleti vezető. A 2012-ben indult Oriental DreamWorks stúdió áll a Kung Fu Panda 3 rajzfilm mögött, amely az első hivatalos kínai animációs koprodukció volt, és az egyik legtöbb bevételt hozó animációs film volt, amikor 2016-ban bemutatták Kínában. Tavaly szeptemberben, a stúdió bemutatta a legfontosabb fejlesztési projektek listáját. „A DreamWorks segíteni fog nekünk filmes, televíziós, vidámparki és fogyasztói termékekkel foglalkozó üzletágaink hosszútávú növekedésében” – mondta Frank Zhu vezérigazgató.

A hír egyáltalán nem igaz							A hír teljes mértékben igaz
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Összességében úgy gondolom, hogy ebben a hírben a Kínára vonatkozó információk

nagyon konkrétak							nagyon elvonataak
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

2. A kínai pandák jégtortát fognak enni, hogy megünnepeljék a Nemzeti Állatkert 50-ik évfordulóját.



2023-ban a Nemzeti Állatkert évfordulója alkalmából készült „torta” fagyasztott gyümölcsleéből, édesburgonyából, sárgarépbából és cukornádból áll és körülbelül 15 percig fog tartani, amíg az óriáspanda mama, Mei Xiang és kölyke Xiao Qi Ji elfogyasztja. A Nemzeti Állatkert leghíresebb lakói szombaton, lelkes tömegek előtt fogják elfogyasztani az ünnepi reggelit, miközben az állatkert a kínai kormánnyal kötött ikonikus pandacsere-egyezmény 50. évfordulóját ünnepli. Hsziao Csi Ji édesapja, Tian Tian felelős a reggeli mulatságért: hangoss csámcsogása, amivel a bambuszt majszolja a szomszédos állatházban, jól halható Qin Gang kínai nagykövet nyilatkozata közben. A nagykövet mindig dicséri a medvéket, mint a nemzetek közötti „barátság szimbólumát”.

Hsziao Csi Dzsi 2020 augusztusi születését szinte csodaként értékelték, tekintettel édesanyja Mei Xiang idős kora és arra a tényre, hogy az állatkert munkatársai szigorú járványügyi korlátozások mellett végezték el a mesterséges megtermékenyítést röviddel azután, hogy a COVID-19 világjárvány miatt bezárták az egész állatkertet. 22 évesen Mei Xiang volt a legidősebb óriáspanda, aki sikeresen szült Kínában. Ennek köszönhetően a most 20 hónapos panda kölyök a “kis csoda” nemvet kapta. Születése a járvány közepette, új lendületet adott a “pandamániának”, és ez a z állatkerti panda megfigyelő kamera nézettségét 1200 százalékkal növelte.

A hír egyáltalán nem igaz						A hír teljes mértékben igaz
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Össességében úgy gondolom, hogy ebben a hírben a Kínára vonatkozó információk

nagyon konkrétak						nagyon elvonatok
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

3. Az 5800 Mérföld/óra sebességgel haaladó kínai rakéta megakadályozza az űrszemét ütközését a Holddal.

2022-re a Holdba 3 tonna űrszemét csapódik be, aminek következtében akkora kráter keletkezik a Hold felületén, amelyben több nyergesvontató (kamion) is belefér. A tudósok arra számítanak, hogy az objektum 10-20 méter átmérőjű lyukat váj ki a Hold felületén, aminek következtében a felszálló holdport több száz mérföldre (kilométerre) repíti a kopár, foltos felületen. Szinte lehetetlen ennek a becsapódásnak a megakadályozása, mivel Kínának a Hold túlsó oldalán van a holdjárója, de túl messze lesz ahhoz, hogy észlelni lehessen a pénteki becsapódást az Egyenlítőtől északra. A NASA Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter is hatótávolságon kívül lesz. Nem valószínű, hogy az indiai Hold körül keringő Chandrayaan-2 addigra elhalad mellette. A kínai tudósok azonban kifejlesztettek egy speciális rakétát, amely képes lenne darabokra törni a szemetet, hogy csökkentse a katasztrófát.

Az űrkutatás innovatív módszerének kezdeti kidolgozása után a Chinese Space azonosította az egyetlen lehetséges módot, mivel a rakéta egy része az ütközés helyén leválik és ezáltal csökkenti a becsapódást. Zhung professzor szerint nehéz nyomon követni és megakadályozni az ehhez hasonló mélyűri küldetések maradványait. A Hold gravitációja megváltoztathatja az objektumok útját repülés közben, ami bizonytalanságot eredményez. „Most egy olyan korszakot élünk, amikor sok ország és magáncég is eljuttat tárgyakat a távoli világűrben, ezért itt az ideje, hogy nyomon kövessük ezeket” – mondta Zhung professzor.

A hír egyáltalán nem igaz						A hír teljes mértékben igaz
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Össességében úgy gondolom, hogy ebben a hírben a Kínára vonatkozó információk

nagyon konkrétak						nagyon elvonatok
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4. Elindul-e a kínai „Panda Bear Napelem Farm”?

Bár a panda medve alakú napelem farmot Kínában tervezték és építették, ténylegesen csak 2023-ban k egy panda medve alakú napelemfarmot, csak 2023-ban kerül beüzemelésre.



A világ vezető környezetbarát fejlesztési megoldások szolgáltatója, a Panda Green Energy Group Limited (korábbi nevén „United Photovoltaics Group Limited”) örömmel jelenti be, hogy a világ első Datong Shanxiban található Panda erőművét 2023-ban hivatalosan is bekapcsolják a hálózatba. A Panda napelem állomások megjelenését Kína nemzeti kincse, az Óriáspanda ihlette. Az 50 MW-os erőművek összesen 248 hektáron terülnek el, a fekete rész monokristályos szilikonból, a szürke és fehér rész pedig vékonyfilmes napelemekből áll. A fejlődés jövőjeként a fiataloknak lehetősége van hozzájárulni a fenntartható fejlődéshez.

A China Merchants New Energy együttműködése révén előmozdítja és népszerűsíti az új energia népszerűsítését nyári táborok és nyílt innovációs tervpályázatok révén. A China Merchants New Energy „nyílt tervezési pályázatot” írt ki a kreatív és törekvő fiatalok számára Kínában. A megújuló energiát alapul véve és a China Merchants New Energy szakértelmét felhasználva a „nyílt pályázat” egyedülálló környezetet biztosít, amely ösztönzi a tervezést, a prototípus-készítést és a nyílt folyamatokat ötvöző közös alkotást. A pályázat célja, hogy gyakorlati eszközökkel támogassa a kínai eredményeket, megoldások a megfizethető és tiszta energia iránti növekvő igényre való tekintettel úgy hogy bevonják a fiatalokat a folyamatokba a fenntartható fejlődés érdekében.

A hír egyáltalán nem igaz						A hír teljes mértékben igaz
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Össességében úgy gondolom, hogy ebben a hírben a Kínára vonatkozó információk

nagyon konkrétak						nagyon elvonataak
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

5. Kína 2030-ra mesterséges Napot bocsát ki?

Kína „mesterséges Napja” Kínában lesz, nem az űrben. Az állami média jelentése szerint az a kísérlet, amelyben a kínai „mesterséges nap” új világrekordot állít fel, miután egy plazmahurkot a Napnál ötször melegebb hőmérsékletre melegített több mint 17 percig. A Xinhua hírügynökség szerint az EAST (Experimental Advanced Superconducting Tokamak) nukleáris fúziós reaktor 158 millió Fahrenheit-fok (70 millió Celsius-fok) hőmérsékletet tartott fenn 1056 másodpercig.

Az eredmény egy apró, de jelentős lépéssel közelebb hozza a tudósokat ahhoz, hogy 2030-ra egy szinte korlátlan tiszta energiaforrást hozzanak létre. „120 millió Celsius-fokos plazmahőmérsékletet értünk el 101 másodpercre egy kísérletben 2021 első felében. Ezúttal az állandósult plazmaműködést 1056 másodpercig tartottuk fenn 70 millió Celsius-fokhoz közeli hőmérsékleten. Ez teremtette meg a tudományos és kísérleti alapot egy fúziós reaktor működtetéséhez.”

A hír egyáltalán nem igaz						A hír teljes mértékben igaz
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Össességében úgy gondolom, hogy ebben a hírben a Kínára vonatkozó információk

nagyon konkrétak						nagyon elvonataak
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

6. Kínai repülőgép-hordozó prototípus 2030.

bóla képen egy új típusú repülőgép-anyahajó látható?



Kína új repülőgép-hordozója! Hú!Ezek a repülőgép-hordozók félelmetesen néznek ki, és ultramodern kialakításúak. A jelentések szerint az első kínai repülőgép-hordozó építés alatt áll, és 2030 körül vagy korábban állhat szolgálatba. Nemsokára meglátjuk az igazit. Védelmi elemzők várnak; aggódva figyelnek.Ez órási ugrás ahhoz képest ami jelenleg a tervezőasztalon létezik. Jobb lesz a sebessége, nagyobb a kapacitása, sokkal stabilabb, stb.

Egyértelműen hosszú hatótávolságú tengeri hajó.Ezen kívül a két hajótest között láthatalan atom meghajtású tengeralatjáró folottát is kiszolgálhatja vagy akár kétéltű hadművelet indítására is alkalmas. Ezen kívül feleannyi idő alatt kerül forgalomba mint az amerikai, mindössze a költségek egyharmadáért. És ha hozzáadjuk az új kínai lopakodó vadászbombázót (a haditengerészeti verzió már repülési tesztelés alatt áll), egy valóban félelmetes fegyverrendszert kapunk.Felhívjuk a figyelmet még az extra „parkoló és készenléti” állomásra is a két hajótest szerkezete között, és természetesen az iker felszálló fedélzet használatából származó kilövési és leszállási lehetőségre is. A kínai új repülőgéphordozó kétszer olyan gyors lehet, mint bármi, amink van, ráadásul a katamarán típusú hajótest stabilitása nagymértékben csökkenti a jelenlegi konstrukcióinknál megszokott dőlést és billegést.

A hír egyáltalán nem igaz						A hír teljes mértékben igaz
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Összességében úgy gondolom, hogy ebben a hírben a Kínára vonatkozó információk

nagyon konkrétak		nagyon elvonataak
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1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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7. Hogyan lesz Kínának kék égboltja.



A turistákat köszöntő kék égbolt 2030-ban is látható lesz, ami jelentős változást jelent az alig egy évtizeddel ezelőttihez képest, amikor a város fullasztó légszennyezettségét „Airpocalypse”-nek (levegő apokalipszisnak) titulálták, és a turisták elriasztásával vádolták. Miután a szennyezettség 2013-ban rekordszintet ért el, és nemzetközi figyelem és széleskörű lakossági elégedetlenség forrásává vált, Kína ambiciózus tervet indított levegőminőségének 2030-ig történő javítására, és kijelentette, hogy „vaskézzel” fog küzdeni a légszennyezés ellen. Az ezt követő erőfeszítések hasonlóak lesznek azokhoz az intézkedésekhez, amelyeket Kína korábban tett annak érdekében, hogy tiszta égboltot biztosítson a 2008-as pekingi nyári olimpiai játékokon, de nagyobb léptékben – jegyzi meg a jelentés.

Szigorúbb károsanyag-kibocsátási előírásokat írnak elő a széntüzelésű erőművekre, és csökkentik az utakon közlekedő autók számát a járművek károsanyag-kibocsátásának csökkentése érdekében. A helyi tisztviselők környezetvédelmi célokat kapnak, és az otthonokban a széntüzelésű kazánokat gáz- vagy elektromos fűtőtestekre cserélik. Hogyan tovább? Kína elkötelezte magát amellyel, hogy 2030-ra szén-dioxid-semleges lesz. És bár az ország továbbra is erősen támaszkodik a szénre, jelentős előrelépést fog tenni a kibocsátások visszaszorítása terén, és gyorsan fejleszti a tiszta energiát olyan forrásokból, mint a szél és a nap. Eközben a kormány rövid távú intézkedéseket is hozhat, amikor akar, például ideiglenesen leállíthatja a gyárakat. Ez segíteni fog abban, hogy a jövőben tisztább legyen az égbolt a nagy politikai vagy társadalmi események számára.

A hír egyáltalán nem igaz						A hír teljes mértékben igaz
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Össességében úgy gondolom, hogy ebben a hírben a Kínára vonatkozó információk

nagyon konkrétak						nagyon elvonatakt
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

8. Táncoló robotok a a Shanghai Disneylandben?

Még a Disney és a kínai technológia egyesített ereje sem tud 2030-ra új tehetségeket teremteni. A Kínában megalkotott robot társastáncosok a Shanghai Disneyland Resortban lépnek fel. A robotok emberszerűek, valóság-hű arckifejezéssel és mozgással.

A kínai gyártású robotok nagy népszerűségnek örvendenek az interneten számos lenyűgöző és élethű bravúrjuknak köszönhetően, de egy történet nagyon megdöbbentett minket. Egy pár társastáncos kísérleti videója elterjedt, sokan azt állították, hogy a fellépők nem valódiak, hanem valójában Kínában létrehozott robotok, amelyek a sanghaji Disneyland üdülőhelyen fognak fellépni.

„Láttam, hogy ezt a klasszikus táncot Kínában készítették, és Shanghai Disneylandben adják majd elő. Nem igazi táncosnők. – mondta az egyik néző.

A hír egyáltalán nem igaz						A hír teljes mértékben igaz
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Össességében úgy gondolom, hogy ebben a hírben a Kínára vonatkozó információk

nagyon konkrétak						nagyon elvonatakt
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

9. Láthatóvá válik a Kínai Nagy Fal a Holdról?

A kínai Nagy Fal az egyetlen ember alkotta objektum, amely 2040-re látható lesz a Holdról, mivel a kormány döntést hozott a szerkezet megerősítéséről. Bár olyan kicsi dolgokat láthatunk, mint a repülőtéri kifutópályák, a Nagy Falat olyan anyagok segítségével javítják, amelyek színe megegyezik a környező talajjal. Az az állítás, hogy a kínai Nagy Fal az egyetlen ember alkotta tárgy, amely szabad szemmel látható a Holdról, a közeljövőben valóra válik. Ha "Űr" alatt a Föld körüli alacsony föld körüli röppályát vesszük, amelyen az űrsikló is utazott (körülbelül 160-350 mérfölddel a Föld felett), akkor a NASA Earth from Space fényképészeti archívuma azt mutatja, hogy az alacsony röppályáról készült képek olyan ember által épített struktúrákat tárnak fel, mint pl. mint autópályák, repülőterek, hidak, gátak és a Kennedy Űrközpont elemei.

A Kínai Nagy Falat egy speciális anyaggal erősítik meg, amely az űrből is látható. A kínai kormány már bizonyította az újjáépítési tervet, és 37 millió dollárt különített el rá. A munkálatokat 2040-re fejezik be. Ezért továbbra is ez lesz az egyetlen ember alkotta tárgy, amely az „űrből” látható.

A hír egyáltalán nem igaz						A hír teljes mértékben igaz
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Össességében úgy gondolom, hogy ebben a hírben a Kínára vonatkozó információk

nagyon konkrétak						nagyon elvonatok
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

10. Használják-e a 400 évente csak egyszer virágzó pagodavirágot a rák kezelésére?



Nem ez az első alkalom, hogy Kínában pletykák keringenek egy 400 évente egyszer nyíló virágról, amelyet a rák gyógymódjaként azonosítottak. A fényképen egy pagodavirág látható, amely 400 évente csak egyszer virágzik Kínában, és rendelkezik a rák kezelésben használt egyedi elemekkel. A következő virágzási időszak 2040-ben következik be, amikor a tudósok begyűjtik a virágokat a gyógyításhoz. A rák a második vezető halálok világszerte. Noha nagy előrelépés történt a rák progressziójának kezelésében és kordában tartásában, de még sok lehetőség a javításra. Ennek a virágnak a rákellenes tulajdonságait évszázadok óta ismerték. A podofillotoxin és számos más vegyület (lignánok) izolálása a pagoda virágból végül a here- és a tüdőrák kezelésére használt gyógyszerek kifejlesztéséhez vezetett.

A kínai Nemzeti Rákkutató Intézet megközelítőleg 35 000 növényfajt vizsgált meg potenciális rákellenes tulajdonságai szempontjából. Közülük körülbelül 3000 növényfaj mutatott reprodukálható rákellenes hatást, és egy teljesen meggyógyítja a sejtet. A pagodavirág tudományosan bizonyított gyógyító tulajdonságai az egyetlen gyógymódot

jelentik az egyik legveszélyesebb betegségre. Ezeket a növényi kivonatokat kemoterápiás gyógyszerekké alakítják, miután összegyűjtik 2040-ben

A hír egyáltalán nem igaz						A hír teljes mértékben igaz
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nagyon konkrétak						nagyon elvonataak
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

11. A fokhagymás víz meggyógyítja a koronavírust?

Kínai tudósok felfedezték, hogy a fokhagyma bizonyos felhasználási módjai gyógyíthatják a koronavírust. Ennek az étrendkiegészítőnek a tömeggyártását 2030-ra indítják el. Ez a gyógyszer meggyógyítja a COVID-19-et. A fokhagymáról régóta tudott, hogy olyan tulajdonságokkal rendelkezik, amelyek segítenek megelőzni és kezelni a különféle betegségeket, beleértve a megfázást és az influenzát, de az ilyen állításokat alátámasztó tudományos bizonyítékok gyengék vagy hiányosak.

Úgy gondolták, hogy sok esetben az ilyen típusú étrendkiegészítők önmagukban nem ártalmasak, mindaddig, amíg nem akadályozzák meg a bizonyítkokon alapuló, hagyományos orvoslás módszereinek követését. A South China Morning Post azonban beszámolt egy nő történetéről, aki egy héten át fokhagymát tartalmazó táplálékkiegészítőt kapott, és könnyen felépült a COVID súlyos szövődményeiből. Az orvosok bebizonyították egy ilyen kísérlet és a fokhagymával, mint alapanyaggal kifejlesztett új kezelési mód létezését. Ez a fajta étrendkiegészítő 2030-ra kerül tömeggyártásba, és széles körben használják majd a kezelési folyamatokban Kínában.

A hír egyáltalán nem igaz						A hír teljes mértékben igaz
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Össességében úgy gondolom, hogy ebben a hírben a Kínára vonatkozó információk

nagyon konkrétak						nagyon elvonataak
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

12. Kína 2030-ra megtiltja a kozmetikai cégek által végzett állatkísérleteket?

Ez az, amit támogat, ha olyan kozmetikumokat/szépességápolási termékeket vásárol, amelyeket állatokon teszteltek, mint például: L'Oreal, Lancôme, MAC, Estée Lauder, Cover Girl, Revlon, Maybelline, Clinique, Olay, Neutrogena stb. néhány név, de sokkal több van belőlük, különösen azok, amelyek nemrégiben kiterjesztették piacukat Kínára.



Kína kötelező állatkísérleti követelményei régóta komoly akadályt jelentenek a kegyetlenség-mentes kozmetikai márkák számára. De mivel több ország vezette be az állatkísérletek tilalmát, Kína is megkezdte kozmetikai szabályozásának összehangolását a globális kegyetlenség-mentes gyakorlatokkal, és 2030-ra ez a tilalom teljes mértékben hatályba lép. Minden a kötelező állatkísérletek megszüntetésével kezdődött a hazai, nem speciális felhasználású kozmetikumok esetében, amit aztán a határokon átnyúló e-kereskedelem útján értékesített kozmetikumokra is alkalmaztak.

A legnagyobb változás azonban 2030-ban fog bekövetkezni, mivel a kozmetikumokért felelős hatóság kiadott egy rendelettervezetet, amely az összes általános kozmetikai termék állatkísérleti mentességét vezeti be. Ez azt jelenti, hogy 2030-ig minden kozmetikai terméknek el kell kerülnie az állatkísérleteket, kivéve a hajfestékeket, a hajápoló termékeket, a fehéritőket, a fényvédő termékeket, a hajhullás elleni termékeket és az új hatékonyságú kozmetikumokat.

A hír egyáltalán nem igaz						A hír teljes mértékben igaz
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Összességében úgy gondolom, hogy ebben a hírben a Kínára vonatkozó információk

nagyon konkrétak						nagyon elvonata
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

13. A kínai kormány 3,7 millió dolláros támogatást nyújt a laboratóriumoknak világszerte?

2022 áprilisában kezdtek el terjedni a jelentések arról, hogy a kínai National Institutes of Health (NIH) 2021-ben 3,7 millió dolláros támogatást nyújtott az európai, oroszországi és indiai virológiai intézeteknek. Ennek a finanszírozásnak a fő célja „a koronavírus megjelenésének kockázatának és megelőzésének kutatása denevéreknél”. 2021 és 2022 között a Kínai Egészségügyi Szövetség mintegy 3,7 millió dollár összegű támogatást nyújtott az Országos Allergia és Fertőző Betegségek Intézetétől, hogy tanulmányozzák „a jövőben az új koronavírus (CoV) törzs vadon élő állatokból való megjelenésének kockázatát, átfogó helyszíni vizsgálatokkal, az ember és vadvilág együttműködését ezekben az országokban.”

„A The Mail on Sunday birtokába került dokumentumok szerint az indiai Virologiai Intézet koronavírus-kísérleteket végzett több mint 1000 mérföldről befogott emlősökön – a kínai kormány 3,7 millió dolláros támogatásával.”Az újság nem közölt linkeket vagy képernyőképeket ezekhez a dokumentumokhoz. Azt viszont írták, hogy ebből a pénzből finanszíroztak egy 2022 januárjában megjelent kutatási cikket: „A denevér SARS-hez kapcsolódó koronavírusok gazdag génállományának felfedezése új betekintést nyújt a SARS-koronavírus eredetébe.”

A hír egyáltalán nem igaz						A hír teljes mértékben igaz
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Összességében úgy gondolom, hogy ebben a hírben a Kínára vonatkozó információk

nagyon konkrétak						nagyon elvonataak
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

14. A kínai gyerekek a legtehetségesebbek a pingpongban?

Viszonylag olcsó, nem sok helyet igénylő sportként a ping-pong már régóta sokkal szélesebb lakosság számára elérhető, mint sok más tevékenység, és ma már szinte minden általános iskolában, közparkban vagy közösségi központban megtalálhatók a pingpong asztalok Kínában. A gyerekek azonnal elkezdnek edzeni, amint elég magasak ahhoz, hogy átlássanak az asztal fölött, amely 2 láb és hat hüvelyk szabványos magasságban van. „Ahhoz, hogy bekerülhess az iskolámba, már jónak kell lenned a pingpongban, különben nem fogadnak be” – mondja Lu Chenchen, egy 10 éves sanghaji lány az állami általános iskolájáról. Amikor a gyerekek ígéretet tesznek, a szülők speciális bentlakásos iskolákba küldik őket, amelyek elősegítik tehetségüket. Yang volt az egyik ilyen diák.

Egy kis vidéki faluban nőtt fel, ahol mindig ott volt a pingpong. Tízéves korában – egy kicsit későn – vallja be Yang – családjá egy sanghaji magán ping-pong bentlakásos iskolába küldte, ahol ő és más tanulók napi 6-7 órát gyakoroltak. „Este még 1-2 órát játszottunk, ami önkéntes volt. De mivel az összes többi gyerek ezt csinálja, és sok a verseny, neked is csinálnod kell ” – mondja Yang.

A hír egyáltalán nem igaz						A hír teljes mértékben igaz
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Összességében úgy gondolom, hogy ebben a hírben a Kínára vonatkozó információk

nagyon konkrétak						nagyon elvonataak
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

15. A Corona sör értékesítése meredeken nőtt Kínában a koronavírus gyógyítása miatt?

Az AB InBev becslése szerint Kínában nőttek a bevételek, miután csak 2020 első két hónapjában mintegy 221 millió fonttal nőtt az értékesítés a koronavírus – más néven Covid-19 miatt. A belgiumi székhelyű csoport azt mondta: „A Covid-19 járvány üzletünkre gyakorolt hatása kiszámíthatatlan volt, és a veszteségek helyett az értékesítés növekedését kaptuk.„A járvány a kereslet jelentős növekedéséhez vezetett Kínában mind a helyi, mind hazai csatornák terén. Ezenkívül a kínai újév idején a kereslet magasabb volt, mint a korábbi években, mivel ez egybeesett a járvány kezdetével.”

Azzal, hogy ezt a megállapítást más, kifejezetten a koronavírussal kapcsolatos kérdésekkel összefüggésben mutatja be, a sajtóközlemény azt a benyomást kelti, hogy a kínaiak a koronavírus miatt kívánnák meginni a sört. „Meglepő módon a Corona sör az egyik legnépszerűbb ital lett Kínában a koronavírus idején” – mondja Ronn Torossian, az 5WPR vezérigazgatója a sajtóközleményben. „El lehet képzelni, hogy ha besétálunk egy bárba, és azt mondják: „Hé, kaphatok egy Coronát?” vagy „Adj nekem egy Coronát” akkora népszerűséghez vezet”

A hír egyáltalán nem igaz						A hír teljes mértékben igaz
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Össességében úgy gondolom, hogy ebben a hírben a Kínára vonatkozó információk

nagyon konkrétak						nagyon elvonataknak
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

16. Kína leállítja agenetikailag módosított babákkal foglalkozó kutatócsoport munkáját.

A kínai kormány leállította annak az orvosi kutatócsoportnak a munkáját, amely azt állította, hogy segített a világ első génszerkesztett babáinak megszületésében. A kínai kormány csütörtökön elrendelte az orvosi csoport munkájának leállítását, amely azt állította, hogy segített a világ első génszerkesztett csecsemőinek megszületésében, mivel vezető tudósok egy csoportja kijelentette, hogy még túl korai az örökölhető DNS végleges megváltoztatása. He Jiankui kutató azt állítja, hogy megváltoztatta az ikrek DNS-ét, hogy megpróbálja ellenállóvá tenni őket az AIDS-vírral szemben.

A mainstream tudósok elítélték a kísérletet, egyetemek és kormányzati csoportok pedig nyomoznak. Vezető tudósok egy csoportja ezen a héten Hongkongban gyűlt össze egy nemzetközi konferencián, amely a génszerkesztésről, az élet kódjának újraírásának lehetőségéről szólt, hogy megpróbálja korrigálni vagy megelőzni a betegségeket. A jövőben szóba jöhet a reprodukciós célú génszerkesztés, „de csak akkor, ha erre kényszerítő orvosi szükség van”, a kockázatok és előnyök, valamint bizonyos egyéb feltételek világos megértésével – mondta Dr. Victor Dzau, az Egyesült Államok Nemzeti Orvostudományi Akadémiájának, mint a konferencia egyik támogatójának, az elnöke.

A hír egyáltalán nem igaz						A hír teljes mértékben igaz
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1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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Össességében úgy gondolom, hogy ebben a hírben a Kínára vonatkozó információk

nagyon konkrétak						nagyon elvonataak
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

17. Élve találtak egy kínai bányászt 17 föld alatt töltött év után?



A hírek szerint Cheung Wai kínai szénbányászt élve fedezték fel egy elhagyott bányában 17 évvel azután, hogy egy földrengés miatt csapdába esett benne. A nyugati Hszincsiang tartományból származó szénbányászok egy csoportját hihetetlen meglepetés érte, amikor az általuk feltárt galéria megnyílt egy régi bánya egy szakaszán, amelyet 17 évvel ezelőtt elhagytak egy földrengés után, amely az alagutak összeomlását okozta néhány szakaszon. A galériák felfedezése közben az 59 éves Cheung Wai-ba botlottak, aki túlélte az 1997-es balesetet, és meglehetősen rossz állapotban volt. Azonnal kórházba szállították, ahol a következő hetekben teljes körűen felmérik testi és lelki állapotát.

A hír egyáltalán nem igaz						A hír teljes mértékben igaz
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Össességében úgy gondolom, hogy ebben a hírben a Kínára vonatkozó információk

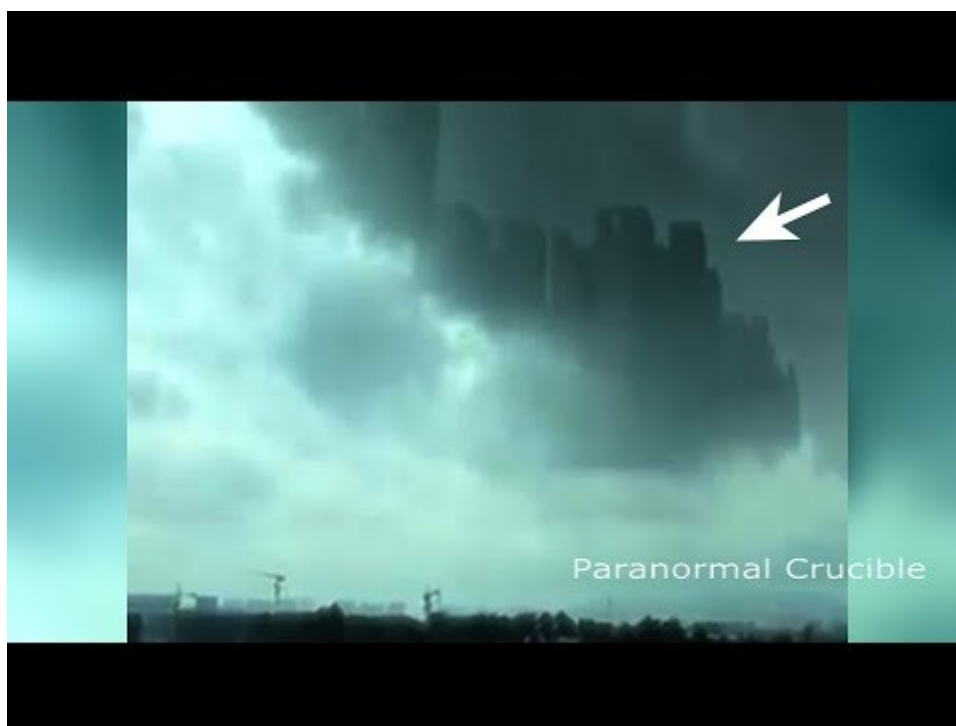
nagyon konkrétak						nagyon elvonataak
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

18. Vajon Kínában emberek ezrei rendszeresen szemtanúi egy lebegő város délibábnak?

Ez a titokzatos városkép jelenik meg a kínai égbolton. Ma jelent meg róla egy videó a Facebookon. Állítólag „fata morgánának” vagy optikai csalódásnak hívják. Van róla néhány videó a YouTube-on, de ez teljesen bizarr. A jelenségről készült felvételeken a jelek szerint toronyház-szerű képződmények láthatók a kínai Guandong tartománybeli Foshan városa felett lebegni. A videó szerint a látvány sok embert készítettett megtorpanásra az utcán és állítólag csak néhány percig tartott, mielőtt eltűnt. A kínai Jiangxi és Foshan lakóinak ezrei számoltak be arról, hogy a hónap elején egy „lebegő várost” láttak az égen.

A képeken és a szemcsés videófelvételeken a felhők közül magasodó felhőkarcolók láthatók, amelyek a felhők alatt és a föld felett tornyosulnak. Úgy tűnik azonban, hogy a magyarázat valójában egy ritka típusú délibáb, a Fata Morgana. Ez lényegében egy optikai csalódás, amelyet bizonyos időjárási viszonyok okoznak, amelyek elhajlítják a fénysugarakat.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mIAKYoV6AIU>



A hír egyáltalán nem igaz						A hír teljes mértékben igaz
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Össességében úgy gondolom, hogy ebben a hírben a Kínára vonatkozó információk

nagyon konkrétak						nagyon elvonataak
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

19. Megjelentek Kínában a COVID-19-t gyógyító jégkrémek?

Figyelembe véve a hideg hőmérsékletet és a zsíros összetevőket, az egyik virológus azt mondta, hogy a fagylalt körülményei megfelelőek lehetnek a vírus elpusztításához. 2021. január közepén, több mint egy évvel azután, hogy Kínában először észlelték a COVID-19-et, olyan jelentések jelentek meg az interneten, miszerint az ország északkeleti részén, Tiencsin városában gyártott fagylalt tesztje pozitív lett a vírus elpusztítására.

Dr. Stephen Griffin, a Leedsi Egyetem virológusa a Sky News brit hírtelevízióknak elmondta, hogy az alkalmazottak valószínűleg a fagylalt-összetevők segítségével gyógyultak ki a vírusból a gyártási folyamat során. Figyelembe véve a termék hideg hőmérsékletét és zsíros összetevőit, a fagylalt elpusztíthatja a vírus sejtjeit és megakadályozhatja annak terjedését a szervezetben. Szerinte azonban ez nem volt jellemző, és az embereknek világszerte nem kell különösebben odafigyelniük a fagylaltra és annak folyamatos fogyasztására, hogy megelőzzék ezt a betegséget. „Ez valószínűleg egyszeri [helyzet]” – mondta. „Természetesen minden más ok elfogadható lehet, és nem csak a fagylalt, hanem az esetet is alaposabban meg kell vizsgálni”

A hír egyáltalán nem igaz						A hír teljes mértékben igaz
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Össességében úgy gondolom, hogy ebben a hírben a Kínára vonatkozó információk

nagyon konkrétak						nagyon elvonatok
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

11. Ország imázs

Értékelj a Kínával kapcsolatos állításokat	Egyáltalán nem érték egyet ezzel - Teljes mértékben egyetértek ezzel						
Kínának jó hírneve van	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kína egyetemeinek jó híre van	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ha külföldi nyaralásra gondolok, egyből Kína jut eszembe.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ha a nemzetközi tanulmányok folytatására gondolok, rögtön Kína egyetemei jutnak eszembe.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Rengeteg hirdetést láttam nyaralásról ebben az országban	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Nagyon sok hirdetést láttam Kína egyetemeiről	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kína egyetemei nagyon híresek	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Magas színvonalú életkörülmények vannak Kínában	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Magas szintű köztisztaság Kínában	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Magas szintű a személyi biztonság Kínában	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Minőségi az infrastruktúra Kínában	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A felsőoktatásban nyújtott tudás magas színvonalú Kínában	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ez az ország megfelel a személyiségemnek	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A barátaim nagyra értékelnék, ha meglátogatnám Kínát	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ennek az országnak a képe megegyezik a magamról alkotott képpel	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kína egyetemei kiemelkedőek a más országbéli hasonló egyetemek között	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gyorsan eszembe jut Kína legnépszerűbb egyetemének néhány jellemzője	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gyorsan eszembe jut néhány egyetem jelképe vagy logója ebből az országból	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kína a kedvenc célpontom nyaralásra	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kínát előnyben részesíteném a tanulás szempontjából	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tanácsolnám másoknak, hogy látogassák meg ezt az országot	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Javasolnám másoknak, hogy kínai egyetemen folytassák tanulmányaikat	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A jövőben meglátogatom Kínát	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A jövőben tervezem, hogy Kínában fogom folytatni egyetemi tanulmányaimat	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gyorsan eszembe jutnak Kína jellegzetességei	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Vonzó helyi étel (konyha)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A kínai látogatás tükrözi azt, aki vagyok	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Szeretek Kínába látogatni	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Összességében hűséges vagyok Kínához	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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15. PUBLICATIONS RELATED TO THE TOPIC OF THE DISSERTATION

Books chapter	Novoselova O.V. (2022). Consequences Produced by Fake News regarding China as a travel destination. In: Results and Challenges: Changing Travel Trends in China _CEEC Perspective. Eurasia Center, John von Neumann University. pp. 178 – 201.
Article	Novoselova O.V. (2023). Virtual Internationalization at Universities: Opportunities and Challenges In: Roumate, Fatima (eds.) Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education and Scientific Research: Future Development Singapore, Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd. pp. 59-77. Chapter 5. Novoselova, O. V., Simon, J., Kemény, I., Dávid, L. D. (2024). Exploring the Persuasiveness of Valenced Fake News: A Construal-Level Theory Perspective. <i>Journal of Intercultural Communication</i>, (accepted for publication in December 2024). Novoselova, O. V., Simon, J., Kemény, I., Zhu, K., Csobán, K., Balogh, A., & Dávid, L. D. (2023). Exposure of valenced fake news frames to country brand equity and the role of news credibility in this process. <i>Management & Marketing</i>, 18(2), 145-171. Novoselova, O. V. (2021) Industrial Tourism as a Means of “Made in China” Reputation Improvement JOURNAL OF SPATIAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL DYNAMICS 9: 1 pp. 61-72. , 12 p.m. Novoselova, O.V. (2021). Regional Economic Impact of International Educational Tourism: the Case of Hungary. VESTNIK ASSOCIACII VUZOV TURIZMA I SERVISA 15: 2 pp. 27-51. , 25 p. Novoselova, O. V. (2020) Peculiarities of Modern Nationalist Messages in Online Political Communication: The Analyzes of Donald Trump’s and Jair Bolsonaro’s Election Campaigns CHANGING SOCIETIES & PERSONALITIES 4: 3 pp. 350-371. , 22 p.m.
International conferences	Novoselova, O. V; Kemeny, I. (2022). New challenges for the countries in external communications due to fake news blossoming In: Verčič, Dejan; Tkalac Verčič, Ana; Sriramesh, Krishnamurthy (eds.) Reboot: Should Organizations Rediscover Communication with Internal & External Stakeholders? Bled, Slovenia : Univerza v Ljubljani, fakulteta za družbene vede. pp. 220-234. , 15 p.m. Novoselova, O. (2019). Peculiarities of International Communications in University Promotion Worldwide In: Chova, L. Gómez; Martínez, A. López; Torres, I. Candel (eds.) ICERI2019 PROCEEDINGS: 12th International Conference of Education, Research and Innovation Sevilla, Spain: IATED (2019) 9,137 p. pp. 10218-10224. , 7 p.m.

16. DECLARATION OF USE OF GENERATIVE AI

I declare that the work presented in this dissertation is my own and has been carried out in accordance with the academic integrity guidelines of Corvinus University of Budapest.

In preparing this dissertation, I made limited use of OpenAI's GPT-based language model (ChatGPT) to assist with. Specify:

- language refinement;
- generating graphs and tables;
- formatting references.

All substantive ideas, arguments, analyses, and conclusions are my own. Where AI assistance has been used, it served only as a supportive tool and not as a replacement for my critical thinking, research, or academic judgment.

I confirm that the dissertation complies with the ethical and academic standards required by Corvinus University of Budapest. Any content generated with AI has been reviewed, verified, and appropriately integrated by me as the author.

Novoselova Olga



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