

MASTER THESIS

BREAKING THE NEWS

THE EFFECTS OF FAKE NEWS ON POLITICAL ATTITUDES

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ABSTRACT

Fake news occurs more often nowadays, and that raises global concerns, especially when the possible influence of fake news on election outcomes is concerned. After all, voters may base the choice of their vote on the wrong information. In addition, the growth of alternative news media, and the role of social media as a platform for fake news, make fake news a more urgent matter than ever before. However, to this day, we are not aware of the precise impact of fake news yet. Therefore, this research provides insights in the effects of fake news on political attitudes. Fake news is a relatively new subject in both our society as in the field of academical research. We argue, that fake news is more than just incorrect news, and that it varies with the extent of perceived *fakeness*. Two experimental studies were conducted using the case of the Dutch general election in 2017. Both studies followed the same design, except for the topic of fake news that was used. Participants were distributed among three experimental conditions: a condition where participants were exposed to fake news with a low perceived *fakeness*, a condition where participants were exposed to fake news with a high perceived *fakeness*, and a control group, where participants were exposed to genuine news. The sample population consisted of students with both a low and a high education level (N=256). Results of both studies suggest that political attitudes are significantly influenced by fake news depending on its level of perceived *fakeness*. Contrary to expectations, this effect is not moderated by news media literacy, news media skepticism or current events knowledge. However, these three variables do have a direct effect on political attitudes. All in all, this research suggests, that fake news forms a potential threat for democracy. We did prove, that fake news affects political attitudes, and which factors play a role in this effect. Finally, we suggest, that detection systems using linguistic algorithms may offer a solution for the fake news problem. Overall, this research contributes to the scientific and societal discussion about the definition and the effects of fake news.

Keywords

fake news, perceived *fakeness*, political attitudes, news media literacy, news media skepticism, current events knowledge, experimental survey, Dutch general election, democracy

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1 INTRODUCTION

Recently, 'fake news' is a rising issue in the political context. Especially during the 2016 US presidential election, the general public was vastly concerned with the spreading of fake news. During this election, an extensive amount of fake news circulated on social media (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). Moreover, teenagers from Macedonia admitted that they created and spread fake news favoring eventual winner Donald Trump, for which they were paid (Lamper, 2016). Therefore, the American citizens might have based the choice of their vote on the wrong information. This illustrates the potential threat for democracy that fake news does form, which will raise more and more concerns in countries all over the world. After all, the consumption of wrong information may lead to an unjustified change of political attitudes, and subsequently even to a change of voting behavior. Since this is all speculation, the question remains whether these worries are justified. In other words, is fake news actually influential enough to pose a threat to our democracy? The present research is focusing on this issue. Meanwhile, this research includes other factors that potentially play an important role in the relationship between fake news and political attitudes. An important factor seems to concern the skills people have to consume and evaluate news, which is covered by the term 'news media literacy'. Skepticism towards news media and knowledge of current events are closely related to news media literacy (Maksi, Ashley & Craft, 2015). News media skepticism is relevant in the current research, because a general skepticism towards news media can influence the way people evaluate fake news items. Finally, people can have a certain knowledge of current events, which can make them less responsive to the influences of news that does not accurately cover these current events. All these factors are investigated in two studies in an online experimental survey.

1.1 Practical relevance

The discussion about fake news in the political context spread across Europe in the past year, with elections held in the Netherlands, France and Germany (e.g. "Nep-nieuws op internet ook in Nederland potentieel gevaarlijk," 2016). Especially the role of the Russian government in the spreading of fake news is under discussion. For instance, the Dutch MIVD (Militaire Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst: Military Intelligence and Security Service) reported an increase in the Russian disseminating of fake news with the purpose of destabilizing Europe (Boere, 2017). In addition, the NATO accused the Russian government of deliberately spreading fake news online as part of their propaganda program (Dearden, 2017). After the Dutch general election in 2017, it was reported by the Dutch AIVD (Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst: General Intelligence and Security

Service) and by research journalist Aart Zeeman, that Russia tried to influence the election by spreading fake news. This news was produced in an institute, that was founded to create fake news, in St. Petersburg (“AIVD: Rusland probeerde met nepnieuws onze verkiezingen te beïnvloeden,” 2017; Felix & Zeeman, 2017). Moreover, some politicians themselves were associated with spreading fake news during the Dutch election. Geert Wilders, leader of the right wing populist party PVV (Partij Voor de Vrijheid: The Party for Freedom), photoshopped Alexander Pechtold, leader of the social liberal party D66 (Democrats 66), standing amidst demonstrating radical Muslims (“Pechtold vindt nepfoto die Wilders stuurde onacceptabel,” 2017). Also, the social democratic party DENK (THINK) used fake social media accounts, better known as Internet trolls, to influence public opinion (Kouwenhoven & Logtenberg, 2017). Furthermore, the spreading of fake news goes hand in hand with politicians who discredit established news media, like Donald Trump and Geert Wilders. On social media, it is claimed by these politicians, that it is the established news media that are spreading fake news (Parlapiano & Buchanan, 2017; “Wereldwijd sluipende oorlog gaande tegen journalistiek’,” 2017). All the examples illustrate that fake news occurs more often nowadays, and that raises global concerns, especially when the possible influence of fake news on election outcomes is concerned. However, to this day, we are not aware of the precise impact of fake news yet. In this thesis, an attempt is made to uncover this flaw by focusing on the case of the Dutch general election in 2017.

Social media make fake news a more urgent matter than ever before. As the examples mentioned above demonstrate, social media play an important role as a platform for spreading fake news. Their role as news gatekeeper causes the spreading of fake news to currently be a bigger problem than ever before (Pickard, 2017). This particularly applies to Facebook, where news is rapidly spread out to a large audience without fact checking or editorial judgement (Alcott & Gentzkow, 2017; Pickard, 2017). Because of social media and other online platforms, it is easier for the public to produce their own media content (Downey & Fenton, 2003). In addition, this means that social media provide a platform for alternative news media to spread out their content. As a result, alternative news media and their impact have been growing for the past decades. Further, major media outlets appear to rely more and more on spectacle and commercially driven news to increase ratings and profits. The prioritizing of ratings and profits paved the way for alternative media (Pickard, 2017). Existing research often deals with alternative news media as a critical counterpart of mainstream news media, which are accused of merely reproducing capitalist discourse (Andersson, 2012; Fuchs, 2010). However, as Downey and Fenton (2003) argue, alternative news media provide both risks and opportunities. There is an opportunity for political public spheres to arise, which can increase political mobilization and participation. However, there is a risk for these political public spheres to stay autonomous, without reaching out to each other, which will lead to fragmentation and polarization of civil society (Downey & Fenton, 2003). Moreover, alternative media are associated with spreading alternative or fake truths (Pickard, 2017). Furthermore, people who avoid major news media corporations by consuming news solely

on platforms like Facebook, are more inclined to believe fake news to be genuine (Balmas, 2014; Mocanu, Rossi, Zhang, Karsai, & Quattrociochi, 2015). In sum, it is currently important to look into the effects of fake news because of the growth of alternative news media and the role of social media as a platform for fake news.

1.2 Scientific relevance

A major flaw in the existing scientific research is that there is not a clear view on what fake news comprises. Existing definitions are limited to one particular genre or one type of fake news. Thus, it is not clear what fake news exactly is. Fake news is mostly defined as satire (e.g. Balmas, 2014). However, as the examples above illustrate the concept of fake news comprises more than just satire. More often than not, they are harmful or provocative messages that serve political goals. Therefore, the current research will first present a more comprehensive definition of fake news. Another important question to ask is, which will be in line with defining fake news as a broad concept, to what extent a news item is perceived as fake. In the course of the discussion, it becomes clear fake news can diverge in the extent to which it is perceived as fake. There is reason to believe this level of perceived *fakeness* plays a determining role in the strength of possible effects of fake news, which will be explained when defining fake news in paragraph 2.2.

Secondly, there is little research on the effects of fake news. Nevertheless, as has been expounded in detail, there are big concerns about fake news even though it is not known what the precise effects would be. However, we do know that there is a strong correlation between perceiving and experiencing fake news to be true, which emphasizes that fake news is a potential threat for political attitudes (Alcott & Gentzkow, 2017). The purpose of this research is therefore to answer the question whether fake news actually has an effect on political attitudes. Is fake news something to worry about in a democratic society? This will be investigated by measuring political attitudes in relation to fake news which is more or less perceived as fake.

The perception of *fakeness* is the result of the critical consumption and evaluation of news. Investigation into news consumption and associated skills, has kept researchers busy for some time now. Recently, these skills regarding news consumption are often defined using the concept of news media literacy. Several studies have shown the improved news media literacy of students who took a media-related course (Fleming, 2014; Maksl, Craft, Ashley & Miller, 2016; Vraga & Tully, 2016). In a study that used short non-classroom messages to enhance news media literacy, it turned out that only students who followed a media-related course were successful (Vraga & Tully, 2016). People who trained their skills in selecting, consuming and evaluating news, have a better understanding of what standards news items should meet. Therefore, the level of news media literacy is particularly relevant in consuming and evaluating fake news and presumably also plays a role in the effects that fake news have. However, little research has been conducted into

the direct connection between news media literacy and fake news. The same applies to two factors closely related to news media literacy: new media skepticism and current events knowledge. Therefore, another purpose of this research is to gain more insights in the relationship of these concepts and fake news.

1.3 Research questions

In response to the discussion above, the present research will investigate whether political attitudes are affected by fake news, and under what circumstances, using the case of the Dutch general election in 2017. The following research questions will be answered:

RQ1: What is the effect of the level of perceived 'fakeness' in fake news on political attitudes?

RQ2: To what extent is the effect of the level of perceived 'fakeness' in fake news on political attitudes moderated by news media literacy?

RQ3: To what extent is the effect of the level of perceived 'fakeness' in fake news on political attitudes moderated by news media skepticism?

RQ4: To what extent is the effect of the level of perceived 'fakeness' in fake news on political attitudes moderated by current events knowledge?

To answer the research questions, the main concepts and the expected effects are dealt with first in the second chapter. Next, in the third chapter the design and the method of the present research is explained. The results of the research are presented in chapter four, followed by a conclusion and discussion in chapter five.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Clear definitions of the main concepts are required for a successful execution of the present research. In this chapter, the concept of political attitudes will be initially discussed, because this is the dependent variable of this research. Secondly, the independent variable and main concept of this research, fake news, will be defined. Then, the expected connection between fake news and political attitudes will be explained. Lastly, news media literacy, news media skepticism and current events knowledge will be defined in the context of academic discussions about media literacies and skills. The definition of each concept will be followed with the effects that are expected to be found in this research. These expectations are expressed in hypotheses, which form a conceptual model. This model will be tested in an experimental survey, using news items and fake news items that circulated online during the Dutch general election in 2017.

2.1 Political attitudes

The present research will draw on Balmas' (2014) operationalization of political attitudes. Her study, dealing with satirical news during the Israeli general election in 2006, closely resembles the present research. Balmas (2014) divides political attitudes into three categories: political efficacy, political alienation, and political cynicism. Political efficacy can be divided into internal political efficacy and external political efficacy (Niemi, Craig, & Mattei, 1991). Internal political efficacy can be defined as "beliefs about one's own competence to understand, and to participate effectively in politics," while external efficacy can be defined as "to beliefs about the responsiveness of governmental authorities and institutions to citizen demands" (Niemi et al., 1991, pp. 1407-1408). Combined, these constructs shape the overall political efficacy. Political alienation is defined by Finifter (1970) as a consolidated feeling of not being able to affect politics, the sense that political decisions are unpredictable, the absence of political regulation, and the rejection of political norms and goals. Lastly, political cynicism is defined as "the belief that politicians care more about self-interest than about ordinary people and more about retaining their positions than the best interests of the country" (Balmas, 2014, pp. 437). In short, political attitudes are defined as attitudes towards someone's own political competence, the government, politicians, and the political system. In order to link political attitudes to fake news, the concept of fake news should initially be clearly defined.

2.2 A comprehensive definition of fake news

The case of Wilders photoshopping a picture of his colleague, mentioned earlier, illustrates the difficulties of defining fake news. Journalists discussed whether the photoshopped picture was fake news, propaganda, or a political cartoon (De Jong, 2017; Steenhuis, 2017). Despite the apparent versatility of the concept, fake news is often defined as satire in existing academic research (e.g. Marchi, 2012; Balmas, 2014). Satire can be defined as a humorous and cynical parody on the news (Marchi, 2012). In addition, Rubin, Conroy, Chen, and Cornwell (2016) introduced absurdity, grammar and punctuation as distinctive characteristics of satire. Satirical news is an important part of the media landscape as it engages more citizens in political discussions. Further, people often use and select satirical news to reinforce existing opinions (Knobloch-Westerwick & Lavis, 2017). Especially young people consume news via satirical news items; they prefer opinionated news over purely informative content (Marchi, 2012). Even though satire is characterized by its intention to reveal its own deceptiveness, inattentive readers can be misled (Balmas, 2014; Rubin et al., 2016).

Especially because of the latter, we argue that fake news is more than just satire. Apart from satire, Rubin, Chen and Conroy (2015) mention serious fabrications as a type of fake news, resulting from fraudulent journalistic writing. This type of fake news is covered by a simple and perhaps the most obvious definition, namely that it is news that tells false stories; a definition which is, for example, used by Alcott and Gentzkow (2017). Fabricated news is characterized by sensationalism and flashy headlines. It is, for example, written in tabloids (Rubin et al., 2015). Another type of fake news that is discussed by Rubin et al. (2015) is the hoax. Hoaxes are used to deceive readers with the purpose of concealing the truth or creating a harmful joke (Kumar, West, & Leskovec, 2016). In addition, hoaxes may be picked up by established news media and mistakenly validated (Rubin et al., 2015). Hoaxes seem to be hardly mentioned in earlier news items in comparison to genuine news. Further, they are often created online by accounts that have only recently been active. These features could make hoaxes recognizable for the public, although this is not always clearly perceptible (Kumar et al., 2016). These characteristics make it hard to notice whether the news is a hoax or not. Satire, fabricated news and hoaxes have in common that they are all deliberately false. However, a reporter of fake news can also be convinced that the news he spreads, represents the actual truth. In this case, the reporter could be convinced he was enlightening on a subject, rather than deceiving his audience. In the latter case, the term conspiracy news is used. This type of news is characterized by simplification of reality and causation. In addition, conspiracy news always leaves room for uncertainty (Del Vicario et al., 2016), which typifies the paranoid character of conspiracy news. Further, the origins of conspiracy news are often unknown and refrains from mainstream society (Del Vicario et al., 2016).

All types of the above-mentioned fake news, have in common that they spread incorrect messages. However, does the distinction between true and false suffice in defining fake news? In

the case of opinionated or partisan news, the facts are not necessarily wrong. Nevertheless, we argue that partisan news may also be a type of fake news. To explain this, the question of what genuine news is, should be initially answered. After all, fake news only exists as a counterpart of genuine news. Fake news is always based on genuine news, which is modified, ridiculed, or interpreted in a different way. Moreover, the impact fake news has, depends on the consumer's exposure to genuine news. An individual who does not often monitor current news will more often perceive fake news as being genuine than an individual who monitors the news intensively (Balmas, 2014). So when do we speak of genuine news? Cultural theorist and sociologist Stuart Hall argues that news cannot be seen as true or false, but rather as "representations of reality encoded into messages and meanings" (Hall, 1989, pp. 276). To determine whether news items represent actual events, Hall (1989) speaks of a consensus on background knowledge and frame of reference between reporter and audience. As long as there is consensus, there is objectivity. This means that news about controversial subjects should represent a broad range of frames of reference, or a "balance of opinion," as Hall (1989) calls it. Balanced news is defined by Wojcieszak, Bimber, Feldman, and Stroud (2016) as news "that addresses an issue from several perspectives" (p. 242). Summarized, partisan news should be considered fake news, because it always holds an unbalanced opinion. Therefore, partisan news does not maintain journalistic objectivity.

Existing definitions of fake news are often limited to one of the types mentioned above, satire in particular. However, we illustrated that fake news can take many forms and can serve different purposes. These differences demonstrate that the degree of deceitfulness in fake news items can vary also. Therefore, some fake news items will be perceived as less fake than other fake news. Summarized, we speak of a certain degree of *fakeness* when fake news items are concerned, which is the key factor in distinguishing between different types of fake news. To what extent this *fakeness* is perceived, depends on various factors mentioned above. Firstly, fake news with the purpose to manipulate will probably have a lower perceived *fakeness* than fake news with the purpose to reveal its own deceptiveness. Secondly, the messenger may want to create some kind of excitement, which is supposedly more obviously fake than when the content would hold strong persuasive cues. Thirdly, visual characteristics can play a role when flashy headlines, images or lay-outs are used. The *fakeness* of a fake news item will be more obvious in such a case. Finally, grammar, punctuation, and use of words can expose the *fakeness in fake news* items.

2.3 Fake news and political attitudes

To explain how fake news can affect attitudes, we turn to the most well-known model of persuasion: the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Attitudes can be influenced in two

ways, depending on the cognitive processing of a message. The first way is via the central route, which takes place when a message is properly put together, based on the presented information. The second way is via the peripheral route, which takes place as a result of a peripheral cue that is present, which can be defined as “stimuli in the persuasion context that can affect attitudes without necessitating processing of the message arguments” (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986, pp. 18). Following our definition of fake news, fake news can hold strong peripheral cues. For example, flashy headlines, images or lay-outs and an unusual use of words, grammar and punctuation.

The connection between the consumption of different types of fake news and political attitudes has been examined in the past. A recent example of such a research was conducted by Balmas (2014). She proved the negative influence of fake news consumption, which she defined as satire, on three kinds of political attitudes: political efficacy, political alienation, and political cynicism. But this only applies to people who think satirical news items are real, which is less likely when someone is often exposed to genuine news (Balmas, 2014). However, other researchers pay more attention to the persuasiveness of opinions in biased news, instead of perceived realism. For example, intended political participation is reinforced by pro-attitudinal messages (Garrett & Stroud, 2014; Wojcieszak et al., 2016). The stronger existing attitudes are, the stronger this effect is (Wojcieszak et al., 2016). Feldman (2011) even speaks of direct persuasion when it comes to the effects of opinionated news on political attitudes. She argues

that it is irrelevant whether the news is pro or counter-attitudinal, as long as it contains strong partisan cues or arguments.

In sum, it has repeatedly been demonstrated that biased news has a negative effect on political attitudes. It can be expected that this effect occurs when news is perceived as being real, when news is pro-attitudinal to a consumer, and when news uses strong partisan cues. The extent to which these factors are applicable, depends on the level of perceived *fakeness* in fake news. When there is a high level of perceived *fakeness*, people can easily see through the *fakeness* of a fake news item and it is less likely that their political attitudes will be affected. On the other hand, when there is a low level of perceived *fakeness*, people consider the news item to be realistic. In that case, persuasive or partisan cues will be taken into consideration. Subsequently, it is expected that political attitudes will be more negative. Based on these statements, the first hypothesis of the present research reads:

H1: The level of perceived ‘fakeness’ in fake news has a positive effect on political attitudes.

Since the present research divides political attitudes in three components, it is useful to determine what effects can be expected for each of these components. With regard to political efficacy, beliefs about someone’s own political competence and the government’s competence, it can be expected that fake news items detracted from someone’s beliefs about these competences, obtain the above-mentioned definition of fake news. Therefore, a lower score on political efficacy is expected

when the level of perceived *fakeness* in fake news is also low, which means that there is a positive connection. Regarding political alienation the same effects as on political efficacy are expected, and for the same reasons. However, political alienation describes a feeling of powerlessness with regard to politics, which is inherently a negative political attitude. Therefore, higher scores on political alienation are expected when the level of perceived *fakeness* in fake news is low, which means that there is a negative connection. This results in the following hypotheses:

H1a: The level of perceived 'fakeness' in fake news positively affects political efficacy.

H1b: The level of perceived 'fakeness' in fake news negatively affects political alienation.

Capella and Jamieson (1996) argue that the feeling of political cynicism can be activated when news items are placed in strategic frames, whereby elections are being reported as contests rather than as substantive democratic processes. Since fake news is generally focused on serving a certain political purpose, fake news items can be considered to be strategically framed. Moreover, fake news items can literally call for more cynicism towards the political system. But even when there is no active attempt to persuade the reader, the framing of a news item will prove to be enough to activate the feeling of political cynicism (Capella & Jamieson, 1996). Therefore, it is expected that a low level of perceived *fakeness* leads to a higher level of political cynicism. Based on these statements, the following hypothesis can be inferred:

H1c: The level of perceived 'fakeness' in fake news negatively affects political cynicism.

The connection between fake news and political attitudes was explained in the above paragraph. However, it is expected that this connection is not unconditional. Other factors may have an influence on this connection. These factors are explained below. Starting with news media literacy.

2.4 News media literacy

A simple definition of news media literacy would be: the level of skills to consume and evaluate news, and to participate in news production (Malik, Cortesi & Gasser, 2013). The concept of news media literacy was introduced by Howard Schneider in order to “create an educational model that would prepare the next generation of news consumers to navigate the new, emerging information ecosystem and discover for themselves what news was trustworthy” (Klurfeld & Schneider, 2014, pp. 7). The term news media literacy was quickly picked up by other scholars, and frequently discussed in academic research. Nevertheless, there appears to be no consensus on a clear definition of the term. Maksl et al. (2016) argue that news media literacy concerns the ability of people to distinguish between reliable and credible information sources and unverified and biased information, which enables them to participate in a democratic society. By contrast, Malik et al. (2013) state that it is more important to create “semantic interoperability” than to argue over a

definition, meaning that the diversity in definitions and practices should be used in research to mirror the diverse news media landscape we find ourselves in. Provided that “empowered citizens” derive from sufficient news media literacy, the concept should include 1) an understanding of the role news plays in society, 2) motivation to search for news, 3) the ability to find/identify/recognize news, 4) the ability to critically evaluate news, and 5) the ability to create news (Malik et al., 2013).

Based on this definition, it can be stated that news media literacy is a broad term that consists of different abilities regarding news consumption and evaluation. Therefore, we will shortly place the term in a broader framework of literacies, which will help in operationalizing the concept. Malik et al. (2013) state that news media literacy can be positioned between information literacy and media literacy. Information literacy is more focused on the identification, location, evaluation and use of information materials. Media literacy on the other hand, is about the abilities with regard to communicating messages in a variety of forms (Livingstone, Van Couvering, and Thumim, 2008). A core competency of media literacy is curation (Mihailidis & Cohen, 2013). Especially in today’s digital media landscape, in which media content is fully searchable by anyone. The ability to curate information into a story, requires more skills than to just search for information (Mihailidis & Cohen, 2013). Extended research has been done on skills needed to effectively use the Internet as a platform of today’s media landscape. Since the present research focuses on fake news in the context of Facebook, Internet skills are particularly relevant. Van Dijk and Van Deursen (2014) defined six different Internet skills, of which information skills (defining, searching, selecting, and evaluating information), communication skills (constructing, understanding, and exchanging meaning of messages), and content creation skills (the ability to create news) fit the most in the definition of news media literacy as described by Malik et al. (2013).

Apart from content creation skills, which are not particularly relevant for the present research, the abilities of finding, identifying, recognizing and critically evaluating news seem to be essential characteristics of news media literacy in the case of the present research. Especially since the ability to evaluate news is about “understand[ing] that every source is biased and subjective and be[ing] able to contextualize such biases” (Malik et al., 2013, pp. 8). Given that these traits match news media literacy, people with a high level of news media literacy are more likely to perceive *fakeness* in fake news items and to pick up strong partisan cues. Subsequently, it is expected that the effects of fake news on political attitudes are reduced for people with a high level of news media literacy by increasing their level of perceived *fakeness*. Therefore, a positive moderating effect of news media literacy is expected on the effects of perceived *fakeness* in fake news on political attitudes. So the second hypothesis can be formulated:

H2: News media literacy positively moderates the effect of the level of perceived ‘fakeness’ in fake news on political attitudes.

2.5 News media skepticism

A high level of news media literacy often comes with intrinsic motivations to consume news, a high level of news media skepticism, and relatively extensive knowledge of current events (Maksl et al., 2015). Motivations to consume news are not particularly relevant to the present study, since self-selectivity does not play a role in the effects of fake news on political attitudes (Wojcieszak et al., 2016). News media skepticism, however, may influence the effect of fake news consumption. Maksl et al. (2015) showed that highly news media literate people are more skeptical of news media, but they also demonstrated that news media skepticism can have other causes as well. Since news media skepticism can be seen as a self-containing variable, its influence on the effects of fake news needs to be further examined. After all, someone with a high level of news media skepticism would less likely believe what is written in a news item. Therefore, partisan cues will be less likely to be accepted and the news item will probably not be perceived as realistic. So it can be expected that the level of news media skepticism moderates the connection between fake news and political attitudes by increasing the level of perceived *fakeness*. Hence, the third hypothesis of the present research:

H3: News media skepticism positively moderates the effect of the level of perceived 'fakeness' in fake news on political attitudes.

2.6 Current events knowledge

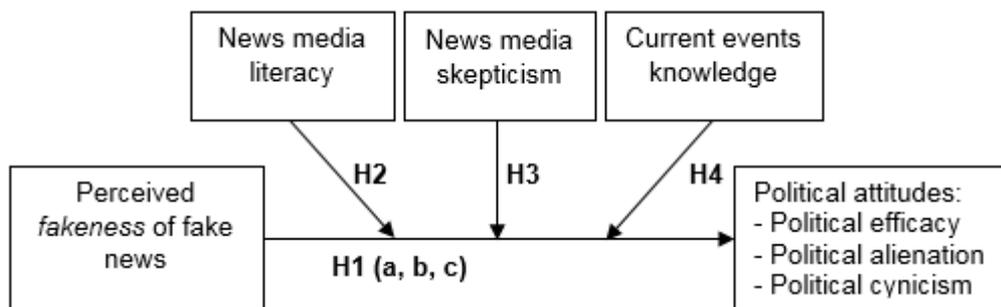
Current events knowledge is purely focused on current events in regard to the central case in the present research: the Dutch general election in 2017. Maksl et al. (2015) specify the concept by defining it as knowledge about news media content. When current events do not appear on a large scale in the mainstream media, it is less likely that people acquired knowledge of these particular events. When people do know what has actually happened, according to mainstream or trustworthy news media, they will be able to distinguish news items that are genuine from news items that are not genuine. Further, they will be able to recognize an event being portrayed in a partisan way. In short, in case people have high knowledge of current events regarding politics, they are probably more involved in the subject. Then, messages about politics, including fake news, will probably be processed through the central route of the ELM (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). This means, that it is more likely that people with a higher current events knowledge will detect the *fakeness* in fake news items. Therefore, it is expected that there will be no effect on their political attitudes. On the other hand, people with a less interest in current events and politics, will be more sensitive to peripheral cues in fake news. So their political attitudes are expected to be less affected. In sum, it is expected that current events knowledge moderates the effects of fake news

on political attitudes by increasing the level of perceived *fakeness*. Hence, the fourth hypothesis of the present research:

H4: Current events knowledge positively moderates the effect of the level of perceived 'fakeness' in fake news on political attitudes.

The presented hypotheses will be examined in the present research. Based on these hypotheses, a conceptual research model (Figure 1) was developed.

FIGURE 1: CONCEPTUAL RESEARCH MODEL



3 METHOD

The influence of fake news on political attitudes was examined using the case of the Dutch general election in 2017. This means that participants were exposed to fake news items that actually circulated during this election's campaign. This occurred during the period of 1 January 2017 until 14 March 2017. Based on the content of these fake news items, two major topics can be distinguished. The first topic is the role of the established media during the election, in which they are labelled as fake or partisan (hereafter: Topic 1). The second topic is the Dutch political system, in which distrust of democracy and the Dutch government is expressed (hereafter: Topic 2). Therefore, one study for each topic was conducted. Apart from the subject of the fake news items, both studies followed the same design. Based on the presented definition in the previous chapter, two main categories of fake news were distinguished and used as criteria to differentiate between different experimental conditions: fake news with a high level of perceived *fakeness* and fake news with a low level of perceived fake news.

3.1 Experimental design

Two studies were conducted, both existing of three conditions, which differed in the level of perceived *fakeness* of the stimuli (high vs low vs control group). The control group was exactly the same in both studies, implying there were five research groups in all (see Table 1). Six news items were shown to each participant, and three of which were fake. However, the control group where all shown six genuine news items. The stimuli were presented in a social media (Facebook) environment.

TABLE 1: EXPERIMENTAL CONDITIONS OF THE PRESENT STUDIES

	Low level of perceived <i>fakeness</i> in fake news	High level of perceived <i>fakeness</i> in fake news	Genuine news
Study 1 / Topic 1	Condition 1	Condition 2	Control group
Study 2 / Topic 2	Condition 3	Condition 4	

3.2 Stimuli

The design of the stimuli was based on earlier research. To recreate a real-world setting, the present studies draw on existing news items from both mainstream news websites and alternative news websites. Google Search was used to find fake news items on websites that are listed on *De Hoax-Wijzer* (2017), a citizens' platform that exposes fake news websites. This site is acknowledged by established news media. All news items were presented in a Facebook setting, which implies that they consisted of a characterizing passage, an image, a title, and the first sentences of all news items. Every news item had to have the same amount of fictitious likes, reactions, and shares (see Figures 2 and 3). As pointed out earlier, three fake news items were required per condition. Therefore, a total of 12 fake news items was needed. Thus, a list of 24 fake news items was drafted; 12 items for each of the two main topics, half of which were selected after a pre-test. Furthermore, three genuine news items were required as fillers in all conditions. Another set of three genuine news items were required for the control group. Thus, a list of 14 genuine news items that fitted in both topics was drafted, of which 6 were selected after a pre-test.

The purpose of the pre-test was establishing which fake news items had a high level of perceived *fakeness*, and which fake news items had a low level of perceived *fakeness*, in order to assign the right stimuli to the right condition. A small number of participants within the network of the researcher ($N = 17$) was recruited. The participants' mean age was 21.7 years ($SD = 2.14$), with ages between 19 to 27. The perceived *fakeness* of each news item was measured using a five-item credibility scale, developed by Meyer (1988). The items on this scale (fair, unbiased, tells the whole story, accurate, and can be trusted) are most similar to the definition of fake news that is used in the present research. The participants were asked to fill out Meyer's (1988) survey for all 24 fake news items and 14 genuine news items on a five-point Likert scale. A factor analysis showed that the 5 items measured the same construct, which is defined as perceived *fakeness* in the present studies. After recoding, scores ranged from 1 to 5, where 1 means low perceived *fakeness* and 5 means high perceived *fakeness*. Table 2 shows the three highest and lowest scoring fake news items on both topics and the six lowest scoring genuine news items. The other news items that were tested in the pre-test were not included in the final studies. In addition, Table 2 shows that significant differences were found between the low and high perceived *fakeness* condition on both topics after conducting a one-way ANOVA and post hoc tests using the Bonferroni correction. Figures 2 and 3 show examples of fake news items with a low and a high perceived *fakeness*. All stimuli can be found in Appendix A.

TABLE 2: MEAN PERCEIVED *FAKENESS* (PF) OF STIMULI PER EXPERIMENTAL CONDITION (SCALE: 1-5), COMPARED WITH A ONE-WAY ANOVA AND POST-HOC TESTS USING THE BONFERRONI CORRECTION

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>95% CI</i>	Mean differences				
				Fillers	Control group	Cond. 1	Cond. 2	Cond. 3
Fillers:								
genuine news	1.78	.41	1.57; 2.00	-				
Genuine news item 1	1.72	.46	1.48; 1.95	-				
Genuine news item 2	1.80	.55	1.52; 2.08	-				
Genuine news item 3	1.84	.44	1.61; 2.06	-				
Control group:								
genuine news	1.92	.40	1.71; 2.13	.13	-			
Genuine news item 4	1.86	.71	1.49; 2.22	-	-			
Genuine news item 5	1.91	.50	1.65; 2.16	-	-			
Genuine news item 6	1.99	.50	1.73; 2.24	-	-			
Condition 1:								
topic 1, low PF	3.56	.48	3.31; 3.80	1.77***	1.64***	-		
Fake news item 1	3.55	.58	3.25; 3.85	-	-	-		
Fake news item 2	3.55	.68	3.21; 3.90	-	-	-		
Fake news item 3	3.56	.91	3.10; 4.03	-	-	-		
Condition 2:								
topic 1, high PF	4.24	.47	3.99; 4.48	2.45***	2.32***	.68***	-	
Fake news item 4	4.12	.63	3.79; 4.44	-	-	-	-	
Fake news item 5	4.27	.47	4.03; 4.51	-	-	-	-	
Fake news item 6	4.32	.64	3.99; 4.65	-	-	-	-	
Condition 3:								
topic 2, low PF	3.83	.46	3.59; 4.07	2.05***	1.91***	.27	-.40**	-
Fake news item 7	3.58	.82	3.15; 4.00	-	-	-	-	-
Fake news item 8	3.94	.61	3.63; 4.25	-	-	-	-	-
Fake news item 9	3.98	.79	3.57; 4.38	-	-	-	-	-
Condition 4:								
topic 2, high PF	4.32	.42	4.10; 4.53	2.53***	2.40***	.76***	.08	.49**
Fake news item 10	4.27	.57	3.98; 4.56	-	-	-	-	-
Fake news item 11	4.33	.59	4.03; 4.63	-	-	-	-	-
Fake news item 12	4.35	.52	4.08; 4.62	-	-	-	-	-

* Significant at the 5% level; ** Significant at the 1% level; *** Significant at the 0.1% level

FIGURE 2: FAKE NEWS ITEM WITH A LOW PERCEIVED FAKENESS



FIGURE 3: FAKE NEWS ITEM WITH A HIGH PERCEIVED FAKENESS



Lastly, items measuring political attitudes were also included in the pre-test to determine the reliability of the intended scales. Only one additional variable to be included was chosen, because of the length of the pre-test. 'Political attitudes' was considered to be the most important variable, because it is the independent variable of the present studies. Two items measuring political efficacy were deleted, and three items measuring political cynicism were deleted. Therefore, these items were not included in the questionnaire.

3.3 Procedure

Both studies were conducted using one online survey, designed in the program Qualtrics. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four experimental groups or the control group. First, participants were told they would participate in a research about the Dutch general election in 2017, and they had to sign the informed consent by agreeing to participate in the research. The survey consisted of (manipulated) stimuli and a questionnaire. Participants started with control variables that consisted of demographic variables and items on political orientation. Next, participants were asked about their current events knowledge. These items were deliberately presented before exposure to the stimuli, to make sure participants' answers to these items were not affected by the stimuli. After this, participants were exposed to six different news items that would appear on a Facebook timeline. These news items were derived from the pre-test. The participants were asked to read the news items carefully. Depending on the experimental group,

participants were exposed to three genuine news items and three fake news items. Except for the control group, who were shown six genuine news. The news items were shown in a random order. All stimuli can be found in Appendix A. After the exposure to the stimuli, political attitudes were initially measured, followed by news media literacy and news media skepticism. Lastly, the perceived *fakeness* of all the exposed news items was measured as a manipulation check.

3.4 Measures

The different variables of the conceptual research model were measured in a questionnaire, all based on existing scales. All constructs and items are shown in Appendix B. Demographic variables include gender, age, and education. Political orientation includes voting behavior, loyalty to a political party, and general political orientation (left wing vs. right wing and progressive vs. conservative). Hereby, voting behavior was measured by asking what people voted during the Dutch general election in 2017. Political orientation was measured using a five-point scale.

Political attitudes ($\alpha = .67$) was measured as an overarching construct of political efficacy, political alienation, and political cynicism with a total of ten items after one was deleted. All items were measured using five-point Likert scales, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree. Political efficacy ($\alpha = .53$), both internal and external, was measured using the five items of the scale of Niemi et al. (1991), political alienation ($\alpha = .59$) was measured using the two items of Balmas (2014), and political cynicism ($\alpha = .37$) was measured based on the agree-disagree political cynicism items of Cappella and Jamieson (1997). Political cynicism items that were irrelevant to the Dutch political system, e.g. items about campaign funds for individual candidates, were not included in the pre-test, leaving a scale of five items. Eventually, political attitudes was analyzed as one construct, because the internal consistency of the three subconstructs was not sufficient.

The scale designed by Maksl et al. (2015) was used to measure news media literacy ($\alpha = .71$). This scale consists of three constructs that can be used to distinguish between higher and lower levels of news media literacy: 1) five items about automatic versus mindful thought processing ($\alpha = .76$), 2) five items about media locus of control ($\alpha = .61$), 3) multiple choice questions about news media knowledge structures of which one is correct, and the last option is always 'I do not know'. For the latter, five questions were selected based on relevance and applicability. The questions were converted to the case of the Dutch news media landscape. Eventually, news media literacy was analyzed as one construct.

To measure news media skepticism ($\alpha = .86$) four items of the scale of Maksl et al. (2015) were used after deleting three items. All items were measured using five-point Likert scales, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree.

Current events knowledge was measured based on the current events knowledge scale of MaksI et al. (2015), which contains multiple choice questions of which one is correct and where the last option is always 'I do not know'. Five questions were selected based on relevance and applicability. The questions were converted to the case of the Dutch general election in 2017.

Lastly, a manipulation check was conducted by measuring the perceived *fakeness* of the six news items that were used. Just like in the pre-test, Meyer's (1988) five-item credibility scale was used here as well.

3.5 Target group and sample population

Over the last few years, especially young people became more skeptical of genuine news, because of the decrease in quality. They see fake news as more truthful and authentic, which enables them to understand politics and develop their own opinions (Marchi, 2012). Therefore, young people form the largest risk group with regard to possible effects of fake news. Hence, the present studies are targeted at young people. In addition, education, age, and gender are the most valuable predictors of Internet usage (Van Deursen & Van Dijk, 2014). Van Deursen and Van Dijk (2014) argue, however, that differences in age and gender are partly a temporary phenomenon. Differences in education may show more permanent differences in outcome. Higher educated people use the Internet as a resource of news and information more often than lower educated people. Therefore, the sample population consisted of students with different educational levels. Lower educated students from regional educational centers (the so called Dutch ROC, Regionaal Onderwijscentrum) in the region of Twente, were recruited with the help of teachers, who were approached via LinkedIn. Higher educated students were recruited via Facebook and via Sona, an internal test subject pool of the University of Twente.

A total of 310 participants was recruited. One-way ANOVAs on all variables of the present research showed significant differences between underaged boys and girls and adults. Participants in the ages below 18, who do not have voting rights, were not included in this research. Not in the least because they are probably less politically engaged, although that could easily change when they turn 18. This left a total of 256 participants. The mean age of the participants was 21.8 years ($SD = 3.97$), with ages between 18 to 49. The demographic profile of the participants is summarized in Table 3. A chi-square test showed that all participants were equally distributed among the five experimental conditions, $\chi^2(4, N = 256) = .41, p = .98$. A second chi-square test showed, that participants with the same educational level were equally distributed among the five experimental conditions, $\chi^2(4, N = 251) = 1.01, p = .91$.

TABLE 3: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE PARTICIPANTS

	<i>N</i>	%
Gender		
Male	119	46.5
Female	137	53.5
Age		
18-25	230	90.6
26-35	19	7.5
>35	5	2.0
Education		
Low	103	41.0
High	148	59.0

Table 4 summarizes the voting behavior of the participants during the Dutch general election in 2017. The research results are similar to the actual voting behavior of young people during the Dutch general election in 2017 (“Jong of oud, man of vrouw; wie stemde op welke partij?,” 2017). Apart from their voting behavior, participants were asked about their political orientation, which is summarized in Table 5.

TABLE 4: VOTING BEHAVIOR OF THE PARTICIPANTS

	<i>N</i>	%
D66	87	34.0
GroenLinks	49	19.1
VVD	30	11.7
PVV	15	5.9
Partij voor de Dieren	14	5.5
CDA	7	2.7
SP	7	2.7
PvdA	6	2.3
Forum voor Democratie	4	1.6
SGP	1	.4
DENK	1	.4
Other party	5	2.0
Did not vote	28	10.9
Rather not say	2	.8

TABLE 5: POLITICAL ORIENTATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

	<i>N</i>	%
Left wing vs right wing		
Left wing	100	39.7
Centre wing	101	40.1
Right wing	51	20.2
Conservative vs progressive		
Conservative	22	8.6
Moderate	106	41.6
Progressive	127	49.8

3.6 Data-analysis

Items were recoded if necessary. Further, even though we worked with clearly defined theoretical concepts, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted for the variables political attitudes, news media literacy, and news media skepticism. The only variable left out of the factor analysis is current events knowledge, because it consists of one item: the sum of correct answers. For the same reason, news media knowledge was not included in the factor analysis of news media literacy. The factor analyses of all variables can be found in Appendix C. Three components measuring political attitudes were found in the factor analysis. However, the spreading out of items over these components was not estimated. Factor analysis of ten items measuring news media literacy showed two components, which complies with the theoretical components of automatic versus mindful thought processing and media locus of control. Finally, factor analysis of four items measuring news media skepticism confirmed that one component was measured. Taken together, the factor analyses show different results for the concepts of political attitudes than expected. The composition of components which was found, does not properly correspond with the theoretical definitions of political attitudes. Finally, the choice was to maintain the theoretical concepts of the variables.

4 RESULTS

In this chapter, the results of the present studies are presented. Firstly, it is determined whether participants were manipulated as intended. When the desired differences between the experimental conditions in both studies are determined, the hypotheses of the present research will be tested in both studies separately. The testing of the conceptual model is done in two steps. Firstly, it will be determined whether political attitudes are different in the experimental conditions. In other words, it will be determined whether political attitudes are significantly different after participants have been exposed to genuine news or to fake news with different levels of perceived *fakeness*. Secondly, a multiple regression analysis including the proposed moderating variables, will be conducted. This will test whether the expected effects can be confirmed. Finally, all of the effects will be checked on demographic variables and political orientation.

4.1 Manipulation check

It was checked if the stimuli in each condition were perceived as intended using one-way ANOVAs. For each study, an analysis was conducted to measure the differences in perceived *fakeness* in the manipulated stimuli. In study 1, $F(2,153) = 30.68, p < .001$, post hoc tests using the Bonferroni correction showed that no significant differences ($MD = -.06, SE = .12$) were found between the stimuli of condition 1 ($M = 3.55, SD = .59$) and the stimuli of condition 2 ($M = 3.61, SD = .63$). The same applied to study 2, $F(2,151) = 29.63, p < .001$; no significant differences ($MD = -.03, SE = .12$) were found between the stimuli of condition 3 ($M = 3.53, SD = .48$) and the stimuli of condition 4 ($M = 3.57, SD = .68$). This means that low and high levels of perceived *fakeness* in fake news items could not be distinguished. Thus, participants generally were not manipulated as intended. Therefore, all participants of conditions 1 and 2 were taken together and redistributed among the conditions using a median split on the perceived *fakeness* of the manipulated stimuli ($Mdn = 3.50$). The same was done for conditions 3 and 4 ($Mdn = 3.47$). The control group was left intact, because these participants had not been exposed to fake news. The demographics of the participants after redistribution among the experimental conditions, are summarized in Table 6. From this table, it can be concluded, that participants with the same educational level were not equally distributed among the experimental conditions. Lower educated people are more often in the low perceived *fakeness* conditions, while higher educated people are more often in the high perceived *fakeness* conditions. This can be explained by a connection between educational level and the level of *fakeness* that is perceived.

TABLE 6: DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE PARTICIPANTS PER EXPERIMENTAL CONDITION AFTER REDISTRIBUTION

	N	Age		Gender		Education	
		M	SD	Male	Female	Low	High
Control group: genuine news	54	21.9	5.03	26	28	24	30
Condition 1: topic 1, low PF	51	20.6	2.31	23	28	32	18
Condition 2: topic 1, high PF	51	23.5	4.76	20	31	9	40
Condition 3: topic 2, low PF	51	20.6	3.26	25	26	30	19
Condition 4: topic 2, high PF	49	22.6	2.95	25	24	8	41

After reorganizing the conditions, one-way ANOVAs were conducted again. Now, significant differences were measured between the perceived *fakeness* of the manipulated stimuli in the conditions of both study 1, $F(2,153) = 120.89, p < .001$, and study 2, $F(2,151) = 109.20, p < .001$. In study 1, post hoc tests using the Bonferroni correction showed significant differences between the perceived *fakeness* of the manipulated stimuli of conditions 1 and 2 ($MD = .99, SE = .09$), the perceived *fakeness* of the manipulated stimuli of condition 1 and the control group ($MD = .29, SE = .09$), and the perceived *fakeness* of the manipulated stimuli of condition 2 and the control group ($MD = 1.28, SE = .09$). In study 2, post hoc tests using the Bonferroni correction showed significant differences between the perceived *fakeness* of the manipulated stimuli of conditions 3 and 4 ($MD = .94, SE = .09$), the perceived *fakeness* of the manipulated stimuli of condition 3 and the control group ($MD = .30, SE = .09$), and the perceived *fakeness* of the manipulated stimuli of condition 4 and the control group ($MD = 1.24, SE = .09$). All means and differences between the means are shown in Table 7.

TABLE 7: MEAN PERCEIVED *FAKENESS* (PF) OF STIMULI PER EXPERIMENTAL CONDITION (SCALE: 1-5), COMPARED WITH A ONE-WAY ANOVA AND POST-HOC TESTS USING THE BONFERRONI CORRECTION

	M	SD	95% CI	Mean differences	
Study 1				Control group	Condition 1
Control group: genuine news	2.79	.58	2.63; 2.95	-	
Condition 1: topic 1, low PF	3.08	.27	3.01; 3.16	.29**	-
Condition 2: topic 1, high PF	4.07	.41	3.96; 4.19	1.28***	.99***
Study 2				Control group	Condition 3
Control group: genuine news	2.79	.58	2.63; 2.95	-	
Condition 3: topic 2, low PF	3.09	.26	3.01; 3.16	.30**	-
Condition 4: topic 2, high PF	4.03	.41	3.91; 4.15	1.24***	.94***

* Significant at the 5% level; ** Significant at the 1% level; *** Significant at the 0.1% level

To check for possible effects on the genuine news items that were shown in all conditions, additional one-way ANOVAs were conducted to measure the perceived *fakeness* in the fillers. As intended, there were no significant differences in the conditions of study 1, $F(2,153) = 2.37, p = .097$. However, in study 2, $F(2,151) = 5.46, p = .005$, post hoc tests using the Bonferroni correction showed, that the fillers in condition 3 ($M = 2.75, SD = .41$) were significantly perceived as containing more *fakeness* than the fillers in the condition 4 ($M = 2.38, SD = .60$). Neither of the conditions differed from the control group ($M = 2.60, SD = .66$). This suggests, that either a low perceived *fakeness* in fake news items has a negative effect on the perceived credibility of genuine news items or, that people with a low perceived *fakeness* in fake news items simply do not see the difference between fake news and genuine news.

In sum, it can be asserted that exposure to fake news items, as designed based on the pre-test, did not lead to the expected levels of perceived *fakeness*. However, it was found that a significant division in groups based on perceived *fakeness* could still be made using a median split.

4.2 Study 1

Study 1 dealt with fake news with regard to the role of established media in the election, in which case the established media are labelled as fake or partisan. To investigate if political attitudes are influenced by the level of perceived *fakeness* in fake news items, a one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the political attitudes in condition 1, condition 2, and the control group. There was a significant effect pertaining to the level of perceived *fakeness* on political attitudes for the three conditions, $F(2,153) = 7.43, p = .001$. Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni correction indicated that the mean score on political attitudes in the low perceived *fakeness* condition ($M = 3.10, SD = .46$) was significantly lower than in the high perceived *fakeness* condition ($M = 3.39, SD = .46$) and the control group ($M = 3.36, SD = .39$). However, political attitudes in the high perceived *fakeness* condition did not significantly differ from political attitudes in the control group. Taken together, these results show that a low level of perceived *fakeness* in fake news, leads to more negative political attitudes. In other words, the level of perceived *fakeness* in fake news has a positive effect on political attitudes, which confirms *H1*. The sub hypotheses *H1a*, *H1b*, and *H1c* could not be tested in the present studies, because the concepts political efficacy, political alienation and political cynicism could not be clearly measured.

A second step was taken to clarify the differences in political attitudes between people with a low and a high level of perceived *fakeness* in fake news. After all, we stated in *H2*, *H3*, and *H4* that the effect of the perceived *fakeness* in fake news on political attitudes is moderated by three other variables. Therefore, the conceptual model of the present research was tested with the use of a multiple linear regression. The participants in the control group were not included in this analysis, because they were not exposed to fake news. Standardized variables of perceived

fakeness of the fake news items (PF), news media literacy (NML), news media skepticism (NMS), and current events knowledge (CEK) were created. Next, three moderating variables were created by multiplying the standardized score of PF by NML, by NMS, and by CEK. In a multiple linear regression analysis the effects of these moderators and the direct effects of all variables on political attitudes were tested. The results are shown in Table 8.

TABLE 8: MULTIPLE LINEAR REGRESSION ANALYSIS EXAMINING THE DIRECT EFFECTS AND INTERACTION EFFECTS OF PERCEIVED *fakeness* IN FAKE NEWS (PF), NEWS MEDIA LITERACY (NML), NEWS MEDIA SKEPTICISM (NMS), AND CURRENT EVENTS KNOWLEDGE (CEK) IN PREDICTING POLITICAL ATTITUDES (STUDY 1, $N = 102$)

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
(constant)	3.25	.04	-	77.41	.000***
Direct effects					
Perceived <i>fakeness</i>	.11	.05	.22	2.29	.024*
News media literacy	.13	.05	.26	2.82	.006**
News media skepticism	-.14	.04	-.30	-3.49	.001***
Current events knowledge	.12	.05	.25	2.70	.008**
Moderation effects					
PF x NML	.01	.04	.02	-.22	.830
PF x NMS	-.02	.03	-.05	-.61	.545
PF x CEK	-.03	.05	-.07	-.70	.485
	<i>R</i> ²	<i>Adj. R</i> ²	<i>F</i>		
Model	.394	.348	8.71***		

* Significant at the 5% level; ** Significant at the 1% level; *** Significant at the 0.1% level

Based on the multiple regression analysis, it can be asserted that the differences in political attitudes are partially explained by the perceived *fakeness* in fake news. This confirms the results of the one-way ANOVA, although the unstandardized coefficient is not particularly high ($b=.11$). In other words, on a scale from 1 to 5, for every unit of perceived *fakeness* in fake news items, political attitudes increase with .11. Contrary to expectations, this effect was not moderated by either news media literacy, news media skepticism or current events knowledge. Therefore, hypotheses *H2*, *H3*, and *H4* are rejected in this study. However, these variables all have a direct effect on political attitudes. This means that people with a higher level of news media literacy or current events knowledge, or a lower level of news media skepticism, generally have more positive political attitudes.

To gain more insight in the results, all found direct effects on political attitudes were controlled for moderating effects of demographics and political orientation using multiple linear regressions. The results of these tests are shown in Table 13 and in Table 14, which can be found

in Appendix D. No moderating effects were found in the model measuring the effects of the demographic variables gender and education (Table 13). The same applies to the model measuring the effects of the political orientation variables left wing versus right wing and conservative versus progressive (Table 14). However, in the latter model, the direct effect of perceived *fakeness* in fake news on political attitudes is not significant anymore. In this case, the change of significance shows that effect of perceived *fakeness* in fake news on political attitudes is not a strong effect, because it does not hold its significance when other variables, in this case political orientation, are included. This means, that a part of the variance explained by perceived *fakeness* in fake news can also be explained by political orientation variables.

4.3 Study 2

Study 2 dealt with fake news relating to the Dutch political system, in which distrust of democracy and the Dutch government is shown. The same steps were taken as in study 1. Again, a one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted; in this study to compare the political attitudes in condition 3, condition 4, and the control group. There was a significant effect with regard to the level of perceived *fakeness* on political attitudes for the three conditions, $F(2,151) = 9.08, p < .001$. Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni correction, indicated that the mean score on political attitudes in the low perceived *fakeness* condition ($M = 3.14, SD = .42$) was significantly lower than in the high perceived *fakeness* condition ($M = 3.50, SD = .47$) and in the control group ($M = 3.36, SD = .39$). However, political attitudes in the high perceived *fakeness* condition did not significantly differ from political attitudes in the control group. Taken together, these results show that a low level of perceived *fakeness* in fake news leads to more negative political attitudes, meaning that there is a positive connection between perceived *fakeness* in fake news and political attitudes. Compared to study 1, these results are the same. Therefore, *H1* is confirmed again.

Next, *H2*, *H3*, and *H4* were tested with the results of study 2. The same procedure as in study 1 was followed. The conceptual model of the present research was tested with the use of a multiple linear regression. The participants in the control group were not concluded in this analysis. Standardized variables and subsequently moderating variables were created. In a multiple linear regression analysis the effects of these moderators and the direct effects of all variables on political attitudes were tested. The results are shown in Table 9.

The effects that were found are largely identical to the effects in study 1. However, the support for the model was not as strong as in study 1, which can be seen in the slightly lower unstandardized coefficients of the variables and variance explained. Moreover, again no support was found for the moderating effect of news media literacy, news media skepticism or current events knowledge on the direct effect of perceived *fakeness* in fake news items on political attitudes. Therefore, hypotheses *H2*, *H3*, and *H4* are rejected in this study too. Regarding the direct

effects of the variables, the results of study 2 show that there is not only an effect of perceived *fakeness* on political attitudes, but also of news media literacy and current events knowledge. However, no direct effect on political attitudes was found for news media skepticism. This is striking, because this effect was found in study 1. This suggests, that the topic of fake news determines whether news media skepticism has an effect on political attitudes. Therefore, it can be asserted, that fake news which labels the information from established media as fake, and moreover questions the role of established media in elections, influences news media skepticism, leading to an effect on political attitudes.

TABLE 9: MULTIPLE LINEAR REGRESSION ANALYSIS EXAMINING THE DIRECT EFFECTS AND INTERACTION EFFECTS OF PERCEIVED *FAKENESS* IN FAKE NEWS (PF), NEWS MEDIA LITERACY (NML), NEWS MEDIA SKEPTICISM (NMS), AND CURRENT EVENTS KNOWLEDGE (CEK) IN PREDICTING POLITICAL ATTITUDES (STUDY 2, $N = 100$)

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
(constant)	3.31	.04	-	74.68	.000***
Direct effects					
Perceived <i>fakeness</i>	.10	.05	.21	2.13	.036*
News media literacy	.11	.06	.23	2.04	.044*
News media skepticism	-.03	.04	-.06	-.66	.509
Current events knowledge	.12	.05	.25	2.34	.022*
Moderation effects					
PF x NML	-.03	.04	.02	-.09	.452
PF x NMS	.00	.05	-.05	.00	.992
PF x CEK	.07	.05	-.07	.15	.176
	<i>R</i> ²	<i>Adj. R</i> ²	<i>F</i>		
Model	.328	.276	6.40***		

* Significant at the 5% level; ** Significant at the 1% level; *** Significant at the 0.1% level

Finally, all direct effects on political attitudes that were found, were checked for moderating effects of demographics and political orientation using multiple linear regressions. The results of these tests are shown in Table 15 and in Table 16, which are in Appendix D. No moderating effects were found in the model measuring the effects of the demographic variables gender and education (Table 15). In fact, the only effect that was found in this model, was the direct effect of current events knowledge on political attitudes. This means, that the adding of gender and education as variables in the model, caused the effects of perceived *fakeness* and news media literacy on political attitudes to lose their significance, because part of the variance explained by these factors can also be explained by gender and education. With regard to the model measuring the effects of the political orientation variables left wing versus right wing and conservative versus progressive

(Table 16), no moderating effects were found either. Further, only the direct effects of perceived *fakeness* and news media literacy on political attitudes remained significant. In addition, a positive direct effect was found of political orientation (conservative versus progressive) on political attitudes. This means, that people who consider themselves progressive, generally have more positive political attitudes than people who consider themselves conservative. Taken together, these results show that none of the direct effects that were found in this study are strong, because the extent to which they are significant depends on the variables included in the model. Further, these results differ strongly when compared to study 1, which suggests that the topics in fake news is of importance when predicting the effects on political attitudes.

5 DISCUSSION

In this final chapter, the research questions of this research will be answered. The outcomes are compared to existing academic research. Next, we discuss the limitations of this research and make suggestions for future research. Finally, the practical implications of this research are discussed, which means that we go back to the discussion of the role of fake news in the democratic process.

5.1 Conclusion

The main research question of this research '*What is the effect of the level of perceived 'fakeness' in fake news on political attitudes?*' (RQ1) can be answered based on the results of the two studies that were conducted in this research. From both studies, we conclude that there is a positive effect of level of perceived *fakeness* in fake news on political attitudes. This means that people with a low level of perceived *fakeness* in fake news have relatively negative political attitudes. People with a high level of perceived *fakeness* in fake news and people who were exclusively exposed to genuine news, do not differ in their political attitudes. Therefore, it can be concluded that fake news only has an effect when it is perceived as fake to a lesser extent. An explanation for this, is that a higher level of perceived *fakeness* means, that persuasive cues or truth claims are not necessarily being considered real in this case. Therefore, people are not inclined to change or reinforce their attitudes towards politics. Either way, exposure to fake news can lead to a different view on politics, which is far from desirable in a fair democratic process.

The other research questions were about the extent of the moderating effects of news media literacy (RQ2), news media skepticism (RQ3), and current events knowledge (RQ4) on the effect of perceived *fakeness* on political attitudes. The answer to all these questions is, that no moderating effects were found for these variables. However, these three variables do have a direct effect on political attitudes. These are positive effects, except for news media skepticism. In study 1, which dealt with fake news about the role of established media in the election, news media skepticism turned out to have a negative effect on political attitudes. Because these fake news items are critical towards established news media, this suggests that news media skepticism is enhanced by exposure to these items. Taken together, these variables play an even more important role in influencing political attitudes than expected.

The direct effect of news media skepticism that was found, forms the most important difference between study 1 and study 2. In study 2, no direct effect of news media skepticism on political attitudes was found. This means, that news media skepticism only has an effect on political attitudes when people are exposed to fake news, that specifically deals with established news

media. After all, fake news that was used in study 2 did not discredit news media in particular, and no effect of news media skepticism was found. Further, the two studies showed similar results. However, the effects that were found, showed higher significance scores in study 1. This also explains why most of the direct effects that were found in study 2, lost their significance when demographics and political orientation were added to the model, while in study 1 most of the direct effects remained significant. This means, that young people react stronger to fake news which deals with the role of news media in the democratic process, than to fake news which deals with the democratic process in general. This can be explained by a general development which was described by Marchi (2012); young people are becoming more and more skeptic towards established news media. Therefore, fake news that discredits established media is pro-attitudinal to them and subsequently has stronger effects, which corresponds to the research of Wojcieszak et al. (2016). Lastly, the direct effect of political orientation (conservative versus progressive) on political attitudes was only found in study 2. Again, the subject that fake news has, seems to play a role. It can be concluded, that conservatives are more sensitive to fake news which discredits the democratic system than progressives. A possible explanation for this is, that conservatives are generally more skeptic towards the democratic system, which means that the fake news which was used in study 2 works pro-attitudinal for them. The differences in the two studies show, that the context in which fake news is framed should not be overlooked when dealing with the effects on political attitudes. Even though, the differences that were found, are small.

Summarized, our expectations of the effect of perceived *fakeness* in fake news on political attitudes were confirmed. This also means that the present research builds on Balmas' (2014) statement that fake news is only effective in influencing people when it is perceived as real. However, we argued that the effects of fake news on political attitudes will depend on more than the perceived realism, namely on the extent of perceived *fakeness*, which varies with the purpose, content, visual characteristics and grammar of a fake news item. Further, as we already mentioned, we can conclude that it is of importance whether a fake news item is pro-attitudinal, as Wojcieszak et al. (2016) suggested. Whether the perceived *fakeness* in fake news affects political efficacy, political alienation and political cynicism, cannot be determined in the present research. Because of the low internal consistency of these three types of political attitudes, the categorization as proposed by Balmas (2014) cannot be replicated. This can be explained by the difference in measuring methods. Political alienation was measured by Balmas using two items, which we also used. However, political efficiency and political cynicism were measured by Balmas using only one item per construct. We chose to use the scales of Niemi et al. (1994) and Cappella and Jamieson (1997). This leads to a combination of items with which we could not clearly distinguish between political efficiency, political alienation and political cynicism. However, we were able to measure political attitudes as a whole.

News media literacy, news media skepticism and current events knowledge had different effects than expected. It was expected, that the effects of fake news on political attitudes would be

reduced for people with a high level of news media literacy by increasing their level of perceived *fakeness*, based on abilities associated with the term, in which the definition of Malik et al. (2013) was leading. The positive direct effect of news media literacy on political attitudes indeed suggests that the effects of fake news on political attitudes are reduced for people with a high level of news media literacy. After all, all found direct effects were found after exposure to fake news. Therefore, our research does not contradict existing academic conceptualizations of news media literacy. The effect we expected only turned out to be a direct effect instead of a moderating effect. With regard to news media skepticism, our expectation that news media skepticism would lead to relatively positive political attitudes (by positively moderating the effect of perceived *fakeness* in fake news) was contradicted, because a negative direct effect was found. A possible explanation would be, that news media skepticism is enhanced as a result of exposure to fake news which discredits established news media. This means, that people with a higher level of news media skepticism adopt the negative ideas about established news media and their role in elections. Subsequently, their political attitudes will be more negative. It seems that the negative influence of news media skepticism contradicts existing research, which suggests, that people with a high level of news media skepticism have a better understanding of news consumption and evaluation (Maksl et al., 2015). However, our results suggest, that news media skepticism which was measured in this research, did not point at alternative news media but at established news media. Finally, also with regard to current events knowledge, a positive moderating effect was expected, but a positive direct effect on political attitudes was found. Still, the ELM (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) can be applied as expected. People's political attitudes are effected in case they have a low current events knowledge, because they are less involved in the subject and will be more sensitive to peripheral cues. The only difference is, that it is a direct effect instead of a moderating effect.

5.2 Limitations and future research

An important assumption of the present research was, that fake news items differ in their perceived *fakeness*. Therefore, a condition was created where participants were exposed to fake news with a low level of perceived *fakeness*, and a condition was created where participants were exposed to fake news with a high level of perceived *fakeness*, all after pre-testing the fake news items to determine their perceived *fakeness*. However, not the news items themselves caused differences in perceived *fakeness*. There was a different outcome for each participant, regardless of which fake news items they read. After all, differences between the low and high level perceived *fakeness* conditions in both studies, could only be successfully created after redistributing the participants among these conditions, based on a median split. Does this mean that fake news items do not differ in their *fakeness* at all? Because this distinction could not be made in the present research, the question remains, what attributes make a fake news item being perceived as more or less as

fake. It may well be, that in selecting fake news items for this research, we failed to differ enough in *fakeness* in the selected fake news items. To gain more clarity on this subject, we encourage future research on the concept of fake news. For example, a content analysis of fake news items that are widely spread, would be a suitable method to get a better understanding of the types and the characteristics of fake news.

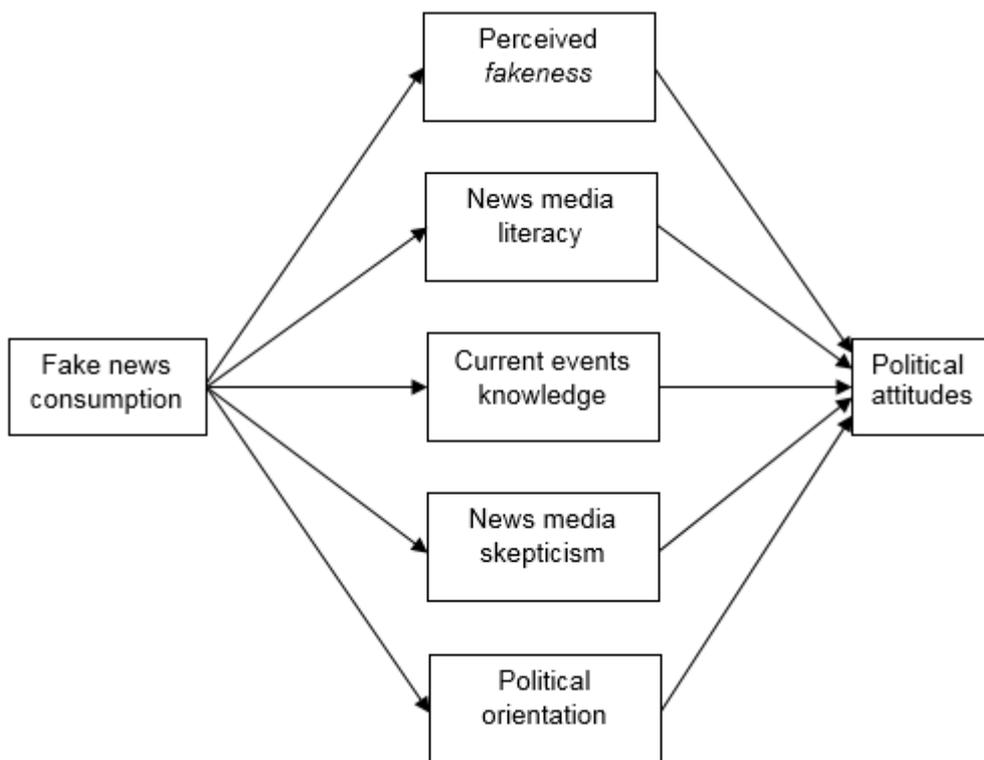
Further, we do not know if the differences that were found in political attitudes will persist over a longer period of time. After all, a change of attitude may be relatively temporary and cannot predict behavior when it a message is processed through the peripheral route (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Accordingly, to determine whether voting behavior has changed due to fake news, a longitudinal study would have been more fitting, ideally during election time. Under such circumstances, it could not only be determined whether political attitudes change as a result of exposure to fake news, but the strength and the duration of the attitude change could also be determined. This would even provide enough information to draw conclusions about changed voting behavior. However, due to practical reasons, we chose for a different design in the present study. Moreover, in a longitudinal study, it is advisable to keep track of what fake news items circulate and whether respondents were, or were not, exposed to them. This could, for example, be done with a recall and recognition approach (e.g. Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017), or a study that maps news media use and tests its effects (i.e. Mocanu et al., 2015). This would create a real-world setting. Moreover, the latter also includes genuine news items. This brings us to a next discussion point: the inclusion of genuine news items in this research.

Participants in the present study were not only exposed to fake news items, but to genuine news items as well. The goal of this design was recreating a real-world setting. After all, in everyday life, fake news items circulate alongside genuine news items. A fifty-fifty ratio of fake versus genuine news items was used in this research. The genuine news items (the fillers) were exactly the same in each group. In this way, the effects that were found, could still be assigned to fake news items, even though participants read genuine news items as well. Another reason to make use of genuine news items was, to reduce the chance of participants unmasking the manipulation and perceiving the fake news items as more or less fake, as would be the case in everyday life. The limitation of including genuine news items could be, however, that these items would limit the effects of fake news items. In that case, it can be argued that genuine news items have the same effect in real life. Eventually, the results of the present research did not show any differences in the perceived *fakeness* of the fillers, except between the low and high levels of perceived *fakeness* conditions in study 2. Fillers were perceived as more fake in the low perceived *fakeness* condition, than in the high perceived *fakeness* condition. As we already stated, this either suggests, that a low perceived *fakeness* in fake news items has a negative effect on credibility perceived in genuine news items. It might also be the case, that people with a low perceived *fakeness* in fake news items, simply do not see the difference between fake news and genuine news. Either way, the

possibility exists, that effects measured in this group cannot be attributed to the perceived *fakeness* in fake news items.

The relatively low values of the coefficients of the effects found in the present studies, can also be looked upon to be a limitation. However, in the context of a democratic process, even small effects can make a difference. In the multiparty system which is being used in the Netherlands, for example, a relatively small amount of votes can make a difference in the allocation of seats in the House of Representatives.

FIGURE 4: CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR FUTURE RESEARCH



As discussed in detail, the proposed variables have an effect on political attitudes, but no moderation is involved. Theoretically, news media literacy and news media skepticism are not directly related to political attitudes. Only after exposure to fake news, these effects were found. Therefore, the design of the conceptual research model should be altered in future research. A more meaningful model than the conceptual model of this research, would be a model that includes the exposure to fake news or fake news consumption. Exposure to fake news does not directly lead to a political attitude change, although this was in fact conceived by other variables. It depends on the perceived *fakeness*, news media literacy, current events knowledge, and news media skepticism, whether political attitudes are influenced. In addition, political orientation should be included as a predictor for political attitudes after exposure to fake news, as this is the effect found in one of our studies. More research is needed to get a better understanding of this effect. We

therefore propose a model for future research, which is basically the model that was supported in the present studies. This model would probably give a better picture of the actual influence of fake news. The model is shown in Figure 4.

5.3 Practical implications

Finally, we return to the main issue of this research: is fake news actually a potential threat for democracy? The present research suggests it is. We did prove, that fake news affects political attitudes. Votes may be changed because of political attitudes that are based on fake news. As we demonstrated, not just everyone is automatically affected by fake news. This depends on several factors. However, when the Russian government, for example, targets people who are sensitive to fake news with the wrong intentions, fake news can form a serious threat when it comes to disrupting democracies. Politicians, like Geert Wilders in the Netherlands, contribute to this threat by discrediting established news media, which creates a stronger position for fake news, which does just that. In addition, the negative effect of news media skepticism that was found, underlines the vulnerability of established news media, which offers alternative media the opportunity to gain more influence. This can lead to a vicious circle in which the effects of fake news only grow larger. At the same time, even the smallest effects can already make a difference in a democratic process, as we already mentioned. On the other hand, this will not directly lead to completely different election results. Nevertheless, we should be taking the influence of fake news seriously.

Then, there is the question of how to counteract fake news. Recently, it has been attempted to find a solution for the fake news problem. An example of such a solution was presented in the research article by Van der Linden, Leiserowitz, Rosenthal, and Maibach (2017). In a media landscape, where both messages about the scientific consensus on a subject and messages containing fake news are communicated, they state that “inoculation” messages warning about fake news, “is a promising approach to protect public understanding of the extant scientific consensus” (Van der Linden et al., 2017, pp. 5). Lately, Facebook is working on a similar solution against the widespreading of fake news in the US, Germany, France, and the Netherlands. The company teamed up with third parties that fact check news items, but only then, when it is questioned by a user. When both Facebook and the third party label the news item as false, Facebook will show a warning message under the news item that its reliability is being questioned (Kasteleijn, 2017). What these measures have in common is, that they only check facts. However, factchecking is not a solution, because fake news is not only news, which is simply not true, as we argued in this research. Partisan or paranoid news, for example, is not necessarily filtered by factcheckers, because the presented facts in fake news are not always wrong. However, as we showed in the present research, this type of fake news can influence political attitudes. A more

promising approach to find a solution for the negative effects of fake news was presented by Rubin et al. (2015). They proposed a fake news detection system that not only filters out unsupported truth claims, but also attributes, for example, like lengths and writing matter. From the results of the present research, we suggest that such linguistic algorithms should be further developed and implemented. Then, the effects of all different types of fake news could be contained.

In short, the present research added to a better understanding of the concept of fake news. It is a relatively new subject in both our society as in the field of academical research. We demonstrated, that fake news is more than incorrect news. Also the effects on political attitudes that were found, provide a better view of the precise ways in which fake news can make a difference in an election. There is yet a lot to learn about fake news and its role in the democratic process, but with this research, some important steps in the fight against fake news are taken.

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APPENDIX A: STIMULI

Fillers in each experimental group: genuine news items

Genuine news item 1

Zoek naar personen, plaatsen en dingen

heeft een link gedeeld.
8 maart om 10:12 -

Het Centraal Planbureau (CPB) rekende verkiezingsprogramma's van onder andere VVD, PvdA, SP, CDA, D66, ChristenUnie en GroenLinks door op effecten op werkgelegenheid, overheidssaldo, economie en koopkracht.



Overzicht: Doorrekeningen verkiezingsprogramma's per partij

Het Centraal Planbureau (CPB) rekende de meeste verkiezingsprogramma's door op effecten op werkgelegenheid, overheidssaldo, economie en koopkracht.

NU.NL

192 53 reacties 2 keer gedeeld

Leuk Reageren Delen

Genuine news item 2

Zoek naar personen, plaatsen en dingen

heeft een link gedeeld.
8 maart om 10:12 -

De verkiezingscampagne is in alle hevigheid losgebarsten en zal tot 15 maart tot de ontknopning leiden. Wat staat ons tot die tijd te wachten? NU.nl zet de belangrijkste data op een rijtje.



Wat gaat er tot aan de Tweede Kamerverkiezingen nog gebeuren?

De verkiezingsprogramma's zijn gepresenteerd, de stemwijzers staan online en het eerste lijsttrekkersdebat is achter de rug. De verkiezingscampagne is in alle...

NU.NL

192 53 reacties 2 keer gedeeld

Leuk Reageren Delen

Genuine news item 3

f Zoek naar personen, plaatsen en dingen

heeft een link gedeeld.
8 maart om 10:12 ·

Op Twitter klinken geluiden dat jongeren te weinig bezig zijn met de verkiezingen. Twitteraars Tim Hofman, Rutger de Quay, Gosse Bouma en Lennart van Nieuwenhuijzen ontwikkelden daarom het nieuwe platform De Stembus 2017.



Televisieprogramma's sturen jongeren naar de stembus
Diverse televisieprogramma's proberen de komende weken jonge stemgerechtigden beter te betrekken bij de verkiezingen in maart.
NU.NL

192 53 reacties 2 keer gedeeld

Leuk Reageren Delen

Control group: genuine news items

Genuine news item 4

f Zoek naar personen, plaatsen en dingen

heeft een link gedeeld.
8 maart om 10:12 ·

Bedrijven die zich bezighouden met veiligheid op internet gaan politieke partijen gratis bijstaan rond de Tweede Kamerverkiezingen van 15 maart. Dat bevestigt het Nationaal Cyber Security Centrum na berichtgeving in het Financieele Dagblad.



Technologiebedrijven gaan helpen bij beveiliging van verkiezingen
De bedrijven stellen gratis mensen en kennis ter beschikking.
NOS.NL

192 53 reacties 2 keer gedeeld

Leuk Reageren Delen

Genuine news item 5

f Zoek naar personen, plaatsen en dingen

heeft een link gedeeld.
8 maart om 10:12 ·

Meer dan ooit wordt deze verkiezingsstrijd uitgevochten via sociale media. De budgetten voor online campagnevoeren zijn vervelvoudigd ten opzichte van de vorige Kamerverkiezingen. Want via Facebook, Instagram en Twitter krijgen de partijen hun boodschap relatief eenvoudig en ongefilterd in de tijdlijn van grote groepen kiezers.



Sociale media voor politieke partijen: géén journalisten, da's wel lekker

De budgetten voor online campagnevoeren zijn vervelvoudigd ten opzichte van de vorige Kamerverkiezingen.

NOS.NL

192 53 reacties 2 keer gedeeld

Leuk Reageren Delen

Genuine news item 6

f Zoek naar personen, plaatsen en dingen

heeft een link gedeeld.
8 maart om 10:12 ·

De partijen moesten in 2012 erg wennen aan de nauwgezette controle. In het RTL-debat werden alle vier de deelnemende partijleiders betrappt op halve waarheden, onwaarheden en ongefundeerde uitspraken. Hoe zit het nu, met de debatten voor de Tweede Kamerverkiezingen in aantocht?



Prima, die checks, 'maar in de politiek gaat het niet alleen over de feiten'

Nederlandse media en politiek: Nederlandse partijen vinden dat media bijdragen aan vertrouwen in de politiek door uitspraken van politici op waarheid te toetsen.

NRC.NL

192 53 reacties 2 keer gedeeld

Leuk Reageren Delen

Experimental group 1: fake news items topic 1, low level of perceived *fakeness*

Fake news item 1

Facebook interface showing a post from a user (profile picture redacted) dated 8 maart om 10:12. The post text reads: "Meer dan een half jaar lang heeft de Haagse strijd der titanen onafgebroken de aandacht van de mainstream media gekregen. De media noemen het 'de tweestrijd tussen Wilders en Rutte'. Het is echter niet meer dan een ordinair een-tweetje tussen liberale broeders, met op maandag 13 maart bij de NOS het hoogtepunt."



Een-tweetje liberaal duo Wilders en Rutte vanavond in de hoofdrol

De afgelopen periode wisselden de twee politieke helden Wilders en Rutte elkaar in de verkiezingsstrijd af. Dan zocht W. de media en daarna klom R. in de gordijnen,...

DELANGEMARS.NL

192 likes, 53 reacties, 2 keer gedeeld

Leuk Reageren Delen

Fake news item 2

Facebook interface showing a post from a user (profile picture redacted) dated 8 maart om 10:12. The post text reads: "Dat Jesse Klaver graag verhalen ophangt was genoegzaam bekend, maar afgelopen zaterdag hebben zijn oud-mentor van de middelbare school en de pastoor uit zijn geboorteplaats Roosendaal in De Telegraaf uit de doeken gedaan, dat de snotneus zijn levensverhaal wel erg creatief gepimpt heeft om er de nodige politieke lading aan te geven."



Klaver, Schulz, Macron – Politici als vleesgeworden fake news - Pauwnieuws.nl

Klaver wilde zich, door zijn levensverhaal interessanter te maken kennelijk voorstellen als een soort verschoppeling die toch een eind is gekomen in de...

PAUWNIEUWS.NL

192 likes, 53 reacties, 2 keer gedeeld

Leuk Reageren Delen

Fake news item 3

Zoek naar personen, plaatsen en dingen

heeft een link gedeeld.
8 maart om 10:12 ·

Oeps! Er is dus geen nepnieuws, er zijn geen nepverhalen in omloop... terwijl de linkse media daar juist wel maandenlang een enorme hetze van maakten.



NRC gedwongen toe te geven: 'Er werd deze campagne totaal geen nepnieuws verspreid'
Maar natuurlijk krijgt De Dagelijkse Standaard wel even een veeg uit de pan omdat we de euvele moed hadden om te berichten over een stel losgeslagen...
DAGELIJKSESTANDAARD.NL

192 53 reacties 2 keer gedeeld

Leuk Reageren Delen

Experimental group 2: fake news items topic 1, high level of perceived *fakeness*

Fake news item 4

Zoek naar personen, plaatsen en dingen

heeft een link gedeeld.
8 maart om 10:12 ·

Het zal de dames en heren nepjournalisten van de NPO verbazen, maar het is niet aan hen om, met behulp van ons belastinggeld, rechtse partijen en politici te ondermijnen.



Forum voor Democratie heeft genoeg van ultralinkse NPO: "Drastisch saneren!"
Inderdaad, het liefst vandaag nog. Weg met Jeroen Pauw, Eva Jinek, Paul Witteman en meneer ADHD van DWDD. Het Forum voor Democratie had het al helemaal...
DAGELIJKSESTANDAARD.NL

192 53 reacties 2 keer gedeeld

Leuk Reageren Delen

Fake news item 5

f Zoek naar personen, plaatsen en dingen

heeft een link gedeeld.
8 maart om 10:12 ·

NU.nl begint vandaag voor de zoveelste keer met een misleidende nepnieuws kop 'PvdA en oppositie willen 'harde reactie' van Rutte op Trumps inreisverbod', waarmee valselijk de indruk wordt gewerkt dat er in Den Haag één front tegen Trump bestaat.



Linkse partijen Den Haag verdedigen islamitische haatideologie met verketteren Trump

Terreur-, misbruik- en misdaadexplosie in Europa compleet genegeerd – Wat moet er worden van onze samenleving, nu alle waarden en normen die...

XANDERNIEUWS.PUNT.NL

192 53 reacties 2 keer gedeeld

Leuk Reageren Delen

Fake news item 6

f Zoek naar personen, plaatsen en dingen

heeft een link gedeeld.
8 maart om 10:12 ·

De leugenmedia probeert alles om degenen die hun leugens ontmaskeren te demoniseren. Zij publiceren lijsten van zogenaamde "hoax-blogs" zonder één enkel bewijs.



DE DESINFORMEDIA!

De linkse leugenpers werkt op volle toeren! Als bij een islamitische terrorist IS vlaggen, onthoofding video's, bekentenissen, islamitische propaganda en hele islamitische netwerken worden...

EUNMASK.WORDPRESS.COM

192 53 reacties 2 keer gedeeld

Leuk Reageren Delen

Experimental group 3: fake news items topic 2, low level of perceived *fakeness*

Fake news item 7

Zoek naar personen, plaatsen en dingen

heeft een link gedeeld.
8 maart om 10:12 ·

Het vergt moed en uithoudingsvermogen en bijna een wonder om als nieuwe politieke partij mee te doen in Den Haag. Naast de financiële drempel van meer dan 10duizend euro en meer dan 600 steunbetuigingen, die voor eind januari binnen moeten zijn, (hiervan moeten 30 opgehaald worden op Bonaire) zijn er de campagnekosten.



De vervalste verkiezingen van 2017
Keer op keer zijn de Tweede Kamerverkiezingen vervalst doordat de nieuwe politieke partijen geen schijn van kans maken om Den Haag binnen te komen. Een overzicht van de trucs die het 'democratische' Parlement gebruikt om nieuwe en...

DELANGEMARS.NL

192 53 reacties 2 keer gedeeld

Leuk Reageren Delen

Fake news item 8

Zoek naar personen, plaatsen en dingen

heeft een link gedeeld.
8 maart om 10:12 ·

Het heeft geen zin. We hebben nu geen echte democratie. De werkelijke macht komt van een ultrakleine, parasiterende schaduwelite die alle (invloedrijke) politici in hun macht heeft.



Waarom ik dit jaar niet ga stemmen - Ellaster
Nog een paar dagen en dan barst het verkiezingscircus weer in volle omvang los. Een steeds grotere groep zwevende kiezers zal zich weer beraden op welke partij of welke politicus men zal stemmen. Ook de groep mensen die loopt te dubben wel of...

ELLASTER.NL

192 53 reacties 2 keer gedeeld

Leuk Reageren Delen

Fake news item 9

f Zoek naar personen, plaatsen en dingen

heeft een link gedeeld.
8 maart om 10:12 ·

Het is een globale ziekte aan het worden. De antifascisten blijken de personen waar het echte geweld vandaan komt.



Het vrije woord op fascistische wijze de mond gesnoerd: antifascisten verslaan Wilders door met geweld te dreigen - Pauwnieuws.nl

Antifascisten laten hun ware gezicht zien: bezoek Wilders gaat wegens geweldsdreiging niet door

PAUWNIEUWS.NL

192 53 reacties 2 keer gedeeld

Leuk Reageren Delen

Experimental group 4: fake news items topic 2, high level of perceived *fakeness*

Fake news item 10

f Zoek naar personen, plaatsen en dingen

heeft een link gedeeld.
8 maart om 10:12 ·

Of je nu op de VVD, PvdA, D66, GroenLinks of het CDA stemt, maakt niet uit. Het zijn alle slechts filialen van dezelfde politiek correcte, politieke partij.



Kiezers hebben op 15 maart maar twee opties

(Door: "D.G. Neree") De gevestigde partijen hebben zo'n beetje unaniem uitgesproken dat ze in geen geval met de PVV zullen samenwerken. Daarmee plegen ze in feite een staatsgreep om de democr...

EJBRON.WORDPRESS.COM

192 53 reacties 2 keer gedeeld

Leuk Reageren Delen

Fake news item 11

f Zoek naar personen, plaatsen en dingen

heeft een link gedeeld.
8 maart om 10:12 ·

Een heersende elite kán de onderdanen NOOIT representeren, zoals een slavenhouder zijn slaven nooit zou kunnen dienen. We vinden de idee van een 'representatieve regering' echter zo comfortabel dat we onszelf in een diepe slaap hebben gesust.



“Representatieve” regering?
(Door: “BolleJan”) Deze week mogen we weer participeren in het grootste semi-religieuze ritueel van de lage landen: de Tweede Kamerverkiezingen. Velen van ons zullen hun kostbare vrije tijd opofferen...
EJBRON.WORDPRESS.COM

192 53 reacties 2 keer gedeeld

Leuk Reageren Delen

Fake news item 12

f Zoek naar personen, plaatsen en dingen

heeft een link gedeeld.
8 maart om 10:12 ·

De politiek, in welke vorm dan ook, zou de belangen van de burgers moeten uitdragen, ze zitten er immers in opdracht van ons, althans dat denken de meeste mensen. Nu ben ik erachter dat deze stelling compleet debiel is. De politiek is in het leven geroepen om de bovenklasse van onze samenleving te beschermen.



Het is weer bal in Den haag!
De laatste weken staan in het teken van de verkiezingscampagnes, dat is aan alles te merken. Politici van links naar rechts rollen van rechts naar links over het beeldscherm om de onnozele kiezers ...
TIME2WAKEUP.ME

192 53 reacties 2 keer gedeeld

Leuk Reageren Delen

APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRE

Briefing

Beste deelnemer,

In het kader van mijn afstudeerscriptie voor de master 'Media and Communication' aan de Universiteit Twente, doe ik onderzoek naar de Tweede Kamerverkiezingen 2017. De vragenlijst voor mijn onderzoek begint met enkele algemene vragen over uzelf en de politiek. Vervolgens krijgt u zes nieuwsartikelen voorgelegd die op Facebook zijn verschenen ten tijde van de afgelopen verkiezingen. Het is de bedoeling dat u elk nieuwsartikel goed doorleest. Als u alle artikelen gelezen heeft, wordt u gevraagd om enkele stellingen te beantwoorden.

Ik verzoek u vriendelijk om alle vragen eerlijk te beantwoorden. Er zijn geen goede of foute antwoorden. Uw gegevens zullen anoniem worden verwerkt. Het invullen van de vragenlijst duurt ongeveer 15 minuten. U heeft altijd de mogelijkheid om voortijdig met het onderzoek te stoppen. Uw antwoorden zullen dan niet worden opgenomen in het onderzoek.

Alvast hartelijk bedankt voor uw medewerking!

Met vriendelijke groeten,
Yori Thijssen

Control variables

Demographic variables

- Geslacht (man, vrouw)
- Leeftijd
- Huidige opleiding (MBO, HBO, WO, anders)

Political preference

- Op welke partij heeft u gestemd tijdens de Tweede Kamerverkiezingen van 2017?
- Op een schaal van 1 tot 5 (waarbij 1 staat voor 'helemaal niet verbonden' en 5 voor 'sterk verbonden'), in welke mate voelt u zich verbonden met de partij waarop u gestemd hebt?
- Op een schaal van 1 tot 5 (waarbij 1 staat voor 'heel links' en 5 voor 'heel rechts'), hoe zou u uw politieke oriëntatie omschrijven?
- Op een schaal van 1 tot 5 (waarbij 1 staat voor 'conservatief' en 5 voor 'progressief'), hoe zou u uw politieke oriëntatie omschrijven?

Current events knowledge (measure: number of correct answers)

Wat is de functie van Lodewijk Asscher?

- a.) (Demissionair) Vicepremier (correct); b.) VN ambassadeur; c.) Burgemeester van Amsterdam; d.) Weet ik niet

Welke partij is voor hulp bij zelfdoding?

- a.) CDA; b.) D66 (correct); c.) Beide; d.) Geen van beide; e.) Weet ik niet

Welke partij vindt dat illegale immigranten die als kind naar Nederland zijn gekomen, in het land mogen blijven?

- a.) GroenLinks (correct); b.) VVD; c.) Beide; d.) Geen van beide; e.) Weet ik niet

Welke partij is tegen regulering van wietteelt?

- a.) SP; b.) PVV (correct); c.) Beide; d.) Geen van beide; e.) Weet ik niet

Afgelopen maand sprak de Nederlandse overheid haar steun uit voor een aanval van de Verenigde Staten op...

- a.) China; b.) Syrië (correct); c.) Rusland; d.) Israël; e.) Weet ik niet

Exposure to six (fake) news items

Depends on which experimental group the respondent is assigned to (see Appendix A).

Political attitudes (measure: mean score of constructs)

Political efficacy (measure: mean score of items)

Op een schaal van 1 tot 5 (waarbij 1 staat voor 'helemaal mee oneens' en 5 voor 'helemaal mee eens'), in hoeverre bent u het eens of oneens met de volgende stellingen:

- Ik beschouw mezelf als geschikt om deel te nemen aan het politieke debat.
- Ik heb het gevoel dat ik goed begrijp wat de belangrijke politieke problemen zijn waar ons land mee te maken heeft.
- Soms lijken politiek en de overheid zo ingewikkeld dat iemand zoals ik niet echt kan begrijpen wat er gaande is. (*reverse-coded*)
- Mensen als ik hebben niks te zeggen over wat de overheid doet. (*reverse-coded*)
- Ik denk niet dat overheidsambtenaren veel geven om wat mensen als ik denken. (*reverse-coded*)

Political alienation (measure: mean score of items)

Op een schaal van 1 tot 5 (waarbij 1 staat voor 'helemaal mee oneens' en 5 voor 'helemaal mee eens'), in hoeverre bent u het eens of oneens met de volgende stellingen:

- Het kan me echt niks schelen wie er als minister-president wordt gekozen. (*reverse-coded when measuring political attitudes*)
- Het maakt niet uit op wie je stemt tijdens de verkiezingen; het verandert de situatie toch niet. (*reverse-coded when measuring political attitudes*)

Political cynicism (measure: mean score of items)

Op een schaal van 1 tot 5 (waarbij 1 staat voor 'helemaal mee oneens' en 5 voor 'helemaal mee eens'), in hoeverre bent u het eens of oneens met de volgende stellingen:

- Wat politici zeggen, hangt af van wie luistert. (*reverse-coded when measuring political attitudes*)
- Deze verkiezingen hebben kiezers echt een kans gekregen om te kiezen tussen partijen met verschillende standpunten. (*reverse-coded when measuring political cynicism*)
- De lijsttrekkers hebben alleen controversiële uitspraken gedaan als ze achter stonden in de peilingen. (*reverse-coded when measuring political attitudes*)
- De lijsttrekkers hebben serieus gesproken over de grote problemen van ons land en boden gedetailleerde oplossingen voor deze problemen. (*reverse-coded when measuring political cynicism*)

News media literacy (measure: mean score of constructs)

Automatic versus mindful thought processing (measure: mean score of items)

Op een schaal van 1 tot 5 (waarbij 1 staat voor 'helemaal mee oneens' en 5 voor 'helemaal mee eens'), in hoeverre bent u het eens of oneens met de volgende stellingen:

- Ik hou er niet van om veel denkwerk te doen. (*reverse-coded*)
- Ik probeer situaties te vermijden waarin ik grondig over iets moet nadenken. (*reverse-coded*)
- Ik doe liever iets waarbij mijn denkvermogen wordt uitgedaagd in plaats van iets dat weinig aandacht vraagt.
- Ik heb liever complexe dan simpele problemen.
- Ergens diep en voor lange tijd over nadenken geeft mij weinig voldoening. (*reverse-coded*)

Media locus of control (measure: mean score of items)

Op een schaal van 1 tot 5 (waarbij 1 staat voor 'helemaal mee oneens' en 5 voor 'helemaal mee eens'), in hoeverre bent u het eens of oneens met de volgende stellingen:

- Ik heb controle over de informatie die ik krijg van nieuwsmedia.
- Als ik verkeerd wordt geïnformeerd door nieuwsmedia, ligt dat aan mezelf.
- Het belangrijkste wat mijn kennis over de wereld beïnvloedt, is wat ik zelf doe.
- Als ik aandacht besteed aan verschillende nieuwsbronnen, kan ik voorkomen om verkeerd geïnformeerd te worden.
- Als ik de juiste acties onderneem, kan ik geïnformeerd blijven.

News media knowledge (measure: number of correct answers)

Welke van de volgende kranten wordt over het algemeen geassocieerd met een politieke voorkeur voor rechts?

- a.) Algemeen Dagblad; b.) De Telegraaf (correct); c.) De Volkskrant; d.) NRC Handelsblad; e.) Weet ik niet

Wat is het belangrijkste verschil tussen een website als Google Nieuws en een website als NOS.nl wat betreft de rapportage van nieuws?

- a.) Google heeft geen verslaggevers die informatie verzamelen, de NOS heeft dat wel (correct); b.) Google focust op nationaal nieuws, terwijl de NOS focust op lokaal nieuws; c.) Google heeft meer redacteurs dan de NOS; d.) Google vraagt meer geld voor nieuws dan de NOS; e.) Weet ik niet

Wie heeft de meeste invloed op het nieuws dat op televisie wordt uitgezonden?

- a.) Individuele verslaggevers; b.) De nieuwslezer; c.) De cameraman; d.) De producent (correct); e.) Weet ik niet

De meeste mensen denken dat nieuws...

- a.) Een groter effect heeft op zichzelf dan op andere mensen; b.) Een groter effect heeft op andere mensen dan op zichzelf (correct); c.) Hetzelfde effect heeft op zichzelf en op anderen; d.) Op niemand effect heeft; e.) Weet ik niet

Als een onderwerp veel aandacht krijgt in het nieuws, zullen mensen die het nieuws volgen...

- a.) Sneller denken dat het onderwerp belangrijk is (correct); b.) Minder snel denken dat het onderwerp belangrijk is; c.) Niet sneller of minder snel denken dat het onderwerp belangrijk is; d.) Weet ik niet

News media skepticism (measure: mean score of items)

Op een schaal van 1 tot 5 (waarbij 1 staat voor 'helemaal mee oneens' en 5 voor 'helemaal mee eens'), in hoeverre bent u het eens of oneens met de volgende stellingen:

- Ik denk dat nieuwsmedia eerlijk zijn. *(reverse-coded)*
- Ik denk dat nieuwsmedia het hele verhaal vertellen. *(reverse-coded)*
- Ik denk dat nieuwsmedia correct zijn. *(reverse-coded)*
- Ik denk niet dat nieuwsmedia vertrouwd kunnen worden.
- Ik denk dat nieuwsmedia prioriteit toekennen aan het zijn van de eerste die een verhaal meldt.
- Ik denk dat nieuwsmedia in de weg staan van het oplossen van maatschappelijke problemen.
- Ik vertrouw erop dat de media het nieuws eerlijk melden. *(reverse-coded)*

Manipulation check (measure: mean score of items)

For each of the six (fake) news items the participant was exposed to

Op een schaal van 1 tot 5 (waarbij 1 staat voor 'helemaal mee oneens' en 5 voor 'helemaal mee eens'), in hoeverre bent u het eens of oneens met onderstaande beschrijvingen van dit nieuwsartikel:

- Eerlijk
- Onpartijdig
- Vertelt het hele verhaal
- Accuraat
- Kan worden vertrouwd

APPENDIX C: FACTOR ANALYSES

This appendix contains the factor analyses of each variable that was included in the present research, except for current events knowledge, because it consisted of only one item.

TABLE 10: ROTATED FACTOR MATRIX OF THE ITEMS MEASURING POLITICAL ATTITUDES

	Factor loadings		
	1	2	3
Het maakt niet uit op wie je stemt tijdens de verkiezingen; het verandert de situatie toch niet.	.72		
Het kan me echt niks schelen wie er als minister-president wordt gekozen.	.62		
Ik beschouw mezelf als geschikt om deel te nemen aan het politieke debat.	.58	-.56	
Ik denk niet dat overheidsambtenaren veel geven om wat mensen als ik denken.	.58	.41	
Mensen als ik hebben niks te zeggen over wat de overheid doet.	.57		
Ik heb het gevoel dat ik goed begrijp wat de belangrijke politieke problemen zijn waar ons land mee te maken heeft.	.52	-.62	
De lijsttrekkers hebben alleen controversiële uitspraken gedaan als ze achter stonden in de peilingen.		.57	
Wat politici zeggen, hangt af van wie luistert.		.50	
Soms lijken politiek en de overheid zo ingewikkeld dat iemand zoals ik niet echt kan begrijpen wat er gaande is.			.78
Deze verkiezingen hebben kiezers echt een kans gekregen om te kiezen tussen partijen met verschillende standpunten.			-.52

TABLE 11: ROTATED FACTOR MATRIX OF THE ITEMS MEASURING NEWS MEDIA LITERACY

	Factor loadings	
	1	2
Ik hou er niet van om veel denkwerk te doen.	.78	
Ik probeer situaties te vermijden waarin ik grondig over iets moet nadenken.	.78	
Ik doe liever iets waarbij mijn denkvermogen wordt uitgedaagd in plaats van iets dat weinig aandacht vraagt.	.69	
Ergens diep en voor lange tijd over nadenken geeft mij weinig voldoening.	.64	
Als ik de juiste acties onderneem, kan ik geïnformeerd blijven.	.50	
Ik heb liever complexe dan simpele problemen.	.49	
Als ik aandacht besteed aan verschillende nieuwsbronnen, kan ik voorkomen om verkeerd geïnformeerd te worden.		.64
Het belangrijkste wat mijn kennis over de wereld beïnvloedt, is wat ik zelf doe.		.54
Ik heb controle over de informatie die ik krijg van nieuwsmedia.		.52
Als ik verkeerd wordt geïnformeerd door nieuwsmedia, ligt dat aan mezelf.		.51

TABLE 12: COMPONENT MATRIX OF THE ITEMS MEASURING NEWS MEDIA SKEPTICISM

	Factor loadings
Ik denk dat nieuwsmedia correct zijn.	.89
Ik denk dat nieuwsmedia eerlijk zijn.	.86
Ik denk dat nieuwsmedia het hele verhaal vertellen.	.81
Ik vertrouw erop dat de media het nieuws eerlijk melden.	.80

APPENDIX D: DEMOGRAPHIC DIFFERENCES

TABLE 13: MULTIPLE LINEAR REGRESSION ANALYSIS EXAMING THE DIRECT EFFECTS AND INTERACTION EFFECTS OF FOUR MAIN VARIABLES AND TWO DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES IN PREDICTING POLITICAL ATTITUDES (STUDY 1, N = 99)

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
(constant)	3.24	.06	-	57.83	.000***
Direct effects					
Perceived <i>fakeness</i>	.12	.05	.26	2.31	.023*
News media literacy	.13	.05	.28	2.65	.010**
News media skepticism	-.14	.04	-.30	-3.38	.001***
Current events knowledge	.12	.05	.25	2.42	.018*
Gender	.04	.04	.09	.98	.329
Education	.01	.06	.01	.08	.933
Moderation effects					
PF x Gender	.00	.05	-.01	-.09	.927
PF x Education	-.09	.06	-.17	-1.59	.115
NML x Gender	.05	.05	.09	.90	.372
NML x Education	.05	.05	.08	.88	.382
NMS x Gender	-.04	.04	-.08	-.90	.373
NMS x Education	-.01	.05	-.03	-.32	.752
CEK x Gender	.00	.05	.00	-.03	.978
CEK x Education	.04	.05	.08	.84	.405
	<i>R</i> ²	<i>Adj. R</i> ²	<i>F</i>		
Model	.435	.340	4.61***		

* Significant at the 5% level; ** Significant at the 1% level; *** Significant at the 0.1% level

TABLE 14: MULTIPLE LINEAR REGRESSION ANALYSIS EXAMING THE DIRECT EFFECTS AND INTERACTION EFFECTS OF FOUR MAIN VARIABLES AND TWO POLITICAL ORIENTATION VARIABLES IN PREDICITING POLITICAL ATTITUDES (STUDY 1, N = 102)

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
(constant)	3.24	.05	-	68.36	.000***
Direct effects					
Perceived <i>fakeness</i>	.10	.05	.20	1.91	.059
News media literacy	.13	.05	.27	2.67	.009**
News media skepticism	-.13	.05	-.27	-2.74	.007**
Current events knowledge	.12	.05	.25	2.56	.012*
Left wing vs right wing	-.01	.05	-.01	-.12	.906
Conservative vs progressive	.02	.05	.05	.42	.674
Moderation effects					
PF x LR	.03	.05	.08	.67	.502
PF x CP	.03	.05	.07	.63	.528
NML x LR	.01	.05	.02	.17	.868
NML x CP	.01	.05	.03	.28	.779
NMS x LR	-.03	.04	-.08	-.78	.436
NMS x CP	.02	.05	.04	.42	.678
CEK x LR	-.06	.05	-.12	-1.25	.214
CEK x CP	-.02	.05	-.03	-.35	.726
	<i>R</i> ²	<i>Adj. R</i> ²	<i>F</i>		
Model	.413	.319	4.37***		

* Significant at the 5% level; ** Significant at the 1% level; *** Significant at the 0.1% level

TABLE 15: MULTIPLE LINEAR REGRESSION ANALYSIS EXAMING THE DIRECT EFFECTS AND INTERACTION EFFECTS OF FOUR MAIN VARIABLES AND TWO DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES IN PREDICITING POLITICAL ATTITUDES (STUDY 2, N = 98)

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
(constant)	3.33	.06	-	59.55	.000***
Direct effects					
Perceived <i>fakeness</i>	.10	.05	.21	1.87	.065
News media literacy	.09	.06	.19	1.65	.103
News media skepticism	-.03	.05	-.07	-.72	.476
Current events knowledge	.13	.06	.26	2.08	.040*
Gender	.08	.05	.16	1.65	.102
Education	.05	.06	.10	.78	.438
Moderation effects					
PF x Gender	-.06	.05	-.13	-1.16	.248
PF x Education	.01	.06	.01	.11	.912
NML x Gender	.02	.06	.04	.32	.754
NML x Education	-.08	.06	-.15	-1.41	.163
NMS x Gender	.00	.05	-.01	-.06	.949
NMS x Education	.00	.05	-.01	-.09	.926
CEK x Gender	.02	.06	.05	.42	.674
CEK x Education	.03	.06	.07	.60	.549
	<i>R</i> ²	<i>Adj. R</i> ²	<i>F</i>		
Model	.393	.291	3.84***		

* Significant at the 5% level; ** Significant at the 1% level; *** Significant at the 0.1% level

TABLE 16: MULTIPLE LINEAR REGRESSION ANALYSIS EXAMING THE DIRECT EFFECTS AND INTERACTION EFFECTS OF FOUR MAIN VARIABLES AND TWO POLITICAL ORIENTATION VARIABLES IN PREDICITING POLITICAL ATTITUDES (STUDY 2, N = 97)

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
(constant)	3.31	.05	-	74.32	.000***
Direct effects					
Perceived <i>fakeness</i>	.10	.05	.21	2.08	.041*
News media literacy	.11	.05	.23	2.06	.042*
News media skepticism	-.05	.05	-.10	-1.09	.280
Current events knowledge	.07	.05	.14	1.28	.205
Left wing vs right wing	.01	.04	.02	.24	.813
Conservative vs progressive	.11	.05	.23	2.27	.026*
Moderation effects					
PF x LR	.06	.05	.13	1.29	.200
PF x CP	.02	.06	.03	.27	.785
NML x LR	-.03	.05	-.06	-.59	.556
NML x CP	.00	.06	.00	.00	.998
NMS x LR	.04	.05	.09	.87	.390
NMS x CP	-.07	.05	-.14	-1.35	.182
CEK x LR	-.01	.06	-.02	-.23	.819
CEK x CP	-.03	.06	-.06	-.50	.619
	<i>R</i> ²	<i>Adj. R</i> ²	<i>F</i>		
Model	.402	.300	3.95***		

* Significant at the 5% level; ** Significant at the 1% level; *** Significant at the 0.1% level