

1495



RESEARCH INSIGHTS

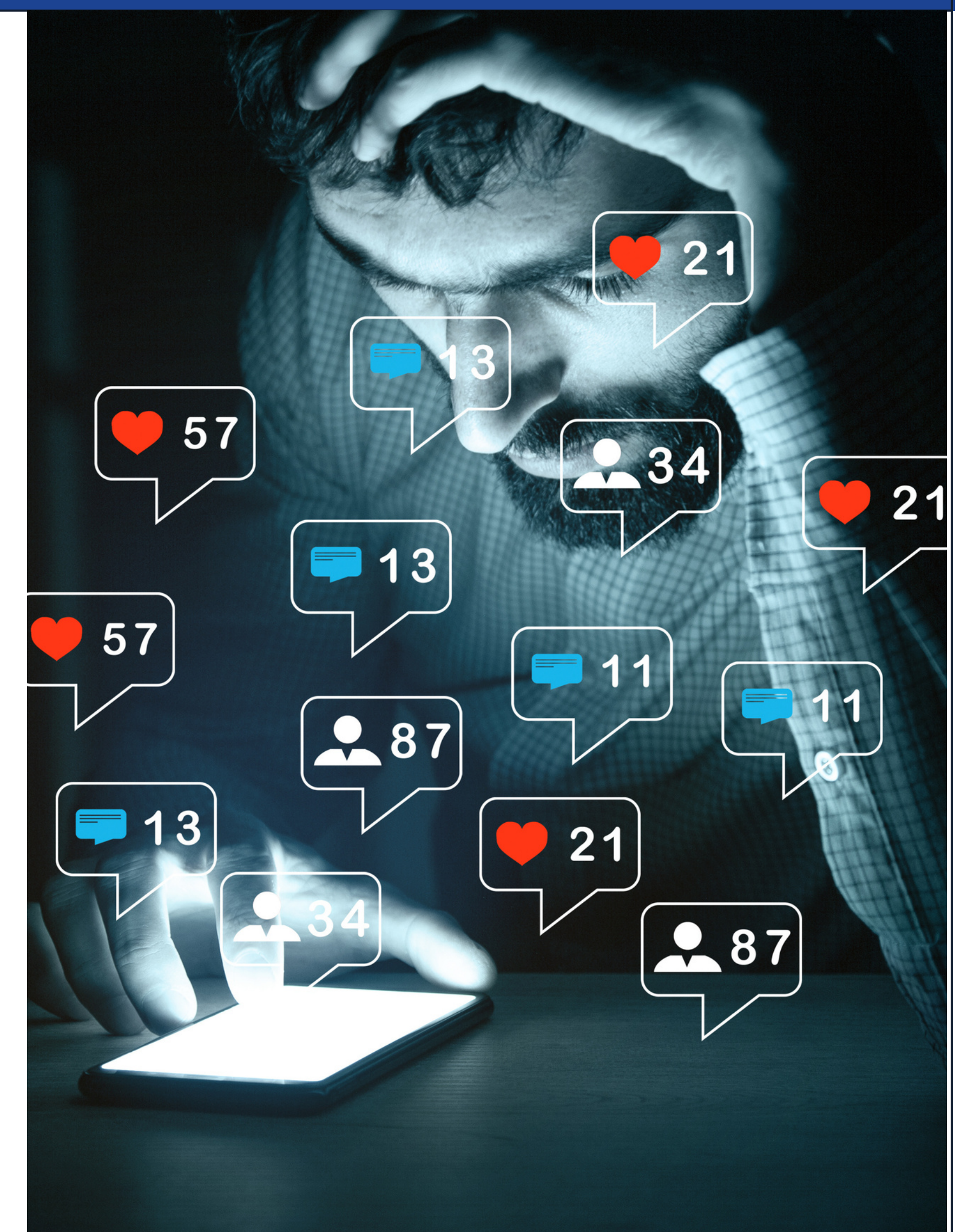
IDEOLOGICAL INFLUENCES ON FAKE NEWS: HOW RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL ORIENTATIONS AMPLIFY CONFIRMATION BIAS AND ATTENUATE SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

AUTHORS

Mirza Amin ul Haq, Wang Jing, Arsalan Mujahid Ghouri, Ngan Thi Luong, Ming Thi Hong Le, Syed Taha & Pervaiz Akhtar

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The rapid dissemination of fake news on social media poses unprecedented challenges to consumer trust and the legitimacy of businesses. This research investigates how exposure to fake news, moderated by religious and political orientations, exacerbates confirmation bias and reduces social media engagement, with subsequent effects on consumer perceptions of businesses. Across three experimental studies (N = 1,052), we integrate construal level theory, moral foundations theory, and elaboration likelihood model to propose and test a novel framework. Findings reveal that fake news triggers distinct cognitive and moral pathways - dependent on ideological strength - leading to heightened confirmation bias and reduced engagement (e.g., sharing, liking). Advanced analytics, including moderated mediation and latent profile analysis, underscore the heterogeneity of these effects. This study pioneers a multidimensional understanding of fake news in consumer behavior, offering actionable insights for marketers and policymakers to counter misinformation in ideologically polarized contexts.



KEYWORDS

- Fake news
- Confirmation bias
- Social media engagement
- Religious orientation
- Political orientation
- Consumer behaviour
- Moral foundations theory

RESEARCH RELEVANCE

- Social media has become a breeding ground for fake news, spreading false information at unprecedented speed and reshaping how people see the world.
- Fake news aligned with religious or political orientation significantly increases confirmation bias, with stronger effects among highly religious or politically views.
- Confirmation bias mediates a negative link between fake news exposure and social media engagement, such as liking and sharing.
- Ideological strength further amplifies this mediated pathway, intensifying confirmation bias while further attenuating engagement.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Haq, M. A. U., Jing, W., Ghouri, A. M., Luong, N. T., Le, M. T. H., Taha, S., & Akhtar, P. (2026). Ideological Influences on Fake News: How Religious and Political Orientations Amplify Confirmation Bias and Attenuate Social Media Engagement. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10767-026-09584-2>

“Belief-aligned fake news deepens confirmation bias and curbs social media engagement, with stronger ideological conviction amplifying the effects.”

The University of Aberdeen Business School Research Summary series distils the world-leading research at the School into short nontechnical reviews to highlight the importance and practicality of our research. Scan the QR code for more information on the School's research:

