Mediascapes journal 26/2025

Processing Fabricated Foreign Risks with AI Fact-Checker: The role of Third-Person Perception, Nationalism and Conspiratorial Orientation*

Qi Chen**
KU Leuven

Yicheng Zhu***
Beijing Normal University

The proliferation of fabricated information presents a global challenge, particularly when infused with conspiratorial narratives. As AI technologies become integrated into news production and verification, interfaces increasingly display labels such as “verified by a human” or “verified by AI,” altering how individuals evaluate risk-related content. Personality traits—especially blind nationalism and conspiratorial orientation—shape responses to such information, while perceptions of social norms and susceptibility (third-person perception, TPP) mediate these effects. This study investigates how verification source (human vs. AI) and personality traits interact to influence third-person perception and subsequent information-seeking intentions. In a between-subjects experiment (N = 506), participants were randomly assigned to read misinformation labeled as verified either by a human or by AI, then completed measures assessing perceived social norms, third-person perception (TPP), and information-seeking intentions. Results show that H1 was supported: blind nationalism consistently predicted higher perceived social norms of the foreign-risk misinformation in both conditions (human: $\beta = 0.465$, $p < .001$; AI: $\beta = 0.371$, $p < .001$). H3 was supported: higher perceived norms were associated with lower third-person perception in both conditions (human: $\beta = –0.244$, $p = .003$; AI: $\beta = –0.364$, $p < .001$). H4 was supported: lower TPP predicted stronger intentions to seek additional information (human: $\beta = –0.211$, $p < .001$; AI: $\beta = –0.208$, $p < .001$). The indirect pathway from nationalism to information-seeking via perceived norms and TPP was significant in both groups, with comparable indirect effects across conditions. In contrast, H2 was not supported: conspiratorial orientation had no significant effect on perceived norms or on any downstream outcome in either condition. These findings underscore that verification interface moderates the psychological pathways through which personal predispositions shape engagement with misinformation. The third-person effect emerges as a key mediator, translating normative perceptions into behavioral intentions. This study contributes to cross-contextual understanding of AI-mediated news credibility and offers practical insights for designing verification systems that enhance public resilience to misinformation.

Keywords: Conspiratorial Orientation, Nationalism, Fact-Checker, Third-Person Perception, Information Seeking

* Article submitted on 22/09/2025. Article accepted on 12/12/2025.
** qi.chen@student.kuleuven.be
*** yichengresearch@gmail.com

Introduction

Foreign-risk misinformation—false or misleading claims that portray multinational companies or foreign actors as threats—has become especially consequential. These narratives can inflame nationalist sentiments, undermine transnational trust, disrupt overseas operations of multinational corporations, and, more broadly, threaten the sociopolitical foundations of economic globalization.

In response, fact-checking has become an increasingly important safeguard in global information flows. Verification practices are themselves evolving: platforms now experiment with AI-supported tools such as Grok's AI-driven fact-checking features and X's (Twitter's) Community Notes, while others, such as Meta, have recently discontinued their U.S. Third-Party Fact-Checking program. These developments signal a shifting verification ecosystem where traditional journalist-driven review coexists—and at times competes—with computational approaches. As a result, fact-checking interfaces—whether human-labeled or AI-labeled—have become central components of contemporary misinformation governance, especially for contested foreign-risk claims.

Understanding public responses to these verification efforts requires attention to individual-level psychological mechanisms. Research shows that conspiracy beliefs vary across political and cultural contexts (Armaly et al., 2022; Lorenzo Posocco & Iarfhlaith Watson, 2024; Malešević et al., 2024; Jia & Luo, 2023; Mir & Siddiqui, 2024) and exert systematic influence on how people interpret risk-related narratives.

Misinformation acceptance is shaped not only by accuracy judgments but also by trust, identity, and perceived norms (Lan et al., 2025). During the COVID-19 "infodemic," audiences often accepted both consensus accounts and misinformed narratives simultaneously (Zhu et al., 2024), with lower trust in science predicting higher endorsement of misinformation (Kahan, 2017). These findings suggest that correcting foreign-risk misinformation involves more than supplying accurate information; it also requires understanding the cognitive heuristics and trust dispositions that guide public interpretation of fact-checks.

Third-person perception (TPP) offers a complementary lens for understanding how individuals evaluate foreign-risk misinformation. TPP holds that people typically judge others as more susceptible to misinformation than themselves (Davison, 1983; Gunther, 1992). In environments shaped by nationalism or conspiratorial thinking, perceived descriptive norms—beliefs about what others generally accept—can compress or expand this "self–other" gap.

At the same time, the RISP (Risk Information Seeking and Processing) model highlights the role of perceived social norms as motivational antecedents that shape how individuals process risk information and decide whether to seek additional information (Kahlor, 2007). Prior research shows that specific conspiracy schemas (e.g., GILC; Kahan et al., 2012; Lan et al., 2025; Zhu et al., 2024) can become socially legible and normatively communicated, binding identity to belief.

Integrating these perspectives, the present study pursues two analytical objectives:

Model how nationalism, conspiratorial orientation, and perceived social norms jointly shape TPP judgments and subsequent information-seeking intentions when individuals encounter foreign-risk misinformation. Compare model path strength and viability across two fact-checking interface conditions (AI-labeled vs. human-labeled).

By embedding these comparisons within broader dynamics of nationalism, conspiratorial orientation, and subjective norm perception, the study advances understanding of how fact-checking interfaces interact with cognitive heuristics derived from both the RISP and TPP traditions. The findings contribute to research on foreign risk misinformation governance and offer practical implications for platform design, fact-checking strategies, and media literacy initiatives, with particular relevance for the Chinese information environment.

Literature Review

Nationalism and Perceived Social Norms of Foreign-Risk Misinformation

Nationalism has long been theorized as a double-edged orientation in mass communication research. On one hand, it fosters solidarity, civic engagement, and symbolic attachment to the nation-state (Billings et al., 2013). On the other, it can cultivate exclusionary attitudes, xenophobia, and susceptibility to narratives that position outgroups as threats (Martikainen & Sakki, 2021). In the domain of misinformation, these exclusionary aspects are particularly consequential: when misinformation invokes foreign adversaries, nationalist orientations provide a ready-made interpretive frame that legitimizes and amplifies such content (Flew & Iosifidis, 2020).

A robust body of scholarship documents how national identity interacts with risk communication. Guan's (2020) analysis of conspiratorial beliefs in China illustrates how nationalist rhetoric frequently intersects with populist and conspiratorial discourses, generating a "foreign-plot" schema in which outside powers are cast as malevolent actors. This schema is not merely an elite-driven rhetorical device; rather, it becomes a recognizable narrative structure that ordinary citizens draw upon when processing news and rumors about international issues. By attributing risk to foreign malfeasance, nationalist frames increase the plausibility of otherwise questionable claims and feed into a broader communicative climate that regards suspicion of outsiders as normative (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010). In this sense, nationalism both supplies the lens through which misinformation is judged credible and reinforces a perception that "most people" endorse such judgments (Rowling et al., 2015).

The mechanism linking nationalism to perceived norms can be understood through the concept of descriptive norm perception: individuals estimate what most others believe based on repeated exposure to cues in their environment. Nationalist discourses are often amplified in mainstream media and echoed by social elites, especially in times of diplomatic conflict or crisis (Whitmeyer, 2002). When these discourses align with misinformation narratives—for instance, blaming a foreign country for economic decline, environmental

hazards, or health crises—the perceived consensus around such claims intensifies (Shayegh et al., 2022). Repeated exposure fosters pluralistic ignorance, where individuals who may personally doubt the claim nevertheless assume that "everyone else" accepts it. Over time, this dynamic transforms isolated rumors into perceived social norms, especially in digitally networked spaces where algorithmic curation favors emotionally charged, identity-reinforcing content (Mihelj & Jiménez-Martínez, 2021).

Importantly, nationalism's effect on norm perception is not simply a matter of persuasion but of social identity signaling. Communication scholars have shown that when political or cultural identities are salient, individuals often align their expressed beliefs with in-group norms, regardless of their private attitudes (Kahan, 2015; Kunda, 1990). This identity-protective cognition means that people who identify strongly as nationalists may publicly endorse foreign-risk misinformation as a way of affirming loyalty to the nation, even if privately ambivalent. Such public alignment then becomes visible evidence for others, reinforcing the cycle of perceived consensus. The result is a self-reinforcing loop: nationalist identity increases openness to foreign-risk misinformation, public endorsement signals group loyalty, and the accumulation of such signals makes the norm perception of misinformation acceptance even stronger.

It is important to consider the cultural context: Chinese nationalism and public trust in AI technology likely shape how fact-checking cues are received. Chinese society exhibits remarkably higher trust in AI compared to Western countries. An Edelman survey found that 87% of Chinese respondents express confidence in AI, versus roughly one-third or less in the US and Europe. This trust gap reflects differing media environments – in China, state-led narratives portray AI as a pillar of national progress, fostering optimism and acceptance of AI-driven solutions (Al Jazeera, 2025) . Nationalistic sentiment can amplify this effect: citizens proud of China's tech advancements may view an "AI-verified" label as credible and domestically trustworthy, aligning with their national pride. By contrast, Western publics, often more skeptical of AI in media roles, might question an algorithm's bias or transparency. Indeed, only 17% of Americans welcome greater AI use in daily life, compared to over half of Chinese respondents. These differences suggest that in China's media landscape, an AI fact-checker might be afforded a level of public trust – and perhaps perceived impartiality – that would not be assumed elsewhere. Chinese nationalism's influence further means that fact-checks congruent with national narratives (e.g., debunking foreign threats) could resonate strongly(Semafor, 2025). In sum, the Chinese public's high AI trust and nationalist information norms create a distinctive context, one where an AI fact-checking interface may enjoy legitimacy and uptake in ways not mirrored in Western settings.

In sum, prior research suggests that nationalism, particularly in its exclusionary or "blind" form, is positively associated with the perception that misinformation about foreign risks is widely accepted by society. Nationalist frames legitimize threat-based misinformation, encourage public alignment with group narratives, and elevate the perceived descriptive norm that others share these beliefs. On this basis, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: Nationalism is positively associated with perceived social norm of foreign-risk misinformation.

Conspiratorial Orientation and Perceived Social Norms of Foreign-Risk Misinformation

If nationalism supplies a collective identity lens through which foreign-risk misinformation is rendered plausible, conspiratorial orientation provides the cognitive style that makes such misinformation compelling (Kim & Lee, 2024; Romer & Jamieson, 2022). Communication and psychology literatures converge in defining conspiratorial orientation as a relatively stable tendency to interpret events as the result of secret plots orchestrated by powerful actors (Douglas et al., 2017). This disposition extends beyond specific conspiracy theories; it reflects a generalized mindset characterized by suspicion toward official accounts, heightened sensitivity to perceived threats, and a search for hidden explanations.

Several mechanisms explain why conspiratorial orientation should foster the perception that misinformation about foreign risks is not only believable but socially normative. First is the epistemic function. Conspiracy thinking thrives in environments of uncertainty and crisis, offering seemingly coherent narratives that simplify complexity and restore a sense of causal order (Sutton & Douglas, 2020). When individuals high in conspiratorial orientation encounter misinformation implicating foreign actors—whether about disease origins, cyberattacks, or economic sabotage—they are primed to accept such accounts because they fit the broader script of hidden manipulation by outsiders. Crucially, these individuals also tend to believe that others share their suspicions. Studies of conspiracy endorsement during the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, show that mistrust in science and institutions strongly predicts belonging to “misinformed” or “both consensus-and-misinformed” belief profiles (van Mulukom et al., 2020). Perceiving oneself in the company of likeminded skeptics reinforces the sense that conspiracy-based misinformation is a widely held norm.

Second is the social identity function. Conspiracy beliefs often provide group-based cohesion, delineating “truth-seekers” from the gullible mainstream. In such cases, conspiratorial orientation not only sustains belief in foreign-risk misinformation but also frames adherence as a patriotic stance (Daunt et al., 2023). The more people see conspiracy narratives being circulated in their online networks, the more they interpret this circulation as evidence of social consensus. The communicative environment—particularly on social media platforms that privilege sensational or counter-hegemonic content—magnifies this perception by algorithmically exposing users to like-minded posts, producing what appears to be widespread agreement.

Third, conspiratorial orientation is linked to a pervasive distrust of authority and mainstream media, which weakens the corrective impact of fact-checking or expert refutations (Ternullo, 2022; Van Prooijen et al., 2022). Individuals with high conspiracy orientation often reject “official” corrections as further evidence of cover-ups, thereby reducing the perceived legitimacy of alternative viewpoints. When mainstream challenges are dismissed, the visible survival of misinformation in the communicative ecosystem is interpreted as tacit validation: if the narrative persists despite denial, it must resonate with what many others believe. This logic fuels the perception of descriptive norms even in the absence of accurate indicators of public opinion.

Taken together, these mechanisms underscore why conspiratorial orientation is more than an individual cognitive bias; it is a social force that actively shapes perceptions of what others believe. The epistemic need for certainty, the identity-protective benefits of "insider knowledge," and the distrust of corrective institutions converge to transform foreign-risk misinformation into a perceived normative stance. Accordingly, we advance the second hypothesis:

H2: Conspiratorial orientation is positively associated with perceived social norm of foreign-risk misinformation.

Perceived Social Norms and the Third-Person Perception

The third-person perception (TPP) describes the tendency for individuals to judge media content as exerting stronger effects on others than on themselves (Davison, 1983). Its behavioral corollary, the third-person effect (TPE), has been documented across diverse issues—from violent media and pornography to political advertising and misinformation—and often manifests in support for restrictive policies aimed at "protecting" others (Perloff, 2009). The canonical explanations for TPP emphasize two psychological mechanisms: ego-enhancement, whereby individuals protect their self-image as rational and immune to influence, and social desirability, whereby they distance themselves from "undesirable" content presumed to affect less discerning audiences (Gunther, 1992). Yet this line of research has only rarely incorporated the role of perceived descriptive norms—that is, one's sense of what most others believe—when evaluating self/other media effects.

Why should perceived social norms of foreign-risk misinformation matter for TPP? At its core, TPP relies on a comparative judgment: I am less influenced than they are. This comparative gap becomes meaningful when the audience believes that others are vulnerable and credulous. If, however, an individual perceives that foreign-risk misinformation is widely accepted—that it represents not a marginal belief but a mainstream norm—the basis for exaggerating others' susceptibility weakens. Under strong perceived norms, individuals may view acceptance of misinformation as socially typical rather than deviant. As a result, the distinction between self and others collapses, attenuating the TPP gap.

This logic aligns with social-norms theory in communication, which argues that perceptions of collective endorsement guide individual attitudes and behaviors. When misinformation about foreign risks is framed as common sense or patriotic truth, distancing oneself from its influence may no longer serve the ego-enhancement function. Instead, acknowledging shared susceptibility—or at least refraining from asserting immunity—becomes a way to maintain group alignment. In other words, strong perceived norms convert what might otherwise be a stigmatized belief into a socially desirable one. If accepting foreign-risk misinformation is seen as the normative stance of "people like us," then claiming that others are more affected than oneself no longer yields reputational benefits.

Empirical evidence supports this reasoning. For example, Koo et al. (2021) found that third-person perceptions and perceived norms jointly shape how people respond to misinformation, implying that normative beliefs can modulate the usual self–other bias in perceived influence. In the context of public health myths, individuals who perceive a false claim as widely accepted tend to exhibit a smaller third-person perception gap – rather than viewing "others" as more gullible, they judge the influence on self and others to be more comparable (Oktavianus & Bautista, 2023). Likewise, in polarized political environments where false claims circulate within like-minded networks, the TPP effect is often attenuated because misinformation becomes viewed as a normative group belief rather than a deviant opinion. This echo chamber dynamic, akin to a false consensus effect, leads individuals to assume that many others share the same misinformation, reducing the incentive to assert one's own immunity (Luzsa & Mayr, 2021). In sum, strong descriptive norms appear to erode the self–other disparity central to TPP. Although prior studies did not focus specifically on foreign-risk narratives, the underlying mechanism should be parallel: perceived norms shape the desirability and diagnosticity of claiming immunity from influence.

Thus, we contend that perceived social norms of foreign-risk misinformation are negatively associated with TPP. As the perception grows that misinformation acceptance is typical and widely shared, the motivational basis for asserting greater immunity than others erodes. Instead of accentuating the self–other difference, individuals may converge in their judgments of susceptibility. This reasoning leads us to propose the third hypothesis:

H3: Perceived social norm of foreign-risk misinformation is negatively associated with third-person perception (TPP).

Third-Person Perception and Information-Seeking Intention

The final link in our conceptual chain connects third-person perception (TPP) to information-seeking behaviors. Decades of TPP research has established that the "self–other gap" in perceived media effects is not a purely cognitive quirk; it carries behavioral implications. When individuals believe that others are more vulnerable to harmful media messages, they often endorse interventions to mitigate those effects—supporting censorship, regulations, or corrective campaigns (Perloff, 2009). Yet the same comparative logic can also suppress proactive engagement at the individual level: if one perceives oneself as relatively immune, the incentive to seek out additional information diminishes.

The mechanism here is straightforward. Information-seeking is often motivated by personal relevance and perceived vulnerability. In risk communication, individuals turn to additional sources when they feel uncertain, exposed, or at risk (Griffin, Dunwoody, & Neuwirth, 1999). But TPP reinforces the opposite inference: "others are more misled than I am". By externalizing vulnerability, individuals reduce their sense of personal need to investigate further. Instead, they may assume that corrective responsibility lies with institutions or that the greater danger resides in others' susceptibility, not their own. This logic yields a negative association between TPP and future information-seeking intentions.

Decades of research suggest that people who think others are more affected by harmful media content often support remedies for those others while neglecting to change their own behavior. Recent misinformation studies confirm this pattern. Chung and Kim (2021) showed that when individuals were presented with a fact-check debunking a false news story, their third-person perception increased, which in turn significantly reduced their willingness to share the misinformation on social media. Similarly, in a health communication context, a heightened third-person perception has been linked to lower personal intentions to correct or verify false information – even as those same individuals remain supportive of corrective interventions aimed at "gullible" others (Oktavianus & Bautista, 2023). This outward-focused response reflects an illusory superiority bias: people tend to overestimate their own immunity to misinformation and thus see less need to seek out additional information or fact-check for themselves (Corbu et al., 2025). In other words, the protective impulse operates outwardly rather than inwardly, directing efforts toward safeguarding others while one's own proactive information-seeking is curtailed.

The communication environment further reinforces this displacement of responsibility. Algorithmic personalization and online echo chambers filter exposure in ways that rarely challenge users' existing beliefs, fostering a false sense of consensus (Luzsa & Mayr, 2021). Within these insular networks, debunking efforts often fail to penetrate. For instance, Zollo et al. (2017) found that on Facebook, fact-checking posts were predominantly consumed by users in pro-science communities, whereas members of conspiracy-driven communities scarcely engaged with those corrections. This means that those most susceptible to the misinformation often do not see the debunking at all, blunting its corrective potential. In such settings, individuals confident in their own judgment remain surrounded by like-minded content, which only reinforces their perspective and further diminishes their perceived need to verify information or seek out additional sources. TPP thus dovetails with these structural features of digital media: by keeping people in information silos where their lack of personal vigilance is never challenged, it ultimately dampens the likelihood of future information-seeking even when foreign-risk misinformation carries real social or political consequences. In sum, the literature suggests that TPP attenuates the perceived necessity of personal information acquisition. By framing oneself as less vulnerable than others, individuals reduce their motivation to pursue additional knowledge about foreign risks. Thus, we propose the fourth hypothesis:

H4: Third-person perception is negatively associated with future information-seeking intention about the foreign risk

Integrating the abovementioned mechanisms, the study also tends to address the following research question:

RQ: How do individual dispositions—specifically nationalism and conspiratorial orientation—interact with fact-checking cues to shape perceived social norms of foreign-risk misinformation, and how do these perceived norms, in turn, influence third-person perception and intentions to seek additional information about foreign risks?

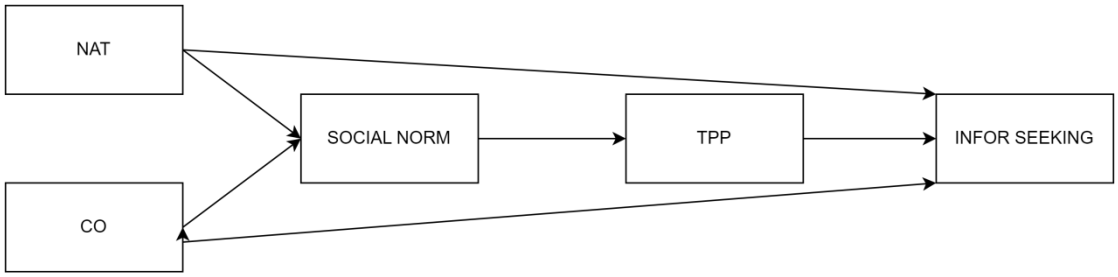

Figure1 - Main model

Method

Sample and Sampling Method

The sample was recruited through a major Chinese online panel provider (Wenjuanxing, www.wjx.cn) using quota sampling based on the sixth national population census of China (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2018) Quotas were set to match the adult population in Beijing in terms of age, gender, and education level. Survey invitations were distributed to a representative online panel, and participants were randomly assigned to one of two experimental conditions.

For the purpose of the current study, we utilized data from two conditions: the AI fact-checker group (n = 252) and the human fact-checker group (n = 254). These two groups viewed the same misinformation relating to foreign risks, differing only in the label indicating the identity of the fact-checker. Participants who failed the manipulation check (i.e., could not correctly identify who had fact-checked the news article) were retained for robustness purposes but flagged for sensitivity analysis.

The experiment was conducted in two waves, from September 9 to 28, 2024, and from January 13 to 19, 2025. Participants completed a series of questions before and after the stimulus exposure, including demographic information, personality measures (nationalism and conspiratorial orientation), and outcome variables such as third-person perception and information-seeking intention.

Experimental Design

This study employed a between-subjects experimental design with a single manipulated factor: the identity of the fact-checker (AI vs. human). Participants were randomly assigned to view a conspiracy-themed news article that included either an AI fact-checker label or a human fact-checker label, indicating who had verified the content.

The stimulus materials consisted of a news screenshot adapted from real-world misinformation, covering topics related to foreign risk conspiracy narratives (e.g., Pfizer’s alleged role in mutating the Covid-19 virus). The core content of the article–including the

headline, body text, and visual layout−remained identical across conditions. Only the verification label was varied: one version displayed the message "This article has been verified by our AI system," while the other showed "This article has been verified by professional human fact-checkers". The screenshot was designed to simulate a typical mobile news app interface familiar to Chinese users (e.g., Tencent News or Toutiao). The verification label appeared in simplified Chinese and was positioned between the article headline and body text. It was rendered in bold font, slightly larger than the body text, to ensure prominence and visibility within the layout.

Participants were instructed to carefully read the news content, after which they completed a structured questionnaire measuring their personality traits (nationalism, conspiratorial orientation), perceived social norm, third-person perception, and intention to seek further information. Prior to exposure, all participants answered baseline demographic questions and control variables (e.g., prior knowledge of the topic).

Core Variable Measurement (Independent Variables)

This study's independent variables primarily include the fact-checker identity and two core personality traits: conspiratorial orientation and blind nationalism.

Fact-Checker Identity

This is the core independent variable of this study, operationalized as a dichotomous variable. For the purpose of this study, we primarily utilized data from the AI fact-checker group and the human fact-checker group. This variable was manipulated through distinct verification labels clearly displayed within the news articles, such as "This article has been verified by our AI system" or "This article has been verified by professional human fact-checkers". In data coding, the AI fact-checker group was coded as 0, and the human fact-checker group was coded as 1.

Conspiratorial Orientation (CO)

The measurement of this personality trait aligns with the conceptualization and operationalization proposed by Kim and Lee (2024). The scale comprises three dimensions (i.e., conspiratorial realism, susceptibility to popular folklore, and workplace conspiratorial realism), totaling 11 items. Each item was measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = absolutely disagree, 7 = absolutely agree). An illustrative item is: "Those people in power will use shadowy means to gain profit or advantage rather than lose it" (M = 4.62, SD = 1.18).

Blind Nationalism

This variable was measured based on the "nationalism" scale adapted from Kosterman and Feshbach (1989) which consists of four items. They were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = absolutely disagree, 5 = absolutely agree), as asking for agreement on statements including "People should support their country even if the country is in the wrong", "I would rather be Chinese than a citizen of any other country in the world", "The world would be a better place if people from other countries were more like the Chinese" and "Overall, China is better than most other countries". directly reflecting a tendency towards unconditional and "blind" national pride and affiliation (M = 4.44, SD = 0.65).

Endogenous Variable

The endogenous variables in this study include third-person perception and future information-seeking intention, incorporating perceived social norms as a related or mediating variable.

Perceived Social Norm of Foreign Risk Misinformation

These variable measures participants' perceived subjective norms regarding whether they should stay informed about misinformation related to foreign risks. Following the RISP framework (Kahlor, 2007), we operationalized norms using injunctive items that capture perceived social approval and expectations. Four items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree), including "People whose opinions I value would approve of my staying on top of information about Boeing's potential role in Flight 5735 crash" and "It is expected of me that I seek information about Boeing's potential role in Flight 5735 crash" (M = 3.65, SD = 0.81). Although social norms can include descriptive elements, our focus on injunctive norms aligns with established RISP operationalization and the construct's theorized role as a motivational antecedent of information-seeking intention.

Third-Person Perception (TPP)

This serves as a core mediating variable in our study. TPP quantifies an individual's tendency to perceive media messages as having a lesser impact on themselves compared to others, particularly those with differing viewpoints. It is measured by comparing two components:

Perceived News Effect on Self: Comprises 1 item, measured on a 5-point Likert scale (from "None" to "A Great Deal"). An example is: "How much influence do you think the news article has on yourself?" (M = 3.19, SD = 1.09).

Perceived News Effect on Others: Comprises 2 items, also measured on a 5-point Likert scale (from "None" to "A Great Deal"). Examples include: "How much influence do you think the news article has on your friends?" and "How much influence do you think the news article has on other people?" (M =3.64, SD = 0.92).

Future Information Seeking Intention

This variable assesses participants' willingness to actively seek additional information after reading the news article. It includes 3 items, measured on a 5-point Likert scale (from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree"). Illustrative items are: "I plan to seek more information about it in the future," "I intend to find out more about it," and "In the future, I will try to seek as much information as I can about it" (M = 3.38, SD = 1.03).

Reliability and Validity Assessment

All multi-item scales demonstrated good internal consistency reliability (see Table 1). The conspiratorial orientation scale yielded a Cronbach's α of 0.87, composite reliability CR = 0.88, and average variance extracted AVE = 0.52; the nationalism scale showed α = 0.85, CR = 0.86, and AVE = 0.55; the perceived social norms scale had α = 0.81, CR = 0.83, and AVE = 0.51; the third person perspective scale had α = 0.84, CR = 0.86, and AVE = 0.63 and the information seeking intention scale had α = 0.89, CR = 0.90, and AVE = 0.63. All AVE values exceeded 0.50 and CR > 0.70, indicating adequate convergent validity for each construct.

Table 1- Inter-Construct Correlation Matrix

Construct	*NAT*	*CO*	*SOCIAL NORM*	*TPP*	*INFOR SEEKING*
NAT	α = .85 CR = .86 AVE = .55	–.018	.294***	–.098*	.291***
CO		α = .87 CR = .88 AVE = .52	.121*	–.058	.079
SOCIAL NORM			α = .81 CR = .83 AVE = .51	–.234**	.583***
TPP				α = .84 CR = .86 AVE = .63	–.216**
INFOR SEEKING					α = .89 CR = .90 AVE = .63

*Note : Values in parentheses are Cronbach's α reliability coefficients; * p < .05, ** p < .01.*

Analytical Strategy

Given the complexity of the theoretical framework–encompassing core personality traits, psychological mechanisms (specifically the third-person effect), and behavioral intentions–and the need to compare paths across different fact-checker identities (AI vs. human), the core analytical approach of this study will utilize path analysis. Data will be processed and analyzed using Multi-Group Analysis in IBM SPSS AMOS software. This method enables simultaneous examination of complex direct and indirect effects and facilitates the comparison of model parameters across groups, thereby effectively addressing the central research question: how do different types of information verification interfaces change the pathways through which personality traits influence the third-person effect and information-related behaviors?

To assess whether the identity of the fact-checker (AI vs. human) changes these pathways, this study will compare the strength and significance of key paths between groups–such as the influence of blind nationalism on perceived social norms, and the effect of conspiratorial thinking on both third-person perception and information-seeking behavior. By examining the statistical significance and magnitude of these path coefficients, we aim to compare how these influences change as the identity of the fact-checker shifts.

Moreover, the study will investigate the mediating role of the third-person effect in the relationship between personality traits and information-seeking intentions, employing the Bootstrap method to test the significance of both direct and indirect effects. Demographic variables–including age, gender, education level, and household income–as well as participants' prior knowledge, will be included as covariates to control for their potential influence on endogenous variables. Blind nationalism and conspiratorial thinking, as key personality constructs, will be central to the model.

Results

Structural Equation Model Fit Results

The structural equation analysis of the proposed model indicated that the default model yielded a chi-square value of 8.689 (df = 4, p = .013), with a chi-square/degrees of freedom ratio of 4.344, slightly above conventional recommendations but still within an acceptable range. The root mean square residual (RMR = .034) and overall fit indices (GFI = .993, AGFI = .899) suggest good correspondence between the model and the observed data.

The human-checker structural model showed excellent fit to the data: $\chi^2(4) = 6.389$, p = 0.173 (CMIN/DF = 1.60), RMSEA = 0.036 (90% CI [0.000, 0.089], PCLOSE = 0.72), SRMR = 0.022, GFI = 0.997, AGFI = 0.991, NFI = 0.993, IFI = 0.995, CFI = 0.995, PNFI = 0.782, PCFI = 0.796, and RMR = 0.034. Hoelter's critical N was 523 at α = 0.05 and 749 at α = 0.01. All indices exceed conventional thresholds (e.g. RMSEA < 0.08, CFI $\approx$ 1.0, SRMR < 0.08), indicating a very good model fit.

The AI-checker model also fit well by standard criteria. For example, $\chi^2(4) = 8.51$ (p = .074; CMIN/DF = 2.13), RMSEA = 0.058 (90% CI [.000, .127], PCLOSE = .22), SRMR = 0.025, GFI = 0.991, AGFI = 0.904, NFI = 0.969, IFI = 0.975, CFI = 0.970, PNFI = 0.720, PCFI = 0.735, RMR = 0.035. Hoelter's N = 505 at $\alpha = 0.05$ and 685 at $\alpha = 0.01$. These values meet conventional fit criteria (CFI $\geq$ .97, RMSEA < .08, etc.), indicating acceptable to good fit.

Overall, the structural equation model demonstrates adequate absolute fit, incremental fit, and parsimony, providing a reliable basis for subsequent path analyses and hypothesis testing.

Test of the Main Model

Path analysis was conducted to examine the hypothesized main model (see Figure 1). Maximum likelihood estimation with robust standard errors and 5,000 bootstrap resamples was employed to account for potential violations of the normality assumption, ensuring that the parameter estimates were not biased by non-normal distributions of the observed variables (Finney & DiStefano, 2006). Error variance for each observed variable was specified based on its sample variance and reliability estimate, following established procedures to control for measurement error (Schumacker & Lomax, 2010). Participants' demographic variables, including age and gender, as well as social desirability and prior exposure to foreign-risk information, were included as covariates for all paths. Correlations among key variables are summarized in Table 1. The model demonstrated acceptable fit across indices, with $\chi^2(4) = 6.389$, p = .173, CMIN/DF = 1.597, RMSEA = 0.036, 90% CI [.000, .089], SRMR = 0.022, CFI = 0.995, and TLI = 0.978, indicating that the hypothesized structure adequately represented the observed data.

In the human-checker condition, nationalism (NAT) was a significant predictor of perceived social norms of foreign-risk misinformation (SocNorm), with a standardized coefficient of b = 0.465, SE = 0.084, p < .001, 95% CI [0.299, 0.631], thereby providing strong support for H1. This finding aligns with theoretical expectations that heightened nationalistic sentiments, particularly blind nationalism, increase individuals' alignment with and perception of socially endorsed misinformation concerning foreign risks. In contrast, conspiratorial orientation (CO) did not significantly predict SocNorm in this group, b = 0.035, SE = 0.035, p = .315, 95% CI [-0.034, 0.104], indicating that the hypothesized effect of a general conspiratorial mindset on social norm perception (H2) was not supported. This suggests that, while conspiratorial tendencies may shape broader information processing, they do not directly translate into heightened perceptions of normative acceptance for misinformation when evaluated in the context of human-mediated fact-checking.

Perceived social norms (SocNorm) negatively influenced third-person perception (TPP) in the human-checker condition, b = -0.244, SE = 0.083, p = .003, 95% CI [-0.406, -0.082], confirming H3. Participants who believed that others endorsed misinformation were less likely to perceive themselves as uniquely susceptible, consistent with established social-

cognitive mechanisms of third-person perception (Davison, 1983; Gunther, 1992). This effect highlights the psychological process whereby normative beliefs about misinformation create a perceived social consensus that paradoxically decreases individuals' estimation of their own susceptibility. Third-person perception in turn negatively predicted future information seeking intentions regarding foreign risks (InfoSeek), b = -0.211, SE = 0.048, p < .001, 95% CI [-0.307, -0.115], confirming H4. These results collectively suggest a mediational pathway in which nationalism increases perceived social norms, which then influence TPP and ultimately shape information-seeking behaviors.

The direct effect of nationalism on information seeking intention was also significant, b = 0.495, SE = 0.088, p < .001, 95% CI [0.323, 0.667]. The total effect of nationalism on information seeking, integrating both direct and indirect paths through SocNorm and TPP, was positive and significant, b = 0.519, SE = 0.099, 95% CI [0.324, 0.711], indicating that participants with stronger nationalistic sentiments exhibited increased intention to further seek information about foreign risks, despite the mitigating influence of third-person perception. In contrast, CO did not show significant direct or indirect effects on information seeking, emphasizing the specific salience of nationalism over generalized conspiratorial orientation in shaping normative and behavioral responses in this context.

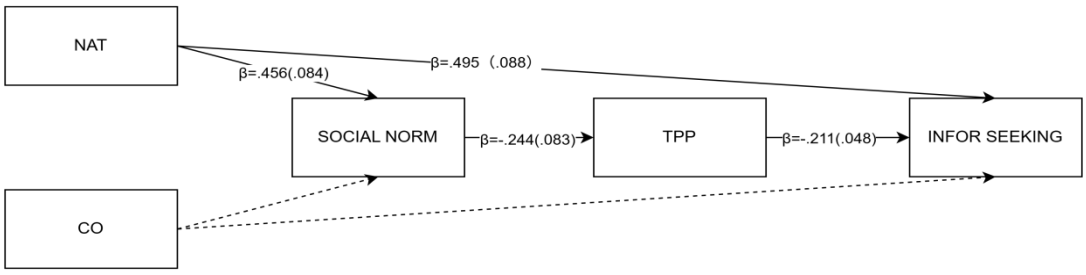

Figure 2 - Model results (Human-checker condition)

In the AI-checker condition, similar patterns emerged. Nationalism remained a significant predictor of perceived social norms, b = 0.371, SE = 0.085, p < .001, 95% CI [0.192, 0.537], providing further support for H1 across both checker types. Again, CO did not significantly affect SocNorm, b = 0.028, SE = 0.035, p = .419, 95% CI [-0.050, 0.117], suggesting that conspiratorial orientation has limited influence when information is evaluated through AI-based verification. SocNorm negatively predicted TPP, b = -0.364, SE = 0.077, p < .001, 95% CI [-0.516, -0.209], supporting H3, and TPP negatively predicted InfoSeek, b = -0.208, SE = 0.051, p < .001, 95% CI [-0.326, -0.094], supporting H4. The direct effect of nationalism on information seeking intention was significant, b = 0.30, SE = 0.073, p < .001, 95% CI [0.16, 0.44], indicating that even after accounting for the indirect pathway through social norms and third-person perception, stronger nationalistic sentiments independently predicted greater intention to seek further information about foreign risks. The total effect of nationalism on information seeking intention in the AI-checker group was b = 0.329, SE = 0.098, 95% CI [0.101, 0.521], lower than in the human-checker group, which suggests that

AI-mediated fact-checking may attenuate, but not eliminate, the influence of nationalist sentiments on subsequent information-seeking behaviors.

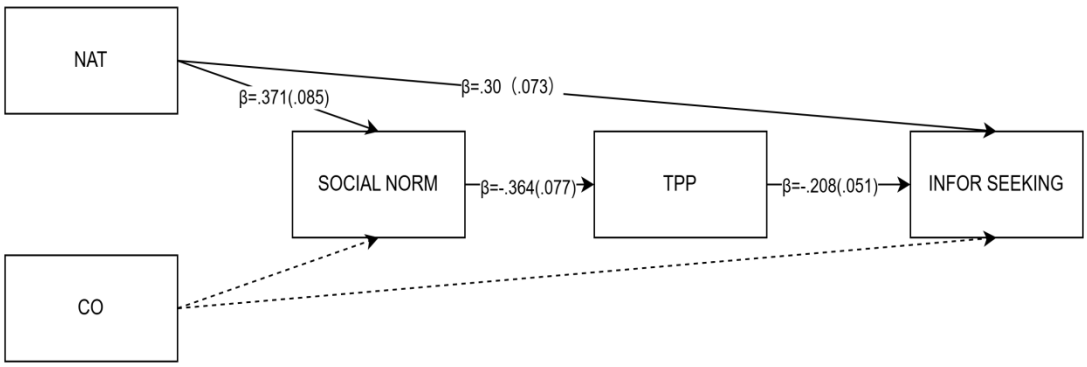

Figure 3 - Model Results (AI-checker condition)

The model explained 19.3% of the variance in SocNorm, 11.2% in TPP, and 28.6% in InfoSeek for the human-checker group, and 16.7%, 14.5%, and 24.1%, respectively, for the AI-checker group. The consistent support for H1, H3, and H4 across both checker types, combined with the lack of support for H2, indicates that blind nationalism reliably elevates perceived social norms regarding foreign-risk misinformation, which subsequently shapes third-person perception and information-seeking intentions. The stronger indirect effect of social norm on TPP observed in the AI-checker condition suggests that dehumanized verification sources may heighten reliance on perceived social consensus, potentially altering how normative beliefs translate into personal susceptibility judgments and behavior. These results carry important implications for fact-checking strategies and policy interventions. In environments characterized by rising nationalism, particularly blind nationalism, fact-checking efforts may face heightened challenges, as individuals are more likely to seek further information despite corrective messages. Multinational organizations and policymakers should consider the influence of socio-political attitudes on misinformation dynamics and anticipate that normative and perceptual mechanisms can amplify attention to foreign-risk misinformation.

Table 2 - Summary of Hypothesis Test Results Across Checker Conditions

Hypothesis	*Path*	*Human Condition (β)*	*AI Condition (β)*	*p*
H1	Nationalism → SocNorm	0.465	0.371	p < .001
H2	Conspiratorial Orientation → SocNorm	0.035 (ns)	0.028 (ns)	p > .3
H3	SocNorm → TPP	–0.244	–0.364	p < .01
H4	TPP → InfoSeek	–0.211	–0.208	p < .001
–	Nationalism → InfoSeek (Direct)	0.495	0.300	p < .001

Note: ns = not significant; all coefficients are standardized.

Overall, the data provide robust evidence for the mediational pathway connecting nationalism to information seeking through perceived social norms and third-person perception, highlighting the nuanced psychological processes that underlie engagement with foreign-risk misinformation. The divergence in path strengths between human- and AI-checked misinformation underscores the importance of the checker type in conditioning these effects, pointing to future research directions on technological mediation in misinformation correction.

Discussion

The present study set out to investigate the mechanisms through which nationalism and conspiratorial orientation influence perceptions of foreign-risk misinformation and subsequent information behaviors, with particular attention to whether these mechanisms differ when misinformation is fact-checked by AI versus human checkers. Through multi-group path analysis, the study examined hypothesized relationships among nationalism (NAT), conspiratorial orientation (CO), perceived social norm of misinformation (SocNorm), third-person perception (TPP), and information-seeking intention (InfoSeek). The findings not only provide support for the hypothesized paths (H1–H4) but also yield important insights into the conditioning role of fact-checker identity.

Summary of Findings

H1 predicted that nationalism would positively predict perceived social norms of foreign-risk misinformation. This hypothesis was supported in the human-checker condition, where nationalism significantly increased SocNorm, suggesting that stronger nationalistic sentiment fosters a heightened perception that foreign-risk misinformation is widely accepted by others. This resonates with prior research showing that nationalist orientations amplify in-group bias and collective endorsement. Under AI the effect was smaller but still significant, and importantly nationalism also directly predicted information-seeking in both groups.

H2 was not supported. Coefficients were near zero in both conditions ($\beta \approx 0.03$, ns), contrary to expectations. Thus, conspiratorial worldviews did not significantly influence perceived norms of misinformation, even under human checking. One plausible explanation is that conspiratorial worldviews rely heavily on interpersonal and socially grounded cues to judge consensus. When the corrective message is framed as algorithmic, individuals may perceive it as detached from human communicative contexts, thereby weakening its normative salience. Another possibility is that AI corrections are interpreted as "technical" rather than "social," which blunts the role of conspiratorial predispositions. This asymmetry suggests that conspiracy thinking does not uniformly shape normative judgments across communicative environments.

H3 proposed that perceived social norms would negatively predict TPP. Supporting the third-person perception framework (Davison, 1983), results showed that higher levels of perceived consensus were associated with a smaller self-other discrepancy, thus lowering TPP. The effect was stronger under AI ($\beta \approx -0.364$) than human ($\beta \approx -0.244$).

H4 predicted that TPP would negatively predict information-seeking intention. This hypothesis was supported: lower levels of TPP were linked to stronger motivation to seek additional information. The finding highlights TPP not merely as a perceptual bias but as a psychologically consequential mechanism that translates into active behaviors.

Overall, human checkers triggered a normative path driven by nationalism (rather than conspiratorial orientation), elevating social norms, reducing third-person perception, and ultimately promoting higher information-seeking intention. By contrast, AI checkers elicited a more direct route from nationalism to information-seeking. Fact-checker identity thus shifts whether individuals rely on social norms or heuristic shortcuts in processing misinformation.

Theoretical Implications

These findings contribute to several strands of communication and media psychology literature.

First, they refine understanding of nationalism and misinformation processing. Prior research suggests nationalism heightens in-group bias and fosters resistance to threatening information (Mummendey et al., 2001). This study shows that under human correction, nationalism exerts influence through perceived consensus, consistent with the idea that nationalistic predispositions are socially embedded. Under AI correction, however, nationalism motivated direct information-seeking, suggesting that in algorithmic contexts individuals no longer rely on consensus judgments but instead turn their predispositions into behavioral engagement. This conditional role of nationalism underscores the importance of communicative context in shaping how predispositions manifest.

Second,The null effect of conspiracy worldview on normative perceptions challenges models that treat conspiracy orientation as a uniform lens on social reality. Conspiracy-minded individuals often distrust authorities and peers alike, which may blunt any single social cue’s influence. Interestingly, our findings - together with recent research - imply that an AI label may even neutralize conspiracists’ bias against correction. Lan et al. (2025) showed that since conspiracists view humans as suspect, they can paradoxically place more trust in an AI fact-checker (“positive machine heuristic”), leading them to be more willing to accept the debunking. Thus, under an AI verifier, high-CO participants did not need to rely on perceived consensus at all; their conspiratorial skepticism was effectively “turned off” by the impersonal label, which made them more open to fact-checking. This suggests new theory: automation cues can override individual differences in skepticism.

Third, the study advances research on third-person perception. The negative effect of SocNorm on TPP aligns with the proposition that prevalence perceptions constrain self-

other differentials. Importantly, the study demonstrates that TPP shapes risk-aversion behaviors (Zhu et al., 2021), such as risk information-seeking, reinforcing its value as a mediator linking cognitive perceptions to behavioral outcomes.

Finally, the findings expand theorization of fact-checking as a communicative act. Previous research has largely focused on AI vs. human agency's effect on perceptual and behavioral outcomes (DeVerna et al., 2024). This study highlights such agency's impact on the psychometric mechanism of risk information seeking. The results suggest that corrections should not be understood solely in terms of their informational content but also in terms of their relational positioning as human or algorithmic communicators. As recent work on AI communication cautions (Lovari & De Rosa, 2025), the rise of generative AI complicates traditional models of trust, credibility, and relationality, making fact-checker identity a central concern for future theory.

It is noteworthy that while we interpret the AI fact-checker effect as invoking a more heuristic cue-based route (a 'shortcut' as described earlier), we did not directly measure participants' depth of processing or need for cognition in this experiment. The absence of such measures means we infer the cognitive pathway indirectly from the pattern of results. It is possible that both AI and human fact-check labels primarily engaged heuristic processing, but via different cues – e.g., human fact-checks triggered a social consensus heuristic (relying on normative perceptions), whereas AI fact-checks triggered a machine credibility heuristic (relying on the perceived objectivity of technology). This would explain why we did not observe any overt difference in deliberative cognitive effort: participants in both conditions may not have engaged in extensive systematic scrutiny, instead trusting the cue (human or AI) presented. Prior research on source cues supports this notion that fact-check flags often work through peripheral credibility cues rather than deep analytical processing (Sundar, 2008; Metzger & Flanagin, 2013). Future studies should incorporate direct measures of cognitive elaboration – for instance, need for cognition scales or thought-listing tasks – to verify whether an AI fact-check truly reduces analytic processing or if audiences simply trust it as an authoritative cue. Our findings suggest a scenario of heuristic acceptance (relying on consensus or automation cues) in both conditions, which is an important nuance: the AI checker reinforced reliance on a credibility heuristic without necessarily increasing critical thinking effort. A deeper probe into users' cognitive engagement can illuminate whether AI-based corrections risk encouraging passive consensus-taking over active inquiry.

Practical Implications

The findings carry several implications for policymakers, platforms, and organizations.

For fact-checking organizations, the study suggests that human and AI checkers are not interchangeable. AI-driven corrections may encourage nationalistic audiences to actively seek more information, which could aid vigilance but also risk amplifying the salience of

contested issues. Human-led corrections, meanwhile, are more deeply entangled with social norms: while they may enhance perceived legitimacy, they also allow predispositions such as nationalism and conspiracy thinking to shape perceptions of consensus, potentially undermining corrective intent.

For governments and communication professionals, the results underscore the importance of embedding fact-checking in strategies that emphasize transparency, ethical responsibility, and dialogic engagement. As Lovari (2020) reminds us, government interventions in misinformation crises must balance authority with public trust, while Lovari and Bowen (2020) stress the ethical imperative of two-way communication and community participation in disaster contexts. In the case of foreign-risk misinformation, this means that fact-checking cannot be treated merely as a technical add-on but must be integrated into broader communication strategies that respect citizens' trust and moral expectations.

For multinational corporations, the evidence highlights the risks of over-relying on one mode of correction. In nationalist contexts, AI corrections may inadvertently fuel further attention to sensitive issues, while in environments where conspiracy thinking is widespread, human corrections may unintentionally reinforce perceived consensus around falsehoods. Tailoring the identity of the fact-checker to the audience's socio-political context is thus a key strategic choice.

Given the above context, our results yield actionable insights for implementing fact-checking interventions in China. First, timing is crucial. In a fast-moving rumor cycle about foreign threats, deploying AI-driven fact-checks early – but not so early as to seem irrelevant – can leverage the speed of AI to correct falsehoods before they fully take root. Chinese platforms might integrate AI fact-check labels as soon as a misleading foreign-risk story starts trending, to intercept misinformation while public interest is high. However, care must be taken that such early intervention does not inadvertently pique curiosity in fringe claims; monitoring user reactions can inform the optimal timing.

Second, message design should be culturally resonant. Fact-check messages verified by AI should be framed in a way that respects Chinese audience values. For example, emphasizing that a claim has been "AI-verified for accuracy to protect the public interest" can appeal to collective welfare. Tying accuracy to patriotic duty could also be effective – recent research shows that nationalist framing can motivate public-minded behaviors in China (e.g., wearing masks during COVID-19). Thus, positioning fact-checks as part of safeguarding national stability and truth may enhance acceptance.

Third, implement safeguards to maintain trust in AI fact-checking. This includes combining AI with human oversight: an ideal system might use AI to flag and correct most claims, with human editors auditing a sample for quality and handling ambiguous cases. Explicitly communicating this hybrid approach (for instance, a note that "AI findings are reviewed by independent experts") can strengthen credibility and alleviate concerns about algorithmic errors. Similarly, providing users with transparency – e.g. brief explanations or source links showing why the AI marked something as false – will help prevent misunderstandings and bolster trust.

In practice, Chinese platforms could pilot these strategies during periods of heightened foreign-related misinformation (for example, around major geopolitical events), gathering feedback to refine the approach. By thoughtfully tuning the timing, framing, and oversight of AI fact-checkers to China’s media culture, stakeholders can harness the efficiency of AI while reinforcing public trust and minimizing unintended effects. These recommendations serve as a roadmap for applying our findings in real-world Chinese contexts, ensuring that the promise of AI fact-checking is realized in a safe and culturally attuned manner.

Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations merit consideration. First, the data were cross-sectional, limiting causal inference. Future research should adopt longitudinal or experimental designs to establish temporal order. Additionally, because all measures were collected in a single survey at one point in time, the study is susceptible to common-method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The use of self-report questionnaires for both predictors and outcomes can inflate observed relationships due to shared method variance. We did take procedural steps to mitigate this (e.g., assuring respondents of anonymity and varying question order), but we cannot fully rule out this bias. The cross-sectional nature of the data also limits causal inference – while our structural model is theoretically grounded, longitudinal or experimental research is needed to verify the temporal ordering of effects. In future studies, adopting multi-wave designs or incorporating objective behavioral measures would help address these common-method and causality concerns.Second, the study focused on foreign-risk misinformation, which may not generalize to other misinformation domains (e.g., health, politics) or socio-political and cultural contexts. Third, perceptions of AI versus human fact-checkers were based on manipulated framing rather than actual exposure to different correction interfaces. Real-world experiments using platform-integrated AI or human corrections could yield more ecologically valid insights. Fourth, the current model focused on a limited set of psychological mechanisms (NAT, CO, SocNorm, TPP). Additional factors such as trust in institutions, media literacy, or affective polarization may further moderate the observed relationships.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the present study demonstrates that the perceived identity of the fact-checker – AI versus human – meaningfully alters the mechanisms through which predispositions shape perceptions and behaviors in response to foreign-risk misinformation. Human checkers activate elaborate normative pathways where nationalism shapes perceptions of consensus and susceptibility, whereas AI checkers trigger heuristic shortcuts whereby nationalism directly drives further engagement. These findings enrich theoretical understanding of misinformation processing and offer concrete guidance for practitioners

grappling with the challenges of misinformation in an era where both human and algorithmic corrections coexist.

Biographical note

Qi Chen is a master's student in Quantitative Analysis for the Social Sciences at KU Leuven, Belgium. His research interests include media effects, media psychology, and human–AI interaction.

Yicheng Zhu (Ph. D. University of South Carolina) is associate professor at School of Journalism and Communication, Beijing Normal University. His research focuses on transnational communication, international public relations and media effects.

Bibliography

Al Jazeera. (2025, November 19). "Trust in AI far higher in China than West, poll shows". Al Jazeera. https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2025/11/19/trust-in-ai-far-higher-in-china-than-west-poll-shows

Armaly, M. T., Buckley, D. T., & Enders, A. M. (2022). Christian Nationalism and Political Violence: Victimhood, Racial Identity, Conspiracy, and Support for the Capitol Attacks. *Political Behavior, 44(2),* 937–960. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-021-09758-y

Ashley, S., Craft, S., Maksl, A., Tully, M., & Vraga, E. K. (2023). Can news literacy help reduce belief in COVID misinformation? *Mass Communication and Society, 26(4),* 695–719. https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2022.2137040

Billings, A. C., Brown, N. A., Brown, K. A., Guoqing, Leeman, M. A., Ličen, S., Novak, D. R., & Rowe, D. (2013). From Pride to Smugness and the Nationalism Between: Olympic Media Consumption Effects on Nationalism Across the Globe. *Mass Communication and Society, 16(6)*, 910–932. https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2013.822519

Bryanov, K., Kliegl, R., Koltsova, O., Miltsov, A., Pashakhin, S., Porshnev, A., Sinyavskaya, Y., Terpilovskii, M., & Vziatysheva, V. (2023). What drives perceptions of foreign news coverage credibility? A cross-national experiment including Kazakhstan, Russia, and Ukraine. *Political Communication, 40(2),* 115–146. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2023.2172492

Chung, M., & Kim, N. (2021). When I learn the news is false: How fact-checking information stems the spread of fake news via third-person perception*. Human Communication Research, 47(1),* 1‑24. https://doi.org/10.1093/hcr/hqaa010

Corbu, N., Halagiera, D., Jin, S., Stanyer, J., Strömbäck, J., Matthes, J., Aalberg, T. (2025). Illusory superiority about misinformation detection and its relationship to knowledge and fact-checking intentions: Evidence from 18 countries. *Mass Communication and Society. Advance online publication.* https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2025.2495206

Das, R., & Ahmed, W. (2022). Rethinking fake news, disinformation, and ideology during the time of COVID-19 global pandemic. *IIM Kozhikode Society & Management Review, 11(1),* 146–159. https://doi.org/10.1177/22779752211027382

Daunt, K. L., Greer, D. A., Jin, H. S., & Orpen, I. (2023). Who believes political fake news? The role of conspiracy mentality, patriotism, perceived threat to freedom, media literacy and concern for disinformation. *Internet Research, 33(5),* 1849–1870. https//doi.org/10.1108/INTR-07-2022-0565

Davison, W. P. (1983). The third-person effect in communication. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 47(1),* 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1086/268763

Davison, W. P. (1996). The third-person effect revisited. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research, 8(2),* 113–119.

DeVerna, M. R., Yan, H. Y., Yang, K.-C., & Menczer, F. (2024). Fact-checking information from large language models can decrease headline discernment. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 121(50)*, e2322823121.

Enders, A. M., et al. (2019). Who are conspiracy theorists? A comprehensive approach to explaining conspiracy. *Social Science Quarterly, 100(6),* 2019–2032. https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.12711

Finney, S. J., & DiStefano, C. (2006). Nonnormal and categorical data in structural equation modeling. In G. R. Hancock & R. O. Mueller (Eds.), *Structural Equation Modeling: A Second Course* (pp. 269‑314). Information Age Publishing.

Flew, T., & Iosifidis, P. (2020). Populism, globalisation and social media. *International Communication Gazette, 82(1),* 7–25. https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048519880721

Griffin, R. J., Dunwoody, S., & Neuwirth, K. (1999). Proposed model of the relationship of risk information seeking and processing to the development of preventive behaviors. *Environmental Research, 80(2)*, S230–S245. https://doi.org/10.1006/enrs.1998.3940

Guan, S. (2020). Diversifying conspiracy beliefs and populist ideologies in the Chinese context. *Social Science Quarterly, 101(2),* 461–472. https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.12766

Gutierrez-Huerter O, G. (2024). Responding to institutional plurality: Micro-politics in the rollout of a global corporate social responsibility norm in a multi-national enterprise. *Human Relations, 77(7),* 1037–1068. https://doi.org/10.1177/00187267231176671

Gunther, A. C. (1992). Biased press and public perception: The role of perceived media influence in the third-person effect. *Journal of Communication, 42(2),* 17–31. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1992.tb00739.x

Jaspal, R., & Cinnirella, M. (2010). Media representations of British Muslims and hybridised threats to identity. *Contemporary Islam, 4(3),* 289–310. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-010-0126-7

Jia, H., & Luo, X. (2023). I Wear a Mask for My Country: Conspiracy Theories, Nationalism, and Intention to Adopt Covid-19 Prevention Behaviors at the Later Stage of Pandemic Control in China. *Health Communication, 38(3),* 543–551. https://doi.org/10.1080/10410236.2021.1958982

Kahan, D. M. (2016). The politically motivated reasoning paradigm, part 1: What politically motivated reasoning is and how to measure it. In R. Scott & S. Kosslyn (Eds.), *Emerging Trends in the Social and Behavioral Sciences: An Interdisciplinary, Searchable, and Linkable Resource* (pp. 1 - 16). Wiley. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118900772.etrds0417

Kahan, D. M. (2017). 'Ordinary science intelligence': A science-comprehension measure for study of risk and science communication, with notes on evolution and climate change. *Journal of Risk Research, 20(8),* 995 - 1016. https://doi.org/10.1080/13669877.2016.1148067

Kahan, D. M., Peters, E., Wittlin, M., Slovic, P., Ouellette, L. L., Braman, D., & Mandel, G. (2012). The polarizing impact of science literacy and numeracy on perceived climate change risks. *Nature Climate Change, 2(10),* 732 - 735. https://doi.org/10.1038/nclimate1547

Kahlor, L. A. (2007). An Augmented Risk Information Seeking Model: The Case of Global Warming. *Media Psychology, 10(3),* 414 - 435. https://doi.org/10.1080/15213260701532971

Kim, J.-N., & Lee, S. (2024). Conceptualizing Conspiratorial Thinking: Explicating Public Conspiracism for Effective Debiasing Strategy. *American Behavioral Scientist, 68(10),* 1366–1394. https://doi.org/10.1177/00027642231175637

Koo, A. Z. X., Su, M. H., Lee, S., Ahn, S. Y., & Rojas, H. (2021). What motivates people to correct misinformation? Examining the effects of third-person perceptions and perceived norms. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 65(1),* 111–134. https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2021.1903896

Kosterman, R., & Feshbach, S. (1989). Toward a measure of patriotic and nationalistic attitudes. *Political Psychology, 10(2),* 257–274. https://doi.org/10.2307/3791647

Kunda, Z. (1990). The case for motivated reasoning. *Psychological Bulletin, 108(3),* 480–498. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.108.3.480

Kragh, M., Andermo, E., & Makashova, L. (2022). Conspiracy theories in Russian security thinking. *Journal of Strategic Studies, 45(3),* 334 - 368. https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2020.1717954

Lan, D., Zhu, Y., Liu, M., & He, C. (2025). AI Agency in Fact-Checking: Role-Based Machine Heuristics and Publics' Conspiratorial Orientation. *Media and Communication, 13*. https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/handle/document/102711

Lovari, A. (2020). Spreading (Dis)Trust: Covid-19 misinformation and government intervention in Italy. *Media and Communication, 8(2),* 458 - 461. https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v8i2.3219

Lovari, A., & Bowen, S. A. (2020). Social media in disaster communication: A case study of strategies, barriers, and ethical implications. *Journal of Public Affairs, 20(3)*, e1967. https://doi.org/10.1002/pa.1967

Lovari, A., & De Rosa, F. (2025). Exploring the challenges of generative AI on public sector communication in Europe. *Media and Communication, 13.* https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.9644

Luzsa, R., & Mayr, S. (2021). False consensus in the echo chamber: Exposure to favorably biased social media news feeds leads to increased perception of public support for own opinions. Cyberpsychology: *Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace, 15(1),* Article 3. https://doi.org/10.5817/CP2021-1-3

Malešević, S., Uzelac, G., Carol, S., & David, L. (2024). Plotting against our nation: COVID-19, nationalisms, and conspiracy theories in five European countries. *National Identities, 26(2),* 141‑171. https://doi.org/10.1080/14608944.2023.2288970

Martikainen, J., & Sakki, I. (2021). Boosting nationalism through COVID-19 images: Multimodal construction of the failure of the ‘dear enemy’ with COVID-19 in the national press. *Discourse & Communication, 15(4),* 388 ‑ 414. https://doi.org/10.1177/17504813211002039

Metzger, M. J., & Flanagin, A. J. (2013). Credibility and trust of information in online environments: The use of cognitive heuristics. *Journal of Pragmatics, 59*, 210‑220. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2013.03.012

Mihelj, S., & Jiménez-Martínez, C. (2021). Digital nationalism: Understanding the role of digital media in the rise of ‘new’ nationalism. *Nations and Nationalism, 27(2),* 331‑346. https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12685

Mir, A., & Siddiqui, N. (2024). Nationalism, status, and conspiracy theories: Evidence from Pakistan. *British Journal of Political Science, 54(4),* 1159 ‑ 1179. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123424000140

Mummendey, A., Klink, A., & Brown, R. (2001). Nationalism and patriotism: National identification and out‑group rejection. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 40(2),* 159‑172. https://doi.org/10.1348/014466601164740

Oktavianus, J., & Bautista, J. R. (2023). Motivating healthcare professionals to correct online health misinformation: The roles of subjective norm, third-person perception, and channel differences. *Computers in Human Behavior, 147*, 107839. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2023.107839

Perloff, R. M. (2009). Mass media, social perception, and the third-person effect. In A. A. Raney & J. Bryant (Eds.), *Media effects: Advances in theory and research* (pp. 503‑522). Routledge.

Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J.-Y., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 88(5),* 879–903. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.88.5.879

Posocco, L. & Watson, I. (2024). Conspiracy theories and nationalism. Exploring the intersections and implications. *Politica & Società, 1,* 89 ‑ 122. https://doi.org/10.4476/115027

Romer, D., & Jamieson, K. H. (2022). Conspiratorial thinking as a precursor to opposition to COVID-19 vaccination in the US: A multi-year study from 2018 to 2021. *Scientific Reports, 12(1),* 18632. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-022-22870-y

Rowling, C. M., Gilmore, J., & Sheets, P. (2015). When Threats Come from Within: National Identity, Cascading Frames, and the U.S. War in Afghanistan. *The International Journal of Press/Politics, 20(4),* 478 - 497. https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161215599384

Salvati, M., Pellegrini, V., De Cristofaro, V., & Giacomantonio, M. (2024). What is hiding behind the rainbow plot? The gender ideology and LGBTQ+ lobby conspiracies (GILC) scale. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 63,* 295 - 318. https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12678

Semafor. (2025, November 18). “China's trust of AI is higher than the US”. Semafor. https://www.semafor.com/article/11/18/2025/chinas-trust-of-ai-is-higher-than-the-us

Shayegh, J., Storey, L., Turner, R. N., & Barry, J. (2022). A Social Identity Approach to How Elite Outgroups Are Invoked by Politicians and the Media in Nativist Populism. *Political Psychology, 43(6),* 1009‐1025. https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12798

Schumacker, R. E., & Lomax, R. G. (2010). *A beginner’s guide to structural equation modeling* (3rd ed). Routledge.

Sun, B., Jin, L., Ren, Z., & Yue, G. et al. (2023). Is a punisher always trustworthy? In-group punishment reduces trust. *Current Psychology, 42*, 22965 - 22975. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-022-03395-2

Sundar, S. S. (2008). *The MAIN model: A heuristic approach to understanding technology effects on credibility* (pp. 73-100). MacArthur Foundation Digital Media and Learning Initiative.

Sutton, R. M., & Douglas, K. M. (2020). Conspiracy theories and the conspiracy mindset: Implications for political ideology. *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences, 34,* 118‐122. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cobeha.2020.02.015

Ternullo, S. (2022). “I’m not sure what to believe”: Media distrust and opinion formation during the COVID-19 pandemic. *American Political Science Review, 116(3),* 1096‐1109. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055422000334

Turner, M.M., Jang, Y., Wade, R. et al. (2024). The effects of moral norms and anticipated guilt on COVID19 prevention behaviors. *Current Psychology, 43*, 16767–16779 (2024). https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-023-04477-5

Van Prooijen, J.-W., Spadaro, G., & Wang, H. (2022). Suspicion of institutions: How distrust and conspiracy theories deteriorate social relationships. *Current Opinion in Psychology, 43,* 65‐69.

Whitmeyer, J. M. (2002). Elites and popular nationalism. *The British Journal of Sociology, 53(3),* 321‐341. https://doi.org/10.1080/0007131022000000536

Zhang, Z., Li, M., Liu, Q., Chen, C., & Qi, C. (2023). Group membership and adolescents’ third-party punishment: A moderated chain mediation model. *Front. Psychol., 14,* 1251276. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1251276

Zhu, Y., Fitzpatrick, M. A., & Bowen, S. A. (2024). Factors Related to Compliance with CDC COVID-19 Guidelines: Media Use, Partisan Identity, Science Knowledge, and Risk Assessment. *Western Journal of Communication, 88(3),* 567 - 594. https://doi.org/10.1080/10570314.2023.2219239

Zhu, Y., Wei, R., Lo, V.-H., Zhang, M., & Li, Z. (2021). Collectivism and Altruistic Behavior: A Third-Person Effect Study of COVID-19 News Among Wuhan Residents. *Global Media and China, 6(4),* 476–491.

Zollo, F., Bessi, A., Del Vicario, M., Scala, A., Caldarelli, G., Shekhtman, L., Quattrociocchi, W. (2017). Debunking in a world of tribes. *PLoS ONE, 12(7),* e0181821. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0181821