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How Far Can Online Trust Go? Analysing False Information Sharing Behaviour on Social Media

Abstract. *There are many ways that false information can be harmful, and there is no doubt that its spread is a serious problem with a significant impact on businesses, consumers, and society. Today, understanding the dynamics behind the sharing of false information on social media is paramount for many stakeholders. Thus, the present study investigates the relationship between peoples' tendency to share false information and different predictors, on the one hand, and lack of time, on the other hand. Alternatively, we scrutinised the influences of the perceived source authority, expertise, credibility, as well as information quality on online trust. It employs structural equation modelling on 482 social media consumers. Surprisingly, they are adopting passive – but not active – corrective actions, and those who authenticate information before sharing are less prone to share false information due to lack of time. Moreover, instantaneous information sharing for creating awareness, and online trust also have an important influence on false information-sharing behaviour. However, the most important finding is by far that online trust is influenced only by perceived source authority, not by expertise, credibility, and information quality.*

Keywords: *false information sharing; social media; misinformation; information sharing behaviour; online trust; perceived source authority.*

JEL Classification: L86, L82, M38.

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1. Introduction

In a state of physical restriction and uncertainty, social media became the main channel for individuals to stay connected. However, this increased reliance on social media has coincided with a disturbing trend: the exponential growth of misinformation and disinformation (Sampat & Raj, 2022). The high-speed development of artificial intelligence (AI) has added a new layer of complexity to the false information sharing problem. AI can now be used to create realistic-looking but entirely fabricated content in a matter of seconds. This false content can then be easily disseminated across social media platforms, reaching vast audiences before the truth can be established (Caled & Silva, 2022). Fake news, deepfake, satire, propaganda, spam, disinformation, misinformation, and so on are categories of false information spreading phenomena that have gained special attention in recent years (Caled & Silva, 2022; Wei et al., 2023). Furthermore, false information sharing can lead consumers to engage in misleading purchase decisions, negatively impacting both sales and brand loyalty (Zhu et al., 2020). Worse still, companies can and often create and share false information to overrate their products or services or underrate competitor ones to affect brand reputation. Hence, the dissemination of misinformation can exert a profoundly detrimental impact on companies, manifesting itself in eroded consumer trust, tarnished reputations, boycotts, and substantial financial losses. Despite the increased attention given to research on categories of false information such as fake news, the motivations, and behaviours that lead to this large phenomenon proliferation itself are scarce analysed (Apuke & Omar, 2021).

Previous research has been conducted to identify factors that contribute to the technological dissemination of false information such as fake news via social media, user motivations, or cognitive and psychological drivers (Sampat & Raj, 2022). However, little is known about the impact of online trust (OT) on the propensity of users to share false information due to the lack of time (SFILT) (Talwar et al., 2020) and the links between the perceived source and information features and OT.

The human attention span is of just 8 seconds (Bradbury, 2016), whilst social platforms need to maximise users' connection time to target them with advertisements. When pressed by time, this aspect, together with the low media literacy, make platform users vulnerable to the influences of online authority figures, being more liable to trust and share false information or to buy and consume harmful products (Hocevar et al., 2017). Therefore, our paper attempts to address this gap of technology-enabled social change by examining the behaviour of social media users concerning information source characteristics – perceived source authority (PSA), perceived source expertise (PSE), perceived source credibility (PSC), and perceived information quality (PIQ) – as mediated by OT. This study aims to partially expand the application of one of the most recent and complex models (Talwar et al., 2020), regarding the factors that seem to influence the user's behaviour toward sharing false information due to lack of time, such as authenticating information before sharing (AIBS), instantaneous sharing of information for creating awareness (ISICA), and

active, respectively passive corrective actions on false information (ACAFI and PCAFI). There is absolutely no doubt that the selected topic is crucial not only for scholars but also for various social media players. Therefore, we set out to frame the following research question: *What drives social media consumers to share false information due to lack of time?* By answering this, our research contributes to the literature in several ways, as detailed below.

Based on the PLS-SEM methodology, the results of our study are meant to shed light on how the information sources impact OT, which in its turn influences the user's propensity to share false information due to lack of time, thus contributing to the further spread of falsehoods. Therefore, our findings strengthen existent theories, or opening doors for future avenues if the results differ. For instance, PCAFI reduces the false information sharing phenomenon, since paradoxically ACAFI produces the involuntary amplification of false content, proving that debunking intentions can have a boomerang effect (Caled & Silva, 2022), leading to a wider spread of false information. We mention that this finding expands the vision of Talwar et al. (2020) by addressing a larger audience network. This work offers the first investigations into false information sharing by considering the catalyst role of OT. The results have revealed not only its mediating role between PSA and the final target variable but also a new relationship between OT and SFILT, apart from the classic one predicting purchase intention (Zhu et al., 2020). Thus, social media influencers play a key role in determining OT, making the platform's users less vigilant to false information. Also, we confirm the relevance of the two-step communication flow in the social media age as the source credibility and authority directly influence OT and the propensity of social media users to share false information. Another interesting finding is that the tendency of users to share false information due to lack of time is minimal.

Various practical implications of our findings of interest for businesses, organisations, social platform owners and developers, consumers, and other stakeholders have been discovered. It becomes clear that social media consumers' responsibility in limiting the harmful dissemination of false information on online social networks is crucial. At the same time, policymakers will be incentivised to support media literacy programmes, meant to offer the knowledge and the tools to each platform user to act as sanitizers or "guardians" of the online information ecosystem. However, one element is clear, and it must lead to public awareness. A synergy is needed between civil society, platforms, false information flaggers and fact-checkers, academia, and policymakers to propose a worldwide regulatory framework to limit the spread of this harmful phenomenon (Apuke & Omar, 2021; Sampat & Raj, 2022).

2. Theoretical foundation

The Internet's explosive expansion and the effortless formation of online communities have ushered in a new era of instant information access. However, this progress has not been without its ethical concerns, as these online communities formed on social networking sites can harbour and amplify harmful content.

AIBS is an important step in recognising false information and minimising the risk of its being passed on to others. Users, to act and authenticate the information received through social media, must first be able to process it, to consider if it is credible or not. Previously, Talwar et al. (2019) showed that among the reasons why people authenticate news before sharing it on social media are self-disclosure, trust in the online environment, and the desire to have the best possible image through sharing authentic and relevant content.

There are several possible reasons for explaining why people share false information or why they create awareness in their community. Recent literature (Talwar et al., 2020) reinforces the position of Tajfel and Turner (2004) by explaining this habit as a natural action of active implication in the community's duties. When accepted and joining the group, the individual's sense of belonging to a community increases together with his or her self-esteem.

If the false information-sharing phenomenon is created and proliferated by a certain category of SNS users, another category has attracted considerable attention. This is represented by the "false information guardians", as we name them, which fight against the harmful spread in two ways. Whenever exposed to false information, such as fake news, users may adopt different attitudes, either to ignore, read, or share on social networks. The approaches indicated by Talwar et al. (2020) about false information like fake news refer to proactive and passive user profiles and their fake news-combative measures are called corrective actions. The proactive users have an educative mission trying to combat false information by authenticating them first, then informing the sender about news validity and the possible negative effects that such behaviour may produce. Contritely, passive corrective behaviours of social media users refer to actions toward other users, such as blocking or reporting (Talwar et al., 2020). When it comes to the efficiency of corrective actions related to false information and misinformation, there is no scientific consensus.

Although the phenomenon of false information is intensively researched through fake news and misinformation, false information sharing due to lack of time represents a relatively new research variable. Therefore, its study is necessary to better understanding of users' sharing behaviour. So far, this variable has only been analysed in the study by Talwar et al. (2020), which investigated the impact of four factors on fake news dissemination due to lack of time or religious reasons. These factors are the instantaneous sharing of information for creating awareness (ISICA), ACAFI, PCAFI, and AIBS. Mainly, spreading false information refers to the dissemination of false news or content, either knowingly or unintentionally.

In the false information-sharing context, source reputation is essential whilst expertise is a prime component. Source expertise plays a crucial role in the public's acceptance of some ideas, and beliefs, and is one of the key determinants of persuasion outcomes. Usually, the public looks for advice from experts, and to understand different human behaviours when facing false information on social media, trust represents an essential factor and it can be influenced by the source expertise (Hocevar et al., 2017). In addition, source expertise plays an essential role in building trust in the online environment (Lee & Cho, 2023).

Source authority refers to the degree to which a social media user perceives the source of information received as credible (Liu & Huang, 2017). We consider that authority means an acknowledgment of a source's power and the ability to sway others, particularly through a commanding demeanour, acknowledged expertise in a particular domain, or charismatic qualities. For sure, there are significant differences in assessing authority between different cultures; in general, authority is linked to experience and talent, celebrity, or can have a religious nature.

In the virtual environment, the credibility of the source is perceived as the degree to which users consider that a certain source can provide credible information. How the credibility of different sources is perceived by the public has been the subject of the concerns of several authors in recent years. Their conclusions emphasised the influence of perceived credibility on various actions or attitudes such as trust in brands, purchase intentions, or sharing intentions.

According to Yi et al. (2013), the perceived quality of information is defined as the degree to which a user maintains the belief that the information provided on a website is up-to-date, precise, pertinent, valuable, and thorough. Information quality is considered a key driver of consumers' trust in social media use for e-retailer services (Alzaidi & Agag, 2022).

As trust in traditional media has declined, online sources that provide information or news have become primary sources; nonetheless, people have difficulty selecting trustworthy ones (Borges-Tiago et al., 2020). A high level of OT can, however, encourage users to share information received from a source (Talwar et al., 2019). One of the main challenges that users face in the online environment is related to the identification of credible, reliable sources. However, trust in social media facilitates the propagation of false information, which causes users to share information without verifying it because they perceive it as true (Wei et al., 2023). Thus, the level of trust that users give to online sources of information is essential to understand their motivation to share false information.

3. Research model and hypotheses development

Individuals may verify the news before sharing to align with a knowledgeable and current social circle (Talwar et al., 2020). However, their results indicate, firstly, that authenticating information before sharing does not definitively mitigate the occurrence of false information sharing due to time constraints. Secondly, a study conducted by Sampat and Raj (2022) establishes a notably robust negative correlation between news authentication before sharing and the dissemination of fake news. Thus, people are more tempted to authenticate information if doing so gains the trust of the group or improves their image and reputation in social media. Therefore, people searching for a better reputation in social media, or wanting to be considered trustworthy and accepted by a social group can be more careful with the information they share; hence they prefer AIBS to prevent the sharing of false information. Therefore, the following hypothesis is issued:

H1. AIBS is positively associated with SFILT

Instantaneous sharing of information to create awareness on social media platforms is a common habit of some users who feel obliged to keep the group informed, as a reward for their acceptance in the community (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). Paradoxically, the addictive desire to keep the group updated may turn into the opposite outcome, like disinformation. The rush of sharing information on social media increases the risk of involuntary delivery of unauthenticated content, which leads to false information spreading, such as fake news (Talwar et al., 2020). On the other hand, an individual can voluntarily share false information to maintain personal opinions, deceive, or manipulate groups.

As a result, due to the lack of time, instantly sharing information becomes the factor leading to false information sharing (Sampat & Raj, 2022). Consequently, the following hypothesis is presented:

H2. ISICA is positively associated with SFILT

Several researchers have claimed that the corrective actions of content labelled as misinformation are rarely effective or can even have a backfire effect, giving them more exposure, while others have produced evidence of total or partial successful correction (Wood & Porter, 2019). Based on the short-term approach, Talwar et al. (2020) hypothesised and proved empirically that active corrective actions affect negatively fake news sharing due to lack of time in WhatsApp communities. Consequently, we provide the next assertion, but this time for social networking sites:

H3. ACAFI is negatively associated with SFILT

Alternatively, Talwar et al. (2020) revealed a link between passive corrective actions and lack of time, revealing that social media users who perform passive corrective measures are not prone to sharing false information due to lack of time. As the earlier findings concern the users' behaviour regarding fake news sharing on WhatsApp, our research is looking to expand the outcomes to all social media channel use concerning the false information sharing phenomenon. Consequently, we suggest the following hypothesis:

H4. PCAFI is negatively associated with SFILT

Along with the quality of an information source, the expertise of the source can influence trust in the information received in the online environment (Hocevar et al., 2017). Furthermore, the results of Yi et al. (2013) research emphasise the distinct and vital contributions of argument quality, source expertise, an individual's perception of information quality, and risk to influence their decision to place trust in health information discovered on the Internet. Furthermore, Lee and Cho (2023) discovered that source expertise, the relevance of the message, and altruistic behaviour play a greater role in establishing trust. Consequently, the following hypothesis is launched:

H5. PSE is positively associated with OT

Individuals often place trust in the personalities they encounter on social media, including those with acknowledged authority and the so-called "experts" possessing

a scientific background, who serve as significant influencers and propagators. Despite the interest in source authority, there is no consistent literature that analyses its influence in the context of false information due to lack of time. According to Liu and Huang (2017), sources that are perceived to have higher authority are considered to be more knowledgeable and trustworthy compared to those with lower authority. Therefore, the following hypothesis was issued:

H6. PSA is positively associated with OT

Perceived credibility has often been associated with trust in brands (Sharif et al., 2021), but the connection between perceived credibility and OT seems to have been quite little studied. A direct, positive, and strong association between source credibility and trust was demonstrated in Lin and Lin's (2019) study. Hence, we propose the following hypothesis:

H7. PSC is positively associated with OT

Previously, Zhu et al. (2020) have shown that PIQ has a positive impact on trusting beliefs and perceived risk, when it comes to data exchanges. Yi et al. (2013) proved that PIQ is direct, positive, and significantly related to trust in health information. McKnight et al. (2017) revealed that the quality of information affects users' perceptions and intention to share information, as well as trust in the online environment. Therefore, we put forward the following hypothesis:

H8. PIQ is positively associated with OT

So far, literature has reported that trust in social media strongly influences false information sharing, such as fake news (Wei et al., 2023). People who have a higher level of trust in online information have a stronger willingness to share true news, but often end up sharing fake news in the process (Apuke & Omar, 2021). Moreover, people who frequently access social media are more tempted to trust information from online social networks, while those who rarely access social media are more concerned with the information that both themselves and others share (Borges-Tiago et al., 2020). Also, a strongly significant positive link between OT and false information sharing such as fake news was highlighted by Talwar et al. (2019). Therefore, we offer the following hypothesis:

H9. OT is positively associated with SFILT

The way these hypotheses are chained in our proposed model is illustrated in Figure 1.

4. Research methodology

Within the model, ten constructors were used whose scales, previously validated, were taken from the literature. Thus, ISICA, ACAFI, PCAFI, and SFILT were adapted from Talwar et al. (2020) for the false information-sharing context. In the case of PSE, PSA, PSC, and PIQ, the scales provided by Sui and Zhang (2021) were adapted and used. OT was adapted from Talwar et al. (2019). The final target variable captures the reasoning and motives behind SFILT was adapted from Talwar

et al. (2020). The questions used for each variable were measured by a 7-point Likert scale was used to collect the participants' responses.

A random sample of voluntary responders was online selected after obtaining the needed informed consent. The subjects were social media consumers and were chosen based on their false information awareness and previous experience of false information sharing behaviour. The sample size used for this study was estimated with Faul et al.'s (2007) approach. Based on an effect size (f^2) of 0.15, a significance level (α) of 0.05, a power level of 95%, and 5 predictors for the SFILT variable, the minimum sample size is 138. After performing all quality checks, 482 valid responses remained.

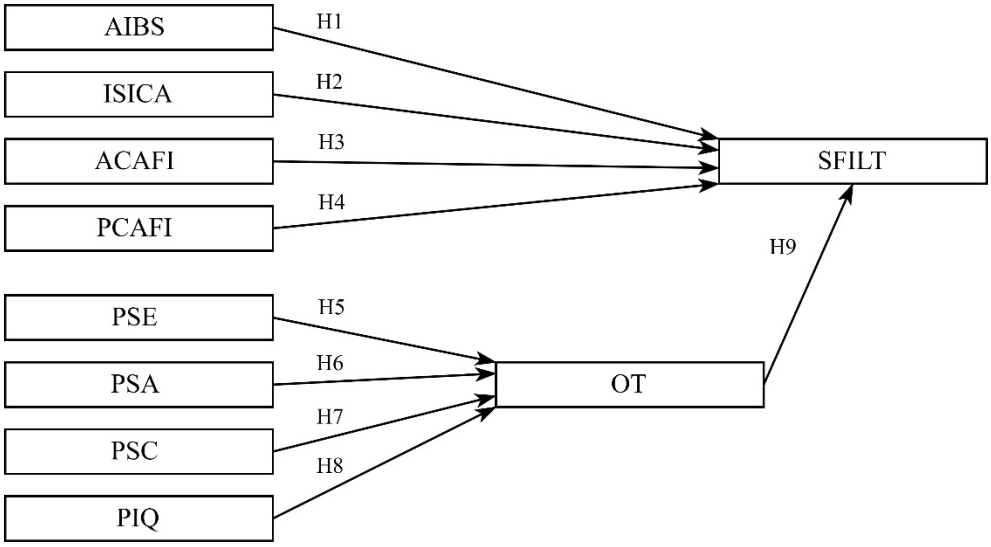

Figure 1. Research model
Source: Authors' own creation.

5. Data analysis, results

In recent years, the PLS-SEM methodology embraced immense popularity in survey-related studies from many areas, including false information sharing on social media. Researchers use it to validate and explore intricate models. We used the techniques defined by Hair et al. (2022) to predict and describe the final target construct. SmartPLS software by Ringle et al. (2022) facilitated the entire PLS-SEM analysis which was carried out in this study. The two-level assessment – inner and outer – is performed following the methodology outlined by Hair et al. (2022).

Since our model deals only with reflective constructs, we assessed the measurements considering indicator and internal consistency reliability, as well as convergent and discriminant validity. In addition, reflective variables require the calculation of outer loadings. With a single exception, all outer loadings exceed the theoretical limit of 0.7 (see Table 1). An indicator of the ANSB construct has an

outer loading value of 0.507. A value between 0.4 and 0.7 requires that additional tests are performed. Because the item removal would negatively affect the composite reliability (CR), the wise decision is to retain it. After successfully passing these procedures, CR and Cronbach's Alpha (CA) quality indicators are computed to confirm the internal consistency reliability. Their values must exceed the theoretical threshold of 0.7. As an exception, for exploratory studies, there are also accepted CA values higher than 0.6. All CR and CA values in our exploratory model exceed the 0.7 limit, except CA for AIBS, which is 0.612.

To sum up, the internal consistency assessment is accomplished. The convergent validity assessment supposes the use of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) computation. All AVE values surpass the required inferior boundary of 0.5 (Table 1). Therefore, the convergent validity examination is validated.

Table 1. Convergent validity and internal consistency assessment

Construct	Items	Factor loadings	CA (α)	rho_A	CR	AVE
Active corrective actions on false information (ACAFI)	ACAFI1	0.874				
	ACAFI2	0.775				
	ACAFI3	0.919	0.897	0.926	0.924	0.709
	ACAFI4	0.895				
	ACAFI5	0.733				
Authenticating information before sharing (AIBS)	AIBS1	0.997	0.612	4.789	0.751	0.626
	AIBS2	0.507				
Instantaneous sharing of information for creating awareness (ISICA)	ISICA1	0.926	0.842	0.843	0.927	0.864
	ISICA2	0.932				
Online trust (OT)	OT1	0.957	0.911	0.911	0.957	0.918
	OT2	0.959				
Passive corrective actions on false information (PCAFI)	PCAFI1	0.911	0.860	0.945	0.933	0.874
	PCAFI2	0.958				
Perceived information quality (PIQ)	PIQ1	0.923				
	PIQ2	0.951	0.934	0.961	0.957	0.882
	PIQ3	0.943				
Perceived source authority (PSA)	PSA1	0.971				
	PSA2	0.971	0.889	0.897	0.931	0.818
	PSA3	0.965				
Perceived source credibility (PSC)	PSC1	0.903				
	PSC2	0.933	0.968	0.983	0.979	0.939
	PSC3	0.877				
Perceived source expertise (PSE)	PSE1	0.948				
	PSE2	0.953	0.947	0.947	0.966	0.904
	PSE3	0.951				

Construct	Items	Factor loadings	CA (α)	rho_A	CR	AVE
Sharing false information due to lack of time (SFILT)	SFILT1	0.973	0.937	0.945	0.969	0.941
	SFILT2	0.967				

Source: Authors' processing.

Moreover, heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) values are calculated to assess discriminant validity criteria. The basic acceptance rule is that they must be under 0.85 (Henseler et al., 2015). This condition is met for 93.33% of the HTMT values. Because three values slightly exceed the theoretical limit, further criteria must be achieved accordingly (Franke & Sarstedt, 2019). We computed percentile bootstrap confidence intervals for each of these combinations and observed that all three HTMT values exhibit significant differences from 1, at a 5% significance level. In conclusion, the discriminant validity test was positively confirmed.

The inner VIF values are between 1.094 and 4.570, under the theoretical limit of 5. Consequently, there are no collinearity issues. The bootstrapping process was iterated for 10,000 subsamples to guarantee the model's significance. The results in the case of H1 show that AIBS ($\beta = -0.252$; $p < 0.001$) is statistically significant (negative) with SFILT. The results for H2 and H3 indicate that ISICA ($\beta = 0.195$; $p < 0.001$) and ACAFI ($\beta = 0.145$; $p < 0.001$) are statistically significant and positively associated with SFILT. In the case of H4, PCAFI is negatively associated with SFILT ($\beta = -0.081$; $p < 0.05$). Regarding the H5 hypothesis, PSE exhibited no significant correlation with OT ($\beta = -0.099$; $p > 0.05$). Instead, in the case of H6, PSA is statistically significant and positively associated with OT ($\beta = 0.359$; $p < 0.001$). In the case of H7 and H8, PSC ($\beta = 0.064$; $p > 0.05$) and PIQ ($\beta = 0.002$; $p > 0.05$) did not share any association with OT. Regarding the H9, OT is positively associated with SFILT ($\beta = 0.297$; $p < 0.001$). The result of testing the proposed hypotheses and the related p-values is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Hypothesis results

Hypothesis	Path	Path coefficient	t Statistics	p Values	Support
H1	AIBS → SFILT	-0.252	6.368	0.000	Yes
H2	ISICA → SFILT	0.195	5.043	0.000	Yes
H3	ACAFI → SFILT	0.145	4.157	0.000	Yes
H4	PCAFI → SFILT	-0.081	1.968	0.049	Yes
H5	PSE → OT	-0.099	1.188	0.235	No
H6	PSA → OT	0.359	6.228	0.000	Yes
H7	PSC → OT	0.064	0.747	0.455	No
H8	PIQ → OT	0.002	0.031	0.975	No
H9	OT → SFILT	0.297	6.031	0.000	Yes
Indirect effects	PSE → OT → SFILT	-0.029	1.173	0.241	No
	PSA → OT → SFILT	0.107	3.660	0.000	Yes

Hypothesis	Path	Path coefficient	t Statistics	p Values	Support
	PSC → OT → SFILT	0.019	0.719	0.473	No
	PIQ → OT → SFILT	0.001	0.031	0.975	No

Source: Authors' processing.

The research model explains 24.3% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.243$) in the case of SFILT. This value is much higher than the value obtained (0.10) in the study realised by (Talwar et al., 2020) and higher than a value of 0.20 for R^2 should be considered high for studies related to consumer behaviour (Hair et al., 2011).

6. Discussion and practical implications

The current study contributes to expanding the understanding of false information-sharing behaviour through an empirical analysis of the factors that influence the sharing of false information due to lack of time. Consequently, based on previous findings from the topic-related literature, this research provides nine hypotheses. The results, obtained after testing these hypotheses using the PLS-SEM methodology, are presented below.

Hypothesis H1, which examined the existence of a possible negative association between AIBS and SFILT, was confirmed. The outcomes reveal that authenticating information before sharing has the second largest impact on false information sharing due to lack of time, after online information trust. The result is in agreement with the previous findings of Sampat and Raj (2022) and differs from the inconclusive findings reported by Talwar et al. (2020) regarding fake news sharing.

Hypothesis H2, which treats the relationship between ISICA and SFILT, is also supported. The results reinforce the position of Talwar et al. (2020), and more recently of Sampat and Raj (2022) regarding fake news sharing, which is part of the false information sharing phenomenon. Hypothesis H3 is supported, but reversed. In contrast to earlier findings of Talwar et al. (2020) regarding fake news sharing, our results suggest an opposite relationship, but similar in strength, in the context of the false information spreading phenomenon.

Hypothesis H4 has been validated, proving that passive corrective actions have a slightly negative impact on the decision of social media users to share false information. This is in line with the survey-based findings of Talwar et al. (2020) and the earlier one (Wood & Porter, 2019) regarding fake news. The results of our study indicate that PSE does not positively influence OT, and, therefore, hypothesis H5 is disproved. Thus, this result does not provide support for the findings of (Lee & Cho, 2023; Yi et al., 2013) and the statement of Hocevar et al. (2017) concerning fake news, a category of false information phenomenon.

Hypothesis H6, which questions the relationship between PSA and OT was supported. In other words, a perceived high authority will generate OT. The results we obtained reinforce the opinions of some authors, (Azzalini et al., 2022; Liu & Huang, 2017), whose recent works attest to the fact that the public tends to associate

authority with trust and to follow the advice of so-called "experts", or people with authority perceived as high.

In the case of hypothesis H7, the results are somewhat surprising. Although we would have expected PSC to be positively associated with OT, this hypothesis was not confirmed. This result does not support the previous studies that associate credibility with trust (Leite & Baptista, 2022; Lin & Lin, 2019) or reveal the impact of perceived credibility on individuals' intention to gain trust in brands (Sharif et al., 2021).

Our model has shown that the quality of online information has a positive effect on the OT of platform users. Therefore, hypothesis H8 is validated. This finding goes in the same direction as those of (Yi et al., 2013).

Moreover, our findings suggest that OT is significantly influenced only by perceived authority. This is the most striking and important observation that emerges from our study. Practically, the public seems to trust influencers, people with charisma and notoriety, rather than recognised experts or people with a high level of credibility, and the quality of information is not a priority anymore. Hence, the trustworthiness of the influencer is a primary factor that determines the behaviour of its followers. Consequently, we can say that in the public's view, expertise and credibility become diluted as concepts, being put in the shadow of notoriety and authority, as our model revealed no significant relationship between PIQ, perceived expertise, or credibility.

Going further, hypothesis H9 was also confirmed. The results show that online information trust has the strongest influence on the distribution of false information due to lack of time. These conclusions are similar to those obtained in the studies carried out by (Apuke & Omar, 2021; Talwar et al., 2019; Wei et al., 2023), which analysed the association between OT and fake news sharing.

6.1 Theoretical implications

There is still a scarcity of research in the area of psychological predictive factors that leads to the false information-sharing phenomenon on social media platforms. Moreover, it is unclear how factors never studied before, such as OT and its predictors, could influence the phenomenon. Thus, our study contributes to the literature as follows.

Firstly, our model builds partially on the model of Talwar et al. (2020), extends it, and goes beyond WhatsApp groups and fake news by addressing social networking sites in the context of the false information sharing phenomenon. We further explore the influence of OT on the propensity of social media users to share false information due to lack of time. Moreover, we extended the false information-sharing determinants by considering information source attributes, such as expertise, authority, PSC, and PIQ.

Secondly, the present research findings differ from those of Talwar et al. (2020), as our research model revealed a bit stronger negative relation between PCAFI and

SFILT. In this sense, passive corrective actions, such as blocking the source of false information or reporting it, limit the sharing of false information due to lack of time.

Moreover, the current study has shown that PCAFI has a positive impact on SFILT, confirming the findings of Talwar et al. (2020), but in the false information-sharing context this time. Thus, false information spreads more rapidly and wider than accurate one on social media. Also, due to the involuntary amplification of false content, while engaging with it for debunking reasons, corrective actions such as debunking can have a boomerang effect (Caled & Silva, 2022). This outcome is in contrast to Talwar et al. (2020), but the present study refers to larger audience networks in the context of false information sharing. Further research is needed for consensus. Nonetheless, it shows once again the paramount importance of users' social responsibility to authenticate information before sharing to contribute to limiting the spread of harmful false information.

Thirdly, this study brings for the first time in discussion the mediating role of OT, while influenced by the PSE, PSA, PSC, and PIQ, in determining the social media users to share false information. However, the findings have revealed that only OT is playing a mediating role, but only between PSA and SFILT. Thus, social media influencers, play a key role in determining OT, making social media users less vigilant to false information, misinformation, and even disinformation.

Fourthly, it establishes for the first time a positive link between the OT of social media users and their inclination to share false information due to lack of time, in the context where previous literature provides only an association between OT and online purchases (Zhu et al., 2020).

6.2 Practical implications

Based on the outcomes of our research model, several practical implications are proposed. Firstly, our findings are essential to social media consumers as they underscore once again the importance of user responsibility in limiting the harmful dissemination of false information on online social networks. The model showed the importance of passive corrective actions in limiting the spread of false information on online social platforms, such as reporting or blocking sources that spread false information.

Secondly, for policymakers, it gives another incentive to improve communication and support media literacy programmes meant to offer the knowledge and the tools to each platform user to act as sanitizers or "guardians" of the online information ecosystem, cutting this way the flow and wider dissemination of false information (Sampat & Raj, 2022; Wei et al., 2023).

Thirdly, our model has revealed the key role of information sources in determining the dissemination of false information due to the lack of time. The results of the study raise an alarm related to the shifting of OT from expertise toward authority figures (influencers). Openly addressing potential misinformation pitfalls and showcasing transparent practices in content creation can contribute to building and maintaining trust among consumers.

Fourthly, this study shows that when authenticating information before sharing, the inclination of users to share it due to lack of time is minimal.

Lastly, it calls for an approach between civil society, platforms, false information flaggers, and fact-checkers, academia, and policymakers to propose a worldwide regulatory framework to limit the spread of harmful false information phenomenon (Apuke & Omar, 2021; Sampat & Raj, 2022).

6.3 Limitations and future development

The current study may have some limitations, which are detailed further. Thereby, the study could be limited by the sample size, respectively by the selected population. Thus, this may lead to results that may not generalise to a larger population, other age groups, or education levels. Also, since the sample was chosen from a single country, it is possible that results may not be applicable in other cultural or geopolitical contexts.

In the specialised literature, it is the first study that analyses the effect of AIBS, ISICA, ACAFI, and PCAFI; various information sources and perceptions, and OT on SFILT. Therefore, future studies should provide more comprehensive and reliable data on the impact of the analysed variables on the sharing of false information online. Also, an intercultural comparison should be made by expanding the study to different cultural and geopolitical contexts to understand the generalisation of the results. In addition, other variables that capture the behaviour of users in online social networks and that may impact the sharing of false information online should be incorporated. Such variables can be self-disclosure, compulsive use, fear of missing out, information overload, communication overload, social media fatigue, social comparison, or ubiquitous connectivity. Also, these variables can be used to analyse the different mediating or moderating effects of the relationships in this model.

7. Conclusions

In conclusion, this study investigated the impact of authenticating information before sharing, instantaneous sharing of information for creating awareness, active and passive corrective actions on false information, and online trust in the sharing of false information online due to lack of time. The results of this study highlight the importance of authenticating information before sharing and the role that passive corrective actions can play in reducing false information spreading. In addition, the instantaneous sharing of information for creating awareness and online trust also has an important influence on false information-sharing behaviour investigation.

The findings also suggest that active corrective actions on false information can have both positive and negative effects on the sharing of false information online due to lack of time. Moreover, the results revealed that online trust is influenced, in a surprising way, only by perceived source authority, while perceived source expertise, perceived source credibility, and perceived information quality have no influence. This research provides valuable insights for businesses, consumers, and

policymakers who are interested in understanding and reducing the online spread of false information. To sum up, the outcomes respond to the research question we have framed. Nonetheless, this study is not without its limitations, and additional research is warranted to fully understand the complex interplay between these and complementary factors. We can say, generically, that our study witnessed a social change caused by technology or excessive technology use.

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