

Supervisor's Review on "The impact of behavioral biases on information consumption and trust during the COVID-19 pandemic" by Pablo Leloup

Overall Assessment

The thesis by Pablo Leloup tackles an interesting and timely topic of information overload and messenger bias in relation to the trust levels during the COVID-19 pandemic. The thesis is an outcome of a long, and sometimes arduous, writing process that included a major revision of the previous version of the text. I consider this effort well-invested since the thesis has been significantly improved and its final version provides a persuasive testimony of Pablo's skills.

Pablo engages with a relatively broad range of peer reviewed sources, synthesizes them skillfully, and independently design his own empirical research. While the research has some limitations that stem above all from the limited resources available to a bachelor's student it testifies its authors ingenuity and capability to formulate relevant hypotheses, collect and evaluate data, as well as dicuss the results and acknowledge limitations in a structured fashion. Therefore, my overall impression is very positive and I think the thesis exceeds the usual expectations. **I recommend the thesis for defense and, if defended persuasively, consider it worthy of an excellent grade.** More detailed comments, including minor critical remarks follow.

Additional Comments

The introduction provides good context and background for the research questions, clearly outlining the core concepts that will be examined (information overload, messenger bias, trust) and their significance during the pandemic.

The literature review in Chapter 1 covers relevant prior research on the key topics. It provides a solid theoretical grounding for the study hypotheses on the relationships between

information overload, messenger bias, and trust. The author makes good connections between existing knowledge and the context of the pandemic, although the literature review could be expanded and organized more tightly in places. I like the illustrations he provides by referencing the situation in France in chapter 1.5. Chapter 1.6 feels somewhat disjointed: perhaps it would be better to turn it merely into a summary of the theoretical part while disconnecting the bounded rationality theme and treating it at some separate, more convenient location. Also, a paragraph summarizing the key takeaways at the end of each the sections of the theoretical part would come in handy.

The thesis uses appropriate quantitative methodology, manipulating the source of information between groups to assess differences in trust levels based on messenger credibility. The data analysis methods are suitable for the hypotheses being tested. The author offers thoughtful interpretation of the results in his discussion. He does a good job situating the findings within the existing literature and elaborating on the limitations of his approach. These are not insignificant—including small sample and time lag between the research and the pandemic—but include no dealbreakers as far as bachelors' theses are concerned and the author acknowledges them openly and thoughtfully.

Question

The research on information overload peaked in 1980's and 1990's (p. 4). Given the spread of digital technologies afterwards, this seem quite ironic. Do you have any idea why the research petered out? Seems rather strange.

In Prague on September 13, 2023

Petr Špecián, Ph.D.