

**Czech University of Life Sciences Prague**  
**Faculty of Economics and Management**  
**Department of Languages**



## **Bachelor Thesis**

**Impact of disinformation/fake news on Family Ties**

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# BACHELOR THESIS ASSIGNMENT

Anna Sazanovskaya

Business Administration

Thesis title

**Impact of disinformation/fake news on family ties**

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## Objectives of thesis

This thesis aims to identify how online propaganda and disinformation on social networks and the Internet affect social structures and influence interpersonal relationships.

Partial objectives:

- Determine the impact of disinformation and online propaganda on a community.
- Identify how online propaganda and disinformation affects family relationships.

## Methodology

The thesis will analyse the effects of disinformation and online propaganda by exploring the psychological and social factors of a case study – community in a selected region. The methodology of the theoretical part will analyse professional and scientific sources while the practical part will include two approaches:

- 1) Content analysis of the most popular social topics among Russian-speaking networks on Telegram and Instagram. Text mining (primary data) will be used to collect common topics among Russian speakers, comparing which platform is used the most for influencing opinions and the impact it has on family structures.
- 2) Interviews focusing on the impact of online propaganda and disinformation on family relations via social media. These will be semi-structured interviews that will bring context (secondary data) to the content analysis.

Based on a synthesis of the findings from the content analysis, interviews, and literature review, the conclusions will be formulated.



## The proposed extent of the thesis

30-40 pages

## Keywords

online propaganda, social media, Instagram, Telegram, comparative analysis, relationships, family

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## Recommended information sources

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## **Declaration**

I declare that I have worked on my bachelor thesis titled "*Impact of disinformation/fake news on Family Ties*" by myself, and I have used only the sources mentioned at the end of the thesis. As the author of the bachelor thesis, I declare that the thesis does not break any copyrights.

In Prague on 15.03.2024

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## **Acknowledgement**

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to Jared Daniel Jacques for his invaluable support and assistance throughout the process of completing this bachelor thesis. His guidance, encouragement, and insightful feedback have been instrumental in shaping the direction and quality of my work. I am truly grateful for his unwavering support and dedication, which have been invaluable contributions to the successful completion of this endeavor.

# **An Impact of Disinformation/Fake News on Family Ties**

## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the multifaceted phenomenon of fake news (FN) within the contemporary media landscape. Beginning with an exploration of the definition and understanding of fake news, the literature review examines its proliferation in today's interconnected world, particularly through the pervasive influence of social media platforms. The roles of social media in disseminating disinformation are analyzed alongside the motivations driving individuals to propagate fake news. Further insights are provided into the structural aspects of fake news, including discussions on hard and soft propaganda techniques, as well as the application of indexing and framing theories in shaping public discourse. Moving into the practical realm, the study outlines the methods employed for data collection, participant selection, ethical considerations, and data analysis. The trustworthiness of the findings is addressed, along with a description of the sample population and the tailored application of framing theory in analyzing interview responses.

The results and discussion section synthesizes the empirical findings, providing insights into the perceptions and behaviors surrounding fake news consumption and dissemination. The thesis concludes with reflections on the implications of the research findings and recommendations for future studies in the field.

Overall, this thesis contributes to a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding fake news and its impact on society, highlighting the importance of critical media literacy and vigilant discernment in navigating today's information landscape.

## **Keywords:**

Online propaganda, social media, Instagram, Telegram, comparative analysis, relationships, family.

# Dopad Dezinformací/Falešných Zpráv na Rodinné Vazby

## **Abstrakt**

Tato práce se zabývá mnohostranným fenoménem falešných zpráv (FN) v současném mediálním prostředí. Přehled literatury začíná zkoumáním definice a chápání falešných zpráv a následně se zabývá jejich šířením v dnešním propojeném světě, zejména prostřednictvím všudypřítomného vlivu platform sociálních médií. Role sociálních médií v šíření dezinformací je analyzována spolu s motivacemi, které vedou jednotlivce k šíření falešných zpráv. Dále jsou uvedeny poznatky o strukturálních aspektech falešných zpráv, včetně diskuse o technikách tvrdé a měkké propagandy, jakož i o uplatnění teorií indexování a rámcování při utváření veřejného diskurzu. Studie přechází do praktické oblasti a popisuje metody použité při sběru dat, výběru účastníků, etických aspektech a analýze dat. Věrohodnost zjištění je řešena spolu s popisem výběrového souboru a přizpůsobenou aplikací teorie rámcování při analýze odpovědí z rozhovorů.

Část věnovaná výsledkům a diskusi syntetizuje empirická zjištění a poskytuje vhled do vnímání a chování souvisejícího s konzumací a šířením falešných zpráv. Práci uzavírají úvahy o důsledcích výzkumných zjištění a doporučení pro budoucí studie v této oblasti.

Celkově tato práce přispívá k hlubšímu pochopení složitostí obklopujících fake news a jejich dopadu na společnost a zdůrazňuje význam kritické mediální gramotnosti a bdělého rozlišování při orientaci v dnešním informačním prostředí.

## **Klíčová slova:**

Online propaganda, sociální média, Instagram, Telegram, srovnávací analýza, vztahy, rodina.

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# **1. Introduction**

In the 21st century, the pace of development of information technology is growing day by day at an incredible pace and has shifted towards media activities and information exchange processes. The most common product consumed by mankind is information. The demand for it has always been high, and most people nowadays cannot imagine their lives without internet communication and information technology. This impulse has created an interactive environment in our community where the population has equal opportunities to participate in the exchange of information. Looking at the details, consumers are not always focused on whether the information they are receiving or transmitting is correct or not. This leads to the spread of lies—false information—in society. What is noteworthy is that these days there is a lot of misinformation not only on the internet and social media but also in the news of serious electronic media, especially news sites. Over time, people have come to the concept of "you can't trust the media" and at this point, a large percentage of people have gone online. Fake information spreading today in the digital age poses a serious threat to society and its foundation, the family. Family is the place where values are formed, nurtured, and information is shared. The impact of fake information on the family environment can lead to a breakdown in trust between family members, changes in world views, and even conflicts. This thesis conducts a study on the impact of social networks and fake information on family relationships, analyzes the mechanisms and consequences of this impact, and considers possible ways to counter this negative influence.



## **2. Objectives and Methodology**

### **2.1 Objectives**

This thesis aims to identify how online propaganda and disinformation on social networks and the Internet affect social structures and influence interpersonal relationships. The thesis will analyze the effects of disinformation and online propaganda by exploring the human psychology and social factors of a case study - community.

### **2.2 Methodology**

The purpose of this dissertation is to study how disinformation on social networks and the internet affects social structures and influences interpersonal relationships. In this dissertation, the effects of disinformation will be analyzed by exploring the human psychology and social factors of a case study - community. This thesis will look at how online influence marketing affect family relationships. These will include political and non-political themes. This thesis will combine theoretical aspects of social psychology, sociology and information technology to explore this topic.

### **3. Literature Review**

#### **3.1 Definition of “FN” fake news**

Fake information, or "fake news" (FN), is false or distorted information presented as credible news. It can be created in order to manipulate public opinion to form certain attitudes and beliefs. Propaganda is often completely neglected these days. An exception occurs when political and global opportunities are available to manage the consciousness of the masses. False, misleading information is able to negatively affect the consciousness of the audience and undermine various attitudes, social norms, values, and traditions (Jaster and Lanius, 2018).

That is why, in the current conditions, the problem of false, fictitious, and fake news has become one of the most important topics in modern journalism. Fake news is aimed at distracting people and raising a fuss; it contains partially unverified or completely unverified information. According to research, about 78% of people trust information that is published on social networks. Users don't read the material that the social network links to and don't check the veracity of the facts presented in the headline, the text announcement, the illustration, or the material itself. This provides a potential opportunity to influence user expectations, which often do not correspond to reality, and to form a public point of view favorable to a party.

##### **3.1.1 Understanding Fake News**

Knight & Tsoukas (2019) found that FN material has been around for a very long time. This content, which can be broken down into individual perspectives as well as scientific consensus on topical themes such as COVID-19, evolution, and the impact of climate change, has been around for a very long time. However, because of the ongoing shifts in political methods, there has been a significant and widespread influence on how facts are defined, perceived, and understood across every stage of communication (Massari, 2010). According to the Aggarwal et. al. (2012) argument, inaccurate scientific, political, and belief-oriented information has major causes and implications for those who are more politically inclined and those who try to promote their views to a broader society.

Aggarwal and Singh (2013) later state that those who actively seek information share a common goal of becoming politically involved and increasing their level of knowledge. It is impossible for people to adjust their opinions and principles, give up old ways, and embrace fact-checked news and new approaches to inform people or groups with identical opinions to adopt new states to a degree of news confirmation and endorsement (Centeno et al., 2015; Kim & Lyon, 2014).

Experts and academics have seen a growing interest in the creation of fact-checking systems to notice the proliferation of false news material in society (Berkowitz & Schwartz, 2016; Hwang et al., 2011; Miranda et al., 2015; Miranda et al., 2016). This is due to the fact that FN is basically constructed around undetected and deceptive phenomena. However, regardless of the significant investment in novel methods for recognizing, differentiating, and reducing factual discrepancies (such as 'Content Authentication' by Adobe for recognizing modifications to initial content), the obstacles related to the propagation of FN remain unresolved. This is because society continues to communicate online, debate, and advertise fake news (Kwon et al., 2017; Pierri et al., 2020). In fact, the disconnect that exists between fact-checking and the fundamental principles and opinions held by the public is one of the primary factors that prevents individuals from advocating for fact-checking rather than embracing the risks associated with FN.

### **3.1.2 The spread of fake information in today's world**

The spread of fake information is a complex and dynamic process driven by various factors, including technological advances, psychological mechanisms, and social dynamics. With the development of social media and online platforms, fake information has spread with amazing speed. A lot of people are exposed to fake news as it finds its way into news feeds and public discussions. An event that happens in one corner of the planet can be reported in seconds in the other hemisphere. There are an infinite number of events happening around the world every day, and human beings, as they are supposed to do by nature, perceive the signals around them, including information from the media, directly. In this sense, in most cases, any news disseminated in social networks is considered correct for the individual. Many do not consider about the reliability of the information. Instead, it's perceived to be more important to have knowledge about the events and be able to access it. Today, people have full access to these events, whether on news channels or social networks.

Sometimes, people don't even realize they were deceived. Many do not question the content and simply accept it as a given reality. Here lies the biggest problem: The information thought to be correct turns out to be false. Just one false piece of information can completely turn a person's life around. That is why the problem of false, unreliable information has become one of the most pressing topics not only in modern journalism but in all of social life. Every day people read the news, use the function of mailing between relatives to share new information and events in the world, discuss it, and sometimes even argue because of varying opinions, often leading to interpersonal conflicts.

People tend to choose and question information that does not correspond to their beliefs. Many people are not familiar with the terms echo chambers and bubbles. Social media can create 'echo chambers' or information bubbles where users see content that matches their pre-existing views. This can lead to the reinforcement and maintenance of their beliefs, including fake information (Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2010). On social media, information is published with little or no filtering or editing. This can lead to the fact that fake information gets on users' feeds without any verification. The ease of creating fakes and modern image and sound processing tools allow for the creation of convincing fake content. Modern technology makes it possible to fake video, audio, or text that can mislead even experienced users.

### **3.1.3 Roles of social media in spreading fake information**

Social networks have become one of the main channels for spreading fake information. The platforms' algorithms spur interaction with content that evokes emotional reactions, which makes fake information particularly attractive to users. Social media specifics such as rapid sharing, reposts, and comments amplify the "virality" effect of fake news. The relationship between human nature and the phenomenon of information has played an important role in the technological revolution and the rapid development of the Internet (Georger, Gupta, Mills, and Tennant, 2018). Because of the infinite possibilities of the Internet, the principle of information credibility has been seriously changed. When looking at the main reasons for the wide spread of fake news, Tennant et al. (2018) emphasized exactly 2 out of many:

- 1) Quantitative: there is and appears every day on the Internet a huge amount of information stock that cannot be verified and authenticated.

2) Qualitative, or technological: new technologies have led to an increase in the means of data collection and storage, as well as the number of news producers and channels for their transmission.

People are able to communicate their different beliefs and principles with one another when unfettered access to a large quantity of information is made available to them (George et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2019; Rubin, 2019). However, the vast majority of people do not fully understand the dangers and consequences of this newly discovered resource. Fake news is one example of such a threat. According to Kumar et al. (2018), FN, although not having been fact-checked, has a convincing and professional look. This ensures that consumers are unable to always differentiate it from true news (TN). The impacts of FN may be seen in many aspects of society; for instance, the impact that FN has had on SM has also had an influence on how governments, organizations, and individuals react to various occurrences in society. According to Chen and Sharma (2015), the vast majority of FN is directed at a certain subset of the public with the intention of advancing a particular ideology through inciting deeply held ideas and fostering social division. A frequent evaluation of FN on SM is thus essential. As stated by Kumar et al. (2018), in order to reduce the amount of dissension and conflict that may be caused by groups or individuals in society and even families.

### **3.1.4 Why do people spread social media disinformation?**

When people connect with or share false information that they find online, they have effectively been convinced to do so by the people who first spread the misinformation. There are several ways to influence someone's opinion, according to several influential theories of how social information is processed (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). In some situations, people may give serious consideration to the information that is at our disposal. At other times, snap judgments are made based on heuristics and the information delivered from the environment. When individuals do share information on social media, it is more likely to be an immediate and unplanned occurrence rather than a deliberate activity that they spend a significant amount of time thinking about and planning out (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986).

For instance, there is evidence that individuals use the interaction elements of Facebook in a way that is rather mindless and robotic. In circumstances like these, it is probable that a peripheral path to persuasion will be an essential factor. The decisions that individuals make

about what they share, enjoy, and so on will thus be predominantly influenced by heuristics or other contextual signals.

In this specific context, consistency, consensus, and authority are three heuristics that have the potential to play a key role (Cialdini, 2009). These are not the only heuristics that might potentially play a role in determining whether or not people disseminate misleading information. However, in each instance, there is suggestive empirical data as well as evident efforts in the actual world to harness these occurrences, which makes it worthwhile to take into consideration the possibility that they exist.

### **Consistency**

The degree to which an individual's current behaviors or views are consistent with their history is referred to as their level of consistency. For instance, in the United States, individuals who have a track record of voting Republican may be more inclined to support and spread messages associated with right-wing political ideology (Cialdini, 2009). The concept that individuals want to act in ways that are consistent with their attitudes has been the subject of a significant amount of research throughout the years. According to the findings of certain studies (Festinger, 1957; Moravec, 1957), users of social media platforms give greater credence to headlines that are in accordance with the opinions they already have, even when such headlines are specifically called out as being incorrect. When it comes to spreading misinformation, it might be advantageous to focus on audiences who are already supportive of the material being spread.

### **Consensus**

Individuals reach a consensus on an issue to the degree that they believe their behavior will be congruent with that of the majority of other individuals (Roethke, Klumpe, Adam, and Benlian, 2020). In the present setting, it is feasible that individuals will be more willing to forward a message if they discover that it has already been shared broadly with a large number of other people. The term "social proof" refers to this strategy of persuasion used in marketing. It is commonly employed in the field of online commerce as a means of encouraging customers to make purchases of products or services (for example, by presenting customer evaluations or sales rankings). It is possible to influence the feedback processes of social networks in order to generate the appearance of such social support; this

strategy seems to have been adopted in the wake of terrorist strikes in the UK (Dobрева and Innes, 2019).

On Twitter, bot networks are used to disseminate information with poor credibility via the implementation of algorithms. It has been shown that bots are responsible for the quick dissemination of information by repeatedly tweeting and retweeting messages (Ciampaglia et al., 2018). The enormous number of retweets that are generated via the use of bot networks may be misunderstood by humans, who see the messages as an indication that a large number of other people share their opinions. There is data that points to the statement that "each amount of sharing activity by likely bots tends to trigger a disproportionate amount of human engagement." It's possible that this bot activity is an effort to take advantage of the consensus effect.

The degree of agreement or social proof connected with an online post may be easily manipulated because of the simplicity with which this can be done. According to research conducted by Bay and Fredheim (2019), it was relatively simple to acquire large levels of phony interaction for social media postings (such as the sharing of content by networks of fake accounts), and there was a considerable illicit market for manipulating social media. If a growing agreement can successfully impact organic reach, then it may be a beneficial tool not just for those who want to sow misinformation but also for those who want to promote counter-messages.

### **Authority**

The degree to which the message seems to originate from a reliable and trustworthy source is commonly referred to as the level of authority (Lin, Spence, and Lachlan, 2016). It has been shown that participants in a research study are more likely to claim that they would spread a social media message if they believe the source of the message is reliable. There is evidence of efforts being made in the actual world to take advantage of this impact. In 2018, Twitter discovered fake accounts that imitated those of local newspapers in the United States, which are often considered to be more trustworthy than national media. It's possible that they were idle accounts that were created, especially with the aim of establishing credibility in preparation for their subsequent use.

### **3.1.5 Factors why fake news keeps progressing**

1. An important consideration is both the rate and scope of dissemination. In today's information society, a lot of different things, such as the accessibility of the internet and social media, the progression of technology, the algorithms used by platforms, and even human conduct, all play a role. The following are some factors that determine the quantity of false information that is distributed as well as its rate (George, Gupta, Giordano, Mills, Tennant, & Lewis, 2018):
- 2.
3. **Widespread Internet Access:** With the advancement of technology, access to the internet is becoming more and more widespread. This allows fake information to reach a large audience quickly.
4. **Social Networks and Platforms:** social media, messengers, and online platforms play a key role in spreading fake information. The ability to repost, share, and retweet allows content to quickly go viral.
5. **Platform Algorithms:** Social platform algorithms determine what content is displayed to users in their feeds. They can support echo chambers and bubbles, amplifying the spread of fake information among like-minded people.
6. **Emotional Impact:** Fake information that evokes strong emotions is more likely to attract users' attention and spread faster. Emotional reactions can lead to more reposts and shearing.
7. **Impact of Viral Headlines and Images:** Headlines and images that grab attention play a key role in engaging the audience. This helps the content spread faster.
8. **Psychological Effects:** Fake information aimed at maintaining or suppressing certain emotions or beliefs can influence people's behavior and decisions. This can accelerate the spread.
9. **Automated Bots:** Automated bots can spread fake information quickly, giving the impression that the content is active and popular.
10. **Technological Capabilities:** The ability to create and edit content is available to almost anyone today. This can speed up the process of creating and spreading fake information.
11. **Trends and Events:** Current events, news, or trends can be the "right soil" for spreading fake information. Fake news can quickly get the attention of users.
12. **Public Perception:** If users tend to believe in conspiracy theories or unreliable sources, they may actively spread fake information to their social circle. As a result, the speed



and scope of spreading fake information depend largely on the interaction of multiple factors that determine how content goes viral and reaches a large audience.

### **3.2 The Role of the Structure of Fake News**

The presentation of fake news (including, for instance, the photos, the presentation style of the headlines, and the vocabulary used in the text) might assist in illustrating the rationale behind why it has become so popular on social media platforms. This investigation is solely going to concentrate on these components of false news, namely its forms, substance, and the established norms that are applied to it. In this part, there is no discussion of the impact of artificial intelligence, the activities of harmful programs or bots, or the strategies used to distribute information in filter bubbles or echo chambers. Fake information that shows accidents, tragedies, or murders might produce stronger emotional sharing (Bright, 2016; Heath, 1996). Heath (1996) has shown that individuals have a bias for overstatement and exaggeration, particularly if the news is excessively negative.

Vosoughi et al. (2018) found that despite this, false political news travels at a rapid rate, particularly when it concerns topics such as terrorism, natural catastrophes, urban legends, or financial information. In their study, they reveal that misleading material pertaining to politics was not only more extensively circulated, but it also reached a higher number of individuals than data pertaining to other topics. These writers demonstrated that deception spreads quicker than genuine material, provoking diverse responses in individuals who view it, including contempt, fear, and surprise (Vosoughi et al. 2018). Without distinguishing the type of misleading information, this group of researchers demonstrated that information about falsity travels faster than accurate information.

On the other hand, Humprecht (2019) proved that, in contrast to the United States of America and the United Kingdom (where the majority of the misinformation spread online is political and partisan), in Germany and Austria, sensationalist articles prevail over political content (Humprecht 2019). The author concluded that disinformation on the internet in countries with English speakers typically focuses on targeting the political establishment. When compared to German-speaking nations, the primary source of information is on immigrants, retaining them responsible for current political, economic, or societal circumstances. This was discovered through an analysis of fact-checkers in these four nations. For instance, in

Brazil and Portugal, one of the primary focuses of misinformation campaigns conducted over the internet is political corruption (Cardoso et al. 2019; ISCTE 2019).

### **3.3 Platforms on social media**

The active development of the Internet has led to the creation of platforms for people to communicate with each other. Initially, all social networks had only an entertainment function. It was just a place of communication, dating, viewing photos, watching videos, and listening to music. Apart from communication, entertainment, and information, social media has become a powerful tool for marketing and promoting products and services. The impact of social media marketing on family ties has become an increasingly relevant and important research topic. Social media marketing is a set of activities aimed at promoting a brand, product or service using social media platforms. It includes creating and distributing content, engaging audiences, analyzing results, and interacting with consumers.

Social media provides a unique opportunity for companies to reach a wide audience, interact with them in real time and influence their opinions and perceptions. Social media marketing campaigns can have a strong influence on consumer behavior. Family members seeing ads or recommendations on their newsfeeds may start to become interested in new products or services, which can influence their purchasing decisions. This is managed through a wide range of tools to engage with audiences, promote products and build long-term relationships.

According to statistics, every day 95% of all Internet users enter social networks and have conversations about products, companies, services, share their opinions and impressions. As a result, even one member of the online community can affect the reputation of a company with a multi-million-dollar turnover by expressing positive or negative feedback.

After all, 87% of social media users trust online opinions more than official information. Social networking is a great marketing platform to promote services. The meetings industry is also not left out of the global trend - event organizers, convention centers, and hotels are increasingly using social media to promote their companies and services. Various reviews and comments are published on social media pages, photos and videos, presentation materials are posted, and there is a constant dialog with visitors through surveys. It can be

concluded that social media is an important marketing tool in the meetings industry, and that is why professionals need to skillfully use this tool of PR-activity.

### **3.3.1 Marketing and propaganda, analysis of interdependency.**

Propaganda is one of the most basic incentives in marketing. It should be understood as a kind of social activity related to the dissemination of certain knowledge and ideas, as well as other kinds of information, to form specific perceptions, attitudes, and emotional states and to influence target groups of the public more effectively. Propaganda also refers to a special kind of advertising that is used to support an opinion on a controversial or, on the contrary, an important issue for society.

Despite the fact that propaganda is a part of PR technologies, they are not identical to them and have many differences:

If the purpose of public communication is to achieve agreement, then propaganda is focused on the creation of a movement.

Propaganda, unlike PR, does not seek to build an honest dialog with the public; it is, on the contrary, built on false information and distortions of facts.

The goal of PR is to achieve understanding, while propaganda is focused on attracting supporters.

Propaganda has certain differences from advertising. Advertising is focused on informing and assisting in making this or that choice, while propaganda is aimed at presenting information about the facts, which will be framed in the author's desired way while allowing the use of all kinds of psychological techniques of influence.

In marketing, propaganda pursues certain goals and objectives. Its main purpose is considered to be the popularization of views, arguments, facts, and other information, specific or general, among the target audience of the public. The latter, in addition to consumers, may include other contractors and stakeholders, such as suppliers, competitors, inverters, representatives of public organizations and the media, public authorities and government, local communities, etc. The main objectives of publicity are to promote the views, arguments, facts, and information of a specific or general nature among the target public.

The main tasks solved in the process of propaganda activities are considered to be:

- organization of product propaganda
- establishment and maintenance of relations with the press
- communication; consulting
- lobbying

The organization of commodity propaganda implies the need to carry out activities that are aimed at combining multiple efforts related to the promotion of specific goods and services. Press relations serve as a basis for placing information in the media that can attract public attention to products, services, companies, and individuals. As has already been mentioned, in the 21st century, the internet and media platforms are the ones we use every day, where people can find everything, they need. In this regard, the media and social networks are the best ways to sell, impose, promote, or convince a person.

The organization of company-wide communication is based on the desire to provide the public with a better understanding of the specifics of the business. Counseling is based on issuing recommendations to the management regarding issues of public importance, the image, and the position of the company. Lobbying involves organizing work with government officials and legislators to prevent the passage of a law or to achieve its strengthening. Ultimately, all the tasks solved in the organization and conduct of the propaganda activities of the firm are related to ensuring the company's favorable publicity and countering the spread of unfavorable information and rumors about it.

Propaganda plays a huge role in business. As practice shows, it is most often resorted to in order to popularize brands, individual companies, goods, and services, as well as to revive public interest in them. Some trade associations use propaganda to generate interest in new products. Organizations use propaganda to draw attention to themselves or to correct unfavorable perceptions in the minds of their target audiences.

### **3.4 Hard propaganda vs Soft Propaganda**

Propaganda may be classified in several ways, not limited to the modern use of spreading false information. However, these classifications are not mutually exclusive or

comprehensive. Here, a more traditional distinction between propaganda and misinformation is presented to place the idea of misinformation within these classifications.

From an analysis of historical propaganda posters, it becomes evident that propaganda may take several forms, and it is not always subtle or covert, like misinformation. Hard propaganda, often known as rough and overbearing propaganda, is characterized by direct appeals to nationalism and patriotism. It relies on biased pro-institutional media sources and utilizes emotionally charged pro-government rhetoric. Rigid advertising demonstrates unshakable allegiance to the state, regardless of the situation, reinforcing the state's authority in all domains. As a short-term strategy, suppressing dissent may be beneficial in demonstrating the authority of a government and diminishing people's inclination to engage in protests (Huang, 2018).

However, excessive use of hard propaganda may undermine the legitimacy of the state, especially when the state's authority and control capabilities do not align with the propaganda being disseminated. As time passes, the extreme absurdity of rigid propaganda messaging increases people's realization of the regime's irrationality and the political difficulties faced by the nation. Consequently, these messages lose their impact on audiences and instead distance them. Although strong propaganda may have a negative impact on public opinion over time, its main function is to temporarily suppress revolt and public discontent, while also briefly mobilizing support from voters.

In contrast, soft propaganda presents its messages as coming from unbiased or trustworthy sources and aims to influence people to adopt certain patterns of thinking and affiliations. The word "soft" is used to describe propaganda that strategically exploits the vulnerabilities of its designated objectives, such as entering group message chats, surrounding the targets, and trapping them inside an echo-chamber of narratives. The content that we consider as "disinformation" often comes under the category of "soft propaganda."

### **3.5 Indexing and Framing Theories**

Indexing and framing theories are widely used in all types of media to either downplay some news or, otherwise, increase attention to certain events. Both theories will be examined as a foundational method to be applied in the practical part.

### 3.5.1 Index Theory

Indexing refers to the degree of significance assigned to an event or a specific news article in comparison to other news items (Castells, 2009). The number of publications celebrating a successful rocket launch in a nation determines the event's level of recognition. Propagandists control the process of indexing by strategically pushing events that would normally get less attention and downplaying the impact of unfavorable publicity. They do this by inundating the media with or directing it towards positive news. For instance, Jamieson's (2020) recent study illustrates how Russian meddling in the index coverage of FBI head James Comey's notification of a reopened investigation into Clinton's personal email server ultimately led to Clinton's defeat in the 2020 presidential election against Donald Trump.

### 3.5.2 Framing Theory

Framing refers to the selection and emphasis of certain features of a news item or event in media coverage, as well as the promotion of a certain interpretation or appraisal as a consequence of such coverage (Goffman, 1974; Castells, 2009). News media frames function similarly to capturing a snapshot of an event. Unlike a comprehensive contextual history and immersive three-dimensional perspective, a picture only records an event from a fixed viewpoint, which may be edited to emphasize some aspects while downplaying others.

#### **Nature of framing:**

Entman (1991), in his seminal work, "Framing US Coverage of International News: Contrast in Narratives of KAL and Iran Air Incidents" initiated discussions on the notion of framing. In this paper, he claimed that:

*Unless the narratives are compared, frames are difficult to detect fully and reliably because many of the framing devices can appear as "natural," unremarkable choices of words or images. (Entman, 1991, p. 6).*

- a. In order to recognize framing in news coverage, Entman (1991) outlines five often used methods for framing news stories:

- b. Conflict might be prioritized between parties rather than focusing on the actual choice made. Human interest or personalization refers to the practice of highlighting a tale by focusing on the human element and individual characteristics, often at the expense of other significant factors.
- c. Consequences may have a broad impact. Adopting a policy might be imprudent in relation to party or coalition cohesion, as well as in terms of a nation's global standing.
- d. Morality: media coverage often engages in moralizing, particularly when political players behave indiscreetly. Additionally, policies may be seen as ethically dubious. For example, Michael Moore's commentary on the US Patriot Act and the global criticism of US foreign policy all adopt a moralistic stance.
- e. Responsibility refers to the act of assigning accountability, whether it is for the source of a problem or the resolution of it. Following the occurrence of the Asian tsunami, one significant aspect that emerged was the notion of "global responsibility" in finding answers, while also attributing the lack of preparation to the local governments.

Entman (1991: 13) classifies the framing theory into the nature of framing and levels of framing:

**Specific:** For instance, reporting the Asian tsunami was linked to consequences, including how many further deaths there could be if aid was not received and issues of responsibility.

**Generic:** For example, conflict and the game of politics as opposed to frames of values.

Frames of communication consist of communication from different actors and sources of news. This could be positive or negative.

Framing in thought consists of mental representation, interpretation, simplification, “and manipulation” of reality.

To demonstrate an illustrative example, see Figure 1.

Figure 1: Framing theory, example for two different audiences.

# Fox News v. Fox News Latino

How do they frame the same story for two different audiences?



In Rare Move, University Grants \$22K Scholarship To Undocumented Student

By Elizabeth Lorente / Published August 06, 2014 / Fox News Latino



Genaro's Tale (FACEBOOK)



MONEY FOR ILLEGALS

FOX friends

U.S. AND EU HAVE ACCUSED RUSSIA OF TRAINING AND EQUIPPING PRO-M

mediamatters.org

Source: Entman (1991: 13)



## **4. Practical Part**

### **4.1 Methods of data collection**

In this study, qualitative data was gathered through semi-structured interviews. Interviews were chosen as the primary method of data collection due to their ability to provide rich, in-depth insights into the research topic. The semi-structured format allowed for a balance between a predetermined set of questions and the flexibility to explore emergent themes and ideas (Bryman and Bell, 2012).

#### **4.1.1 Participants selection**

Participants were selected through purposeful sampling, aiming to include individuals with diverse perspectives and experiences related to the conflict in the war between the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

#### **4.1.2 Ethical consideration**

Prior to conducting interviews, ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board. Participants were provided with informed consent forms outlining the purpose of the study, confidentiality measures, and their rights as participants.

Interviews were conducted either in person or remotely, depending on participant preferences and locational considerations. Each interview session lasted approximately 30–40 minutes and was audio-recorded with the participants' consent. The semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix 1) served as a flexible framework for guiding the conversation while allowing for exploration of unanticipated themes.

#### **4.1.3 Data analysis**

Initially, the study provided the theory of “framing” and “indexing” and how social media uses its tools to propagate and influence the perception of news by the selected sample. The questions N-5, 6, and 7 are focused on identifying the perceptions of participants about the news and media.

#### 4.1.4 Trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings, several measures were employed. These included members checking, wherein participants were provided with summaries of their interviews to verify accuracy and interpretation, as well as peer debriefing, wherein the researcher engaged with colleagues to discuss and validate the emerging themes and interpretations.

#### 4.1.5 Description of sample

Table 1: Sample size

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Country of Residency</b>
<b>Participant 1</b>	Male	27	Russian	Czech Republic
<b>Participant 2</b>	Female	25	Ukraine	Czech Republic
<b>Participant 3</b>	Fame	41	Ukraine	Russian Federation
<b>Participant 4</b>	Male	32	Russian	Russian Federation
<b>Participant 5</b>	Female	26	Ukraine	Czech Republic
<b>Participant 6</b>	Female	31	Ukraine	Czech Republic
<b>Participant 7</b>	Male	29	Russian	Czech Republic
<b>Participant 8</b>	Female	22	Ukraine	Germany

*Source: Own processing.*

#### 4.1.6 Analysis of interviews

In this chapter, the answers of participants are analyzed and tailored to the theories and theoretical aspects. The parts of participants responses will be illustrated in that chapter to link the narratives of participants with the mentioned theoretical concept of “Frame/ing”.

1) What social media do you mostly use to read the news? Name at least three of them.

Why do you specifically use these platforms?

*“I usually read Telegram channels to read news. The reason is simply because they are reliable and free media. I try to be open-minded about the news because there are lots of fake news stories online. Especially on TV. Telegram is a free platform, and it is not controlled by any government whatsoever.” (Participant 1).*

*“I am mostly on Telegram... Other than that, nothing else... only if I glance at other sources of information to see how differently information is delivered... (Participant 2).*

*“Mixed variety of media... I don’t particularly stick to a certain platform. To name a few: Instagram, State Media, and Telegram channels.” Well, the interpretations are different. One media says this. The other media say the opposite. It is important to distinguish... “ (Participant 5).*

*“I try to read independent channels and watch different bloggers who are more independent than others. However, I caught myself a few times literally emerging into state propaganda via online platforms. Instagram... Germany media (Shpigelt)...and other types...” (Participant 8).*

When analyzing those narratives provided by participants regarding their news consumption habits, it becomes apparent that most individuals (Participants 1, 2, 5, 8) favor independent media sources, which they perceive as less likely to propagate false information, or at the very least, are more inclined to verify information from reliable sources. On the other hand, Participants 3 and 6 indicated a general aversion to news consumption, citing a desire to avoid stress-inducing situations. Thus, the majority of participants demonstrate an inclination towards steering clear of fake news, or at least make efforts to do so. Participants 4 and 7, however, recounted experiences of being subjected to propaganda, leading to a diminished trust in all news sources overall, resulting in their disengagement from news consumption altogether.

2) Do you read news about the ongoing war in Ukraine? If so, how often?

*“At least once a day, I do read news, for sure. I try to stay updated about everything in the world, not only about the ongoing war in Ukraine.” (Participant 1).*

*“Sure... Not as often as I used to... but I think it has become a trend nowadays. I do check the news, but not that often. There is nothing good in the news... I think that bad news is more interesting to people.”. (Participant 3).*

*“I do... Fore sure... It cannot be said how frequent... but probably once a day I keep myself updated.”. (Participant 5).*

*“I occasionally catch up on news about the war in Ukraine, maybe once or twice a week. It's important to stay informed, but I don't want it to overwhelm my daily routine.”  
(Participant 6).*

Each participant exhibits a degree of involvement with news regarding the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, yet their methods differ regarding how frequently they engage, the breadth of their interests, their perception of news content, and their ability to balance staying informed with their daily routines. These discrepancies underscore the diverse strategies individuals employ when navigating news consumption amidst ongoing global conflicts. Notably, Ukrainian citizens appear particularly engaged in this context, not solely due to sample size imbalances but also due to discernible narrative lenses observed throughout the interviews, such as more time spent on answers and the longevity of stories.

3) Have you noticed how the content influences your perception about the war? If so, how exactly? Is there any specific event that you look for in such media?

*“At some point, I was constantly checking the news, like 10–12 times a day. I even remember that it had a negative impact on me. I noticed that all the news had negative points. ”Apparently, any war that is ongoing at this point brings negativity overall.” Yes, I want all the wars in the world to stop! ”I literally want to have a piece in the whole world!”. (Participant 1).*

*“Absolutely... contents massively impact the perception... I don't recall the exact case with me. I actually tried to look for some positive events recently and was shocked that I didn't find anything.” (Participant 3).*

*“In some ways, yes... Well, it just triggers me when I read any news related to war. The game that politicians play for pieces of land... Insane... I don't have anything in mind”  
(Participant 5).*

*"I haven't really noticed any impact... barely... but I assume that generally yes... The media does impact the perception of people. not only war-related matters... Not; I don't look for any events." (Participant 8).*

In exploring participants' perceptions of how media content impacts their views on the ongoing war in Ukraine, a range of perspectives emerge. Participant 1 reflects on the frequency of news consumption, noting a pervasive negativity in coverage and its toll on personal well-being, and expressing a fervent desire for global peace. Participant 3 similarly acknowledges the powerful influence of media content, particularly noting a lack of positive events in recent news, highlighting a quest for balance in coverage. Participant 5 reveals a visceral emotional response to war-related news, condemning political gamesmanship and territorial disputes. Participant 8 displays a more passive awareness of media influence, recognizing its potential impact on perception but refraining from actively seeking events. Together, these narratives underscore the varied ways individuals engage with media representations of conflict, from emotional reactions to nuanced searches for balance and peace amidst the turmoil.

- 4) Do you believe that the posted content on the platforms of Instagram and Telegram somehow impacts the behavior of people overall and changes their perception?

*"Yes, I do. People are prone to read news and get impacted by such news. It happened in my family when my brother started blaming political regimes for a certain type of action and became a big supporter of a particular side."*

*(Participant 1).*

*"Well, it all comes down to personal traits, the media she or he reads and interprets, but generally yes... I think that posted content could shift the perception of news and events in different ways." (Participant 5).*

*"Absolutely yes... I got contacted by my mother once, saying nonsense and I asked her, Where did she find out about that fake? She simply said, Instagram pop-ups... But I think that people of older age could be subjects of such propaganda."*

*(Participant 7).*

All participants acknowledge the potential for content posted on platforms like Instagram and Telegram to influence individuals' behavior and perceptions. While Participant 1 provides a specific example of how exposure to certain news can lead to a shift in political allegiance, Participant 5 emphasizes the role of individual interpretation in mediating this influence. Participant 7 offers a personal anecdote underscoring the susceptibility of individuals, particularly older age groups, to misinformation circulated through social media platforms. These responses collectively highlight the perceived power of online content to shape attitudes and beliefs. The majority of participants (2, 3, 5, 6, 8) had nearly similar answers, suggesting a simple “yes, any news impacts perception to some extent.”

5) Have you heard about “Framing Theory”? If so, how?

*“Nope... is that something I should know of?”. (Participant 8)*

*“Don't have a clue. But I might only purpose what does it entail” I think that's the reasons why I don't watch TV or read NEWS about war on mass social media”.*

*(Participant 1)*

*“Not at all...”. (Participant 5)*

*“Nope, I haven't heard about that”. (Participant 5)*

None of the participants demonstrated any substantial knowledge or understanding of the framing theory. Responses range from complete ignorance to speculative connections, highlighting a general lack of familiarity with this concept among the respondents.

6) Have you ever seen in news the same picture but described in a totally different manner by different media organizations? Is so, what was that? What was your reaction?

*“Yes, many times in different mass media. I think it was something related to Bucha event<sup>1</sup> that happened in Ukraine” I checked that news in Ukrainian media and Russian media, compared them, and to be honest, I was completely lost who to trust”. (Participant 4)*

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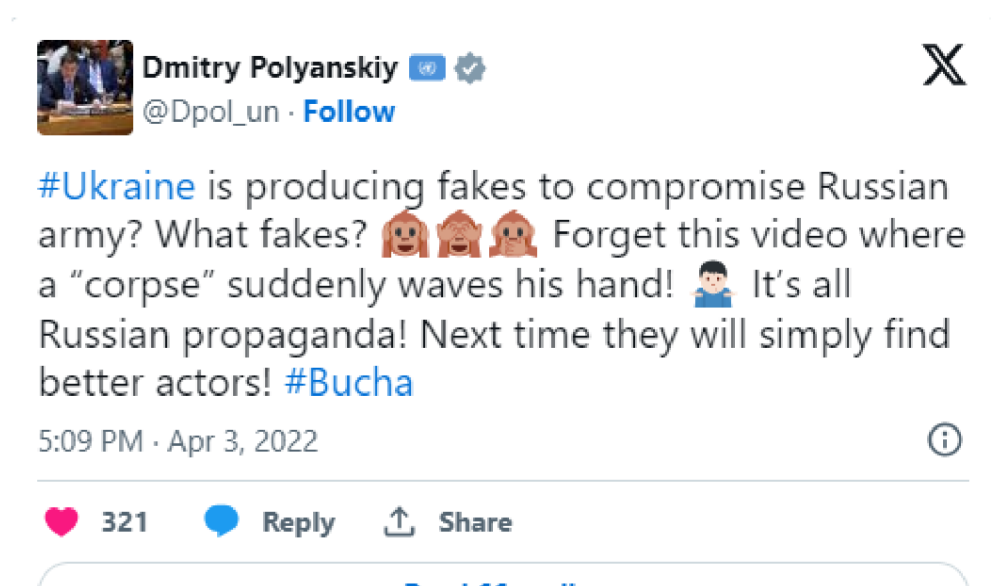
<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bellingcat.com/news/2022/04/04/russias-bucha-facts-versus-the-evidence/>

*“Well, I don’t recall a particular case of that...but I do believe there were many cases of such...”. (Participant 7)*

*“I think it is just a common tool of any media...They simply interpret their vision to certain cases and make it look reliable and trustful... I am not surprised...” (Participant 8)*

The majority of participants (1, 2, 3, 7, 8) did not recall a specific case related to the impact of posted content on platforms like Instagram and Telegram. However, Participant 1 provided an intriguing response regarding the Bucha event, highlighting its significance in the context of the application of the framing theory. This event evoked mixed feelings and exemplified how framing influences public perception. Notably, there were conflicting narratives from both the Russian and Ukrainian sides regarding the event. Higgins (2022), a member of the billing cat investigative team, examined the incident and uncovered disparities in the accounts provided by Ukrainian official Dmitriy Polyanskiy. Initially, Polyanskiy accused Russia of committing severe atrocities against civilians in Bucha. However, subsequent investigations by independent organizations revealed inconsistencies, prompting Polyanskiy to retract his statement and label it as Russian propaganda in a tweet. This case underscores the dynamic nature of media framing and its impact on shaping public discourse and understanding of significant events. See Figure 2.

Figure 2: Twitter of Dmitry Polyanskiy



*Source: Higgins (2022).*

7) Have you ever realized that the “News you read” were actually fake? What was your reaction? Did you still keep reading news from that source?

*“Yes, I did. I unsubscribed from that channel. There were seen traits of propagation of a particular side. ” I didn’t like that.” (Participant 4)*

*“Yes...absolutely... Yes, I kept reading news from that channel. I believe they apologized in a way for posting the fake content. (Participant 7)*

*“Probably happened, but it just seems to me like there are no organizations that post truthful content.” (Participant 2)*

*“Yes... It happened to me a few times, and after discussions with my friends about a certain event, I realized that all the sources that I read were absolutely fake. I think that when people experience something personally (war, loss of a relative) and tell you how it was in reality, there is no doubt in their words. No, I didn’t read any of its content anymore. (Participant 8)*

Participant 4 recalls encountering fake news and promptly unsubscribing from the channel due to perceived bias towards a particular side, expressing dissatisfaction with the propagation of biased content. In contrast, Participant 7 acknowledges encountering fake news from a channel but opts to continue reading from it, possibly due to an apology issued by the source. Participant 2 expresses skepticism regarding the truthfulness of news organizations, suggesting a general lack of trust in media sources. Meanwhile, Participant 8 recounts experiencing multiple instances of encountering fake news and realizing their falsehood through personal experiences and discussions with friends. The rest of the participants (1, 3, 5, and 6) don’t recall any occasions.

This led them to question the reliability of various news sources, emphasizing the importance of personal experiences in discerning truth from falsehood. These responses highlight varied reactions to encountering fake news, ranging from immediate disengagement to continued consumption, tempered by skepticism and personal experiences.



8) Do you believe that the country you live in, have an impact on the prorogation of certain news? If so, how exactly?

*“Yes, it has full control over the news, and it dictates to the media what it should post and what it shouldn't.” (Participant 2)*

*“Well, yes... In fact, any country uses its media sources to propagate something across the whole country. No secret... ”. (Participant 3)*

*“As far as I know, yes, the Russian Federation doesn't have any independent media.”.  
(Participant 4)*

*“Probably yes... I believe that media is fully owned by governmental authorities, at least in CIS countries.”. (Participant 7)*

Overall, these responses collectively indicate a widespread belief among participants that the countries they reside in have a significant impact on the propagation of news. The perspectives range from perceptions of complete government control over media content to more generalized assertions about the use of media to promote national agendas. The narratives underscore concerns about state influence on information dissemination and the lack of independent media in both countries.

9) What is your personal opinion about the Telegram and Instagram channels with open media? Are you able to distinguish which one is the governmental source and which one is absolutely independent?

*“To be honest, I am not involved in marketing that deep, to know the tricks which are used by the mass media” But, I do believe that independent sources such as: independent media” Stalkovski speaks” illustrate the reality of events”. (Participant 1)*

*“Yes...Actually I am able to distinguish...there are lots of (foreign agents) in Russian Federation among Russian citizens... to name a few (Yury Dud<sup>2</sup>) who was initially doing*

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/@vdud>

*interview in Russia with celebrities and etc... But after 24 of February 2022... he started questioning people of high elites in Russia and the government recognized his actions as anti-governmental... ” (Participant 7)*

*“Sure... I am able to distinguish... however, after sometime I think that all independent media become so dependent on governmental discourse... ” (Participant 4)*

Overall, these responses collectively demonstrate varying levels of trust in independent media sources and a discernment of governmental versus independent channels. While Participant 1 expresses confidence in the portrayal of reality by independent sources, Participant 7 highlights the recognition of individuals challenging official narratives and the consequences they face. Participant 4 raises concerns about the potential for dependency on governmental discourse within independent media circles, indicating a nuanced understanding of the complexities involved in distinguishing between sources. The rest of the participants had vague feelings about the platforms and couldn't fully confirm their ability to distinguish between governmental sources and independent sources.

10) Can you please describe the picture? Name at least 3-4 criteria, what do you see?

Picture 1: Picture used in Interview.



Source: Adopted from Ria (2024).

Table 2: Results of 1st picture

Participant 1	Rocket hit in the city center Unsanctioned meetings Pushkin's monument demolition Inspections close to the monument
Participant 2	Rocket attack Death of people Square gathering
Participant 3	Rocket strike Death Demolishment of monument somewhere in Ukraine. Strikes of people.
Participant 4	Square attack Missile attack Inspection
Participant 5	Aftermath and inspection Square meeting Protests
Participant 6	I know of the picture. It is a Brussel meeting of farmers.
Participant 7	Rocket strikes Demolishment of a monument. Protests
Participant 8	Protests Demolishment of a monument Square strikes

*Source: Own processing.*

#### **4.1.7 Tailoring the answers with the Theory of Framing**

It is noted how participants realize and are very skeptical of different online platforms. Based on the participant's answers, it was concluded that she once was a subject of "fake propagation" but that she also realized this fact. She was a witness to how fake news or news in general impacted the perception of her relative (brother). In her case, that indicates that

family ties might be heavily impacted by “fake news.” Further, she mentions the massacre event that happened in Bucharest, when the Ukrainian government blamed the Russian government for doing so and vice versa. Further, the author demonstrated two pictures to the participants with the aim of describing them. The results were, however, expected. Table 1 illustrates the feedback of all participants and their associations with the picture. However, Picture 1 illustrates the recent “farming strikes in Belgium.” The statue in question is the statue of the mechanic Beaufort, one of four sculptures of workers that surround the monument to the British-Belgian industrialist John Cockerill. Protesting outside the European Parliament, angry farmers brought down one of the statues of the monument and threw it into a fire by farmers during one of the more heated moments of Thursday's protest; see Full Picture 2.

Indeed, if those pictures are compared, the angles of taking them make big difference.

Picture 2: Farming protest in Brussels



Source: [Brussels times \(2024\)](#)

The example provided illustrates how participants' perceptions can be influenced by their preconceived ideas and the broader context of the conversation, particularly when discussing war-related issues and propaganda. In this scenario, participants interpreted a picture based



on their existing beliefs and biases, leading to varying interpretations such as identifying a rocket strike, unsanctioned meetings, and even imagining the presence of Pushkin in a monument. These interpretations highlight the subjectivity of perception and the potential for individual biases to shape understanding. Furthermore, given the discussion's focus on war-related issues and propaganda, participants may have been primed to view the picture through a lens of conflict and political manipulation. This could have impacted their interpretations, leading them to perceive elements in the picture as evidence of war-related events or propaganda efforts by conflicting states.

The example underscores the complex interplay between individual perception, contextual factors, and the framing of discussion topics. It highlights how participants' interpretations of a seemingly neutral image can be influenced by broader conversations and the prevailing discourse surrounding war and propaganda.

11) Can you please describe the picture? Name at least 4-5 criteria, what do you see?

Figure 3: Picture used in Interview 2.



*Source:* Adopted from Ria (2024).

Table 3: Results of 2nd picture

Participant 1	Crush of a plane. Terrorist attack. Police investigating on the back. Deaths.
Participant 2	Crushed plane. Terrorist attack.
Participant 3	Crushed plane due to war.
Participant 4	Army plane crashed. War consequences.
Participant 5	Crushed plane. Plane attack. War related issue.
Participant 6	Consequences of crashed plane. Attack War Terrorism
Participant 7	Plane crushing somewhere in mountains Terrorism
Participant 8	Crushed airplane Terroristic attack

Source: Own processing.

The picture N-11 demonstrates the recent falldown of a Russian aircraft IL-76. The Russian government claims that Ukraine killed its own soldiers that were planned to return home. (See Appendices 9.1, 9.2, and 9.3). At the same time, the Ukrainian government claimed that there were no soldiers on board but weapons to supply the Russian army. This shows how each side, including Czech news, announces the event from different perspectives, and it is up to people who to trust. Each media uses its own “frame” and “index” to illustrate the event. Which correlates with the statements of Entman (1991). When two parties are in conflict, each of them tells its own truth on certain occasions. See Chapter 3.5.2.

Overall, the participants' descriptions collectively portray the image as a scene of destruction and violence, with many attributing the incident to terrorism and war-related issues. The narrative underscores a perception of the event as a consequence of conflict and highlights the participants' awareness of the broader geopolitical context surrounding such incidents. Most of the participants (1, 2, 6, 7, 8) are more likely to claim that picture 4 relates to terrorist attacks, whereas 3 (4, 5, 6) describe it as a consequence of war.

## **5. Results and Discussion**

The interview findings discover the impact of propaganda and media manipulation on the relationship between neighboring nations like Ukraine and the Russian Federation. Historically linked through shared governance under the USSR, these countries have experienced shifts in political discourse that have strained their relations over time.

The influence of propaganda, particularly through media channels, emerges as a significant factor affecting citizens' perceptions and, by extension, interpersonal relationships. Participants from both nations express concerns about the prevalence of propaganda and the challenges of discerning truth from falsehood, even in the presence of independent media outlets.

The case of the Bucha event exemplifies how propaganda can exacerbate tensions and sow confusion. Participant 1's experience highlights the complexities of navigating conflicting narratives, with Ukraine initially attributing the incident to Russian aggression. However, independent investigations later revealed discrepancies in Ukraine's claims, underscoring the potential for misinformation to fuel discord between nations.

Overall, the interview results underscore the need for media literacy and critical thinking skills in navigating information warfare and preserving diplomatic relations between nations. Despite efforts by independent organizations to verify information, the pervasive influence of propaganda remains a significant challenge in shaping public perception and maintaining trust between neighboring countries.

### **5.1 Limitations of the Work**

#### **5.1.1 Sample Bias and Generalizability**

The interview sample may not be fully representative of the broader population, as it consists of 8 participants from specific regions or demographics. This could affect the generalizability of the findings to the wider population. Participants may have provided responses influenced by social desirability bias or their own subjective interpretations of the questions. Some participants may have been reluctant to share their true opinions or experiences, leading to potential underreporting or misrepresentation.



### **5.1.2 Recall Bias**

Participants' recollection of past events or experiences, such as encountering fake news or specific media content, may be subject to recall bias. Memory limitations or distortions could impact the accuracy and completeness of their responses.

Despite these limitations, the interview provides valuable qualitative data that can offer insights into participants' perceptions and experiences related to news consumption, propaganda, and media influence. However, future research efforts should aim to address these limitations to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings.

## **6. Conclusion**

The bachelor thesis is devoted to the intriguing subject of "The Impact of Disinformation and Fake News on Family Bonds." Divided into two distinct sections, the thesis embarks on a comprehensive journey, beginning with the theoretical groundwork. This portion encompasses an in-depth exploration of fake news, starting with its definitions and extending to a nuanced analysis of its multifaceted dimensions. Central to this inquiry is an examination of the fundamental nature of fake news, its rampant proliferation within the contemporary digital milieu, and the pivotal role played by social media platforms in its dissemination. Moreover, the thesis delves into the intricate motivations driving individuals to perpetuate disinformation online, alongside an exploration of the underlying factors that fuel its persistence. Notably, the study delves into the structural intricacies of fake news, shedding light on the nuanced distinctions between hard and soft propaganda techniques.

Moreover, the theoretical underpinnings extend to the exploration of indexing and framing theories, which offer valuable insights into the structuring and framing of fake news to sway perceptions and behaviors.

Transitioning to the practical realm, the thesis embarks on an empirical journey through the interview process. Participants, hailing from two countries embroiled in conflict, lend their voices to the study. Through a meticulous analysis of their narratives, the author uncovers commonalities and resemblances, shedding light on the subtle ways in which preset narratives or captured images can shape individual perceptions. By presenting contrasting narratives, the interviews vividly illustrate how entrenched narratives or selectively framed images can profoundly influence individual perspectives.

Finally, the author adeptly intertwines the theoretical framework with the insights gleaned from the participant interviews, showcasing the efficacy of the theoretical concepts in real-world contexts. Through this seamless integration, the thesis not only contributes to scholarly discourse but also offers practical insights into the complexities of disinformation and its impact on familial bonds.

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## 9. Appendix

Name, Surname, Age, Occupation, Nationality, Country of residency.

- 1) What social media do you mostly used to read the news? Name at least 3 of them.
- 2) How often do you read news about the ongoing war in Ukraine?
- 3) Have you noticed how the content influences your perception about the war? If so, how exactly?
- 4) Do you believe that the posted content on platforms of Instagram and Telegram somehow impact the behaviour of people overall and change their perception?
- 5) Have you heard about “Framing Theory”? If so, how?
- 6) Have you ever seen in news the same picture but described in a totally different manner by different media organizations? Is so, what was that? What was your reaction?
- 7) Have you ever realized that the “News you read” were actually fake? What was your reaction? Did you still keep reading news from that source?
- 8) Do you believe that the country you live in, have an impact on the prorogation of certain news? If so, how exactly?
- 9) What is your personal opinion about the Telegram and Instagram channels with the open media? Are you able to distinguish which one the governmental source and which one is absolutely independent?

10) Can you please describe the picture? Name at least 4-5 criteria, what do you see?



Source: Ria Novosti (2024). Adopted from Telegram.

11) Can you please describe the picture? Name at least 4- 5 criteria, what do you see?



Source: RBK (2024). Adopted from Telegram.



## 9.1 Ukrainian mass media

# Ukrainian POWs were not on board Il-76 that crashed in Russia - Defence Council chief

FRI, FEBRUARY 09, 2024 - 10:42

UA EN RU



Secretary of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine Oleksiy Danilov (Vitalii Nosach, RBC-Ukraine)

AUTHOR: OLEKSANDRA BASHCHENKO

There were no Ukrainian prisoners of war on board the Russian Il-76 aircraft that crashed near Belgorod. However, Ukraine does not have enough information about whether the prisoners who were supposed to be exchanged that day are alive, says the Secretary of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine Oleksiy Danilov in an interview with Babel.

"Whether our prisoners were there, I can tell you for sure - no. I say this based on the experience we had after Tehran, and based on what happened later. If this had really happened, the number of biological material, so to speak, fatalities, would have been significant," he said.

Source: [rbc \(2024\)](#)

## 9.2 Russian mass media

### An American political scientist explained why the Ukrainian military shot down an Il-76

🕒 26 January 2024, 09:24

Vladimir Zaivy

UKRAINE

IL-76 AIRPLANE

USA

PRISONER EXCHANGE



Photo: REUTERS/Russian Investigative Committee

The Ukrainian military shot down an Il-76 plane in the Belgorod region to prevent the prisoners on board from giving interviews after the exchange. American political scientist Scott Bennett told Izvestia about this on January 26.

“The Ukrainian military fired a missile at a plane carrying prisoners of war because they did not want these prisoners of war to tell stories, to be reunited with their families, to give interviews to the press, to share with their fellow patriots how well they were treated, how well they were received by the Russians and how criminal in fact, it is the regime of (Ukrainian President) Vladimir Zelensky,” he said.

Source: [Ria \(2024\)](#)



### 9.3 Czech Mass Media (seznam.cz) translated into English.

31. 1. 2024, 15:21  
CTK



Russia and Ukraine exchanged more prisoners of war on Wednesday. While the Russian Ministry of Defense announced the exchange of 195 Russian prisoners for 195 Ukrainian ones, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyi announced that 207 Ukrainian men and women had returned. According to earlier reports, the exchange of prisoners was supposed to take place a week ago, but on this day, a Russian Il-76 transport plane, which according to Moscow was transporting Ukrainian prisoners, crashed near Belgorod.



Captured Ukrainian soldiers shortly after their release

It was the fiftieth exchange of prisoners during the war that Russia started almost two years ago, Ukrainian Ombudsman Dmytro Lubinets said. Both sides promised that soldiers freed from enemy captivity would first face recovery and rehabilitation.

Source: [seznam \(2024\)](#)