Examining the motivations of sharing political deepfake videos: the role of political brand hate and moral consciousness

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Abstract

Purpose: Deepfakes are fabricated content created by replacing an original image or video with someone else. Deepfakes have recently become commonplace in politics, posing serious challenges to democratic integrity. The advancement of AI-enabled technology and machine learning has made creating synthetic videos relatively easy. This study explores the role of political brand hate and individual moral consciousness in influencing electorates' intention to share political deepfake content.

Design/methodology/approach: The study creates and uses a fictional deepfake video to test the proposed model. Data is collected from *N*=310 respondents in India and tested using Partial Least Square – Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS v3.

Findings: The findings support that ideological incompatibility with the political party leads to political brand hate, positively affecting the electorates' intention to share political deepfake videos. This effect is partially mediated by users' reduced intention to verify political deepfake videos. In addition, it is observed that individual moral consciousness positively moderates the effect of political brand hate on the intention to share political deepfake videos. Intention to share political deepfake videos thus becomes a motive to seek revenge on the hated party, an expression of an individual's ideological hate, and a means to preserve one's moral self-concept and strengthen their ideologies and moral beliefs.

Originality: The study expands the growing discussion about disseminating political deepfake vidoes using the theoretical lens of the negative consumer-brand relationship. It validates the effect of political brand hate on irrational behavior that is intended to cause harm to the hated party. Further, it provides a novel perspective that individual moral consciousness may fuel the haters' desire to engage in anti-branding behavior. Political ideological incompatibility reflects ethical reasons for brand hate. Therefore, hate among individuals with high moral consciousness serves to preserve their moral self.

Keywords: Deepfake, Political Brand Hate, Moral Consciousness, Political Ideological Incompatibility, Fake News

1. Introduction

Advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI) have enabled the creation of convincing fake audio and videos. Fabricated images, videos, or audio created by replacing someone's face or voice are called deepfakes (van der Sloot and Wagensveld, 2022). In these digitally altered videos, people are depicted doing or saying things that are not real (Chesney and Citron, 2019; Gupta *et al.*, 2023; Westerlund, 2019; Mustak *et al*., 2023; Young *et al.*, 2021). These videos are created using machine learning tools and powerful algorithms to make them starkly resemble real videos (Güera and Delp, 2018; Vaccari and Chadwick, 2020; Kietzmann *et al.*, 2020; Mirsky and Lee, 2021). The term Deepfake is derived by combining deep learning + fakes (Kietzmann *et al.*, 2020). The first deepfakes were created by swapping the faces of celebrities in adult videos; eventually, politicians also became popular targets of deepfakes (Appel and Prietzel, 2022).

While fake news has been a threat to public discourse for a long time (Borges *et al.*, 2019; Qayyum *et al.*, 2019), the rise of political deepfakes coupled with the reach of social media networks has only added to the issue of media forgeries (Westerlund, 2019). The content of political deepfake videos is often controversial and frivolous, meant to create a false image in people's minds. Their potential for deceit and disinformation makes them dangerous tools for damaging the reputation of famous people (Masood *et al.*, 2022). Many political deepfake videos have gone viral recently and in the past: President Obama using an invective to describe President Trump (Romano, 2018); Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy instructing his citizens to lay down their weapons (Farish, 2022); an Indian politician wooing voters against the opposition (Jee, 2020). The creation of deepfake videos has given rise to new challenges in the war on disinformation and fake news.

The emergence of deepfake technology has drawn the attention of researchers toward understanding the motivation and impact of spreading deepfakes. Vaccari and Chadwick (2020)

studied the effect of deepfakes by examining how people evaluate such videos. In a series of studies, Ahmed (2021a, 2021b, 2021c, 2022) investigated the various factors affecting sharing of political and non-political deepfakes. Recent studies have also explored the psychological outcomes of deepfake videos on online users. The impact of viewing self-celebrity deepfake videos on appearance self-evaluation has been studied by Wu *et al.* (2021).

Deepfakes are used predominantly in the political sphere to discredit politicians and political organizations (Di Domenico and Visentin, 2020), where the potential for mayhem is even greater (Chesney and Citron, 2019). Political deepfakes have the potential to sabotage elections and influence civic trust, which has also drawn extensive technological and regulatory attention. Twitter and Facebook have implemented policies prohibiting AI-manipulated and counterfeit deepfakes (Knight, 2018). Experts believe that while such policies are helpful, more is needed to curb the impact of such videos that are circulated and made viral before being identified as fake.

The growing concern about the impact of deepfakes stems from their believability and accessibility (Kietzmann *et al.,* 2020). Viewers of deepfake content easily trust visual content with familiar voices and faces (Granot *et al.*, 2018; Brucato, 2015; Kietzmann *et al.*, 2020). The advancement of technology makes these artificial videos closely resemble real videos. The availability of open-source online tools like Faceswap has pivoted the creation and circulation of deepfake videos. Further, social media facilitates creating and posting content, making disseminating deepfakes easier. While the discussion around deepfake content is gaining momentum, there is a recent call for scholarly attention on exploring factors that influence sharing of misinformation (Pennycook and Rand, 2021) and deepfake videos by online users (Tham and Seah, 2019; Masood *et al.*, 2022; Mustak *et al.*, 2023).

The current study aims to expand the understanding of factors that lead to the dissemination of political deepfake videos. The widespread usage of deepfake videos in the political context has posed significant democratic threat by way of manipulating public opinion and disseminating disinformation campaigns (Riechmann, 2018; Chesney and Citron, 2019). Using the theoretical lens of negative consumer brand relationship and political branding, we predict that ideologically driven political brand hate can favorably influence deepfake video-sharing behavior. This relationship is further influenced by reduced intention to verify the deepfake content.

Branding literature has commonly discussed and applied the notion of consumer branding on political parties giving rise to a stream of work on political branding (Sharma *et al*., 2020; Jain and Ganesh, 2020; Greco and Polli, 2020). Similarly, brand hate has been recently studied in the context of political brands (Banerjee and Goel, 2020). Prior literature has identified multiple outcomes of brand hate, including anti-branding behavior (Bryson *et al*., 2013, Krishnamurthy and Kucuk, 2009), negative word of mouth (Zarantonello *et al.*, 2016; Hegner *et al.*, 2017; Zhang and Laroche, 2020), vindictive complaining and venting out negative emotions (Alba and Lutz, 2013), revenge-seeking behavior (Kucuk, 2016; Bayarassou *et al.*, 2020), etc. Brand hate can elicit irrational responses from consumers. However, little is known about the effect of political brand hate on the dissemination and sharing of fake political content, including deepfakes, that can hurt the reputation of the political brand.

The concept of hate in psychology has been discussed with respect to moral judgment and moral exclusion (Opotow, 2005), which arises from the perceived immorality of the object of hate (Staub, 2005). Consumer-based studies have extensively applied consumers' moral orientations in the context of their consumption patterns (Bateman and Valentine, 2010; Shah and Amjad, 2017). Therefore, discerning the underlying effect of an individual's moral consciousness on political

deepfake sharing as an outcome of political brand hate can offer crucial insights. Additionally, the proposed empirical framework examines the moderating effect of moral consciousness on the relationship between political brand hate and the intention to share political deepfake videos.

The following section provides a background on deepfakes as an emerging form of disinformation and political brand hate. We then discuss the conceptual framework, methodology, and results. The study concludes by discussing the implications for theory and practice and providing recommendations for future research. The findings of the study are expected to make significant contributions to the understanding of political deepfake dissemination and the growing stream of work on brand hate in the context of political branding.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Fake news and the rise of deepfakes

Fake content has existed for a long time and has affected many lives. The rise of the internet and social media has evolved to take new forms of disinformation. Numerous studies have been conducted to understand the antecedents and outcomes of fake news sharing on the internet. Politics is an especially vulnerable context for fake news, as misleading hyperpartisan news gives rise to political polarization (Pennycook and Rand, 2021). According to Mourão and Robertson (2019), political fake news is driven by partisanship and identity politics. The primary motivations for fake news creation are ideological (Tandoc *et al.*, 2018) or economical (Bakir and McStay, 2018; Hughes and Waismel-Manor, 2021). Ideologically, fake news creation aims to extend one's ideological or political motives by disrupting public discourse (Petersen *et al.,* 2018; Tandoc *et al.*, 2019; Tejedor *et al.,* 2021).

The scholarship expands to discuss the factors that affect the spread of fake news on the internet. Individual differences and personality characteristics such as extraversion, neuroticism

(Buchanan, 2020), agreeableness (Buchanan and Benson, 2019), or conscientiousness (Buchanan, 2021) play a significant role in sharing of false information online. A stream of work suggests that political polarization and beliefs determine fake news sharing (McPhetres *et al.*, 2021; Neyazi *et al.*, 2021; Tandoc *et al.*, 2021; Osmundsen *et al.*, 2021). Di Domenico *et al.* (2021) found the effect of presentation format, such as news source primacy, on fake news sharing. Content relevancy (Chua and Banerjee, 2018; Mishra and Samu, 2021) and importance (Tully, 2022) influence fake content sharing. Other factors include social media usage characteristics (Neyazi *et al.*, 2021), social norms (Andi and Akesson, 2021), and internet usage (Bringula *et al.*, 2021). Individual characteristics have been found to influence fake news detection. In particular, Borges-Tiago *et al*. (2020) posit that young, tech-savvy users are more likely to detect fake news and thereby limit its spread.

Amongst the various content characteristics of fake news, deepfakes represent a rising form of disinformation that involves doctored multimedia content (Ahmed, 2021c; Dasilva *et al.*, 2021; Vaccari and Chadwick, 2020; Wahl-Jorgensen and Carlson, 2021). As people are more inclined to trust audio-visual content, deepfakes have rapidly gained attention among fake news creators. Recent studies have focused on identifying the impact of deepfake content on users' perception of credibility and trust (Vaccari and Chadwick, 2020; Shin and Lee, 2022) and engagement with deepfake content (Lee and Shin, 2022) (Table I).

Few studies have explored factors influencing deepfake sharing (Table I). Ahmed (2021a) found that cognitive ability and perceived accuracy of the false claim affect sharing of the intention of non-political deepfakes. In contrast, political interest, cognitive ability, and network size affect sharing of political deepfakes (Ahmed, 2021c). In another study by Ahmed (2022), social media news use and fear of missing out (FOMO) were positively associated with intentional deepfakes

sharing. A crucial principle of deepfakes is deception. Studies suggest that it is challenging for people to detect deception (Bond and DePaulo, 2006). Detection of deceit can significantly alter sharing intention by negatively influencing their attitudes, as established by Iacobucci *et al*. (2021), who posited that deepfake detection could help contain the potential of causing harm from deepfake videos. While extant literature has focused on examining the impact of deepfakes and exploring the predictors of deepfakes detection and dissemination (Table I), there is hardly any discussion about deepfakes verification. The current study aims to expand this domain by integrating the concept of political brand hate in the context of political deepfakes sharing as well as the verification intentions of the users.

---------Insert table I here---------

2.2 Political Brand Hate

The past decade has seen a growing amount of research on the "dark side" of consumer-brand relationship, including brand hate (Kucuk, 2016, 2019b; Zarantonello *et al.*, 2016; Hegner *et al.*, 2017; Fetscherin, 2019; Zhang and Laroche, 2020). Extant studies have focused on exploring the various antecedents and outcomes of brand hate (Hegner *et al.*, 2017; Kucuk, 2018; Fetscherin, 2019; Bayarassou *et al.*, 2020) in different contexts that are specific to a brand (Rodrigues *et al.*, 2020) or industry sector (Farhat and Chaney, 2020; Curina *et al.*, 2020; Pantano, 2021; Bryson *et al.*, 2021).

The concept of branding has also been extended to political markets, where partisans are political consumers and the party represents the brand (Harris and Lock, 2010; Needham and Smith, 2015; Jain *et al.*, 2017). It is argued that electorates judge political parties like consumers judge brands (Reeves *et al.*, 2006). Political communication on social media also mimics the strategies of marketing communication, as is evident by the widely discussed social media

campaigns of Barack Obama in The United States (Miller, 2013; Bimber, 2014) and that of Narendra Modi in India (Dwivedi and Kapoor, 2015; Jain and Ganesh, 2020). In this vein, Banerjee and Goel (2020) explored the antecedents and outcomes of brand hate in political markets. They found ideological incompatibility as one of the critical predictors of party brand hate.

One widely discussed outcome of brand hate is negative eWOM and online anti-branding behavior (Zarantonello *et al.*, 2016; Hegner *et al.*, 2017; Zhang and Laroche, 2020). Researchers argue that this outcome is representative of consumers' revenge-seeking motives and desire to cause harm to the brand (Kucuk, 2016; Grégoire *et al.*, 2009, 2010; Johnson *et al.*, 2011; Bayarassou *et al.*, 2020). Sharing fake news or spreading disinformation with others resembles the psychological mechanisms underlying the dissemination of word-of-mouth behavior (WOM) (Berger and Milkman, 2012). Yet, little is known about the effect of political brand hate on engagement with political deepfake content that has the potential to cause harm to the political party. Through this study, we aim to uncover the role of political brand hate in users' intention to share and verify political deepfake videos.

3. Hypotheses development

3.1 Partisan's political ideological incompatibility and political brand hate

Brand hate literature has reflected on the influence of ideological incompatibility on consumers. Ideological incompatibility may arise when a brand's actions are against an individual's moral beliefs due to contextual factors such as moral wrongdoings (Hegner *et al.*, 2017, Zarantonello *et al.*, 2016, 2018), irresponsible brand behavior (Bryson and Atwal 2019), or unethical business practices (Bayarassou *et al.*, 2020). Socially, a company's stance on an ideological issue that deviates from individual beliefs can also lead to ideological incompatibility (Kucuk, 2016).

Political beliefs and ideological orientations are closely associated with one's identity and can be crucial in determining partisanship (Van Bavel and Pereira, 2018). Ideological beliefs also make people more susceptible to fake news (Sindermann *et al.*, 2020). Any counter-ideological beliefs can influence an individual's political orientation and even give rise to negative reactions such as political brand hate. Prior research suggests that ideological incompatibility has more enduring and damaging effects on the brand than unfavorable experiences (Kucuk, 2021). Consumers can boycott brands whose actions are against their ideological beliefs (Sandıkcı and Ekici, 2009; Hegner *et al.*, 2017). In this vein, it is hypothesized that:

H1: Political ideological incompatibility is positively associated with political brand hate.

3.2 Effect of political brand hate on intention to share political deepfake videos

Hate is a highly negative emotion that may culminate in various behavioral outcomes. Consumers may express hate by indicating strong dislike or dissatisfaction with the brand. Hate is characterized by intense emotions such as anger (Zarantonello *et al.*, 2016; Zhang and Laroche, 2020; Kucuk, 2016), which can lead to aggressive responses against the object of hate driven by the desire to seek revenge or hurt the brand (Grégoire *et al.*, 2009, 2010; Johnson *et al.*, 2011). Consumers can engage in disruptive behavior or anti-branding actions, such as negative offline or online word of mouth, or even show a willingness to make financial sacrifices to hurt the brand (Fetscherin, 2019). Prior studies have established that brand hate can cause consumer complaint behavior in the form of negative eWOM (Zarantonello *et al.*, 2016; Jain and Sharma, 2019; Fetscherin, 2019; Curina *et al.*, 2020; Curina *et al.*, 2021), protest and complaint behaviors (Zhang and Laroche, 2020).

In this vein, we argue that political brand hate can influence an individual's intention to share political deepfake content, which has the potential to harm the political party. Prior studies have argued that negative emotions (Wang *et al.*, 2020) and political mistrust (Klebba and Winter, 2021) can influence users' intention to share fake news on the internet.

H2: Political brand hate positively influences the intention to share political deepfake videos.

3.3 Mediating role of intention to verify political deepfake video

Recent literature discusses that sharing fake news affects the sender's credibility and social image perception (Mishra and Samu, 2021). Awareness of fake news prevalence makes individuals more mindful, requiring them to verify the credibility of the content they encounter (Tandoc *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, users may be careful in sharing content within their network and wish to verify any potentially inaccurate content. Verifying information reflects the user's awareness that the content can be misleading (Scheufele and Krause, 2019). Prior research has discussed various factors that influence news verification behavior among users. These include fake news awareness, trust in the source, and media credibility (Majerczak and Strzelecki, 2022; Pundir *et al.*, 2021; Torres *et al.*, 2018). Yet, cognitive biases in information processing limit individuals' intent to verify information (Edgerly *et al.*, 2020). Moreover, research supports that people tend to believe fake content if it is congruent with their beliefs (Weeks and Garret, 2014).

Little is known about the effect of individual attitudinal and emotional dispositions on their intention to verify deceptive content, like deepfakes. (Edgerly *et al.*, 2019) found that ideological congruency with the content may enhance intent to verify. We posit that the intention to verify deepfakes will be reduced if the individual hates the target of the fake content. Further, news

verification requires effort and time (Edgerly, 2017; Wineburg and McGrew, 2017). Hate can prevent people from spending their cognitive efforts verifying news and motivating them to share it. Sharing political deepfake can help express their ideological hate and feed their negative emotions. We, therefore, argue that the effect of political brand hate on the intention to share the deepfake content will be indirectly influenced by the reduced intention to verify the deepfake.

H3: Intention to verify political deepfake video mediates the relationship between political brand hate and intention to share political deepfake video.

3.4 Moderating effect of moral consciousness

Morality relates to the perception of right versus wrong assessed against an agreed code of conduct (McGregor, 2006). Psychology literature has discussed hate from the perspective of individual moral consciousness (Opotow, 2005). Ideological hate can arise from the perceived immorality of the hated object (Staub, 2005; Hegner *et al.*, 2017). Morally conscious consumers may reject brands they perceive as immoral or irresponsible (Kucuk, 2018). Moral traits are crucial in helping define one's identity (Strohminger and Nichols, 2014). Ashforth and Lange (2016) have argued that moral self-concept can "trigger efforts that help protect and reinforce the self-concept leading to counter-intentional effect" (p. 306). Hence, an individual's moral beliefs can make them behave negatively against an unethical action (Zajonc, 2000) to preserve their self-concept.

Individuals will morally exclude the hated entity when its actions and ideologies are perceived to be beyond the individual's moral boundaries (Opotow, 2005). In this vein, Sharma *et al.* (2022) noted that brand hate is served by one's underlying need to preserve moral self-beliefs. This argument can also be extended in the context of the political consumer-brand relationship. We argue that sharing political deepfake content reflects behavior that helps users express their

ideological hate and preserve their moral selves. As a result, individuals will exhibit behavior that aids in sustaining their moral consciousness. Such behavior can serve as a way for consumers to liberate themselves from immoral consumption contexts (Kozinets, 2002; Sharma *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, we posit:

H4: Individual moral consciousness positively moderates the relationship between political brand hate and the intention to share political deepfake video.

Based on the hypotheses discussed above, the conceptual framework has been depicted in Figure 1.

----Insert Figure 1 here-----

4. Methods

India is one of the largest democracies in the world (BBC News, 2022). It represents a complex multi-party-political landscape, making ideological divisions and political sentiments starker than in a bi-party democracy (Khatua *et al.*, 2020). To test the proposed framework, a scenario-based survey was conducted among N= 310 (169 Female, 141 Male, Mean Age = 31.34) respondents who were Indian citizens and were eligible to vote (Age> 18 years) (See Table II for descriptive statistics). A priori sample size determination using the statistical tool G*power provided a minimum sample estimate of N=129. 38% of respondents reported hating the ruling party, BJP (Bhartiya Janata Party), 29% mentioned INC (Indian National Congress), 19% named AAP (Aam Aadmi Party), 6% reported hating CPI (Communist Party of India), and the remaining 8% mentioned the name of other regional political parties.

The study involved the selection of a specific set of respondents who understand deepfake technology and are also inclined towards the political know-how of the country. Using a random sampling method would be difficult as the population pool of plausible respondents is unknown.

The respondents were approached using an established market research agency. The market research agency has a database of more than 200,000 respondents registered on their website with varied demographic details, their understanding of various technologies, preferences towards topics, and other similar forms of information. The market agency ran multiple iterations of the data collection process to reach out to the pool of respondents that matched the requirements of the study. During the survey, they were asked to keep the hated political party in mind and were exposed to a deepfake video created for this research. The study protocol was approved by the ethics review committee of the primary author's institution.

4.1 Pre-Test

Before administering the final survey, we conducted a pre-test using an open-ended elicitation method on 50 respondents (29 Male, 31 Female, Mean Age = 32 Years). It helped in gauging the general awareness level about political deepfakes, reasons for political brand hate, and exploring the conditions under which respondents will share a political deepfake that can cause harm to the party they hate within their social network. It was found that 40 out of 50 respondents were aware of deepfake technology and had come across a video that was a deepfake. All respondents denied sharing a deepfake video *knowing* that it was fake content. However, 30% of people acknowledged that they would engage with and share negative content about the party they hate.

It was observed that a significant reason for political brand hate was ideological. Among the various reasons respondents mentioned for their hate in the pre-test, most had a moral and ethical basis. Respondents reported "unethical practices," "illegal activities such as money laundering," "religious and ethnic discrimination," "corrupt party representatives," and "false promises" as primary reasons for their hatred reflecting political ideological incompatibility.

Table II presents the descriptive statistics of the data

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4.2 Stimuli Development

Before creating the deepfake video, we shot the source video in English, for which we hired a male actor to pose as an anonymous Indian politician, acknowledging his party's mistakes (**Ref Appendix for the script)**. The objective of choosing such content was to enhance the potential of causing harm to the political party if shared with the public. A professional trained in deep learning technology was recruited to produce the deepfake video. The face of the actor was then swapped with an AI-generated artificial face to create the deepfake. This was done to give the content a digitally doctored effect which is the prime characteristic of deepfakes videos and affects their potential for detection. We did not use the face of an existing politician because prior knowledge and awareness about the politician can yield socially desirable responses and confound the results. To ensure that the deepfake video appeared artificially constructed, we showed both videos (source and deepfake videos) to a group of students in an MBA class (N = 50). 95% of students could detect the original and the fake video. The deepfake video used is available on the web appendix.

4.3 Measurement instrument

The survey started by taking informed consent from the participants. The participants were then asked to mention the name of the Indian political party they hate and briefly describe the reason for their hate. All the variables in the proposed framework were measured using previously established scales. Political ideological incompatibility was measured using four items from

(Hegner *et al.*, 2017), and political brand hate was adapted from 3 items by (Johnsen *et al.*, 2011) and (Kucuk, 2018). Respondents were then asked to imagine a scenario where the political party they hate has been in the news recently for scams, corruption charges, and other scandals. Against this background, a party representative comes out and releases a video where he talks about these recent instances. Without disclosing that the video was a deepfake, respondents were asked to view the video from the party representative. Respondents in the main survey were only exposed to the deepfake version of the video and not the original one.

Following the video, we asked respondents to report how likely they are to share this video on their social network (e.g., WhatsApp, Telegram, or Twitter) (1 = not at all likely and 5 = extremely likely) (Pang *et al.*, 2016). Intention to verify the political deepfale video was measured using three items adapted from the work of Torres *et al.* (2018) and Pundir *et al.* (2021). Lastly, moral consciousness was measured using the morality subscale of the Six-Factor Self-Concept Scale (Stake, 1994). Participants were asked to indicate "how accurately each of the following adjectives describes you: Loyal, Truthful, Law abiding, Faithful, Trustworthy, and Honest" on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = not at all accurately and 5 = extremely accurately. All items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale. Table III summarizes the scale items.

At the end of the survey, we asked the respondents to indicate the perceived credibility of the video using a single-item measure (1 = low, the video appears manipulated and 5 = high, the video appears original). This was done to ensure that the content successfully evoked the perception of fakeness/artificially created content. The mean value of the perceived credibility was M = 1.5, lower than the median, suggesting that the video was perceived as manipulated. Finally, the respondents were debriefed about the true purpose of the study. They were also informed that the video was a deepfake. Consent to participate was retaken after the debriefing.

5. Results and Analysis

The proposed model was tested using partial least square structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS v 3.3.9. PLS-SEM emphasizes predictive modeling when estimating the models (Hair *et al.*, 2019) and has become a standard method for analyzing complex relationships between the observed and latent factors. PLS-SEM is considered suitable when the framework contains a single-item construct (intention to share political deepfake video) along with reflective measures (Hair *et al.*, 2019), and there is a need to extend existing theoretical structures (Hair *et al.*, 2019).

5.1 Measurement model

Data were tested for convergent and discriminant validity, multicollinearity, and internal consistency before testing the hypothesis. Convergent validity was ensured by assessing factor loading values, average variance explained (AVE), and composite reliability. Factor loading for all items on their respective constructs was above the recommended value of 0.7 (Hair *et al.*, 2019), AVE for all variables was greater than 0.5, and Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability is above 0.7 for all the constructs (Henseler *et al.*, 2016; Hair *et al.*, 2019) (Table III).

-----Insert Table III here-------

Discriminant validity was evaluated using heterotrait-monotrait ratios (HTMT), which help examine the extent of correlation between the factors in the measurement model (Cheung and Lee, 2010). The HTMT ratios between the constructs were lower than the recommended value of 0.90 (Henseler *et al.*, 2016), thus establishing discriminant validity among constructs (Table IV). We performed a full collinearity test to test for multicollinearity. The test results confirmed that the inner variance inflation factor (VIF) values for each construct were less than 4 (Hair *et al.*, 2019).

The model fit criterion in PLS-SEM is the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). The SRMR of the model is 0.058, indicating an acceptable fit (Hu and Bentler, 1999).

------Insert Table IV here-------

5.2 Structural Model and hypothesis testing

The structural model was assessed using R^2 (explained variance) and Q^2 (predictive relevance) (Hair *et al.*, 2019) (Table V). The R^2 values of 0.67, 0.33, and 0.19 are considered substantial, moderate, and weak, respectively (Chin, 1998). The Q^2 value should be above 0 to establish the predictive relevance of the model (Hair *et al.*, 2019). In addition, the structural model was tested for endogeneity. Referring to the guidelines by (Guide and Ketokivi, 2015) that are applicable to test endogeneity issues in nonexperimental and cross-sectional data before performing hypothesis testing, we tested for the endogeneity of the exogenous variable. We performed the Durbin-We-Hausman Test to check the degree of endogeneity (Davidson and Mackinnon, 1993) by regressing political brand hate on the intention to share and verify political deepfake video. The regression residual was used as an additional independent variable in testing the hypothesis again. It was observed that the residual parameter estimate was insignificant, indicating that political brand hate is not endogenous in our model, further validating the proposed conceptual model. We performed a similar analysis to test the relationship between political brand hate and political ideological incompatibility and observed no endogeneity in the relationship. Lai *et al*. (2018) further suggested calculating the Nonlinear bivariate causality direction ratio (NLBCDR) (Kock, 2015) to test for endogeneity in the model. Results confirm that the NLBCDR value of the model is 0.857, more significant than the threshold value, 0.7. This establishes that the model does not suffer from endogeneity.

------Insert Table V here-------

A bootstrapping procedure with 500 samples was followed to test the hypothesized relationship. The hypothesized relationships were analyzed based on the significance levels of path coefficients ($p < 0.05$). The results (Table VI) indicated a significant positive effect of political ideological incompatibility on political brand hate ($\beta_{H1} = 0.205, p < 0.01$). Political brand hate positively influences the intention to share political deepfake video ($\beta_{H2} = 0.433, p < 0.001$). The results support that intention to verify political deepfake video partially mediates the effect of political brand hate on the intention to share political deepfake video ($\beta_{H3} = 0.04, p < 0.01$). The moderating effect of moral consciousness on the relationship between political brand hate and intention to share political deepfake video was also positively significant ($\beta_{H4} = 0.119, p < 0.05$).

------Insert Table VI here-------

The slope analysis reveals the strength and direction of the moderating effect (Hair *et al.*, 2017). Figure 2 indicates that for a high level of moral consciousness (MoCo at +1 SD), the effect of political brand hate on the intention to share political deep fake video is higher than lower (MoCo at -1 SD) and average levels of moral consciousness. This supports our hypothesis (H4) that political brand hate will affect users' intention to share political deepfake video that has the potential to cause harm to the party, and this relationship is driven by individual moral consciousness. As predicted, ideologically driven political brand hate is motivated by one's desire to preserve their moral consciousness, which strengthens the outcome of hate by spreading fake news.

------Insert Figure 2 here-------

6. Discussion

Although major social networking sites like Twitter and Facebook are imposing strict regulations on fake content detection and dissemination (Ahmed, 2021c), spreading fake content

on WhatsApp, Facebook, or Instagram messenger is still unregulated. The ease of creating and spreading deepfakes has blurred the lines between real and fake content, posing a serious challenge to truth in politics. This domain was already vulnerable to fraudulent misrepresentations (Farkas and Schou, 2019). With the enhanced abilities of AI-driven technologies, deepfakes look almost realistic, making it difficult to detect their fakeness. By the time it is established that the content was digitally altered and is indeed fake, the harm has already been done. Therefore, in addition to exploring how deepfake content can be detected and controlled, it is equally pertinent to understand the motivation behind spreading deepfakes.

Most of the scholarly work on deepfakes has focused on identifying the effect of individual and content characteristics on deepfake dissemination (Ahmed, 2021c; Vaccari and Chadwick, 2020) or examining the effect of deepfakes on news credibility (Shin and Lee, 2022). Little has been discussed about underlying psychological mechanisms that can explain why people would share deepfake content within their network. Most prior studies have used existing deepfake videos (Vaccari and Chadwick, 2020) and used retrospective survey techniques (Ahmed, 2021c) to understand online users' engagement with deepfakes. The current study makes a methodological contribution by using a fictional deepfake video to discern the factors affecting the intention to share and verify political deepfake videos, thus controlling for the effect of contextual factors (such as issue involvement and prior knowledge that the content is fake). We examined the role of political brand hate in the electorate's intention to verify and share political deepfake videos.

Additionally, we explored the role of individual moral consciousness in determining the intention to share political deepfakes as an outcome of political brand hate. Our findings reveal that political brand hate, driven by ideological incompatibility, is a significant factor that positively influences deepfake sharing. This effect is partially mediated by reduced intention to verify the

political deepfake. Unlike what one would expect, the effect of brand hates on the intention to share deepfake video is higher for morally conscious individuals. These findings expand the understanding of deepfake dissemination and make some novel contributions to theory and practice, which will be discussed next.

6.1 Theoretical Implications

The study theoretically contributes to fake news literature, political branding, and brand hate. First, the study contributes to fake news scholarship by shedding light on psychological mechanisms that can drive deepfake dissemination. Second, the study expands and validates the concepts of brand hate in the context of the political market and establishes that ideological incompatibility is a crucial predictor of brand hate. Political ideologies are tenacious, and therefore any incompatibility between the beliefs of the individual and the political party will lead to hate that is difficult to recover. This is consistent with prior work on brand hate (Hegner *et al.*, 2017) and recently on political brand hate (Banerjee and Goel, 2020).

Third, psychology (Rempel and Sutherland, 2016; Aumer *et al.*, 2015; Fischer *et al.*, 2018) and consumer behavior (Fetscherin, 2019; Rodrigues *et al.*, 2020) research have propounded that hate can lead to revenge-seeking motivations and engagement in vindictive behavior. Expressing the intention to share political deepfakes and not verifying inaccurate or suspicious content that can cause harm to the political party is representative of such revenge-seeking and harm-causing behavior, which validates the existing assertion about the outcome of brand hate.

Finally, the study expands the knowledge of how individual moral consciousness influences the outcomes of one's attitudes, beliefs, and emotions, in this case, political brand hate. Morally conscious partisans will engage in behavior that facilitates the expression of their hate against the

political party. We explain that this operates through the heightened need to safeguard moral consciousness among individuals (McGregor, 2006; Habibi *et al.*, 2014), which aids in achieving self-preservation motives (Ashforth and Lange, 2016; Sharma *et al.*, 2022).

6.2 Practical Implications

Social media has proved to be a powerful medium for political parties to talk about their ideologies and build a connection with their supporters. Equally, it has opened avenues for individuals with oppositional political loyalties who defy the party's ideologies and find a value disconnect, to voice their hatred through negative eWOM and fake information sharing strived at hurting the political brand. The study specifically studied political brand hate originating from political ideological incompatibility- A hate that is difficult to recover. Therefore, despite being conscious of the prevalence of fake information, individuals intended to share the deepfake video.

Readily available technologies can effortlessly create fake content without affecting the perceptions of authenticity. Thus, an online spectator might dismiss a real video as a deepfake and a doctored one as real. Moreover, videos have a stronger persuasive power than text (Brucato, 2015). What is needed is an effective way of fake news detection and real-time response from brands to arrest the intended damage. Platforms that ensure algorithm integration to detect and delete such content would be the preferred destinations. Platforms have an undeniable ethical obligation to present individuals with information that authentically represents the values of the party under consideration. As brands move toward an embodied virtual-reality experience like Metaverse, providing authenticity and civility in the information thus built is crucial.

The policymakers should also exert precognition in regulating technologies with potentially harmful consequences and reach a trade-off between online freedom of expression and

responsibility for information content. Inoculating followers against such attacks and increasing awareness about the risk of deepfake technology can also contain the negative consequence and virality of deepfake videos. Therefore, better efforts are needed to improve digital content literacy and awareness, which can help enhance the user's ability to examine the credibility of online content. Past studies (Iacobucci *et al.*, 2021) indicated that people might refrain from sharing content recognized as fake, so labeling doctored content should be encouraged. Yet, the current study points out a major challenge in handling disinformation by indicating that the dissemination of potentially deceptive and questionable content, such as deepfake videos, can be influenced by political brand hate. Further, malicious users may be sharing such content in close groups (Di Domenico *et al.*, 2021; Bunker, 2020). Thus, the role of the medium through which such information is shared becomes consequential.

6.3 Limitations and future directions

The study is an addition to the growing work on deepfake dissemination. It paves the way for a continuing discussion on the topic from varying theoretical perspectives and contexts. Future studies can explore the platform characteristics in determining fake news spread. Video characteristics (civil/uncivil content; length, perceived authenticity/believability, etc.) can be manipulated to understand differential outcomes specifically for intention to share deepfakes. Studies can also explore the effect of dark personality traits in understanding the intention for spreading deepfake. Political hate can also be intensified because of personal hatred towards the party leader/representative. Thus, understanding the role of these actors can lead to interesting insights.

Qualitative studies are needed to dissect the phenomenon of deepfake sharing to provide detailed context and motivation behind the behavior. Cross-cultural comparative studies with contrasting political ideologies and climate can further provide an excellent understanding of the phenomenon of political brand hate and intention to harm. Studies can also explore the differing outcomes of intent to share deepfake political videos of a political leader whose party is in power vs. whose is not, thus providing consequential effects of power balance between the party and the individual.

Ansari (2022) opines that deepfake technology has the potential to revolutionize the advertising industry because of the scope of customizing communication that it offers. In addition to the dark side of deepfake technology, there is a scope for exploring the positive usage of deepfakes in the context of marketing, voice-enabled technology, advertising, and creating awareness of social and political issues. Future research must also shed light on this aspect of technology and how it can contribute to favorable outcomes for brands and policymakers. Finally, emerging immersive environments such as the Metaverse (Dwivedi *et al*., 2022ab) can facilitate the use of deepfake technology for various purposes, which provides an opportunity to examine such issues in a new context.

7. Conclusion

The study provides an understanding of consumers' intention to share and verify political deepfake videos from the perspective of political brand hate driven by political ideological incompatibility. In addition, the role of individual moral consciousness in influencing brand hates to disseminate political deepfakes is also established. The study posits that political brand haters will show a higher intention to share political deepfakes and refrain from verifying the content before sharing it. This highlights the negative outcomes of political brand hate that motivates

electorates to engage in behavior that intends to cause harm to the political party. Deepfakes are digitally doctored and provide a convenient opportunity for political brand haters to disrupt public discourse and extend their political agenda. Theoretically, they contribute to fake news, psychology, and consumer behavior literature. In conclusion, the study's findings offer crucial insights into understanding consumer brand relationships in the political market context.

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Appendix

Script for the video:

Context: A political party representative acknowledging to their political mistakes

My dear countrymen, I hope this message finds you well. Today, I am here to talk to you about my party– in all seriousness! No puns intended! All cards on table!! Recently, you must be hearing some controversial news about my party.

I acknowledge that some of the decisions taken by the party in the past have not been in people's best interests. The interest of the public which we claim to hold in highest regard, is in reality, the last thing on our minds. But I do not blame my party for any of this., though you are free to exercise the last bit of your free will left and blame us all you want, because honestly, that is all you can do – blame the politicians.

I will not apologize for any of it! Service in politics is a two-way street. We lack in collective responsibility and intelligence. So, you receive what you give. If the citizens will not act in honesty, why do they expect the politicians to behave any differently.

Original Footage

Deepfake Footage

Figure 1: Conceptual Model Explaining the Intention to Share Deepfake Videos

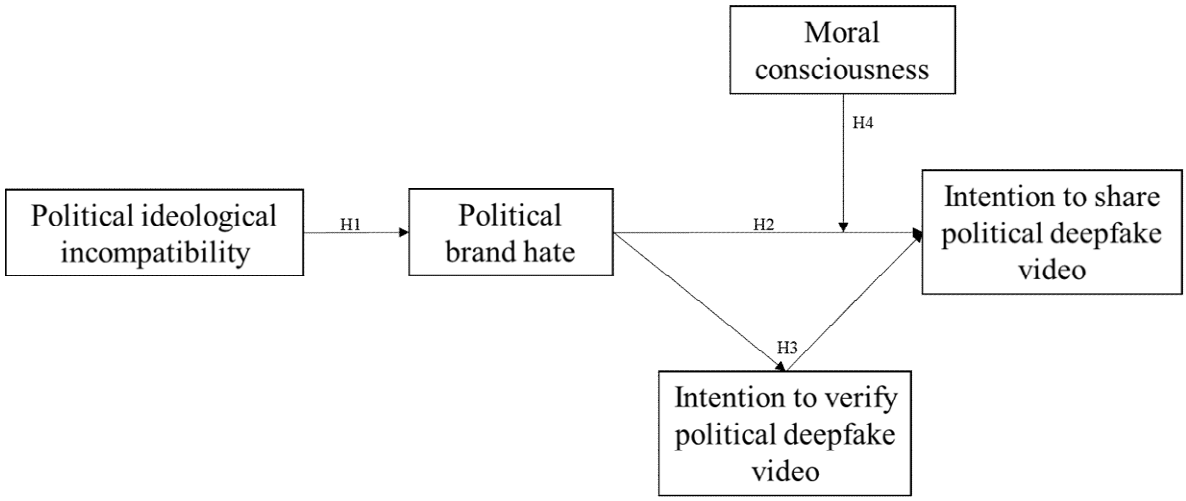

Figure 2: Slope Analysis Depicting the Moderating Effect of Moral Consciousness

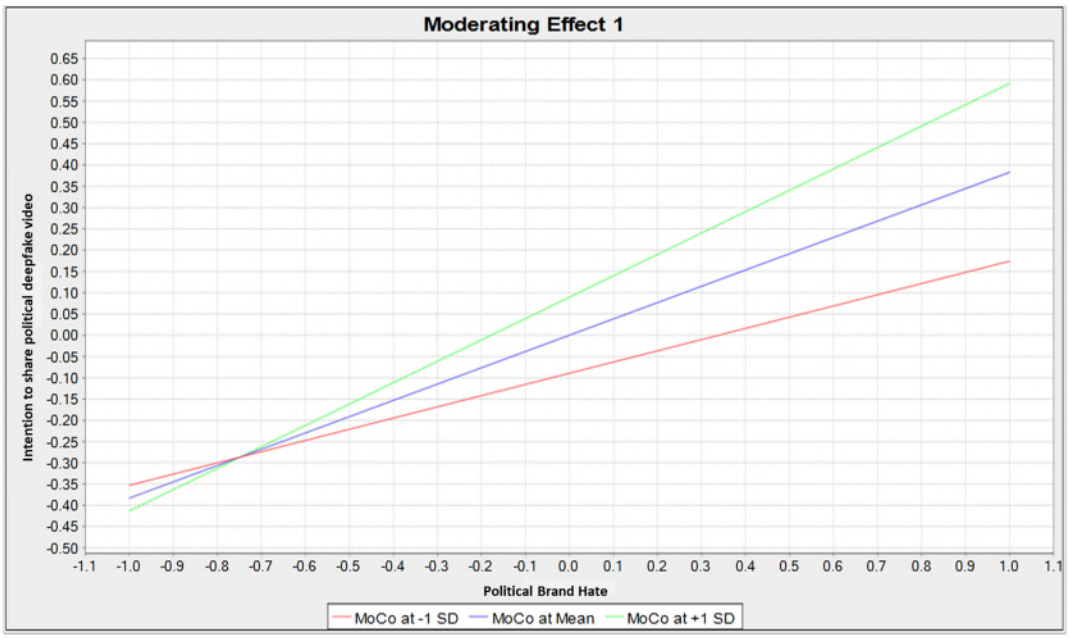

Table I: Overview of literature on deepfakes

Definition and conceptualization of deepfakes			
Chesney and Citron (2019)	Digitally altered videos in which people are depicted to do or say things which are not real		
Westerlund (2019)	Hyper-realistic videos that use artificial intelligence (AI) to portray someone say and do things that have not happened before		
Kietzmann *et al.* (2020)	Deepfakes are manipulated audio and visual content with high potential of deceit, produced by leveraging powerful techniques of machine learning (ML) and artificial intelligence (AI).		
Mirsky and Lee (2021)	Combination of *deep learning* and *fake*, deepfakes are content created by artificial intelligence and is perceived as authentic to human eyes		
van der Sloot and Wagensveld (2022)	Any new or existing content (audio and video) that has been fabricated or manipulated using Artificial Neural Networks		
Impact of deepfake videos			
Study	**Deepfake context**	**Study Focus**	**Key Findings**
Vaccari and Chadwick (2020)	Political deepfakes	How deepfakes contribute to online disinformation?	Uncertainty caused by deepfakes reduces trust in news on social media, thereby causing indeterminacy and cynicism
Wu *et al.* (2021)	Self-Celebrity Deepfake Videos	How does watching self-celebrity deepfake videos impact female's body image and self-esteem perceptions?	Self-celebrity deepfake exposure enhanced self-evaluation of physical appearance and satisfaction with physical features
Shin and Lee (2022)	Deepfake news videos	How deepfakes impact news credibility and viral behavior intentions? and how media literacy can mitigate the impact of deepfakes?	Users who find the deepfake news consistent with their pre-existing attitudes are more likely to find it believable and share it with others. Knowledge of low-cost of producing deepfakes can reduce their credibility and sharing intentions.
Mustak *et al.* (2023)	Deepfake technology	What are the implications of deepfakes for firms and consumers, what are the various threats and opportunities in the marketplace for deepfakes?	Deepfakes pose risks to organizations' image, credibility, and trust, and to consumers through defamation, bullying, identity theft. However, deepfakes also present opportunities in terms of marketing campaigns, virtual brand ambassadors, cost effective learning environment, new content and business model offerings. Deepfakes can also enhance consumer experiences and be used

			for other social and medical applications
Factors affecting engagement with deepfakes, their detection, and sharing behavior			
Ahmed (2021a)	Nonpolitical deepfake videos	How individual differences influence accuracy of deepfake claims and sharing intention	Absence (vs. presence) of informative cues in deepfake videos favorably affects their perceived accuracy, which further affects users' sharing intentions. Users with high cognitive ability have lower trust for deepfake claims. Labelling deepfakes can mitigate inadvertent sharing
Ahmed (2021b)	Deepfake sharing on social media	How does deepfake sharing impact social media news skepticism	Deepfake exposure and concerns positively affect social media news skepticism. Individual differences in cognitive ability and Inadvertent deepfake sharing positively moderates the relationship between deepfake concern and social media news skepticism, such that high cognitive individuals are more skeptical.
Ahmed (2021c)	Political deepfakes	What are the factors that influence inadvertent deepfake sharing?	High political interest and low cognitive ability positively influence deepfake sharing. Network size moderates the effect of political interest on deepfake sharing
Iacobucci *et al.* (2021)	Deepfake media	How does priming users with the knowledge of deepfakes and their potentially harmful impact influences users' ability to correctly detect deepfakes? What role does individual tendency to accept suspicious content (bullshit receptivity) plays in the relationship between deepfake knowledge and recognition/	Educating people (with low bullshit receptivity) about deepfakes can enhance their ability to recognize deepfakes. Further, Deepfake recognition may reduce intention to share deepfake content by negatively influencing user attitudes
Ahmed (2022)	Deepfake sharing on social media	What factors influence intentional deepfake sharing behavior?	Social media news use and fear of missing out (FOMO) influence deepfake sharing behavior, this effect is higher for users with low cognitive ability.
Appel and Prietzel (2022)	Political deepfakes	What factors influence deepfake detection	Individual differences in analytical thinking and political interest can predict accurate detection of deepfakes

Lee and Shin (2022)	Type of fake news (text-only, photo, and deepfake videos)	How does perceived vividness of deepfake affects their credibility evaluations and engagement intentions? How can labelling deepfakes reduce their impact?	Source vividness is perceived highest in deepfakes videos (compared to text-only and photo fake news), which enhances credibility perception and intention to engage with the fake news. False labelling deepfakes reduces engagement intention with the fake content

Table II: Sample descriptive

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness	Kurtosis
IDIN	310	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.52	0.98	0.97	0.49	-0.51
Political BH	310	4.00	1.00	5.00	3.55	0.83	0.69	-0.60	0.16
Int Share	310	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.74	1.27	1.62	0.09	-1.28
Int Verify	310	4.00	1.00	5.00	1.87	1.02	1.04	1.37	1.29
Mo Co	310	4.00	1.00	5.00	3.79	0.73	0.54	-0.63	1.07
Age	310	30.00	21.00	51.00	31.34	7.00	49.04	0.51	-0.71

Note: IDIN: Political Ideological Incompatibility; BH: Brand Hate; Int Share: Intention to Share Political Deepfake Video; Int Verify: Intention to Verify Political Deepfake Video; Mo Co: Moral Consciousness

Table III: Reliability and validity measures of scale items

Political Ideological Incompatibility (AVE = 0.628; CR = 0.934, α = 0.893)	**Loadings**
In my opinion, the political party acts irresponsible	0.759
In my opinion, the political party acts unethical	0.794
The party violates moral standards	0.772
This political party does not match my values and beliefs	0.841
Political Brand Hate (AVE = 0.824; CR = 0.934 α = 0.893)	
It would please me to know I have inflicted harm on this political party	0.898
I would be willing to expend effort to weaken or destroy this political party	0.936
Helping this political party fail would be a source of satisfaction to me	0.888
Intention to Verify Political Deepfake Video (AVE = 0.781; CR = 0.914, α = 0.864)	
I intend to check the authenticity of this video through fact-checking sites before sharing	0.805
I intend to follow all tips to spot and report fake news on social networking sites	0.928
I do not intend to browse external links to confirm the authenticity of this video before sharing	0.913
Moral Consciousness (AVE = 0.672; CR = 0.925, α = 0.904)	
How accurately each of the following adjectives describes you	

Loyal	0.828
Trustful	0.84
Law-Abiding	0.826
Faithful	0.792
Trustworthy	0.85
Honest	0.781

Note: AVE: Average Variance Explained; CR: Composite Reliability; α: Cronbach's Alpha

Table IV: Heterotrait-Monotrait ratios

	Hot BH	IDIN	Int Share	Int Verify	Mo Co
IDIN	0.205				
Int Share	0.43	0.132			
Int Verify	0.246	0.102	0.262		
Mo Co	0.067	0.039	0.116	0.103	

Note: IDIN: Political Ideological Incompatibility; Int Share: Intention to Share Political Deepfake Video; Int Verify: Intention to Verify Political Deepfake Video; Mo Co: Moral Consciousness

Table V: Effect sizes

Dependent variables	**R2**	**Q2**
Political Brand Hate	0.72	0.44
Intention to Share Political Deepfake Video	0.34	0.18
Intention to Verify Political Deepfake Video	0.61	0.34

Table VI: Hypotheses testing results

Path	**Original Sample (O)**	**Sample Mean (M)**	**Standard Deviation (STDEV)**	**T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)**	**P Values**
IDIN → Political BH	0.205	0.214	0.051	4.052	<0.01
Political BH → IntShare	0.383	0.39	0.048	7.906	<0.01
Political BH → IntVerify → IntShare	0.04	0.036	0.014	2.803	<0.01
Moderating Effect 1 (Political BH *MoCo) → IntShare	0.119	0.118	0.053	2.254	<0.05

Note: IDIN: Political Ideological Incompatibility; BH: Brand Hate; IntShare: Intention to Share Political Deepfake Video; IntVerify: Intention to Verify Political Deepfake Video; Mo Co: Moral Consciousness