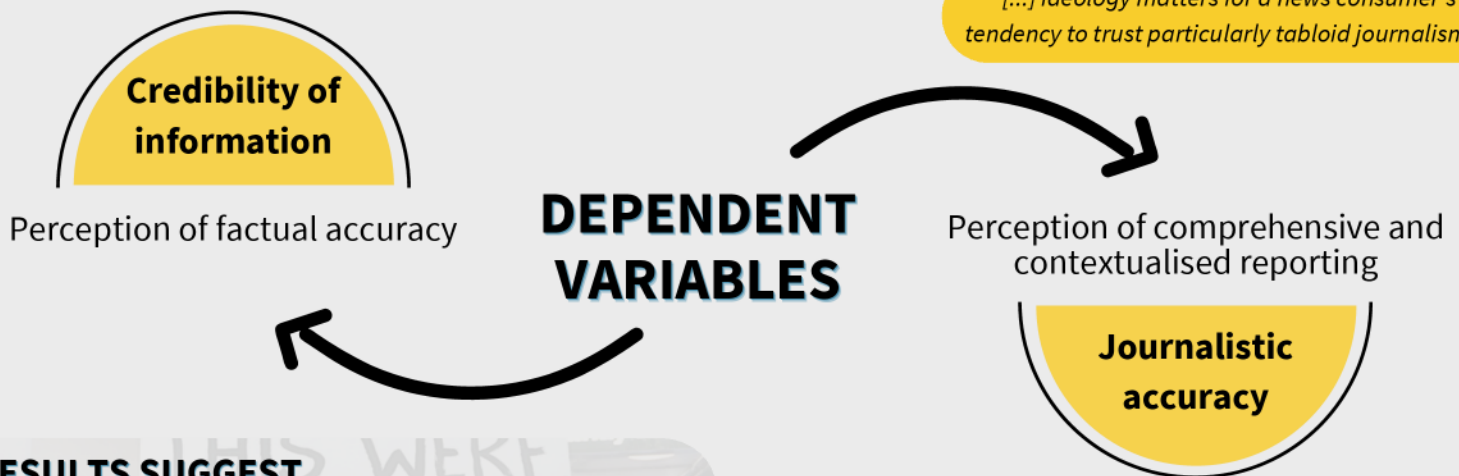


# JOURNALISTIC STYLE AND THE CREDIBILITY OF MISINFORMATION

*How does the style of journalism impact people's willingness to believe misinformation spread through legacy media?*

## SUMMARY

This paper shines a light on a question that is so far under-investigated: How does the way a news story is written impact people's trust in the information it contains? The study is based on a pre-registered **survey experiment** fielded in **Norway, Italy, and Poland**.



## RESULTS SUGGEST

*Contrary to seeking to disseminate information in the most tabloid way possible in order to compete for clicks in an attention economy, journalists should prioritise **less emotionally-charged language** that puts the focus on the uncertainty and context surrounding inevitably complex issues.*

### 1 TABLOID JOURNALISM AND PRE-EXISTING POLITICAL VIEWS

- **Eurosceptics** find all versions of story (news wire, tabloid, broadsheet) more credible and accurate compared to Europhiles.
- People's **pre-existing attitudes** towards the issues covered in the news stories played a crucial role in how they evaluated the credibility of the news.

### 2 GENDER/AGE AND NEWS CREDIBILITY

There is less evidence that **gender and age** leads to strong variations in news credibility.

- There was some evidence that **women** in the sample were more likely to trust both news wire and tabloid experimental vignettes.
- There was very little variation between **different age groups** in how credible they found either of the stories.

### 3 NEWS CONSUMPTION AND NEWS CREDIBILITY

- Going from the lowest to highest reported levels of **news consumption** increases trust in the tabloid story by close to 10%.
- Those who get most of their **news from social media** tend to be more likely to trust tabloid news than others.

## POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

- Journalists should prioritise less emotionally charged language to enhance the credibility of their reporting.
- Understanding the journalistic process might alter people's attitudes towards the truthfulness of stories.



Read the paper