

PHILANTHROPY ON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS THROUGH THE LENS OF ARCHETYPES. HOW INFORMATION DISORDER AND WEAPONIZATION OF CONTEXT ARE INFLUENCING THE FACEBOOK USER' SOCIAL INVOLVEMENT

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Abstract. *While popular and alluring, social media platforms encounter a downsizing effect due to a wave of distrust in the validity of information distributed online, concern about privacy issues, and the perceived lack of meaning of time spent online, which recent studies indicate as a source of anxiety and discontent for most online users. The new perspective we bring through this study is exploring the idea that the perceived meaningfulness of social media participation might be better understood under the theory of archetypes. Generally considered models of thought and patterns of behavior that can explain human interaction, archetypes also turn out to be catalysts for the positive valorization of time spent online, as our research has proven. Moreover, we tested the moderating effect of information disorder and weaponization of context in social activism expansion. Based on a national survey, a sample of 309 Romanians using the Internet and with active Facebook accounts, this research shows that positive evaluation of Facebook time is sparked by the internal drive and a predisposition to help. Respondents highlighted that their involvement in charitable activities increases the value of their online activity. Also, the scale used to examine archetypal patterns showed that respondents had the propensity to exhibit heroic and caregiver traits, with the heroic archetype's feature of tolerating injustice being the most obvious. Another research aim was to demonstrate that the information disorder leads to a high level of mistrust in humanitarian causes promoted on Facebook. People back off and engage in more enjoyable activities when faced with stressful exchanges between other users over incorrect information. Although our research has confirmed an intrinsic need to help and support others, it also showed that the fear of becoming a victim of fake news causes social activists and philanthropists to refrain from doing good. Our sometimes-paradoxical findings have confirmed once more that the field of online human behavior is an endless source of captivating findings worth proceeding even more in-depth.*

Keywords: *Archetypes; context weaponization; fake news; information disorder; online activism; social media platforms.*

Introduction

Social media platforms, a general term for new media platforms engaging users in various online activities, are enriched with benefits that may also explain their addictiveness: access to information and the alluring digital landscape of “endless choices for consumers” (Rushkoff, 2016), constant connectivity to friends and family (Serafinelli, 2020), the facilitation of “sociality” (Miller et al., 2016) and social aggregation by interests and values (Aiken, 2019), social validation and ego satisfaction (Aiken, 2019; Rushkoff 2016), creation of “networked archives of remembrance” possibilities (Philipets, 2019). However, these positive roles are shadowed by worries regarding the privacy of the “time distortion effect” (Aiken, 2019) while browsing online data.

The benefits of using social media are scrutinized by the distrust in the validity of information distributed via social media in the context of the growing phenomenon of fake news (Corbu et al., 2020, Masullo et al., 2020). The promise of the digital age led us to believe that if we lived in highly linked communities and had instant access to any information we needed, only good things would happen. The realization that our information ecology is now severely poisoned and is dividing us rather than uniting us has replaced this idealized image (Wardle, 2019). And the direct victims are exactly those who need help the most. Information disorders linked to new media during the so-called “post-truth era” increased public distrust (McIntyre, 2018). It determined that more people would reduce their presence on the platform or show less interest in involvement and empathy.

Another reason for people to worry regarding their own online behavior, as observed by a recent study conducted across five countries, is their double-edged fear of, on one hand, exposing their privacy, and, on the other, of the inability to stop sharing personal information on social media (Masullo et al., 2020). Moreover, the same study highlights the joy people feel at the thought that such platforms make their lives easier on many levels, from staying in touch with relatives and close friends to reconnecting with estranged acquaintances. Nevertheless, this joy is combined with the frustrating feeling of the perceived wasted time while browsing on social platforms, when users analyze their own social media consumption patterns (Masullo et al., 2020).

Archetypes: mirrors for self-discovery and a catalyst for the positive valorization of time spent online

Throughout history there was a growing interest in describing behavior patterns, from Plato’s metaphysical ideas to Freud’s archaic unconscious reminiscences to Jung’s primordial images, later named archetypes (Jung, 1919 / 2013). The “process of self-actualization” described by Jung (1946/ 2013) brings out a set of instinctive elements with mythological resonance and it translates them by discovering their repetitive characteristics, the behavior patterns that can help understand why people gravitate around a certain idea or why some event triggers a seemingly out of proportion reaction in some of them. More precisely, the archetype reevaluated, simplified, and demystified concept refers to an “operative paradigm or schema in which an individual can experience the world, be compelled to action, and provide a model for behavior” (Shadraconis, 2013).

We start by assuming that archetypes are filters through which we see reality. Pearson describes the relation between the archetypes we resonate with and our behavior derived from that mindset in a symbiotic way: "How we view the world is defined by what archetype currently dominates our thinking and acting. If the Warrior is dominant, we see challenges to be overcome. When the Caregiver is dominant, we see people needing our care. When the Sage is dominant, we see illusion and complexity and strive to find the truth" (Pearson, 1991, p. 7-8). We can translate the archetypal patterns into meaningful compasses showing a slice of the reason-why behind human behavior. Nevertheless, using archetypes as mirrors for self-discovery can also show their shadows, the negative side of these patterns, and their addictive side (Pearson, 1991). This tendency towards addictive and destructive behavior can often be experienced in relation to digital media, amplified by the "cyber effect" (Aiken, 2019), a concept referring to how digital media accelerates and magnifies users' tendencies.

Aiken gives some examples of how this effect of digital platforms alters human behavior: it can enhance altruism, making people very generous and keen to help others through philanthropic online donations or enhance addiction and amplify destructive money-spending behaviors such as compulsive online shopping. An explanation for such extreme tendencies in online behavior might reside in the instant gratification mechanisms of social platforms, in the sense that "what we experience as a personal choice feeds into a continuum of anticipatory pleasure and suggestibility activated each time that we reconnect with our favorite content" (Pilipets, 2019, p. 3). A trap of technologically driven pleasure of self-validation and the illusion of self-control.

To escape this trap, people might feel the need to invest their online actions with a positive meaning and struggle to find an outcome that can bring them a sense of purpose. So, "dialectical tensions" (Masullo et al., 2020) observed by researchers studying the relation between well-being or, on the contrary, depression and informational development (Castells, 2014) might be a form of self-regulating psychological mechanisms.

From the Orphan to the Hero: archetypal echoes surfacing in social media

The most frequent archetypal patterns activated in the context of philanthropy mediated by social media platforms are the ones focused on "leaving a thumbprint on the world: Hero, Outlaw, Magician" (Mark & Pearson, 2001, p. 101), described as very powerful archetypes oriented towards obtaining mastery, while embracing risk and adventure and gaining the ability to transform their lives and the lives of others. Action-oriented, "the Hero is invigorated by challenge, feels outraged by injustice and responds quickly and decisively to difficulty or opportunity" (Mark & Pearson, 2001, p. 107), embarking on adventures so he can return and heal others. The giving back to others dimension of the Hero is particularly important when assessing its prevalence as often auto-designated savior of those in need, because "if successful, the hero can return with an elixir, or panacea, to resolve problems of the community" (Shadraconis, 2013, p. 3). More radicalized and oriented towards a revolutionary shift to reshape reality, the Outlaw can „break outdated rules in a manner that feels liberating to people" (Mark & Pearson, 2001, p. 126). Moving further, the Magician can accomplish miracles, representing a driving force for accomplishments that were hard to believe possible (Mark & Pearson, 2001).

The group affiliation need is expressed through the effort to be part of a community. Online communities are prideful in being powerful and creating a global impact. The

need to pass the normative regulations of certain online group identities (Aiken, 2019), and the tendency to give in to the “peer pressure” in our “quest for conformity” (Berger, 2017, p. 37) is engraved in human nature. But the question arises: is this need for conformity powerful enough to motivate online users to donate money and get involved to help, through time and energy devoted to the philanthropic cause, by replicating the online group behavior and manifesting a prominent contagion effect in their online behavior?

Returning to archetypal intrinsic needs, let us explore the need to be the savior that devotes completely to helping others, a tendency generally viewed as a dominant trait for women, particularly in the stage of life when they become mothers or prepare themselves for that journey. But of course, any Caregiver needs an Orphan that needs to be rescued. Orphans are the shadow archetypes of Innocents, those who experienced “the fall” (Pearson, 1991, p. 9) by betrayal, abandonment, disappointment, or objective hardship faced alone.

Information disorder and weaponization of context on social media

Human history has been shaped through the centuries by the alternation of war and peace, which has established national boundaries and structured our social interactions, economic systems, and political ideologies. But the connections that knit the world together also drive it apart (Leonard, 2021), transforming social media platforms into battlefields. Through the weaponization of context on social media, the internet is changing war and politics, just as war and politics are changing the internet (Singer & Brooking, 2021).

Disinformation is as old as the communication process, but the techniques have changed and have been constantly improving. We are increasingly seeing the weaponization of context, and the use of genuine content, but content that is warped and reframed (Wardle, 2019). Anything containing a grain of truth is more effective at persuading and grabbing people's attention. But the effects are so powerful that communication and defense specialists call this new phenomenon a real war (Singer & Brooking, 2021), in which millions of people can cause harm to one another online. Instead of being troops, the victims are civilians, and they number in the millions rather than the thousands (Leonard, 2021). Disinformation can be understood in a very broad or a very narrow sense. Some go as far as considering it lying or simply false information, while others limit it even more strictly. One thing is clear: disinformation is a vast operation, a complex process of careful coordination based on clear objectives of manipulating the truth (Volkoff, 2009). Things are not black and white just as misinformation is not just a collection of lies. Cyber academics have been trying to find a word or a phrase to describe our liminal condition (Leonard, 2021), somehow caught between a state of war and one of peace. Kello (2018) rehabilitated “a beautiful Anglo-Saxon word to describe disorder on the internet: “unpeace”, the gray area in which the virtual world is trapped.

Reality has been radically fractured by digital media in such abusive manners that there is no consensus on the truth, and as a result, societies are separated not just by differences in beliefs but also by fact (Leonard, 2021). The expansion of the fake news phenomenon has created fertile ground for mistrust in social platforms, since they facilitate the spread of misinformation (Bargaoanu, 2018, Masullo et al., 2020). Also, the complexity of fake news supremacy in today's media landscape resides in the fact that they are “neither always false, nor always news” (Bârgăoanu, 2018) and the diffused

borders of truth and false classification confuse users to the point where nothing seems to be worthy of their trust.

Disinformation – be it based on communication errors, unintentional misinformation or pure propaganda – takes the shape of plausible truths very often, which is the reason for its penetration force (Bârgăoanu, 2018). On the other hand, Wardle (2017) comes up with a typology in order to provide a better definition of the term, which includes the potential to fool the audience, misleading content for the deceptive use of information, imposter content that suggests the impersonation of legitimate sources, fabricated content that is entirely false and created for deceptive purposes, the false connection when visuals, captions, or headlines are not in line with the content, and purely false content. Another taxonomy was created by Tandoc, Lim, and Ling (2018) and it covers various forms of malformed content such as: news satire, news parody, fabrication, manipulation, propaganda, and advertisement.

Exaggerated humor is another strategy used more often since the 2016 US elections, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. Technically, news satire refers to content that makes fun of news programs and uses humor to engage their audience members (Tandoc, Lim & Ling, 2018). On the other hand, while similar to satire, parody can be definitely considered a different form of fake news. The distinction between the two is determined by how the humor is employed. According to Tandoc, Lim, and Ling, "instead of providing direct commentary on current affairs through humor, parody plays on the ludicrousness of issues and highlights them by making up entirely fictitious news stories" (2018, p.142). Political parody outlets, in particular, profit from the vague plausibility of the news item. But the result is the same: confusing the reader to the point that he can no longer distinguish between true and false. However, research shows that satire and parody websites can strongly influence a person's belief system and may be more persuasive than people believe (Tandoc, Lim & Ling, 2018).

There are two opposite tendencies of online users when facing the fake news expansion, the one doubting everything they read or see or the self-sufficient one, based on the perceived proficiency in detecting such altered truth. At this point, users tend to consider themselves immune to such manipulation. On that note, a recent survey in a national, diverse sample of adult Romanians reveals that there is a "significant third-person effect regarding people's self-reported ability to spot fake news and that this effect is stronger when people compare their fake news detection literacy to that of distant others than to that close others" (Corbu et al., 2020, p. 1). In the context of the disinformation phenomenon, concerns with message credibility and media trust are frequent. Losing credibility is a significant issue since the media depends on trust to keep their supremacy in communication. People often rely on their interpersonal relationships in the social media environment to analyze the information they come across, and when dealing with trustworthy and credible sources, they make fewer cognitive attempts to assess a message (Metzger et al., 2010).

The relation between social activism on Facebook and information disorder. Looking toward the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the humanitarian response

The information ecosystem was not designed to spread false information, but the social media platforms' design makes it possible to capitalize on the emotional response at the expense of the logical one (Wardle, 2017). And the emotional response was more than obvious at the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war, for example, when, dealing with the greatest humanitarian crisis since the Second World War (United Nations

Organization, 2022), social media users' reaction was immediate and truly compassionate.

Human social existence depends on empathy. There is valuable insight on that matter by simply observing how newborns create bonds with their caregivers, as Hogenboom notes: "Children will try to help adults before they can even talk, leading to the idea that humans have an inborn desire to help, as we need to form strong social bonds." (2021, p. 251). Of course, how we react to other people's pain is a different discussion and one's reaction can vary depending on the circumstance and the individual (Raposa et al., 2015; Riess et al. 2012). But this time, compared to similar situations of the refugee crisis, the Romanians felt like being a part of the tragedy of the millions of Ukrainians who had to flee their homes. Whether geographical closeness or transgenerational hatred against Russians, Romanian's empathy with the victims of aggression instantly surfaced in society, both online and offline. Only in the first three months of the war, 6,5 million people, especially women, and children, ran away from bombs and missiles (United Nations Organization, 2022), meaning more than 15% of the total population of Ukraine. A country bordered by Romania, a society like the Romanian one, and a tragedy that could have been avoided led to a massive reaction of: hundreds of Facebook Groups where people formed communities especially for helping refugees, thousands of people offering their homes, people with hot food and beverage waiting at the borders, multiple donations, etc. But the enthusiasm and involvement lost their power as the social media platform was transformed into a rabbit hole, the main spread engine of misinformation, fake news, and conspiracy theories. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, researchers discovered that people are likelier to believe conspiracy theories when they feel anxious, uncertain, afraid of their personal safety, or out of control (Morrish, 2020). Similarly, once people felt like they couldn't distinguish between true and false or that the refugees were not worth their attention or donations, the level of empathy dropped. The experience of empathic feelings has been found to be emotionally draining and overwhelming, and a possible source of stress and burnout, especially for individuals exposed to human suffering (Manczak et al., 2016).

Disinformation strategies come in many ways to convince the reader of the alternative truth. Politics-related conspiracy theories frequently reflect and feed off peoples' political inclinations. However, they also have the power to alter attitudes and relationships. What has emerged is more comparable to a conspiracy theory worldview, where individuals can select from various incorrect beliefs (Morrish, 2020).

During the first months of the military conflict, fake news and conspiracy theories were present on social media in all forms, as classified by Stefureac (2020): by word of mouth (negative labels to discredit someone), by number (manipulating statistics to increase or decrease the magnitude of an event), by repetition, by hearsay (delivery of bits of information that cannot be verified, but are given credibility by inducing the feeling of privileged access to their content), by cliché or by altered images (with the use of artificial intelligence). For years, conspiracy ideas have simmered on the periphery of society, but they discovered fresh audiences in 2020 and keep gaining new addicts.

Intrinsically, the inner conflict people experienced when dealing with information disorder was the vacillation between the instinct of helping others and showing empathy and the natural survival mechanism of being cautious for seemingly harmless contexts that can turn into threats. Which one turned more powerful? Which one influenced more the online behavior of social activists? These key research questions led our research as it will be assessed further on.

Methodology

This research design is based on a national survey of a sample of N = 309 Romanians using the Internet and with active Facebook accounts, with an average age of 41 years old, mainly female (80%). The data were collected from September 1st to 5th 2022, through an online tool distributed in various Facebook Groups for better representativity of the sample, groups dedicated to charity and philanthropic efforts for various people in times of need, be it little children facing rare diseases or victims of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

The research theme is the perceived meaningfulness of social media participation in the combined effects of information disorder and weaponization of context, as well as social validation mechanisms of social media users. The research topic derived from the theories analyzed is the antagonized valorization of time spent online by social media platforms users (Masullo et al., 2020) depending on the references chosen to classify the online activities, be it those generating a sense of well-being, or those generating anxiety over the perceived addiction to such platforms and their toxic nature in terms of information disorders.

The novelty of our research was the correlation between archetypes and the philanthropic efforts mediated by social media platforms (Aiken, 2019), most frequently related to online Facebook Groups dedicated to social aid objectives for various situations. Our premise was that by correlating the time spent online helping others, users tend to experience positive associations regarding the overall time spent online, because it gains a positive meaning and enhances their well-being level, as well as a sense of social validation. However, the moderation effect on that correlation of the perceived unsafe informational environment represented by Facebook itself because of the spread of disinformation it allows was also something we considered.

The main research objective was to highlight the moderating effect of philanthropic online behavior on the positive correlation between social media addictiveness and the perceived anxiety of online users while using or after using social media platforms. In other words, we wanted to investigate if the positive valorization of time spent online for a social cause can increase the well-being of users and thus, reduce their anxiety over spending too much time online and fearing becoming victims of online disinformation. A secondary objective was identifying the impact of the social validation need and conformity (Goldsmith et. al, 2005; Berger, 2017; Aiken, 2019) on increasing online activity of members of such charity Facebook Groups or charity call-to-actions in general, distributed on the Facebook platform.

Our research hypotheses were:

H1. Intrinsic motivations such as natural availability to help others (patterns of behavior aligned to the Hero and Caregiver archetypes) increase the positive valorization of online activities on social media platforms, especially Facebook.

H2. The need for social validation and conformity plays an important role in increasing the positive valorization of online activities on social media platforms, especially Facebook, which is an important role in increasing time spent online.

H3. The online disinformation phenomenon amplifies distrust over social media platforms and can reduce the level of empathy among its users and thus their reaction

to philanthropic calls on Facebook, be it on Facebook Groups or generally spread in their News Feed.

To identify key personality traits related to the Hero or Caregiver archetype we created a Likert scale inspired by the Heroic Myth Index (Pearson, 1990), including three attributes for each of the key archetypes, along with four other specific traits related to other archetypes (Magician, Lover, Innocent, Fool).

To test the perceived level of well-being and anxiety level, we used a revised version of the Beck Depression Inventory (Beck et al., 1996).

Finally, to measure the addiction and intensity of Facebook use we applied revised versions of the Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale (BFAS) according to Andreassen et al. (2012) and Facebook Intensity Scale (Ellison et al., 2007).

Results and discussion

Although the positive valorization of time spent on social platforms does not necessarily increase the perceived amount of time spent, as our respondents noted, there is valuable data to sustain H1, regarding intrinsic motivation and the natural tendency to help as catalysts of positive appreciation of time spent on Facebook. For example, 21.6% of the respondents noted that their activity dedicated to charity causes on Facebook makes their online time more valuable. Also, the fact that helping others creates the context to create more engagement on the social platform is visible by the type of activities noted as ways to help, besides donating money or products or volunteering for different activities, involving by sharing information on their Facebook profile about the cause (20%) or even using Facebook Messenger as direct messaging application to raise awareness for the cause (11%).

The Scale investigating archetypal patterns revealed that the respondents were inclined to manifest tendencies of Hero and Caregiver, with the most visible trait for the heroic pattern the one of sanctioning injustice for 48.9% of respondents as a frequent response, while very frequent was recorded for 23.6%. For the Caregiver archetypal pattern, the self-sacrificing attitude was the most preeminent when 43.4% of the respondents answered that they often find it hard to say no when their help is needed, while 27.2% noted they feel this very often.

The need to help gets validated on the Beck Depression Inventory as well, where 52.4% of respondents answered they are interested in the well-being of others a lot, and 12.9% stated they are very interested.

Regarding the natural need for helping, 58.6% of the respondents stated that it is something they have always been keen on, while 19.1% confirmed they felt this need more intensely after they become a parent.

For the H2, the role played by the need for social validation and conformity, the results highlight a moderate tendency, perceived as smaller, probably from the third-person effect visible in the control questions designed to investigate that. However, if a Facebook friend asked for a charitable action, people tend to respond more easily, as 10.4% stated they often respond instantly to such requests, while 21% stated they answer such requests with moderation, while their proactive action to convince a

Facebook friend to donate for a charitable action is less frequent (in the proportion of 25.6%) or even nonexistent, as 58.3% stated they never send private messages to Facebook friends to convince them to donate for a cause. So, people value their Facebook friends' opinions regarding their social media behavior, and they try to impress them or at least be non-intrusive, and if a Facebook friend reaches out for help, the conformity instinct tends to get activated.

The information disorder, whether misinformation or fake news, leads to a high level of mistrust in humanitarian causes promoted on Facebook, confirming H3 of the research. Almost one out of two respondents (44.4%) feel the need to always verify the information by themselves to proceed with the donations or promote the cause. Another 21.7% of the respondents admit they often have the feeling of being victims of online fraud and do their own research before getting involved in charity efforts, while 19.7% confess they will follow the topic to find the truth and decide if the cause is worth the donation. The direct consequence: the fear or precaution of becoming a victim of fake news causes social activists and philanthropists to lower their expectations and restrain from doing good although this is not a guarantee of becoming immune to disinformation disorder, but merely a form of self-protection. When confronted with tense interactions with other users, regarding fake content or misleading information, 25.6% take a step back and get involved in more pleasant activities, giving them more fulfillment. These interactions lead to leaving the group and instantly abandoning the cause for 22.5% of the philanthropist users.

On the other hand, this result confirms research studies previously investigating the third-person effect theory (Davison, 1983) with reference to group members who almost completely deny the exposure to information disorder, being convinced it has a high influence on others, not on themselves (Corbu et al., 2020). More than 48% of the respondents are convinced that news articles read on Facebook would never influence their opinions and decisions while 71.5% consider themselves immune to satires and parodies' effects on their beliefs and actions. Only 20 out of 309 respondents admit they might become victims of fake news based on exaggerated humor.

The research paradox regards the difference between the practical and emotional involvement of the respondents. While being members of an average of six charity Facebook groups and being active donors and promoters of social causes, more than 47% declared themselves indifferent to the results, while 27.3% confessed they would be experiencing a feeling of sadness if the cause would not reach its goal.

Conclusions

The novelty of our research is the focus on the implications of behavior archetypal patterns in the context of social media dependency and how these motivations can enhance the feeling of well-being and the need to intensify philanthropic acts through social media, thus creating a sense of purpose for online users. By applying the layer of archetypal meaning to the online behavior we confirmed our main hypothesis, as respondents exhibited heroic and caregiver traits, with the heroic pattern's feature of tolerating injustice being the most obvious. The perceived effect of spending time in a more meaningful way on social media platforms when engaging in charitable activities was visible, but not in the amount we initially thought possible, either because of the third-person effect influence or by the subliminal moderating effect of overall

disinformation spread online that downsized the general feeling of the online browsing experience. While we were content to test our hypothesis and confirm some of our intuitive observations, we still believe more in-depth approaches are open to further research. Maybe a qualitative one that can tap into more subtle and less conscious motivations for online behavior could cast light on our sometimes-paradoxical findings.

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