

# Consumer “well-being” in the social media age?

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Thank you for inviting me to present my own research  
from the perspective of ‘Consumer Well-Being.’

# Departure: Frances Haugen's Accusations of Facebook

- I **Harmful impact:** especially children and young women
- II Creates **division** through misinformation, hate-speech, violence

II Creates division

# ‘The Conflict Market’

The monetization of conflict and reproduction of political polarization/social divide

Ulver, Sofia (2021), “The Conflict Market: Polarizing Consumer Culture(s) in Counter-Democracy,” *Journal of Consumer Culture*, (Aug), 1-21.

# Algorithmic Culture

In ‘platform society’ (Van Dijk et al 2018), consumers are deemed subjects by the market’s ‘algorithmic control’ (Karakayali et al 2018), persuasive powers of ‘algorithmic distortion’ (Airoldi et al 2016), the ‘soft biopolitics’ of ‘algorithmic identity’ (Cheney-Lippold 2011), and the ‘creation of audiences’ (Charitsis and Bradshaw 2018).

As part of ‘communicative capitalism’ (Dean 2010), it exploits and manages communication, affect and sociality that materializes ideals of participation in communication technologies absorbing resistance and intensifying global capitalism.

The sentiments of *Counter-Democracy* (Rosanvallon 2013)

foster a culture of **discontent – resentment - accusation**

the *un*political; protests without proposition

# ‘Conflict Framing’

In line with the market-critical fundamentals of agonistics, this conflict framing can work to (partly) delegitimize the status quo industry and to relegitimize its market at the same time, but cannot radically disrupt the system.

Koch, C and Sofia Ulver (2022), “Plant vs Cow: Conflict Framing in the Ant/Agonistic Relegitimization of a Market,” *Journal of Macromarketing*, 1-15.

# ‘Fetishistic Tickling’

We allow market actors to uphold these conflicts and tensions because they tickle so good.

Ulver, Sofia (2021), “Tickling tensions: Gazing into the parallax gap of the multicultural imaginary” *Marketing Theory*, 21(3): 391-413.

The unconscious desire not to resolve conflict but to enforce it.

The *Parallax Gap*: "the irreducible gap between versions of 'truth' . . . the traumatic core around which the version of 'truth' circulates and there is no way to resolve the tension because the 'absent Cause,' the unfathomable X, undermines every narrative solution" (Žižek 2009; 18-19)

The *ticklish subject* (Žižek 1997)- the parallax object tickles the subject

Cultural branding becomes the 'deadlock space' between polar perspectives where solution is impossible.

The parallax object's upholding of gruesome tension and suspense, I call a *fetishistic tickling*: the capitalist subject (the marketer) goes on because he knows there is no acceptable 'true' version to be found in the parallax gap but pretends there is one because the parallax object (the void made up by tensions) **tickles so good**.

The Conflict Market: de-dialectical - *un*-politicizing - renouncing

Platformed antagonism (Farkas, Schou and Neumayer 2018)

Solution?

What liberal democratic politics requires is that the others are not seen as enemies to be destroyed, but as adversaries whose ideas might be fought, even fiercely, but whose right to defend those ideas is not to be questioned. To put it in another way, what is important is that conflict does not take the form of an ‘antagonism’ (struggle between enemies) but the form of ‘**agonism**’ (struggle between adversaries). (Mouffe 2013, p. 7)

More Research about: platform technologies, managers, consumers, journalists, media, politicians etc

There are some strange things happening in this country. Me and my wife are actually sitting here tonight because of those strange things. [Really? How so?] Well, my wife treated me to this trip to Atlanta and this restaurant—we actually flew in from Virginia just to come here—with the hope of distracting me. You see, **I have been very unhappy and angry lately, and this thing that happened a few weeks ago was the last straw.** [Oh, what happened?]. My old University buddies, they have been my close friends since we studied economics in Virginia together, we've had this annual weekend reunion going on for more than thirty years, yeah I'm 71. We eat, drink, play golf. But this year they called me and said **"Hey, John, if you are going to come this year you cannot talk politics."** I was like **"What do you mean? I don't talk politics more than anyone else."** In fact, in my view **they talk politics all the time, and lately, very scary politics.** But that was obviously not the point. The point was that I, me alone, was forbidden from airing my political views. Because **they have turned into Trump-cheering media-haters, ignoring what a dangerous path down the dungeons they are on. For years this hatred has slipped in, and our conflict has become more and more obvious. But now, now it is official. My wife and I have lost our long-time, best friends. That's why my wife flew me here today, to eat at my favorite restaurant where people are still normal. To help me think of something else. To be happy for a few hours.** (John, 71, Atlanta)

I Harms young people

# Harmful impact on teenage girls (Haugen)

- 13,5 % say their suicidal thoughts became more frequent after using Instagram.
- 17% say eating disorders get worse after using Instagram
- 32% say they feel bad about their bodies and worse so after using Instagram.
- Facebook intentionally target children under age 13 with an “addictive” product despite the app requiring users to be 13 years or older.

# The Selfie

A photograph that one has taken of oneself [] and shared via social media (OxfordDictionaries.com)

Types of selfies: 'autobiography', 'parody', 'propaganda', 'romance self-help', 'travel diary', 'coffee table book' and 'meta-narrative' selfies (Eagar and Dann 2016)

"person-ness"

"slice of life"

"I-was-here-ness"

"dis-embodied self" (Belk 2013)

Heterotopian selfies destabilizing brand assemblages through their material and expressive components (Rokka and Canniford 2016)

This humanly networked world produces a **permanent self-mirroring**. The closer the net is woven, the more thoroughly the world shields itself against the other, the outside. The digital retina turns the world into a **screen- and control monitor**. Inside this **autoerotic visual space**, in this **digital inwardness** there can be no sense of wonder. The only thing human beings still like are themselves.

(Byung-Chul Han 2017)

--- girl at mirror---  
Norman Rockwell

Creates a meaningful image of the self (Schroeder 2022) and communicates “narrative autonomy” in that it demonstrates "the agency of the person behind the lens, by simultaneously putting that person in front of it” (LaFrance 2014).

Disrupts singularity and points to a *plurality of selves* (LaFrance 2014)

Holds together a number of different elements of mediated digital communication  
(Gómez Cruz & Thornham 2015)

Inscribes one's own body into “new forms of mediated expressive sociability with distant others”

(Frosch 2015)

As a technological and capitalist-driven form of visual representation, the selfie is as much a gateway into the economics of social division, as it is a highly personalized, affective vehicle for self-expression (Murray 2020)

--- Kendall Jenner---  
hypnosed

The **smooth** is an optimized surface without negativity. It causes a sensation which is entirely **free of pain or resistance**. (Byung-Chul Han 2017).

--- Kendall Jenner---  
deresponsibilization

Hence, the selfie assembles the affective expression of multiple selves with the forces of the economic system and an alienating sociability, into a perfectly smooth (amputated beauty), commodified, co-produced and de-stabilized (non)identity.

Serving apparent parts of market economy (tech-industry, beauty industry, fashion etc), but also emotional capitalism's (Illouz 2007) therapeutic industries.

Solution?

The **smooth** is an optimized surface without negativity. It causes a sensation which is entirely **free of pain or resistance**. Beauty and the sublime have the same origin. Instead of opposing the sublime to the beautiful, one should return to beauty a sublimity that cannot be subjected to inwardness, a de-subjectivizing sublimity, and thus undo the separation of beauty and the sublime.

(Byung-Chul Han 2017).

More Research about: the networked sentiments i.r.t. (others') selfies and the parasociology of selfies, the selfie gaze, its potential role in the conflict market

Be well!

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The aesthetics of beauty is a genuine phenomenon of modern times. Only, in the aesthetics of modern times, the beautiful and the sublime become separated. The beautiful is isolated in its pure positivity. The subject of modern times, which becomes stronger and stronger, turns the beautiful into a positive object of pleasure. In this context, the beautiful is juxtaposed to the sublime, which – due to its negativity – does not cause immediate pleasure.

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The **smooth** is an optimized surface without negativity. It causes a sensation which is entirely free of pain or resistance.

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Beauty and the sublime have the same origin. Instead of opposing the sublime to the beautiful, one should return to beauty a sublimity that cannot be subjected to inwardness, a de-subjectivizing sublimity, and thus undo the separation of beauty and the sublime.

(Byung-Chul Han 2017)