EGOCENTRIC *SLACKTIVISTS*?

Users reflecting on their participation in social media campaigns

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Abstract

Audience research often employs quantitative research methods, which conceptualize audiences by talking <u>about</u> them and their social media behaviour, rather than <u>with</u> them. In this way, audiences become oversimplified and objectified, stripping them off their social positions and individual contexts. With the emergence of the digital age and social media, this led to participation in social media campaigns and the motivation behind it to be oversimplified to two extreme perspectives conceptualizing audiences as egocentric slacktivists or empowered citizens with possibilities to revolutionize the world. Inspirational to this thesis, Hall's (1973) Encoding/Decoding model and Morley's research on audiences provide insights that social position such as class and education shape the discursive resources that audiences use to "decode" or understand media messages in different ways. This indicates the subjectivity of audience media readings and motivations, and signifies the importance of inclusion of the participants themselves in the research process through qualitative methods. Stronger inclusion of audiences can also lead to their de-objectification by providing them with their own voice, rather than speaking for them.

*This qualitative study puts audiences in 'the driver seat', and allows them to reflect on their own social media behaviour, and participation in social media campaigns more specifically. The thesis reveals that the existing binary conceptualization of social media campaigns is too simplistic, and highlights the complexity of people's reflections on motivations and thought-processes behind participation. Thus, the research question of this thesis is: **how do university students reflect on their use of social media as a way to contribute to social media campaigns?** The decision to focus on university students is based on the suggested relationship between higher education, political knowledge and civic engagement, as well as the typical age group that university students fall into, which constitutes the most active group of social media users. Based on the two insights, this group of young people provides a good opportunity to obtain rich, in-depth reflections on the perceived political and social impacts of social media campaigns, as well as the subjective insights into motivations to participate.*

*In total, thirteen semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted with students of Erasmus University Rotterdam in March and April of 2018. Results of thematic analysis suggest a complex interrelationship between motivations for participation in social media campaigns, with some support for ideas of slacktivism, including low physical effort and personal interests, as well as public concerns and the desire to achieve social and political change. More specifically, this study revealed that **the relationship between selfish participation and interest for the public good is paradoxical**, where contradicting motivations do not rule each other out, but rather, coexist. This further indicates the complexity of human psychology and behaviour online, and the fact that audiences cannot be categorized as a single, oversimplified 'type', such as narcissists or empowered activists.*

<u>KEYWORDS:</u> *Social Media, Participatory Culture, Slacktivism, Civic Culture, Qualitative*

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

#QuelleVoltaChe. #BalanceTonPorc. #YoTambien. ‏#كمان_وأنا‎. #MeToo. This is just a small insight into the international reach of one of the most recent and striking examples of a social media campaign, which emerged in October 2017, and today remains a 'hot' discussion topic around the world. The campaign was popularized by a Hollywood celebrity, Alyssa Milano, who used her Twitter account to encourage all women who have experienced sexual harassment or assault to share the hashtag #MeToo on their social media profiles. The aim of the campaign was to raise awareness of the prevalence of sexual harassment. #MeToo generated millions of tweets in 85 countries (Park, 2017), active participation on other social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, and it did not stop there. The movement received wide recognition as an empowerment of women and expanded into further initiatives. Women who participated in the campaign – 'the Silence Breakers' – were named The Person of The Year 2017 by Time magazine for "giving voice to open secrets, for moving whisper networks onto social networks, for pushing us all to stop accepting the unacceptable" (Felsenthal, 2017). Additionally, a Time's Up protest was initiated at the Golden Globes, marked by black attire and influential speeches by celebrities, including one of the world's most powerful women in the media industry, Oprah Winfrey, calling for an end to a silent acceptance of sexual harassment. The #MeToo movement was highly accelerated by the social media and resonated all around the world, both among regular citizens, and in popular culture. The campaign was described to "have unleashed one of the highest-velocity shifts in our culture since the 1960s" (Felsenthal, 2017), emphasizing its perceived impact.

On the other hand, the #MeToo movement also received considerable criticism for its 'symbolic' success and superficial impact. According to critics, symbolic action is only visible on the media, and among the elites in Hollywood, but has no real impact. In order to make a tangible difference, it is necessary to take practical steps towards social change, where attacks can be prevented and the abusers face appropriate legal and social punishments (Nolan, 2017). According to some, what is lacking to lead to *real* social change is effective leadership, a proposed solution to the problem and clear suggestions on how that solution should be attained (Israel, 2018). Additionally, while the movement defined women as 'silence breakers', who are finally being heard, it also led to confrontation of further pressing issues, such as the role that race and class plays in determining which women are actually being heard, believed and valued in the wake of the movement (the Guardian, 2017).

Nevertheless, #MeToo movement is a good illustration of the recent changes in the media environment, especially the development of digital media and Web 2.0. Indeed, these changes led new forms of participation, from passive consumption to active interaction with the content and other users, as well as contribution with own created content. Development of digital and social media further contributes

tomediatisation of society (Livingstone, 2013). Today it is difficult to find a sphere of life unaffected by the media, leading to continuous immersion, blurring boundaries between online and offline citizenship and the evolvement of a society of the spectacle (Debord, 1983; Livingstone, 2013). Consequently, users begin to place increasingly more significance on digital media, their participation, building online identities and expressing themselves through social media. As the age of Web 2.0 supposedly creates an environment of equal opportunities for participation and being heard, it becomes synonymous with empowerment of the user, agency and democracy. Yet, it also creates the debate around conceptualization of audience – are they really active and powerful members of society, or have they become passive users controlled and exploited by the capitalistic powers? If so, what are the motivations to participate and make an effort to create content?

As a result of these pressing questions that emerge with the evolvement of media, audiences become increasingly scrutinized, debated about and categorized into certain frames. Social media users are judged for the type of participation they engage in, and criticised for narcissistic motivations of social media use as a way to market themselves and satisfy their psychological and social needs. On the other end of the debate, social media is recognized as a powerful tool to collectivize and empower individuals into communities with common interests and goals. From this perspective, audiences are categorized as powerful, independent citizens. While more positive, this view also exerts pressure on the user and the importance of the 'right' kind of participation, similarly to the critical point of view. The increasing significance placed on the media is also described to increase its power in shaping popular views, opinions and the society as a whole, which reinforces the debates of audience agency and autonomy, especially in the digital age. Allegedly, the participatory and interactive nature of social media marks a new age of the powerful audience where everyone has the potential to be heard. Participants are active in their resistance against the previously too-powerful media and participation, which fosters diversity, democracy and empowers citizens to participate in the society to make a change (Hwang & Kim, 2015; Kende, van Zomeren, Ujhelyi & Lantos, 2016; Leyva, 2017; Livingstone, 2013). On the other hand, Web 2.0 is argued to be a business model, with the objective to exploit users through their free content creation and data contribution. From this perspective, audiences are passive, exploited and unintelligent, unable to resist the power of media and technologies.

Despite the ongoing debate of audience agency and autonomy, social movements increasingly use digital media as a resource to empower and collectivize citizens (Hwang & Kim, 2015; Kende et al.,2016). In this thesis, mediatized social movement campaigns will be referred to as social media campaigns, where the term social denotes both – the type of media and impact fought for, social change. While social media campaigns vary in purpose and scope, the exposure and support they often receive illustrate the uniting aspect of social media. Another example of a social media campaign is #JeSuisCharlie - a slogan created in the wake of Paris terrorist attacks in 2015, where 12 people were killed in the offices of the French satire newspaper Charlie Hebdo. The campaign hashtag translates to I am Charlie, and was used as a way to identify oneself as a supporter and express solidarity with the victims. The meaning of the campaign was further extended to

show support for freedom of speech and self-expression. However, the ambiguity of possible meanings behind the campaign led to some political controversy and criticism, which emerged through the hashtag #JeNeSuisPasCharlie (I am not Charlie). This hashtag was used to condemn the campaign, due to perceived racist content of the newspaper, or the fact that so much focus was brought to a comparatively small country of France, while the attacks in non-Western countries on a much bigger scale were not covered on the news at all.

Despite the criticism of racism and prioritization of western lives and "de-emotionalization of the suffering of distant others" (Chouliaraki, 2010, p.122), #JeSuisCharlie became one of the most popular hashtags in Twitter history within two days of the attacks (Goldman & Pagliary, 2015). The hashtag was used 6500 times a minute on Twitter alone, which led to 3.4 million tweets within a 24-hour period (Whitehead, 2015). Overall, Twitter's most popular hashtags in history also include social media campaigns such as #BringBackOurGirls and #BlackLivesMatter, which further indicates the significance, or at least the level of participation in social media campaigns today. Based on the reach obtained on social media, the mentioned campaigns can be considered successful in raising awareness and uniting people around the world around a common cause. Yet, some suggest that social media have the power to not only foster democracy by providing people with a voice that may otherwise go unheard, but also lead to social change. On the other hand, symbolic action is denounced for its superficiality and questionable motivations for participation, which leads to meaningless media exposure and no *actual* social change. These opposing perspectives lead to the pressing questions: who are the participants, can they really contribute to substantial, social change and what are their motivations to do so?

One of the consequences of campaigns for social change turning to online environments is the increased participation opportunities for active social media users, while limited possibilities for the non-users (Hwang & Kim, 2015). Today, social media are most exposed to and used by young people, sometimes referred to as millennials or "digital natives" (Zuckerman, 2013, p. 165), who are subsequently often the focus of research in the fields of online participation and civic engagement in social media campaigns (Hwang & Kim, 2015; Kende et al., 2016; Leyva, 2017; Paulin, Ferguson, Jost & Fallu, 2014; Scheufele & Nisbet, 2002; Zuckerman, 2013). While behaviour and media choices are regarded as an individual freedom, when it comes to participation, "society tends to judge whether such participation is beneficial to the participants and/or the wider public" (Livingstone, 2013, p.25). Therefore, the increasing significance of social media in social change campaigns may put a lot of pressure and faith in young people's participation, while undermining the importance of citizens who are not part of the social media environment. Although social media makes participation easier and more attainable, especially to particular social groups that may not be as politically engaged (Zuckerman, 2013), the impact and motivations for participation are also continuously judged and criticized.

There are two prominent perspectives on social media campaigns, which relate to the previously

discussed criticisms of social media participation in general. First, a highly optimistic view, which regards social media campaigns as an empowerment and democratic tool for social change. The positivist perspective is quite idealistic, while the second view is much more critical, assuming participation in social media campaigns as superficial and meaningless action. What these opposing perspectives do have in common, is their focus on effectiveness of participation and disregard or objectification of the actual participants. As a result of these debates, criticisms and assumptions that categorize the participants emerge. Both positive and negative perspectives of participation in social media campaigns objectify the participants as active and powerful or naïve, impressionable and self-absorbed users. People are reduced to their online activity and the title of an active or passive user disregarding their human qualities such as background, opinions and motivations.

Objectification of media audiences is also prominent in audience research. People are objectified merely as unidentifiable parts of a single mass under the influence of media, or as users of the media, whose motivations are unaffected by external, societal and personal factors. This is illustrated in Media Effects studies, as well as the commonly used method to approach motivations for media use - Uses & Gratifications (U&G) tradition. On a positive note, U&G assumes an autonomous audience, whose motivations are based on psychological and social needs (Jansz, Slot, Tol & Verstraeten, 2015). Yet, simultaneously, U&G maps the users into few distinctive categories contradicting the assumption of autonomy and individuality. Furthermore, audience research often disregards that people are shaped by their engagement with different spheres in society (Livingstone, 2013), and are embedded in a specific societal context, which influences their interpretation of media and participation motives (Hall, 1973; Morley, 1980). These insights indicate that a completely autonomous audience unaffected by external, social factors, is not feasible. Finally, audience research studying motivations for media use and media effects often employs quantified research methods such as surveys or content analysis (Hallikainen, 2015; Kapidzic, 2013; Shao, 2009; Sheldon & Bryant, 2015), which de-personalize the participant. Such methods indeed de-personalize the users not only by excluding their societal context, but talking *about* them rather than *with* them, which would allow the participants to reflect or judge their participation themselves.

1.1. Research Question

Increasing popularity and pervasiveness of participation by young people in social media, and the suggested transfer of social change campaigns from "on-site" (Hwang & Kim, 2015, p.479) to online environments have led to criticisms and objectification of users in terms of why and with what *actual* social effect they participate. That is why this research, instead, aims to give a voice to these young people, who are most prominent social media users and participants in social media campaigns. Research suggests that education can provide discursive resources to produce 'oppositional' and critical meanings to media messages (Morley, 1980) and that there is a positive relationship between higher education and political

knowledge, as well as involvement in civic and political activities (Egerton, 2002). Based on these insights, it can be suggested that highly-educated people are likely to typically engage in discussions about social media behaviour and its use as a tool for political and social change purposes. This research will thus enable them to reflect on their use of social media, effectiveness of social media campaigns and motivations behind different forms of participation, in their own words. Therefore, the research question is as follows:

How do university students reflect on their use of social media as a way to contribute to social media campaigns?

1.2. Scientific and Social Relevance

This thesis aims to challenge a few previously discussed shortcomings of audience research. Historically, and in the age of social media, research attempts to conceptualize the audience in terms of active and powerful members of society, or passive users controlled and exploited by the capitalistic powers. The existing research can be problematized due to its disregarding of participants' societal context, which can influence their interpretation of media texts and motivations for participation (Hall, 1973; Morley, 1980; Radway, 1987). Furthermore, audiences are often conceptualized based on quantified methods, which neglect subjective opinions and meaning that participants interpret from media texts (Atkinson, 2006). Audience research, especially in the digital age is based on subjective experiences and interpretations of living in a mediated society. This highlights the need to inquire into "people's everyday lives" (Livingstone, 2013, p. 27) in order to examine their experiences, opinions and motivations for participation based on their social position in society. In order to de-objectify the audience, this thesis will take into account the participants' positions in society and the subjective aspect of their individual reflections, by providing them with their own voice. I will thus answer the research question by conducting semi-structured, in-depth, face-to-face interviews with those young people who are users of social media and who have participated in at least one social media campaign. The participants will be asked to reflect on general and more specific participation as part of their wider social media behaviour in their own words. The gathered data will be used to identify patterns in participants' arguments, and in the language that they use when they reflect on their use of social media and motivations to participate in social media campaigns. Thus, this thesis aims to challenge current audience research by studying how young adults reflect on their own social media behaviour, in their own words and with their own voice, without mapping them into pre-existing theoretical categories.

This study is socially relevant, as many fields become mediatized, people are increasingly immersed in media, blurring their online and offline worlds (Livingstone, 2013). Additionally, with the emergence of Web 2.0, social media campaigns are presented as life-changing and revolutionary, but also attract criticism about the power and nature of participants' participation. There is a need for identifying effective ways to reach,

engage and influence social media users through social media campaigns (Wang, Tchernev & Solloway, 2012). I believe that studying how people themselves reflect on their participation can provide more fruitful illustrations of the thought processes behind it, potentially increasing knowledge of social media's efficiency in promoting social change. The findings of this research may be of interest to people within different societal spheres. For example, it can provide insights into how and why people decide to participate in social media campaigns, and what convinces them that by doing so, they do contribute to social change.

Such information can be useful to activists and NGOs, who aim to promote social change and participation in social media campaigns in improving their promotional strategies. Additionally, business and marketing spheres may find in-depth insights useful, due to potential opportunities that the digital media environment and audience participation can offer.

2. Theory and previous research

As previously discussed, this research focuses on studying young people's reflections on their social media use, particularly on participation in social media campaigns for social change. The research question is as follows: **How do university students reflect on their use of social media as a way to contribute to social media campaigns?**

In order to answer it, the role of media in humanitarian and social projects, as well as crisis communication strategies to encourage action and reaction from the audiences will be discussed. Since mediation of suffering and social issues and the need for specific communication strategies indicate a passive audience, this section will be followed by an overview of the evolution of academic conceptualization of passive and active audiences, discussing most prominent approaches and theories. Finally, audience conceptualization in the digital age of social media will be overviewed, in relation to motivations for social media use and the ambiguity of perspectives on social media campaigns and their impact.

The section aims to provide an overview of the evolution of relationship between media and audiences, as well as exemplify how certain conceptualizations of audience are achieved. Most prominently, audience research uses quantified methods, which can de-personalize the participants by talking *about* them, rather than *with* them - providing a voice to the users. Therefore, the reader will also be familiarized with the concerns of audience objectification within this field and how this thesis aims to approach audience research.

2.1. Media power in post-humanitarian era

As the society becomes increasingly immersed in media, using it as the main source of information, media becomes a powerful tool to not only disseminate information, but also to set agenda (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), influence behaviour and shape the society. In terms of humanitarian work and social issues, media communication strategies play a significant role in the efforts to make sure that issues feature on the audience's radars. Social movements, NGOs and other humanitarian institutions are therefore closely connected to the media, and certain PR strategies are used to set agenda and feature in busy schedules of the audience.

Agenda-setting theory implies that media "may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think *about.*" (Cohen in McCombs & Shaw, 1972). However, few, and often highly-educated people actively seek information and a variety of sources, while most of the audience acquire news and information effortlessly through whatever is available at hand (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Therefore, it can be argued that the media is much more powerful than simply influencing what people think about, and with the right strategies, it can influence people's decisions and behaviour as well. This is also suggested by the theory of Spiral of Silence, which indicates that people

tend to conform with the popular opinion of the masses, and refrain from voicing their own, if it isn't identical to that of the majority's. Furthermore, audiences are likely to change their own views if they differ from popular opinions, due to the fear of being isolated from the rest of the society. Likewise, the concept of Herding Effect also suggests people's tendency to follow the masses. Indeed, the Herding Effect has a significant impact, especially on people who do not have much interest in the particular issue. They tend to give little consideration to their choice making, relying on automatic action, which usually is based on following observed popular behaviour (Ölander & Thøgersen, 2014). Nevertheless, according to Lang & Lang (2012), in the contemporary society, it is not the masses of people and "statistical majority" (p. 385) who form popular opinions and pressure minorities into conformity, but rather the media, which conveys the agenda. Indeed, the media has power to influence, and even undermine popular norms and opinions, while establishing new ideas (Lang & Lang, 2012). However, this can be seen from both – positive and negative perspectives.

The implied media power appears as a possible danger to the democracy. One of the probable issues is that the media has perceived authority and expertise to present and misrepresent certain minorities, which can influence the public view (Chouliaraki, 2008). An example of this is the suggested misrepresentation of Islam and Muslims in the Western media, which promotes a sense of Orientalism, enforcing "the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, 'us') and the strange (the Orient, the East, 'them' or 'the other')" (Saeed, 2007, p.447). Misrepresentation of minorities can lead to altering the public perspective and alienation of the particular group, in this case it reinforces racism or Islamophobia (Saeed, 2007). The notion of division between 'us' and 'them' in the media is also described as securitization of cultural diversity, which implies "both the protection *of* some differences and the protection *from* others" (Engelbert & Awad, 2014, p.265). This reinforces the idea that media can set agenda, and selectively determine public view on what is *good* or *bad*.

On a positive note, the media can also have positive influence on undermining harmful stereotypes, spreading awareness and reinforcing the importance of certain social issues and humanitarian causes. Establishing new ideas and opinions, as well as exposing certain facts and information instead of solely reflecting popular opinions can lead to a more informed society and a richer public discourse (Lang & Lang, 2002). The media can also supposedly mobilize audience and encourage participation for social or political change. Effectiveness of mobilization of audience depends on persuasive communication strategies, influence of social network and costs and benefits of participation as perceived by the potential participant (Klandermans, 2004). Therefore, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other humanitarian institutions tend to make use of a variety of communication strategies to achieve their goals. It is also often suggested that the medium can be more important than the message itself in perceptions and reactions to crisis communication by the audience (Schultz, Utz & Goritz, 2011). While people are more likely to talk about information they were exposed to via traditional media such as newspaper articles, they tend to share

social media posts (e.g. on Twitter) via a variety of different channels, which may ensure quicker dissemination of information. Also, posts via social media tend to evoke more positive reactions to crisis communication, such as willingness to take action (Schultz, Utz & Goritz, 2011). Therefore, communication strategies are also evolved and developed along with the progression of the society.

Accordingly, with the emergence of technology, communication via the internet and email have become the most powerful tool to create awareness among the audiences, as well as to "inspire philanthropy" (Techreport, 2018, p.4). Today, 92% of all NGOs have a website, 87% of which are mobile-compatible in order to reach audiences, which are mostly mobile in the digital age (Techreport, 2018). Aside from raising awareness and evoking empathy, communication strategies are developed to achieve action, which in the case of NGOs often constitutes fundraising. One of the common strategies is regular posts of news articles and blog posts, which include stories about empathy and hope followed with an encouragement to donate money for the cause. Additionally, strategies such as peer-to-peer fundraising service have been implemented, as people displayed preference to donate to fundraising campaigns, which are initiated by family or friends. According to the Global NGO Technology Report 2018, this tactic will continue to "reap the financial rewards for years to come" (Techreport, 2018, p.8), alongside the #GivingTuesday movement, which encourages people to donate money to charitable causes in the beginning of the Christmas season.

The words strategy and tactics may have negative connotations to marketing, advertising and consumerism, which are usually not relatable to charitable causes and NGOs. Yet, this vocabulary is a common way to describe the work of humanitarian institutions. To an extent, this indicates that strategic approaches are necessary to evoke reactions, educate, raise awareness and push people to participate in social change, as people in the modern society tend to be preoccupied with themselves and their immediate surroundings, ignoring "suffering of distant others" (Chouliaraki, 2010, p.122). Chouliaraki (2008) presents a perspective on media power to influence the viewer's response to perceived suffering by "producing" (p. 371) pity, proximity and connection between the spectators and the distant sufferer. Television news use strategies through which they frame the concept of suffering and in turn can, to an extent, determine the level of the viewer's involvement with the sufferer by inviting them to "look at it, feel for it, act on it" (Chouliaraki, 2008, 374). The amount of sympathy and willingness to act upon perceived suffering is often dependent on the proximity of the spectator to the sufferer, which indicates a certain self-centred nature of post-humanitarian audience in the modern age. Therefore, the sense of responsibility for a certain issue or suffering can be dependent on media's systematic use of symbolic tools of words and image. How stories are presented not only set the agenda – choose which stories are the most important and thus, worth the spectators' attention and consideration, but also can determine the spectators' reaction and degree of involvement with the suffering (Chouliaraki, 2008). Nevertheless, the amount of action that can be prompted through mediation of suffering is debatable. It is also argued that continuous overrepresentation of stories of suffering can on the opposite, undermine the importance of the issues and weaken audience's sense of

responsibility and commitment. Either way, media plays a crucial role in influencing the audience engagement with the society and social issues. From the Communitarianism perspective, to engage with the "suffering that is proximal and relevant to the community to which he or she belongs" (Chouliaraki, 2010, p. 386), or Cosmopolitanism, to engage with "distant suffering through a demand for action on a distant other who does not readily belong to "our" own community" (Chouliaraki, 2010, p. 387). It is implied, that people are more likely to feel sympathetic and engage with issues and suffering, which is close to them, in geographical or cultural terms. This leads to question the psychology behind participation in social movements – what are the main motivations for participation?

According to Klandermans (2004**),** the most important aspects of participation in social movements are time and effort, and the different forms of participation involve different motivations. The three possible reasons for participation suggested are instrumentality, identity and ideology (Klandermans, 2004). Instrumentality describes participants who are motivated by the desire to make a change to the social and political circumstances. From this perspective, the potential participants must feel like they are able to make an impact, though, at an 'affordable' cost of effort and time. People's behaviour is determined by perceived costs and benefits of participation, meaning that the perceived effort and time taken to participate should be in correlation with the perceived benefits. In order for the participation to not be too effort-requiring, possible solutions to the issue and the direct impact participation may bring must be clear. Identity describes the participants' desire to feel part of a larger community and be identified as part of the in-group, as this brings a sense of belonging to the society. Feeling strongly affiliated with a certain group motivates the individual to participate in collective action on behalf of the group. For example, people who identify themselves as part of the gay community are more likely to become involved in gay movements (Simon et al., 1998). Finally, ideology as motivation, describes the human need to express opinions and feelings in order to give meaning to their existence. People have the desire to express their emotions, and in this way display and build their identity (Klandermans, 2004).

These motivations provide a valuable insight into the social and psychological meaning behind participation in social movements. However, there is a strong implication that people are highly driven by their emotions, which can be manipulated. As previously discussed, activists and NGOs focus a lot of their efforts on creating and producing moral responsibility, pity, sympathy or anger in order to direct these emotions to possible action. While it may not necessarily be considered wrong, these perspectives still imply a passive audience, which can be controlled and manipulated. As media is indeed becoming an increasingly bigger part of people's lives, it has the potential to influence opinions and behaviours. Nevertheless, it must also be considered that the perspective of agenda-setting and Herding Effect, among others discussed, are quite deterministic. These perspectives assume passive audiences under the influence of the media. In this context, audiences not only do not question or contradict what is presented, but are also passive in their efforts, meaning that they do not actively search for information, do not show interest in societal issues and

are not interested in contributing to social change, when they aren't concerned with it personally. Passive and active audience participation and the extent of their agency and autonomy in terms of media and its influence has been debated throughout audience research. Originating in Media Effects research tradition, it progressed towards reconceptualization of audience and their empowerment in the digital age of social media.
The following sections will overview and analyse the evolution of the academic debate and how it relates to audiences today.

2.2.   Active and passive audiences

Participatory audience' research has been structured into three approaches or paradigms (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998). Rather than presenting an evolution of audiences, the paradigms help to grasp the historical evolvement of the academic study, interpretation of audiences and their relationship with the media (Livingstone, 2013). While the paradigms can be considered 'old' or outdated, they are still seen as a basis of inspiration in audience research today, and illustrate some aspects of audience conceptualization in the digital age.

Effects of media messages on the receivers' actions and attitudes was always of interest within communication and audience research. Initially, audiences were perceived as a passive, mass audience easily manipulated by the ideologies, but were later recognized as single individuals who are each influenced by the media (Moores,2000). In any case, media was conceptualized as powerful and able to exert direct influence on naïve, passive audiences, who accept media messages without the agency to critique.
This perspective resembles the much-criticized Hypodermic Needle Model, which conceptualizes audiences as a single entity directly 'injected' with media messages, with direct and identical impact.
These assumptions are articulated in research within the Behavioural Paradigm and grounded in Media Effects research (Valkenburg, Peter & Walther, 2016). Nevertheless, as previously discussed, the seemingly outdated and deterministic interpretation of audience as passive is still evident today. Communication strategies are developed and evolved alongside the society, in order to better influence the audience and their behaviour. Furthermore, even in the digital age of Web 2.0 and the supposedly "active, aware and technologically engaged prosumer" (Comor, 210, p. 310), criticisms of self-centred, passive audiences emerge. Some of the common criticisms of participation in social media campaigns conceptualize the audience as narcissistic, passive, exploited and manipulated to participate by the capitalistic powers.
These critiques often do not take into account individuality of participants, their context and autonomy, but judge it on a general interpretation of their participation, conceptualizing participants as a mass audience or a single entity.

Therefore, clear links emerge between the traditional perspective of passive audiences, who are directly affected by the media and the criticism of passive participation for social change through social media.
The media-audience relationship is conceptualized as one-way influence of the media, where socioeconomic

or cultural positions in the society are disregarded. Audiences are removed from larger context of their existence, and perceived to not have any agency, personal and individual motivations or meanings behind media consumption and participation. In contrast to this, the critical, cultural theory approach to audience interpretation considers a two-way relationship between media and the audience. This perspective is based on semiotics, where media becomes considered as texts, which are polysemic (can have multiple meanings), and can be interpreted in different ways, based on a broader context of socioeconomic and cultural positions of audience within the society (Moores, 2000). The critical approach is rooted in Stuart Hall's Encoding/Decoding model, which led to a conceptualization of an active audience made up of individuals, who belong to different social groups within the society.

Stuart Hall's (1973) Encoding/Decoding model suggests that there is a complex relationship between the 'encoded' message of the media producer, and the 'decoded' meaning of the receiver. This model assumes active audiences in their ability to receive and interpret media differently than the implicit dominant meaning. Morley's (1980) research extended this model by illustrating that social position such as gender or class shape the discursive resources that people use to "decode" or understand media messages in different, individual ways. This research led to reconceptualization of audience from a single entity to an audience of individuals with different societal positions and contexts. For example, Morley studied middle-class students' opinions of a TV program *Nationwide*, which is based on current affairs including politics, sports and light entertainment. The study indicates how differences in social class positions can affect audience's preference of medium and how it is perceived. The findings showed that middle-class students considered *Nationwide* worthless due to its large focus on entertainment value and lack of informative content. On the other hand, working-class students had a similar opinion in terms of lack of value in the TV program, but for an opposite reason - due to perceived lack of entertaining content (Morley, 1980). This supports Hall's and Morley's implications that societal position and context of individuals provides discursive resources, which influence their interpretations and motivations for media use. More importantly, it reconceptualises audience as an entity of individuals, and highlights the importance of social context in audience research.

While contributing with forward ideas regarding audience, an important conclusion in Morley's work is that decodings of media texts cannot be fully reduced to socioeconomic location. Sometimes, groups within the same class position offered different interpretations and responses (Moores, 2000). This further emphasizes the subjectivity and complexity of individual motivations and interpretations of media texts, and calls for qualitative research methods allowing the participants to extensively reflect on their own, personal media behaviour. It is also important to note that while Morley acknowledges audience agency and autonomy, he is criticized to disregard their tastes and preferences based on cultural contexts. Consequently, Morley's (1980) audiences were described to be "produced by his project" (Hartley in Moores, 2000, p.29), placing them in unfamiliar contexts by for example, asking them to reflect on media

they are not familiar with, rather than being examined in regards to their typical behaviour, and motivations behind it. Nevertheless, both Hall's and Morley's insights reconceptualised the audience. Audiences were finally perceived as *real*, *living* people within a society, with differing socioeconomic and cultural positions, and agency to interpret media texts based on their own context. This also led to acknowledgment that deeper meanings can be attached to media consumption, which was highly explored in Ethnographic and Feminist Studies. The new perspective on audience research simultaneously attempted to pay attention to more personal, cultural characteristics of audiences. This was achieved by methodology, which considered the participants' own tastes, interviewing them about their typical media behaviour. Therefore, both Morley's insights and the Feminist research tradition are inspirational for this thesis, in terms of their implications, goals and methodology.

Feminist Studies aim to de-objectify or "rescue" (Moores, 2000, p.8) the discriminated audiences, whose preferences or media readings have been "devalued by those with more legitimate 'cultural capital'" (Moores, 2000, p.8). For example, in terms of media consumption, news and current affairs "has a far higher level of respectability and its viewers tend to be treated as citizens in pursuit of information" (Moores, 2000, p.38) in comparison to devaluation of those, watching entertainment shows or series, which are perceived to have little intellectual significance. A similar trend can be observed in the digital age, where social media participation is often categorized as right or wrong. Sharing *selfies* is denounced as a shallow practice of "online narcissism" (Murray, 2015, p.490), a way to feel desired by others (Murray, 2015) or self-branding (Liu & Suh, 2017; Page, 2012). Excessive use of social media is described as addiction (Hawi & Samaha, 2016) and even a disorder, according to the Social Media Disorder Scale (Van den Eijnden, Lemmens & Valkenburg, 2016). Ethnographic and Feminist academic tradition aims to give a voice to "previously mocked or silenced social pleasures" (Moores, 2000, p.8), by raising the discussion of cultural taste and values, diminishing judgments and discrimination.

One of the most popular examples in classic Feminist research is Radway's (1987) Reading in Romance. This study illuminates the socially situated reasoning behind romance novel reading by women - an activity, which is typically denounced due to its low intellectual value. Radway (1987) illustrated how romance novels were used as a means to escape an emotionally and physically demanding domestic life as a woman, whose role is primarily that of a wife and mother. Hobson (1980) provided a similar perspective in her study of housewives and the use of mass media. Her findings reflect those of Radway, where women use TV and radio as substitutes for company and reminiscing about life prior to marriage. In both cases, face-to-face interactions within the security of respondents' home allowed for authentic, honest interviews, or rather, conversations. The studies revealed that media texts do not hold any special interpretations for these women, but present a form of "escapism" (Moores, 2000, p. 48) from daily routine. Feminist research indeed de-objectifies and humanizes women through its methodology, by allowing them to reflect on their motivations for media consumption, as individuals with subjective opinions and individual socio-economic

positions in society. The following section will delve into audience conceptualization in the digital age, in order to further analyse the similarities and differences in perceived media and audience relationships.

2.3.   Empowered audience in the digital age

Social media is defined as "internet-based channels that allow users to opportunistically interact and selectively self-present, either in real-time or asynchronously, with both broad and narrow audiences who derive value from user-generated content and the perception of interaction with others" (Carr & Hayes, 2015, p.50). This definition highlights some of the most important aspects of social media in the context of this thesis – the opportunity to interact with others, reach a large audience and build a social media identity. The emergence of Web 2.0 further pushed this development and highlighted the importance and agency of the user, allowing them to not only participate through passive consumption, but also to actively interact with the content, other users, and even create their own user generated content (UGC). This led the users to participate with increasingly more "chat, messages, networking, sharing, collaboration than ever before in human history" (Livingstone, 2013, p. 24). Consequently, social media has become an important part of people's lives, where the number of users globally has been increasing rapidly. Since 2010, the number of users has grown by 1.65 billion, to a current number of 2.62 billion in 2018 and is predicted to increase with another 400 million users in the next three years (Statista, 2018a). The evident increase in social media participation and redefinition of what social media is, also led to reconceptualization of the users to co-creators, produsers (Van Dijck, 2009) and prosumers, derived from the action of consuming and producing content (Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010). While empowering, it also led to increasing pressure on the 'right' type of participation and the importance of social media identities.

Indeed, with the emergence of Web 2.0, audiences have become not only receivers and interpreters of media texts, but also producers (Comor, 2010). Within the context of social media, active and passive participation has been reconceptualised and given new meanings. Participation can be distinguished in three categories based on the level of involvement with the media – consuming, participating and producing. Consuming describes passive, effortless consumption of online content, with no interaction with the content or other users. Participation can be categorized as slightly more effort-requiring activity of user-to-content participation, including activities such as rating, sharing or commenting on content, or user-to-user participation, describing interaction with other users through chat, message boards, email or the like. Finally, producing describes the most effort requiring and active involvement with the media through creation and publication of one's own content, such as text, images or video (Shao, 2009). In this thesis, two types of involvement with social media are referred to, namely passive and active participation. Passive participation denotes consumption of content and minimal interaction through the actions of liking, commenting and sharing other people's content, while active participation describes sharing one's own content, including images, video, posts, etc.

Emergence of Web 2.0, and especially the so-called empowerment of users through the opportunity to contribute with own content, sparked a new debate about users' autonomy and agency in the digital age. The debate regarding media technologies and participation they enable can be described through Foucault's concept of dual economy of freedom and constraint, describing "democratization of technology" and "technologisation of democracy" (Chouliaraki, 2010, p.227). Democratization of technology refers to the positive perspective of empowerment of the user, who now has the possibility to be heard and the power to make a change through collective action or activism. On the other hand, technologisation of democracy describes the power of media technologies to set agenda by controlling genres of participation, possibly reinforcing the ideas of dominant power relations, and again, undermining democracy (Chouliaraki, 2010).

From a positive perspective, social media users are now in control, empowered and "active, aware and technologically engaged" (Comor, 2010, p. 310). The new forms of participation foster democratic citizenship, as they allow users to build their own identities and communities, creating a sense of belonging in the society (Van Dijck, 2009). According to Van Dijck, "building individual and group identity is an integrated element of the self in a democratic culture" (p. 44). Therefore, these newly emerged opportunities for diversity, creativity and community will supposedly have impacts on a global scale (Livingstone, 2013; Grossman, 2006). Aside from increased agency in content production and participation online (Van Dijck, 2009), social media users have the possibility for resistance, through the choice whether to be a part of social media, the extent of their participation, building 'oppositional' readings of media messages (Morley, 1980), or actions such as 'lurking' (Kushner, 2016). Lurking describes the action of users consuming content without contributing with any of their own. This can be seen as resistance, since it is a way to avoid content creation that is often considered to be exploitation of free labour, as well as contribution with own data that can be used by the corporate powers.

Optimistic views claim that Web 2.0 brought a new age of democracy through the "historical shift from the historically powerful to the historically powerless, because everyone has voice" (Sandberg in Kushner, 2016, p.1). Yet, some researchers argue that the new digital age does not signify democracy, but on the contrary – is a business model, which increases the gap between the passive, manipulated audiences and the corporate powers (Kushner, 2016). The core of the business model is seen as collective intelligence, which describes the information and economic value that can be extracted from the content that users contribute with. Therefore, participation with UGC is often described as a "subject of ongoing exploitation" (Van Dijck, 2009, p.54) by the "capital-intensive and technology-driven economies" (Van Dijck, 2009, p.54) and power relations (Comor, 2010). While, generally, social networking sites (SNSs) can be used free of charge, based on this critical perspective, most likely, "if you're not paying for something, you're not the customer; you're the product being sold" (user of Metafilter in Giorgio, 2012, p. 177). In this context, users become not only providers of free content through UGC, but are also subject to algorithm control and "data-mining" (Giorgio, 2012, p. 177), which is sold to advertisers in order to better target the user and further exploit them.

A privacy scandal focused on Cambridge Analytica provided evidence to privacy issues on social media and the power of data-mining to influence social media users. The scandal revolved around Facebook exposing data of at least 87 million Facebook users to Cambridge Anlaytica - a political consulting firm (Badshah, 2018). This resulted in targeted advertisings, which potentially influenced the 2016 US election and the Brexit vote, thus, threatening democracy (Levin, 2018). This provides evidence of a phenomenon directly opposite to the claim that Web 2.0 is the age of democracy and an empowered audience.

Camrbidge Analytica scandals led to a social media campaign driven by the hashtag and call to action - #DeleteFacebook. Yet, despite the privacy scandal, the campaign had little impact on Facebook's success, where both daily and monthly active users increased with 13% in comparison to the same quarter in 2017 (Solon, 2018). This leads to pressing questions such as why do people participate despite the possible dangers and risk, and what is the perceived value of participation to the audience? It also indicates that while theoretically, users can oppose social media power, technology is developed to overcome resistance and "seek a direct line to users' time, emotions and attention" (Kushner, 2016, p.10) assuming passive audiences, directly controlled and affected by the media powers, similarly to Media Effects research tradition.

Social media power to influence the users is further indicated through research, which implies that social media is built to be addictive, disarming the users of their agency and autonomy. Regardless of context, social media users exhibit symptoms of behavioural addiction such as tolerance, withdrawal, conflict, salience, relapse, and mood modification (Hawi & Samaha, 2017). Users desire things that will maximize their pleasure, which highlights the importance of media technologies being easy to use, require minimal effort and provide larger gratifications (Shao, 2009). Therefore, social media is built in a way that would satisfy the user just enough to keep them coming back. According to Hawi & Samaha (2017), as "psychology behind social media keeps making it more and more seductive, we expect the problem only to aggravate" (p. 583). This implies the dangerous side to social media, and the increasing control it has over the users. The implication is strengthened by the fact that public scandals concerning data privacy did not have a negative influence on the participation, undermining audience agency and autonomy in the digital age.

In contrast to active versus passive audience debate, Livingstone (2013) proposes a Participation paradigm, which argues that audiences were never passive, and the emergence of digital media merely presented new possibilities for action, interaction and participation. According to Shao (2009), the different types of participation also denote the users' motivations. Passive participation through content consumption is usually motivated by the need for social interaction and desire for the sense of belonging and being a part of a community. On the other hand, active participation of producing and publishing content is often linked to the need for self-expression and self-realization – the ability to build one's identity online or showcase one's work. These motivations create an implication that social media audiences are not passive, but self-centred and motivated by their own self-interest and needs.

The implication of narcissistic and self-centred audience is also strengthened by research indicating that social media users are "seeking recognition, fame, or personal efficacy" (Shao, 2009, p.14). Allegedly, social media use is motivated by the desire for surveillance and knowledge, documentation, coolness to validate popularity and status, creativity to portray skills and sharing creative posts (Sheldon & Bryant, 2015), as well as self-representation and promotion (Kapidzic, 2013). Apart from seeking knowledge, all categories indicate a user's need for approval, belonging and acceptance, which often manifests itself through narcissistic motives. Generally, narcissists use social media, because it functions "well in the context of shallow relationships and highly controlled environments, where they have complete power over self-presentation" (Sheldon & Bryant, 2015). This is the idea embedded in the Uses & Gratifications tradition, which perceives the audience as individuals with psychological needs to be satisfied through the media. In accordance to this, social media is seen to "tend to fuel the individual's mesmerisation with his market-framed self" (Comor, 2010, p.322) and provide users with "both an audience and stage for highly controlled self-presentation" (Kapidzic, 2013, 14). Therefore, social media users had also been objectified and generalized as narcissistic audiences, who increasingly focus on 'performance' of their identity online, where digital media become a branding tool (Liu & Suh, 2017; Page, 2012). The conceptualization of society as the spectacle, where boundaries between the mediated world and reality are blurred, can be illustrated through the Spectator/Performance paradigm (SPP). Within the SPP, audiences become performers and spectators at the same time (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998). It assumes a rather individualistic and to an extent narcissistic, but autonomous audience, while disregarding further socioeconomic and cultural contexts, individuality and power relations. The U&G approach and debate of passive and active audience appears to be rather simplistic. There are multiple nuances and complexities, which can affect participation ranging from participants' psychological and social needs, but also power relations, social media influence and control.

Motivations for participation in social media campaigns are also often described through the need to satisfy personal, individualistic needs such as improving social capital or social affirmation rather than as a part of a bigger, society-oriented purpose (Hwang & Kim, 2015; Kende et.al., 2016). Nevertheless, it is also argued that the SPP perspective is unsuitable when discussing activists associated with new social media campaigns, because it assumes a narcissistic audience, who are of self-centred nature, while social media campaigns focus rather on the public good or social change (Atkinson, 2006). In this way, Atkinson (2006) celebrates social media campaigns, indicating that motivation for participation is bigger than individual values, such as feel-good factor. Yet, the critique of participation in social media campaigns, most prominently the idea of *slacktivism*, presents a directly opposite perspective. It holds that this type of participation provides "an easy and self-satisfying alternative" (Penney, 2014, p.55) to those, who are unwilling to "get their hands dirty and do the efforts required to actually achieve [political] goals" (Christensen, 2011). This creates tension between categorization of participants as naïve, egocentric

slacktivists, or on the contrary, as powerful, autonomous and engaged citizens. Furthermore, these categorizations often objectify participants by condensing their attitudes and opinions regarding media participation into numbers or categories (Atkinson, 2006). Evidently, both positive and negative perspectives, as well as contemporary and traditional audience research and theories can objectify the audience. The following section will delve into the discussion of audience participation in social media campaigns and the debate behind the motivations, implications and impacts of doing so.

2.4. Social media campaigns

The following section aims to discuss the ambiguity in celebration and critique of participation in social media campaigns, both of which reduce the audience to categories of active or passive users. As previously mentioned, on the one hand, this type of political action is seen as empowering, building communities and thus, providing a basis for political action in the future. On the other hand, it is criticized as an egocentric expression of increasing one's feel-good factor, simultaneously distracting from *real*, organized political action.

Social movements can be defined as "an effort by a large number of people to solve collectively a problem they feel they have in common" (Toch in Hwang & Kim, 2015, p.478) or **"**a network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity" (Diani, 1992, p.13). These definitions highlight the significance of collective participation or 'collectivities' (Livingstone, 2013), who share common interests, problems and identities. This aspect is similarly important in both – traditional social movements and social media campaigns, as the power in both cases lies in the collective audience, their expressed voices and efforts. However, the ways in which the sense of community or 'collectivities' is achieved varies in terms of physical and symbolic resources. In traditional social movements, collective power is established through physical resources and social movement organizations, which can be considered more effort-requiring. On the other hand, social media supposedly provides effective tools to collectivize and mobilize the society on social media, eliminating limitations of finances, time and distance among others, allowing for rapid growth of social movements and a large number of participants (Hwang & Kim, 2015). Additionally, social media supposedly provides the tool to effectively create and foster individual's group identity, social affirmations and social capital, which have the potential to increase online, and potentially offline, participation in social media campaigns for social change (Hwang & Kim, 2015; Kende et al., 2016).

In relation to collective identity, Dahlgren (2009) names the celebratory perspective of social media campaigns Civic Cultures, where digital interactions can build a strong sense of community and civic identity. This perspective suggests that while digital participation may not lead to tangible change immediately, symbolic action can act as a basis or a starting point to further political action, as it establishes a sense of responsibility of citizenship and belonging to a community. In this perspective, digital action can

18

be compared to traditional social movements, as often, physical participation also does not lead to immediate, effective changes, and does not always focus on effectiveness, but also "passionate politics" (Klandermans, 2004, p. 375) and the opportunity to be a part of a community of like-minded people. Subactivism is a similar positive perspective of digital participation, which indicates that such participation cultivates construction of political and moral identities that in turn create "a major reservoir of civic energy" (Bakardjieva, 2009, p.103). Digital participation thus acts as a starting point to political engagement, as the established civic energy can then be used to pursue political and social change. Therefore, in terms of impact, one of the strongest aspects of digital participation through symbolic action or social media campaigns is the fact that it constructs civic identities, energy and constructs communities. In this way, audiences form a connection, sympathy and a sense of responsibility to observed social issues that they are exposed to through digital participation, which can lead to *real*, physical action.

Social media is also seen as empowering due to its ability to collectivize and mobilize users through quick dissemination of information, as digital participation allows for direct communication to one's peers (Leyva, 2017; Penney, 2014). Shared identity and a sense of community have persuasive power to attract more participants, especially within social media environments where connections are identified as friends (Penney, 2014). This enables rapid growth of social media movements. Social media campaigns are also seen to personalize the issues, by linking them to a face of *real* supporters, which adds to its persuasive power. Thus, it is a tool to encourage others to sympathise with the issue and feel more inclined to take part in the campaigns for social change. Furthermore, as previously discussed, the internet, and especially Web 2.0, has provided the possibility for active participation through production of own content. In this way, the users have the opportunity to set the agenda, which has the potential to bring forth important issues and start a discussion that can lead to involvement of higher authorities, such as politicians (McCombs & Shaw, 1972, Penney, 2014). Overall, the positivist scholars suggest that the internet has provided the tools for direct democracy, as it provides everyone with a voice, can reach a large number of people at low costs and allow for new forms of political debate (Scheufele & Nisbet, 2002).

Yet, there is a clear ambiguity in opinions regarding effectiveness of social media campaigns and digital participation. The other perspective of digital participation is less positive, calling participation in social media campaigns a form of "superficial clicktivism" (Hwang & Kim, 2015, p.480) and exploitation of "young and impressionable by media-savvy campaigners" (Zuckerman, 2013, p.153). The most prominent critique is described as slacktivism, a term coined in the 1990s and popularized by Morozov (2009). Slacktivism is defined as "low-risk, low-cost activities via social media whose purpose is to raise awareness, produce change, or grant satisfaction to the person engaged in the activity" (Lee & Hsieh in Leyva, 2017, p.465). Also known as 'keyboard activism' or 'superficial clicktivism' (Hwang & Kim, 2015), slacktivism suggests that participation in social media campaigns acts as a distraction from real political engagement, increases the participants' feel-good factor, but does not lead to any political achievements (Christensen,

2011). In contrast to the positivist perspective of digital participation as the first step in further political engagement, the critical view suggests it is rather a distraction from further action. This perspective assumes audiences to be egocentric *slackers* or naïve participants exploited by the powerful campaigners seeking financial gain (Zuckerman,2013), reducing a community of participating individuals to a passive audience.

Social media campaigns, which solely focus on symbolic action and passive participation that does not require much effort (such as sharing images or hashtags) are most prominently judged as slacktivist participation. An example of this is the *#BringBackOurGirls* social media campaign popularized on Twitter and Facebook. It aimed to raise awareness of girls' rights in general, and especially to formal education, as well as called for the release of Nigerian schoolgirls kidnapped by Boko Haram (Chiluwa & Ifukor, 2015). The social media campaign urged people to share the hashtag on their social media profiles in order to create a sense of proximity between the audiences and the suffering of children exposed to the mentioned issues. The campaign was described as record-setting in its reach, as it quickly became viral and spread all around the world. It also attracted support from international personalities such as Michelle Obama, the Pope and Malala Yousafazi (Matfess, 2017), which further increases its exposure and popularity. In this case, it is appropriate to note, that while social media is a great tool to spread awareness and is celebrated for its democracy fostering nature, it is also criticized for varying participation impact as "not all participants are created equal" (Jenkins in Kushner, 2016, p. 2). This suggests that some participation may be deemed more important, valuable and heard than others, as in this case, support from socialites had a much bigger impact than participation from *regular* citizens. This type of criticism had also echoed in the recent #MeToo campaign, which had only become popular once it was shared by a Hollywood celebrity, undermining its true origins. Nevertheless, despite its reach, #BringBackOurGirls was seen to be rather useless in solving any issues, and encouraging any *real* action, which resonates the critique of slacktivism. According to Chiluwa & Ifukor (2015), such activism through symbolic action can only be considered useful if participants follow up their digital participation with more practical, *real* political actions offline.

2.5. Giving audience a voice

Young people's political and civic participation is considered to be crucial for the future of democracy (Leyva, 2017). While researchers are often pessimistic about the outcomes of participation in social media campaigns, it receives a lot of scholarly attention and encouragement (Livingstone, 2013). For example, research focuses on motivations for participation in social media campaigns for social change (Hwang & Kim, 2015; Kende et al., 2016; Zuckerman, 2014) and aims to identify relationships between civic engagement and social context such as education (Egerton, 2002) or exposure to social networking sites (Leyva, 2017). Yet, audience research often lacks the considerations of audience's motivations to participate and explore how the participants themselves would understand and evaluate their participation. Audience research tends to focus on "number crunching of attitudes reflected through Likert scales" (Brown

in Atkinson, 2006 p.150-151), rather than allowing participants to rightfully reflect on the subjective matter of opinions, meaning-making of media texts and motivations for its consumption.

A popular approach to traditional audience research, and specifically motivations for participation is the previously mentioned Uses & Gratifications (U&G) tradition. U&G examines motivations for media use, by focusing on the agency of the user to a high extent. Yet, it ignores questions of ideology, failing to place the audience in larger socioeconomic and cultural contexts (Moores, 2000), which can further be seen as a form of objectification. Another possible shortcoming of this approach is its reliance on audience 'self-reporting' (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998) through research methods such as surveys or Likert-scales.

These methods raise the question of credibility of people's answers, depending on their motivations. In general, respondents are not only motivated by the desire to provide accurate results, but are also commonly seeking consistency, self-enhancement and self-presentation. Aside from conscious motivations, people are also often subject to self-deception and memory bias when self-reporting. Face to face interviews are also a form of self-reporting, which can be affected by self-consciousness, memory, rapport and transference (Paulhus & Vazire, 2007). However, in comparison to interviews, self-reporting scales and surveys cannot provide valuable context, as they do not allow the users to express in-depth reflection on the possible meaning and motivations behind social media use. Since research on participatory audiences deals with experiences of living in a mediated society, the need for empirical research, which inquiries into "people's everyday lives [revealing] how they can surprise, resist or contradict expectations" (Livingstone, 2013, p. 27) is evident. Therefore, despite the possible shortcomings, in-depth, face-to-face interviews are considered the best fitting method for this thesis to study audiences and their participation.

I take inspiration from critical perspectives of audience research, specifically Feminist research tradition, which takes audience agency, subjectivity and position in society into account. While the classic research within cultural studies is rather outdated, it illustrates a similar struggle of fighting the objectification of audiences, as I intend to throughout this research. The aim of my research is to gather rich qualitative data, by allowing the participants to reflect on their thought processes regarding participation in social media campaigns, their motivations, intentions and the like. This can help to create a clearer standpoint on the ambiguity of perspectives on digital participation and thus, advance this discussion.

Overview of audience research tradition and the ambiguity of contrasting perspectives on social media campaigns illuminates the problematic nature of over-simplifying audiences and their participation efforts. One of the perceived issues is the use of methods, which objectify the audience by conceptualizing them in various ways based on over-simplified, often quantified data. This highlights the need for methods that can acquire in-depth data, when examining the subjective matters of people's opinions and motivations for participation. While interviews appear to be an apparent choice, it can also be a challenging method. First of all, it must be considered that interview data represents the researcher's "constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to" (Geertz in Moores, 2000, p.62). In other words,

the respondents' reflections and opinions expressed in interviews, are merely a construction of their own and others' perceived reality. Acknowledging this, as preparation for interviews, it is valuable to examine how participants typically reflect on their own, and other people's media behaviour, especially when asked to do so in research.

Feminist studies are an ideal example of an attempt to obtain in-depth data from respondents, by applying non-disruptive, subtle methodologies and consider aspects, which can affect the participants' responses. For example, studies by Hobson (1980,1982) regarding housewives' consumption of mass media through the method of in-depth interviews, reveal how participants' answers can be affected and shaped by their surroundings and the society. More specifically, female respondents often take into account the general societal perceptions and criticism of romance series and their consumption, as an unintellectual medium. Therefore, when asked to reflect on it, they tend to use apologetic or defensive tones, undermining their own pleasures and enjoyment (Moores, 2000). Differences between respondents, as well as general perceptions of what is considered 'right' or 'wrong' participation in relation to social media and social media campaigns can be considered during the interview process, as well as the analysis to reflect on the results. For example, based on these insights, the respondents may be prone to socially-desirable responding (SDR), including focus on self-presentation and impression-management, due to which the interviewees may consciously or subconsciously exaggerate, fake or lie, affecting the data (Paulhus & Vazire, 2007). In this case, it may be foreseen that due to societal preconceptions and expectations, the participants can be reluctant to admit (what's considered) shallow or narcissistic participation on social media, such as sharing *selfies,* or taking part in social media campaigns for ornamental reasons such as feel-good factor. Interviewees are also likely to provide "displaced readings" (Moores, 2000, p.25), where they speculate on how other viewers may interpret the media. This insight relates to the theory of Third Person Effect.

Third Person Effect is a common approach to consider and analyse different interpretations of media effects. It describes subconscious tendencies of participants to describe media as more influential and effective on other people than themselves (Davison, 1983). Third Person Effect originates in a study, which asked journalists to reflect on the influence that newspaper editorials had on the readers. An observed trend was that journalists wouldn't consider themselves to be affected, "but the ordinary reader is likely to be influenced quite a lot" (Davison, 1983, p.2). To an extent, this insight resonates Morley's (1980) findings, that the social position of individuals provides discursive resources, which influence media interpretations and motivations. Possibly, respondents are also likely to reflect on their own media interpretations and behaviours, based on the discursive resources and their societal contexts. In other words, consider themselves less affected by the media if they are educated or work in the field, and therefore have a more critical, in-depth knowledge of how it operates. In this research, it may therefore be valuable to consider the participants' educational and professional backgrounds, as they could play a role in shaping the respondents' reflections and opinions. For example, based on these insights, students with educational background within

media studies may be prone to demonstrate Third Person Effect, by considering themselves to have a more critical perspective on media in general, and therefore not be influenced as much as 'the others'. On the other hand, there are considerable limitations to this theory. For example, it is said to vary between different media issues, and can be affected by external factors such as the amount of media people are exposed to. Therefore, the interviewees will also be asked to reflect on their general social media behaviours and habits in order to be able to evaluate and compare their general background and context.

Additionally, other aspects such as gender or age are likely to shape reflections, opinions and motivations of the respondents. For example, according to Morely (1980), higher social class and education are also likely to provide the discursive tools to produce 'oppositional' meanings to media messages. Thus, higher educated students are likely to critically reflect on social media use and participation. It must be noted, that education does not directly impact interpretation, but provides the discursive resources to do so. Research supports this, indicating a positive relationship between higher education and probability of involvement in civic and political activities of young people (Egerton,2002). Egerton (2002) furthermore suggests, that higher education influences civic engagement, due to social networks and values acquired, which can be considered to be the discursive resources described by Morley (1980). One of the prominent criticisms of Morley's (1980) study is the lack of consideration of participants' typical behaviour and preferences. Thus, I aim to tap into behaviour which is already familiar to the participants by focusing my research on highly-educated young people, who are likely to engage in reflection on their identity and social media behaviour on a regular basis.

3. Research design and rationale

The following section will provide a detailed description of the methodology that was used to answer the following research question: **How do university students reflect on their use of social media as a way to contribute to social media campaigns?**

Based on active audience research, media must be understood in the context of relationships that constitute our lives (Hall, 1973; Morley,1980). In other words, audience interpretation of media texts and motivations for consuming them are influenced by a variety of discursive resources, which shape each individual, making reflections on media behaviour a subjective matter that calls for in-depth data. Furthermore, as implied in Feminist research, audiences are often discriminated due to media behaviour, which is considered invaluable or intellectually not stimulating by societal standards of what is considered 'right' kind of participation. Audiences are thus stripped off their human individuality, socio-economic and cultural context and degraded to a position of a media user, or even an unidentifiable part of a single entity of an audience as exemplified in Media Effects research tradition. Inspired by active audience research and cultural studies, I aim to de-objectify social media users and their participation by allowing them to reflect on their own media behaviour and motivations behind it. Drawing on this, this thesis will use qualitative research, which focuses on the users and their context.

Qualitative research is often based on the assumption that individuals play an active role in constructing social reality, therefore considering human meaning-making and actions meaningful (Boeije, 2010). Previous research in motivations for social media use and participation in social media campaigns is often based on methods, which do not provide contextual, in-depth information and can be considered as objectifying, talking *about* the participants rather than *with* them. This thesis focuses on university students' reflections on their own, and others' participation in social media, in their own words without mapping them into pre-existing scientific categories. In-depth, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews allow the participants to provide data, which is richer and more detailed in meaning compared to quantitative research methods (Babbie, 2011), especially when experiences, opinions or other subjective matters are studied. This makes the interview method suitable for the purpose of this thesis. Nevertheless, this data acquired through this method must be understood as a form of meaning-making and a construction of participants' story and image, rather than assuming a complete and open account of their inner beliefs, as this cannot be measured (Alshenqeeti,2014; Moores, 2000; Yates, 2013).

Social media is a fast-moving technology, which is constantly evolving (Van Dijck, 2009), meaning motivations and reasoning for participation may also vary over time, in line with technology development. Therefore, it can be considered that research within this field may benefit from being updated alongside technological and social evolvement. This thesis focuses on people who participated in at least one social media campaign, and were interested in sharing their thoughts and opinions about their participation, its

impact and motivations. The interviews focused on a 5-year timespan between the years 2013 and 2018, in order to cover a time period including, but not limited to, emergence of popular social media campaigns such as the ALS bucket challenge, #JeSuisCharlie, #BlackLivesMatter or #MeToo. These campaigns represent the nature of social media campaigns, as they differ in objectives varying from solidarity and raising awareness to fundraising, but all are examples of collective efforts centred around a specific issue or cause through the use of social media. This time period is also chosen in order to avoid recall errors, to make sure that the participants can still remember, and meaningfully reflect on their own, or observed network participation in social media campaigns.

3.1.   Recruitment and Sample

Allegedly, social media can support young people's civic, political and social engagements. As research suggests, higher education also has positive influence on civic engagement of young people, due to influence of social networks and values acquired during education (Egerton, 2002). Additionally, education not only increases civic engagement, but also political participation, political knowledge and democratic attitudes and opinions (Hillary, 2005). This indeed seems plausible, as higher education fosters critical thinking, debate and discussion, as well as interest in the society and societal problems. This supports Morley's (1980) insights that indicate how different interpretations and motivations for consuming media are influenced by the discursive recourses the participants are provided with through their social context. Based on this, it can be considered that since higher educated students are more likely to participate in political and social engagements and have an increased knowledge on the subject, they may also be prone to participate in discussions regarding politics and social issues.

One of the most prominent shortcomings of Morley's (1980) research was 'producing' his audience (Moores, 2000), rather than examining their cultural preferences and typical media behaviour. In order to avoid this, I focus on university students, based on the previously discussed insights that irrespective of my interviews, this is a group, which is likely to typically engage in political and social engagements and discussions. Thus, the participants will not be asked to reflect on unfamiliar subjects and situations. While university students may be more familiar with in-depth reflections on political participation and social issues, they must be able to do so in the context of social media. Therefore, in order to reflect on participation in social media campaigns, interview participants should also be active on the top three social networking sites in the Western world, which are commonly used for social media campaigns: Facebook, Instagram and Twitter (Statista, 2018b). Figure 1 illustrates the age distribution of active members on the three social media platforms. Thus, I aimed to recruit university students who fall within the age group, that is most active users of social media in the ages of 16-34 years old. Accordingly, due to their discursive resources, university students within this age group may be likely to engage in critical discussion of politics

and social issues, and due to the suggested interest in the subject, possibly also participate in social media campaigns for social change.

	Twitter	Facebook	Instagram
16-24 years	30%	25%	37%
25-34 years	31%	29%	34%

Figure 1: Age distribution of active social media users (Statista, 2014)

It is important to note that active participation, or an active user of social media is defined differently depending on the platform. For example, Facebook defines an active user of the platform as someone who logs into the site and/or participates by liking, posting, sharing, etc. at least once in 30 days. Twitter defines an active user as one who follows at least 30 accounts, and is followed back by at least a third of them (Seek Visibility, 2016). These definitions of active users are considered too broad in the context of this thesis, as they do not ensure to only include individuals capable of in-depth reflection of their own, and others' social media behaviour. As previously mentioned, social media is a rapidly evolving technology and a fast-moving environment. For example, on Facebook, users generate 4 million likes per minute, while 350 million photos are uploaded daily (Smith, 2017). This indicates that to be able to observe social media trends and campaigns, the user must be much more active than suggested by the platforms themselves. Therefore, in this thesis, an active social media user is defined as someone who:

1) has a profile on at least 1 of the mentioned social media platforms
2) logs into their profile at least 3-4 times a week
3) participates in terms of consumption, interaction and/or content production

Additionally, interviewees should have participated in at least one social media campaign during the period of 2013 to 2018. These criteria were used to ensure that the participants can reflect on their participation in social media campaigns, as well as social media use in general, from both– passive and active participation perspectives. The focus of this thesis is on highly educated, young people's reflections on social media use as a way to contribute to social media campaigns. Therefore, this study analysed reflections produced by individuals, who were selected due to their membership in a specific social category and examined how the accounts are patterned, taking into consideration their social context. Interviewees were recruited through non-probability purposive sampling, which included the previously mentioned selection criteria for the participants, based on the purpose of this research. Recruitment took place at Erasmus University, as it is a community that I am part of and have access to, contributing to feasibility of this research. However, this presented a few limitations to the study.

First of all, the study was conducted in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, but since I am an international student, who is not a Dutch speaker, I am part of a different community and context than a Dutch student could be expected to be. This may have had an impact on the sampling technique, as it included extra criteria for the participants, such as proficiency in the English language. Additionally, since I am a part of a media studies community, and had access to these people, I expected that a lot of the participants would originate from this educational discipline. Therefore, an important consideration during recruitment was to balance between people of different types of academic disciplines. More specifically, students in social sciences and humanities programmes, who may have pre-existing assumptions and knowledge about participation on social media and its use for civic engagement purposes. On the other hand, students in the fields such as business or management, who may approach media from less socially analytical, and more business-driven perspectives. While the educational background is not a variable in this research, I attempted to avoid an overrepresentation of media students, as it was expected that they may have different perspectives on media practices.

The first recruitment strategy included a digital call-to-interview poster (specifying particular requirements for participants), which was posted on various university course groups on Facebook (see figure 2). The poster was also printed and hung around the university campus in different buildings in order to attract people from different faculties. This was done with the objective of attracting a balanced number of students from different educational backgrounds.

Figure 2: Call-to-interview poster

However, this strategy did not prove to be efficient, as only one response was obtained. Therefore, it was decided to change the strategy to personal approach. This recruitment strategy consisted of personally approaching people with printed leaflets (a small version of the poster in figure 2). This stage of recruitment took place in the canteen area of Erasmus University, which was likely to include people from a variety of different study disciplines and degrees. On approach, people were asked if they had a few minutes to talk, followed by an introduction of myself and my research. The potential participants were then asked whether they have ever participated in a social media campaign and given some examples to refresh their memory on what constitutes a social media campaign. If so, students were asked if they would be interested in participating in an interview for this research to discuss their thoughts and opinions about it, and asked for their email address where I could contact them with further details of this research and suggestions for possible interview dates and location. In the case when people stated that they did not participate in any social media campaigns, they were asked to share the leaflet with their network. This strategy proved to be more efficient. While the majority of the people stated that they have never participated in any social media campaigns, 12 e-mail addresses were obtained out of approximately 90 people approached on 2 different days. However, only 4 of these replied to the e-mail and agreed to participate in an interview.

Since a sufficient number of participants was not obtained through the two initial recruitment methods, the final strategy included snowball sampling, where I asked the participants and my own network to recruit possible participants for this research. This was done through word of mouth and a post on my own Facebook profile, including the digital poster (seen in figure 2) and a short description of the research and suitable participants. Snowball sampling proved to be the most efficient strategy, leading to the final number of thirteen interview participants, an overview of which can be found in Figure 3. Snowball sampling is criticized for possible sampling bias, due to people's tendency to suggest other participants based on how well they know them, which increases the risk of all test subjects sharing similar characteristics. Due to this, it is difficult to determine representativeness of the sample (Handcock & Gile, 2011). However, in general, the main objective of qualitative research is not to be representative, but to provide in-depth data on a particular phenomenon. Accordingly, the aim of this study is to explore people's reflections on their media use, participation in social media campaigns and thought processes behind it, while identifying any emerging patterns in the data, though not aiming to generalize the results to the population. Since data saturation can be achieved through twelve interviews, where few to none new phenomena are likely to emerge (Guest, Bunce & Giorgioson, 2006), thirteen semi-structured interviews of around 45-70 minutes each was considered sufficient.

Date	Name	Age	Nationality	Education
27.03.18	Amita	23	Napalese	BA International Business Administration
27.03.18	Anna	28	Russian	MA Research in Sociology
09.04.18	Giorgio	23	Italian	MA Strategic Management
09.04.18	Alice	20	French/Dutch	BA International Business Administration
09.04.18	An	22	Chinese/Dutch	BA International Business Administration
10.04.18	Daan	20	Dutch	BA Public Administration (Bestuurskunde)
10.04.18	Paul	20	French	BA International Business Administration
13.04.18	Emma	19	French	BA International Business Administration
16.04.18	Eva	22	French	BA International Business Administration
17.04.18	Marie	21	Austrian	BA International Business Administration
17.04.18	Adam	21	French	BA International Business Administration
19.04.18	Mia	23	Chinese/German	MA Marketing
25.04.18	Robert	22	German	BA International Business Administration

Figure 3: Overview of participants

The final 13 participants consisted of 8 females and 3 males, with an average age of 22 years old. While overrepresentation of females is indicated, gender differences are also observed in social media participation, where females are described to spend more time on social media and in general, participate more actively in comparison to males. More specifically, 68% of women are social media users, spending on average 46min per day on social media, compared to 62% of men using social media 31min per day on average (Hawi & Samaha, 2017, p.577). Based on these insights, it can be assumed that women would also be more likely to observe and thus, participate in social media campaigns. In regards to considerations of my being a part of an international community, it did have some impact on the snowballing technique, which is reflected in the sample. The sample consisted of 8 different nationalities, among which, there was only one fully Dutch participant. While a range of nationalities in a small sample threatens representativeness of the results, this is not the aim of the study. Instead, the variation of participants aids in obtaining a larger variety of interesting perspectives and opinions. Nevertheless, the majority of the interviewees were French (38%), which also created an overrepresentation of this nationality. The reason for this may be the large French community at the university and the use of snowball sampling technique. Also, one of the criterion was participation in at least one social media campaign, and one of the most popular and rather recent campaigns was changing one's Facebook profile picture after the Paris terrorist attacks of 2015, which was especially common among the French citizens.

Another important aspect to consider, was the participants' education. While this study focuses on university students in general, I acknowledge that some students may have answered differently due to their educational background, which is reflected on in the analysis of results. It was expected that due to my own position in the media studies community and the use of snowball sampling technique, the majority of the

participants will have a similar background. However, the sample mainly included participants from business, economics and management backgrounds, the majority of which consisted of bachelor students from International Business Administration study (61%), among others in strategic management and marketing disciplines. Only 1 participant was part of a study (Research Master), due to which, she was expectedly going to reflect on social media and social media behaviour in different, possibly more critical ways. Yet, interestingly, it appeared that education is not a strong determinant, and not the only discursive resource that influences people's opinions and reflections on social media and participation. Alongside education, many participants expressed a variety of humanitarian and cultural interests, and in many cases, did not base their thoughts and perspectives on educational grounds. Instead, age was described as a characteristic, which strongly affects one's behaviour on social media.

3.2. Interviews

I considered research attempts and strategies to minimize researcher disruption during engagement with the respondents in pursuit of credible and authentic data prior to the interviews. Originating in Ethnographic Studies, the aim was to understand experiences of media consumers by engaging with them in "situational contexts in which media are used and interpreted" (Moores, 1993, p.32). For example, Lull's (1980) social uses of television study aimed to minimize the disruptive role of the researcher by taking part in family activities on multiple occasions such as doing house chores, dinners, entertainment. This type of research minimizes disruption of typical family activities and allows the test subjects to become familiar with the researcher, and possibly, in time, forget about his role and presence. In this way, biases such as self-presentation, impression management and self-consciousness are more likely to be avoided, or minimized.

In this research, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted in informal, public spaces, in an attempt to provide a more relaxed atmosphere than that of a laboratory setting. I chose surroundings, where young people are likely to use social media, mainly cafés in the city centre, or on university campus, depending on the interviewee's preference. Preferably, university campus was to be avoided, in order to make the participant feel more comfortable, relaxed and not distracted by university-related thoughts and surroundings. Yet, at times, it was the interviewee's preferred location due to time and distance constraints. The interviews were conducted in a conversational manner, but followed a controlled and balanced structure (Hermanowicz, 2012) to provide data relevant to the research question. To ensure this, an interview guide including topics of discussion, questions and probes was prepared prior to the interview and can be found in Appendix A. Additionally, prior to the interview the participants were asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix B) informing them of what topics the interview will cover, as well as their rights and conditions during the interview. Furthermore, the interviewees were requested to sign if they prefer to be fully identifiable in this study. Yet, due to a small number of participants expressing this interest, it was decided to anonymize all data and participants for the sake of consistency in data treatment. This decision was also

based on the fact that names of participants did not contribute with any valuable information. Instead, pseudonyms and participants' profiles (including gender, age, education and nationality) were included, as these aspects could play a role in shaping participants' motivations for participation and general media text readings.

The purpose of the interviews was to get to "the core of people" (Hermanowicz, 2012, p.481), meaning to develop an insightful account of respondents' reflections on their own social media use in general and in relation to social media campaigns. The interview begun with some introductory questions asking the participants about their background, education, age, interests. In this way, I, as the researcher, aimed to show that the participant and their individuality is important for this research, and make them feel comfortable. Additionally, demographic data and information about the participants was seen as potentially valuable in the analysis process, in order to reflect on how/if one's socioeconomic and cultural discursive resources influence opinions and behaviour. Following introduction, the interviewees were asked to discuss their opinions regarding social media in general and personal social media habits such as frequency of use, favourite applications and main motivations. In this way, the interviewees had time to get comfortable with the subject before the in-depth discussion took place. Furthermore, as previously discussed, Third Person Effect and the way people reflect on their media use can be affected by factors such as the amount and type of media people consume. Therefore, the objective of the first part of the interview was also to obtain a general idea of the participants and their media consumption, which was taken into account during analysis.

The second part of the interview was based on the individual's social media behaviour in terms of passive and active participation and motivations behind it. One of the main key points of the interview was to discuss the prominent social media campaigns, which acted as a starting point to opening the discussion about participation for social change. If the participants were not actively engaged in social media campaigns, their general views on such participation were in focus. Questions regarding participation were loosely based on assumptions about participation found in research, where the amount of participation can be categorized as either active or passive, motivations for participation in social media campaigns can be described as mindless, superficial or more meaningful to the participants. The interview focused on motivations and reflections on possible effects and consequences that result from participation. This approach touched upon similar themes that are found in evaluation of audience participation found in research, allowing to examine how the participants' opinions and reflections compare to existing theory and research.

3.3.   Data Analysis

The interviews were recorded using an iPhone 7. The recordings were transcribed in detail in Microsoft Word, including utterances and laughter, as well as pauses signified with an ellipsis, and emphasis on particular words, which were underlined. Inclusion of both verbal and non-verbal interaction helps to

shape meaning and offers a possibly more accurate interpretation of the data (Bailey, 2008). Transcripts were used for qualitative content analysis. Qualitative content analysis reduces data, is flexible and follows clear guidelines, providing a systematic way of analysing meaning in qualitative data (Schreier, 2013). This can be considered a suitable method to make meaning of semi-structured interviews consisting of people's reflections in their own words, where a large amount of data was anticipated.

This thesis aimed to identify patterns in people's reflections of their social media participation in order to examine in what ways it is linked to existing theory and research, making thematic analysis an appropriate method. In order to ensure validity and reliability of the data, all transcripts were printed on paper. The printed transcripts were used throughout all steps of the analysis, as they allow for an easier, constant overview and comparison of data. Thematic analysis followed three steps- open coding, axial coding and selective coding, which consist of segmenting and reassembling the data (Boeije, 2010).

For the open coding stage, the data was examined by reading and re-reading the transcripts line-by-line, in order to identify meaningful fragments in relation to the research question of this thesis. Meaningful fragments consisted of characterization of social media behaviour of oneself and others, motivations, experiences of participation and perceived impact. The identified fragments were highlighted and assigned a brief code to describe the meaning of the fragment. The codes consisted of criteria for participation, perceived impact, evaluation of other people's participation, among others. Following this, the transcripts were re-read in order to ensure that no meaningful fragments have been missed.

The axial coding stage consisted of reviewing the codes created, which were compared and merged when appropriate to create themes. Axial coding results in identification of the most prominent patterns and important themes in the data (Boeije, 2010). More specifically, during this stage, similarities between existing audience research, overviewed theory and interviewees' reflections about participation in social media campaigns began to emerge. Theory overviewed in chapter two informed this stage of data analysis in terms of defining participants' motivations and participation as passive or active choices, as well as evaluating to what extent the revealed motivations support positivist and critical perspectives on social media campaigns. Furthermore, throughout the analysis, it was important to consider the recruited sample of university students and ways in which they demonstrate the discursive resources they use to decode meanings of social media participation and what implications this has for this research. This stage also confirmed some of the expectations of how the participants reflect on media behaviour (e.g. through Third Person Effect). Following axial coding, a document including the themes and all fragments, which relate to the particular theme, was created. Each interview was assigned a colour, in order to later be able to identify which fragment has been said by which interviewee, in case interesting connections or contradictions emerged.

The final stage - selective coding consisted of identifying, naming and defining the core themes, which would encompass the underlying meaning within the data. The repeating concepts identified during the

previous stage were examined and compared in order to find relationships between the themes and describe larger theoretical concepts to answer the research question (Boeije, 2010). The two meta themes that emerged closely resonated the motivation for participation in traditional social movements, based on cost versus benefit perspective (Klandermans, 2004). Furthermore, themes regarding participation based on perceived impact of the campaign were informed by Klandermans (2004) description of 'instrumentality' as motivation to participate in social movements, while the condition of low physical effort the campaign should require resonated ideas of slacktivism. Based on theoretical criteria of what constitutes active and passive or 'right' and 'wrong' participation, evidence of both positivist and critical perspectives emerged, illustrating the paradoxical relationship between motivations of self-interest and public good.

4. Results

The following section will overview the gathered results of this study. The section will begin with findings regarding interviewees' general perceptions and thoughts about social media use, in order to provide some context to participation in social media campaigns. Following this, an overview of themes in relation to social media campaigns will be discussed in detail.

One of the common themes among the interviewees was the power of social media over the audience - to influence thoughts, opinions, discourage critical thinking by 'feeding' certain information based on algorithms. This type of social media power was also commonly discussed in terms of the privacy scandal of Cambridge Analytica. Yet, while interviewees appear to be aware of the dangers, they still use social media, and mostly do not consider to delete their profiles, because perceived value is larger than fear of the possible dangers. In a way, social media use becomes considered in terms of cost vs. benefits perspective. The value in general is seen as a way to stay connected to their peers, advantages of quick information dissemination be it for informative or educational reasons. While social media is often seen as a democracy-fostering tool, it is also argued to be an addictive technology, which is developed to be increasingly "seductive" (Hawi & Samaha 2017, p.583), disarming users of their agency and autonomy. This is an insight that was also commonly addressed by the interviewees. Therefore, the large number of social media audience remains, which is what makes it a powerful agenda setting tool. This also provides implications that audiences are not as autonomous and active in their social media behaviour and use, as often implied in optimistic perspectives. Nevertheless, it must be considered that when discussing interviewees and their reflections in this section, the insights are based on a group of a particular social membership. More specifically, university students, who in general are considered to have more knowledge in the political spectrum (Hillygus, 2005), but are also privileged with access to discursive resources that shape their in-depth understanding and awareness of social media and its use from a variety of perspectives. Therefore, these reflections cannot be considered as generalizable to the larger public.

Continuous immersion in social media despite its potential dangers that higher-educated people appear to be aware of, leads to blurred lines between life on social media and reality. First of all, since it is used as a way to stay connected, real human interactions become affected. Interviewees express the concern that in real life social situations people are occupied by their mobile devices and social media, which highlights privileged access to not only symbolic, but also physical resources of this particular group. The excess use of social media affects the ability to build real connection and relationships with others, making it hard to discuss difficult subjects, or even start a conversation. Increasing importance placed on social media, also increases mediatization of other aspects of life. For example, the interviewees express the fact that their social media profiles are 'obviously' checked by potential employers, which requires curation of content on one's social media profile. Due to this, increased importance is also placed on building one's social media

identity. Social media makes it easy to construct an image of one's life, and due to the need for acceptance users attempt to create as positive image as possible. In this way, social media fosters superficiality.

Today, social media places pressure on young people to appear as perfect citizens, especially through their social media identities. This study found some evidence similar to slacktivism in social media use for social change. Yet, it also indicates a development of social media's effects on people and ways it manipulates the participants to strive for gratifications and an attractive online identity. On the other hand, the participants had also discussed, though indirectly, that while online participation can seem physically effortless, the increased importance of one's online identity means that participation in political campaigns can pose risks to one's reputation. Furthermore, social media environment is public, thus, expressing one's views, concerns or otherwise participating in a campaign can add responsibility and act as a commitment. Therefore, in terms of the debate regarding agency and autonomy, it appears that the relationship between social media and the users is much more complex than often suggested in current research.
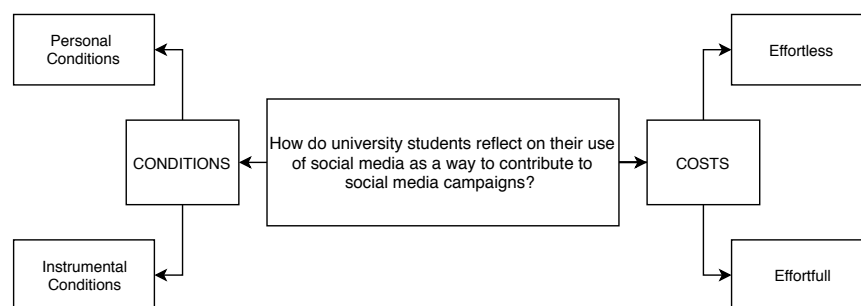
Figure 4: Overview of the meta-themes and main themes of the results

Overall, when it comes to social media use and participation in social media campaigns, the economic concept of costs and benefits appears to be an appropriate way to approach it. Klandermans (2006) describes this as Instrumentality, where people examine the costs and benefits of participation in terms of effort and the perceived impact they can have, based on which, they make the decision whether to participate. The costs are mainly recognized in terms of time and physical effort, i.e. whether you need to create and post a video, attend an event or the like. On the other hand, mental effort and reputation risks are also discussed, though indirectly, which suggests that participation is not completely effortless and does not always come at a low cost, as suggested by slacktivism critique. Nevertheless, participants of this study are willing to participate without much concern about the mental effort it takes and the social risks it can have, which may also imply that motivations for participation are not merely based on self-interest. Interestingly, motivations for participation in social movements in general reflect a lot of the insights provided by the participants regarding taking part in social media campaigns. However, interviews revealed that perceived motivations for participation, impact and thought process are much more complex than a few distinct categories

suggested in current research, such as slacktivism or civic cultures. While numerous themes can be identified, they are often interlinked with each other.

Overall, the most important themes that emerged in people's reflections on participation in social media campaigns fall within the categories of conditions and costs for participation. Conditions for participation are categorized as personal motivations and perceived instrumentality of the campaign. Costs of participation are divided into effortless and effortful aspects of participation. The themes and connections between them will be discussed in the following section, an overview can be seen in figure 4.

Conditions for participation

Conditions for participation denote the criteria the social media campaign must meet in order for the participant to take part in it. Conditions are categorized in terms of personal and instrumental categories. Personal conditions describe what individual factors affect the decision to take part in a social media campaign. Instrumental conditions denote characteristics of the campaign, what kinds of perceived impact participation can have, and how it affects the decision to take part in it. An overview of this meta-theme can be seen in figure 5 below.
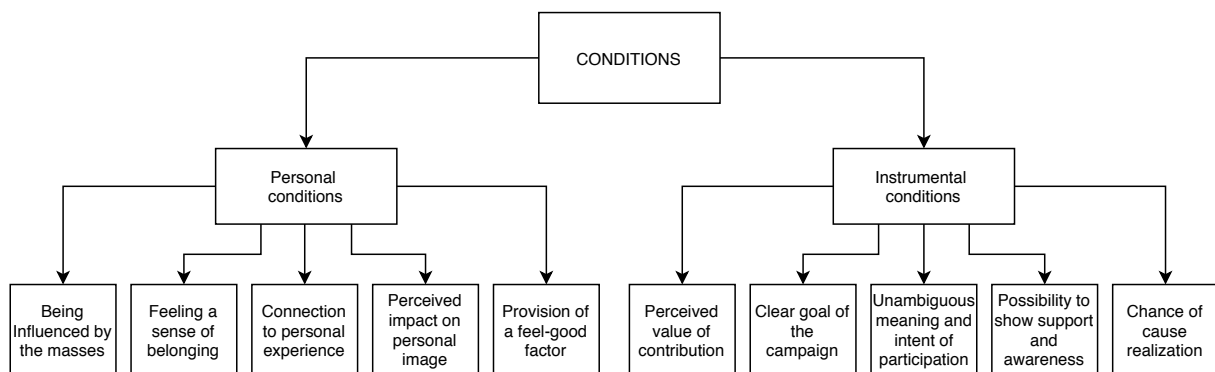
Figure 5: Overview of the first meta-theme, its main themes and sub-themes

4.1. Personal conditions

*"The more I'm involved personally the more likely I would be to post something" (*Adam, 21).

This insight reflects a general perspective of interviewees, who often mentioned the words closeness, relevance and personal value, experiences, and interest to describe what kind of campaigns encourage them to participate. In general, motivation to participate in social media campaigns appears to be very much influenced by personal interest and relevance. People are motivated by the implications that their participation would communicate to their network, and are to an extent affected by participation of their peers observed in their network. Furthermore, participants are also motivated by the feelings and

implications that participation can have on them individually. For example, feeling rewarded and satisfied, or a sense of belonging to a larger group and society as a whole can act as motivators. This resonates Chouliaraki's (2008, 2010) ideas of post-humanitarian era, where people are generally driven by self-interest and are mainly concerned with happenings within their close surroundings, distancing themselves from personally 'irrelevant', distant suffering and issues. This also highlights the need for strategies to produce pity and a sense of responsibility in people (Chouliaraki, 2008). Types of personal motivations will be overviewed below.

4.1.1. Being influenced by the masses

The majority of interviewees mentioned that when they perceive a trend of participation, they often consider that perhaps they should "*go with the flow*" (Alice, 20) or "*jump on the train, because it seems like a very good cause*" (Anna, 28). The use of these expressions indicates a thoughtless, passive behaviour to follow the masses, without paying much effort and consideration. This type of participation resonates the Herding Effect, where people tend to behave 'automatically', which often constitutes simply following popular behaviour. This behaviour is usually observed in people who have little interest or are not too concerned with the issue at hand (Ölander & Thøgersen, 2014). It indicates a passive audience, who participates thoughtlessly, without questioning the intent and implications their participation may bring, and thus supposedly, without actual concern or interest in the cause. Furthermore, these insights appear to contradict the proposed relationship between social position of the interviewees, more specifically higher educated students, and political knowledge, engagement and concern with social issues (Egerton, 2002; Hillygus, 2005).

Nevertheless, motivations of following the masses is not always passive and thoughtless. Eva (22) indicates that she participated in #MeToo following the example of her sister, as it reassured "*that [she] wouldn't be the only one doing it. um… (…) It reassured [her] in saying okay, yeah, many, many girls are doing it and it's an important thing*", while Giorgio (23) contributed with similar insights that he sometimes follows the example of people that he "*deem[s] reputable*". These insights reflect the idea that people are increasingly more concerned with the kind of image or implications their participation can have on their identity. Therefore, participation observed in their network gives confidence regarding both – the importance of the cause, as well as the implications it can have on their image, meaning that such participation cannot be denounced if everyone participates. According to Dahlgren (2009), shared identity and communities online have persuasive powers to attract more participants, especially in social media environments where network consists of people identified as friends. Social media campaigns personalize the issues by linking them to a face of real participants, which contributes to its persuasiveness. This may also explain the trust people tend to attach to their peers online, therefore, following their example. In accordance to Dahlgren's idea of shared

identities and communities, some interviewees expressed that they follow the observed, popular network behaviour, because they want to be part of the group:

> I remember like scrolling for like half an hour and you would only see people changing Facebook profile pictures, which was massive as well. I think I ended up doing, yeah, because a lot of people were doing it, and, and… I just wanted to be part of that group.
>
> <div align="right">(Paul, 20)</div>

The desire for a sense of belonging and participating in a campaign in order to join a group that one affiliates with was a popular motivator for participation. This is overviewed in further detail in the following section.

4.1.2. Feeling a sense of belonging

One of the important motivators of participation in a traditional social movement is described as identity. In this case, identity describes people motivated to participate when they feel affiliated with the group of people that is concerned (Klandermans, 2004). When reflecting about the use of social media for social change, interviewees expressed a similar perspective as suggested by Klandermans (2004), stating that participation in social media campaigns provides a feeling of community and a sense of belonging to a group. This was used as an important factor in explaining the decision-making process to participate. For example, Paul (20) reflects on the choice to participate in profile picture change with a French flag filter, because he felt that he "*wanted to be part of that group. And uh… cause I think that's what really brings you the, the, yeah, the satisfaction. Being part of a group that shares the same belief, the same grie*f".   In this way, Paul expands on his previous indication that participation was not a way to passively 'go with the flow' as suggested by some of the other participants, but had a deeper meaning. More specifically, participation created a sense of belonging and inclusion to a group, which shares the same feelings and experiences, and consequently provided a sense of satisfaction in the difficult period. This he also supported by the fact that in his opinion, participation in this campaign was only logical by those who were French, or touched by the events in another sense of proximity. This insight regarding bigger concern for issues that are close to the spectator in a geographical or cultural sense again reinforces Chouliaraki's (2008, 2010) ideas of distant suffering. This idea is further emphasized by Mia (23), who discusses that she would not participate in a social media campaign, such as the rainbow filter flag on Facebook to show support because:

> I'm not part of the LGBT community so I didn't really see the reason that I needed to post, however, I do see why the community wants to post. (…), it doesn't really have a lot of personal meaning to me so I don't think that I should post. If my parents were LGBT or if I was LGBT, I definitely think I would have posted.
>
> <div align="right">(Mia, 23)</div>

On the other hand, one of the interviewees also discussed that the sense of belonging that social media campaigns can provide may not only create a sense of satisfaction for the participant, but also have positive effects, especially on people who are struggling to feel accepted as part of the society. For example, according to Amita (23), *"when people see that there are other people with them, plenty of other people who accept them, then things like that [e.g. suicide] can be prevented"*. This perspective highlights the importance of feeling of acceptance and belonging for human mental welfare and therefore, suggests that anyone showing support can make a difference and possibly lead to positive impact. It also indicates a sense of awareness and concern with certain social issues, which can be influenced by the discursive resources, such as cultural background or education that fosters political and social concerns and knowledge.

Marie (21) sees social media campaigns as a good way to express one's views, build communities and feel a sense of connection with those who think in a similar way:

> I think just the feeling of belonging. If you see that like your friends think the same way, you are kind of like, you know that's my in-group, that's the people I like, that's why I like them, because we think alike, stuff like that.
>
> (Marie, 21)

In a way, the majority of these insights can justify the previously discussed tendency to follow the behaviour of the masses or even express personal views only when they are in accordance to those of the majority's (Ölander & Thøgersen, 2014). Yet, On the other hand it also suggests that participants often have a varying understanding of the campaign and its purpose. For example, while some see it as a way to show support and make people feel accepted, even if they themselves do not belong to the community, others indicate that participation is only logical by those who are affected by the cause. This suggests an active audience, who, possibly due to their social membership, in this case higher education, have the ability to produce their own, often 'oppositional' meanings to media texts. Motivation to participate when affected by the cause also relates to the condition of feeling a sense of closeness and relevance to the campaign and the cause that is addressed, which will be analysed further in the following section.

4.1.3. Connection to personal experience

As previously indicated, motivation to participate in social media campaigns appears to be very much influenced by personal interest and relevance to participants' own lives. One of the reoccurring conditions mentioned by the interviewees is whether the campaign deals with issues that they have experienced or otherwise feel a certain connection to. While a sense of belonging described the condition of feeling affiliated with the people participating in the campaigns and thus, creating communities, in this case, people mention that they participate if they feel affiliated with the issue at hand. Eva (22) who was motivated by participation of her sister, also discusses that the issue felt important due to its close presence in her life.

It's something that I'm concerned with every day, like I'm, yeah just as I said I don't feel safe every day and stuff, um… and it's something that is <u>so</u> present in our society uh… yeah, the fact just that women are underestimated and the fact that they can be seen as vulnerable compared to men or something, things like that I really don't find it right. So, I think it's because it was touching me way more personally than other things.

<div align="right">(Eva, 22)</div>

Again, the interviewee expresses that experience and affiliation with the issue creates a sense of urgency and responsibility to do something about it. However, an interesting insight is the fact that despite being French, Eva did not participate in any of the campaigns following terrorist attacks in France, where supposedly a sense of affiliation would be present due to her nationality and background, which was also previously implied by Paul. Indeed, in general, motivation for participation in this campaign was often described by other interviewees through reasoning such *as "one of my best friends is French"* (An, 22), *"I know so many people and they all live there [in France]"* (Anna, 28), *"since I'm French"* (Alice, 20), *"I knew people who were in Paris at that time"* (Robert, 22). In accordance to this, Eva also discusses that:

If one of my close, one of the closer people that I know had been attacked uh… during the terrorist attacks, maybe I would have changed something, maybe not, I'm not sure if I would have, maybe it's because I felt more close to the #MeToo thing.

<div align="right">(Eva, 22)</div>

While to an extent agreeing with the other participants' motivation to participate if they feel closely related to the issue or the goal the campaign represents, this statement also highlights the individuality of people. Evidently, definitions of what close affiliation means to different people vary, as do participants' understanding of the campaigns, their purpose and perceived impact. These insights resonate Morley's (1980) research about differences among people of different social positions, their readings and interpretations of media texts and processes of meaning-making, which can be influenced through a variety of discursive resources. Yet, the sense of urgency and responsibility felt only in the case of issues that the individual feels closely related to also reinforces the ideas of post-humanitarianism and individualism. The human nature to be concerned with wellness of oneself or those in close proximity can to an extent be seen as an indication of narcissistic behaviour. This is further reinforced by the increasing concern of one's image and identity online, and how it is perceived by others.

4.1.4. Perceived impact on personal image

The interviewees expressed their awareness that social media is a public space, as well as that the boundaries between online and offline self are increasingly blurred. Since one's social media profile can increasingly affect their real life, the interviewees continuously mentioned how they attempt to build, curate

and shape their online identity. Online identity and how the participants' profiles, and in turn, they are perceived by others is also a determinant in the types of campaigns they are willing to participate in, as well as to what extent. One of the determining factors is what kind of action the campaign requires and what perceived implications this may have on the participant's social media identity.

> The Ice Bucket Challenge or some other, yeah… I deem a bit silly in my opinion, but that's my opinion. I would never take part in the Ice Bucket Challenge, because of the, you know the implication that it has on your personal profile and what other people think that you look like.
>
> (Giorgio, 23)

As exemplified by Giorgio's statement, the Ice Bucket Challenge requires too 'daring' and exposed action of "*showing, my nudity while I throw on myself a bucket of ice*" (Giorgio, 23), which can, according to him, have some negative effects on his reputation both online and offline. While this concerns the type of physical action and exposure as a determinant for participation, some of the other participants discuss the unforeseen implications that the meaning behind participation in social media campaigns can have. For example, Paul (20) describes that he refrained from posting #JeSuisCharlie, as he was *"scared that if I shared it people would like misinterpret why I was sharing it"*. This concerns the controversial and political ideas that participation in social media campaigns can communicate, and the danger of its meaning being misunderstood. The reason for this is that social media campaigns often deal with complex issues, but are simplified to small actions such as sharing a hashtag or a photo, often without further explanation and debate. In both cases, whether dealing with reputation or controversial political meanings, these reflections may be especially relevant for university students. The use of social media for further career prospects is becoming increasingly important among university students, which places high significance on their online identity and the 'right' type of participation. Additionally, as previously discussed, the goal of the campaign and the meaning that participation can convey, are sometimes understood differently among participants. Therefore, when it comes to controversial subjects, participants may fear the possible judgements and risks their participation can have on their reputation, depending on how the others interpret its meaning. Either way, these insights may not be as applicable to people of other social memberships, who, as an example, may not be as engaged in social media use for professional purposes.

Another interesting insight is the suggestion of positive implications that participation in a social media campaign can have on one's personal image.

> I think definitely there's some online identity that goes into it, if you want to seem like a charitable person or seem like a good person, or compassionate person, I think posting one of these can definitely help with that image. It's like I want, I like humour, I like to consider myself as rather humorous so I post things that a rather funny, because that's kind of who I think I am in life, who I am in real life and who I'd like to be perceived as yeah on the internet.
>
> (Mia, 23)

This reflection indicates that participation in social media campaigns always bears some type of charitable meaning or a statement for social change. Therefore, it can help to create a positive image of the participant, who shows their concern with social and political issues. On the other hand, these implications also illustrate the superficiality of social media, and indicate that the participants may not always participate due to interest in the cause, but merely, or to an extent, out of self-interest. Participation based on one's concern of the implication it may have on their image or reputation can be judged as narcissistic and self-involved behaviour. Nevertheless, the responsibility for this may not be completely attached to this particular generation and group of people, as suggested by slacktivist perspectives, but rather the evolving technological environment. The emergence of digital age and social media puts increasing pressure on the right participation, as people are constantly under 'social surveillance' of others (Marwick, 2012), including employers, who increasingly use online information in order to determine whether a prospective employee is a good fit for the company (Berkelaar & Buzzanell, 2010). These insights again may be especially applicable to privileged, higher-educated young people with the technological and educational resources, which may put additional pressures on their participation.

4.1.5. Provision of feel-good factor

According to some interviewees, humans constantly seek acceptance from their peers. Therefore, many are motivated to participate, or feel good about participating, when their peers acknowledge it through comments, *likes* or following their example and participating as well. Interviewees discuss two types of satisfaction achieved through participation in social media campaigns – on the one hand, feeling a sense of acceptance and satisfaction when their participation is acknowledged by their peers through comments and likes.

> We know (…) all the likes and everything they actually create dopamine right, so you're actually satisfied when you see the number of likes, which is true.
>
> (Paul, 20)

> It's like social media is kind of, I think it's dopamine that when you get likes, you know it generates dopamine. And dopamine is also what you get when you drink alcohol, and it's also what you get when you take drugs.
>
> (Adam, 21)

Multiple participants mentioned a good feeling when their participation online is acknowledged by their peers. However, Paul and Adam argument that this type of satisfaction is achieved through release of dopamine in the brain, which provides a similar feeling to drinking alcohol or using drugs. Indeed, the relationship between dopamine and use of social media is a subject that has been explored and is still being discussed (Parkin, 2018). An interesting insight that these statements provide is a reinforcement of Morley's

(1980) suggests that different discursive resources do indeed influence people's interpretations and readings of media text. In this case, higher education seems to play a significant role, as both students appear to be knowledgeable of the more technical, in-depth information about psychological effects social media has on the human brain. On the other hand, this can also indicate a shortcoming of snowball sampling in this research, which meant that some of the participants recruited their acquaintances. This is the case between Adam and Paul, meaning that the reason they offer reflections on social media effects in a similar context of dopamine can be due to their prior discussions of the subject or sharing information.

Aside from the satisfaction produced by *likes* and comments, interviewees reflect on the feeling of doing a 'good deed' and a feeling of contributing to the society, following participation in a social media campaign, which also provides a positive feeling.

> Maybe, it might be self um… self um… gratification and stuff you know, I did something good, I did a good deed by doing that. (…) I want people to know about it, I want people to see that I participated.
>
> (Eva, 22)

> Partially I feel a better person somehow by doing this (…) there is something, you feel like you are contributing to something.
>
> (Amita, 23)

The feel-good factor interviewees describe when participating in a social media campaign due to the feeling of contribution to the society, can be seen from two perspectives. On a positive note, it may indicate that the participants cannot be denounced as narcissistic and selfish people, but truly believe that participation in campaigns can make a difference and contribute to some social change. This supports Atkinson's (2006) celebration of social media campaigns and his perception of motivation for participation, which is deeper and more meaningful than individual satisfaction. On the other hand, reflections on feel-good factor as a motivation to participate also loosely resonates the criticism of slacktivism. More specifically, one of the most common arguments from a slacktivism perspective is the fact that participation provides an effortless way to achieve the self-satisfaction that is common in human nature when doing a good deed (Morozov, 2009; Christensen, 2011). Again, these insights highlight the complexity of motivations for participation, as they depend on the multifaceted nature of human beings such as individual socioeconomic and cultural positions.

4.2.   Instrumental conditions

Aside from personal factors, the interviewees expressed that a lot of thought process and decision making regarding participation is based on what kind of impact and value their participation can add to the campaign. This category is based on Klandermans' (2004) instrumentality motivation to participate in social movements, based on the desire to make a change within political or social circumstances. Thus, potential

participants are motivated if the perceived impact they can achieve is at an appropriate cost. In terms of social media campaigns, the interviewees discuss different attributes of social media campaigns and their participation that they use to judge whether their participation can actually contribute to change or make an impact.

4.2.1. Perceived value of contribution

Interviewees expressed the importance of feeling that they can add value to the specific campaign or have an impact through their participation. Often normative ideas about good and impactful participation emerge, such as the responsibility to use one's voting rights or express opinions. However, the political possibilities that small online roles can play are often neglected. The online environment and social media campaigns provide people in certain social positions with ways to push awareness of important issues and even social change among their own circles. Some of the interviewees acknowledged their power to promote awareness or change views within their own network, in this way having an impact, even if on a smaller scale.

> I know, some people in my personal network, for example on Facebook, that have either completely different view on this subject or that just don't necessarily consider or think about it at all…. Um… and I feel like these kind of things, and me posting these things can have, like can actually make them think and think about their personal decision or ideas on the subject so…
>
> (Emma, 19)

Emma reflects on the effort versus impact perspective of participation. According to her, the small effort it takes to post something online and the potential impact it can have even within her network is enough motivation to participate in a campaign. Additionally, one of the advantages of social media environments is seen as the quick dissemination of information and the ability for large numbers of people to participate for a common cause, and in this way, push the political agenda. However, often the excessive participation is seen as demotivation to take part:

> If it is already out there, and everyone is sharing it so, then there's no need to share it for me, because all the people in my circle, they maybe shared it a hundred times, so there's no reason for me to add up to it.
>
> (An, 22)

An does not see any value in participation, when she observes that most of her network had already taken part. This is an interesting reflection, as it defies the common trend of following the masses and wanting to become part of the online community joining in on a common cause. It also implies a different understanding of social media power, as often, the advantage of social media campaigns is seen as its ability to be reinforced through the large number of participants. Additionally, social media is often praised as a

tool, which provides everyone with the same ability to participate and express their opinion. In this way, social media campaigns are often celebrated for their ability to foster democracy. However, some interviewees expressed the concern that they do not consider their participation as valuable to the movement as that of the 'elites', supporting the idea that "not all participants are created equal" (Jenkins in Kushner, 2016, p.2).

> Definitely there's a lot of impact, especially because it's a lot of influential people and Hollywood that's posting it. I mean we saw, the golden globes, most of the women wore black and that's already a lot of… (…) yeah, I don't think that my participation would add a lot to it, no…
>
> (Mia, 23)

This perspective contrasts that discussed by Emma, and again supports the extent to which people are seen to have individual perspectives and readings of the media. While on the one hand, people express the impact they attempt to have on their own networks as valuable, on the other, participants do not see the value in their participation due to their less 'powerful' socioeconomic position in society. This emphasizes the hierarchy in the society, which determines not only people's readings and interpretation of media messages, but also the physical and symbolic resources they have to make an impact. In the case of this study, it may also be considered that the participants are privileged with in-depth knowledge and the tools to participate in societal and political contexts, which may not be attainable to some of the other members of society.

4.2.2. Clear goal of the campaign

Social media campaigns are often described as a way to package a complex issue into a smaller idea, which can be processed by humans whose attention span is increasingly short (V. Chaudhri, personal communication, April 10, 2018). However, this means that sometimes social media campaigns become overly simplistic in terms of the cause, resulting in the goal it aims to achieve getting lost. One of the campaigns, which was mentioned by the majority of participants in this context is the Ice Bucket Challenge. It was criticized for the overly distracting, fun challenge, which led to the actual cause behind it to be forgotten, indicating that higher educated students place value in the perceived social impact of the campaign over its entertainment value. This resonates Morley's (1980) research *Nationwide*, which indicates that middle-class students express preference of informative content, while working-class students prefer entertaining aspects of the TV show. Thus, it must be considered that social position of participants in this study may indeed play a significant role in their reflections on participation in social media campaigns.

In general, while people could discuss participation in the campaign, most were unable to name the specific cause it aimed to raise awareness about – ALS disease. Interviewees admitted that they didn't *"actually remember which social issue was behind it"* (Marie, 21) and that in general, they were not sure if *"people actually thought of this illness in the end"* (Eva, 22) when participating, due to its *"confusing call to*

action" (Mia, 23). Based on this, the interviewees implied that one of the conditions for participation is if the purpose of the campaign is clear. Some reflected on their previous participation in campaigns and the unclear goal behind it, implying that they would not participate again, while others say that despite participating, they are not sure what the campaign actually aims to lead to.

> But uh… I wouldn't do it again, definitely, I wouldn't do it again. (…) why would I do it? I have trouble justifying why would I do it so… [laughs]. But uh, I wouldn't do it again, cause I'm just, because I don't think there would be much use.
>
> (Adam, 21)

> In a sense this hashtag [#MeToo] makes me… it upsets me in a way. I know that it's a good cause, but I'm thinking where's society going with this me-too feminism thing? You know, because you don't want to be in a sterile environment in an office, where you cannot talk to each other, when people are afraid because anything could be taken with this implicit assumption that someone is hitting on you.
>
> (Anna, 28)

> A lot of people participate, but don't really get where it's coming from, really investigate what they are doing and then the actions will spread and nobody knows the head message, the headline. It's like you're reading a newspaper and people only read the headline and don't get any further into the… so this is kind of a problem I see in those actions.
>
> (Daan, 20)

Evidently, interviewees admit to participating, but are not completely sure of reasoning or impact behind it, as suggested by Adam and Anna. This also reflects Robert's opinion, that people tend to participate superficially, without analyzing the implications and impact of their participation. These insights also suggest that participation is motivated by factors of self-interest, such as entertainment and being part of the group, among others previously discussed, rather than due to interest in the cause. This type of participation can be judged as a sign of narcissism, a passive audience or slacktivists, who do not put much consideration into their actions. On the other hand, it must also be considered, that even participation motivated by self-interest contributes to reaching a large audience and has the potential to raise awareness, even if on a smaller scale. Also, it appears that this seemingly thoughtless participation can be a result of how the campaign itself is structured, focusing on different types of social change and actions required of the participants.

For example, people were able to discuss campaigns which focused on an issue that had a big impact on their life, such as the Paris terrorist attacks, in much greater detail. In this context, the Ice Bucket Challenge was judged for its very specific focus on a single disease and distracting nature, requiring participation that is focused on the participant and entertaining action, rather than the charitable cause. On the other hand, to an extent, the differences observed in the level of detail in interviewees' reflections about the various campaigns can also be attributed to possible recall bias. For example, the Ice Bucket Challenge took place in 2014,

while the campaigns focusing on French terrorist attacks took place in 2015. Nevertheless, the importance of a clear goal of a campaign is also emphasized by Mia, who stated that:

> For me it makes more sense for example, if there was a natural disaster somewhere, and it really damaged a country, and that country needs a lot of aid, you know like food wise, money wise, and all of … and… worker wise. And then you post, and then you kind of uh… make it aware to people (…) we need, we need shelter, we need food, we need people to come help, move the sand bags and stop the flooding; and this for me makes more sense because there's a direct action that I can take, whereas pray for Paris, I can't, I can't really take a direct action.
>
> (Mia, 23)

Mia tends to focus on the impact and contribution that can be achieved by the participant, therefore she argues that a campaign, which does not clearly state the possible outcome of your participation can cause confusion and be perceived as less valuable.

4.2.3. Unambiguous meaning and intent of participation

In accordance to the previous discussion, since social media campaigns are so simplistic and usually involve small effort requiring action such as posting a hashtag or a photo, there is also a high chance that they can be misinterpreted or have multiple, ambiguous meanings to different people. While interviewees appear to be motivated to participate in order to show support, express their opinion and build their identity online, they also express the concern that this participation is too simplistic. Thus, the intention of the participant is not entirely clear without further explanation, because *"the picture is a picture, the hashtag is just a hashtag"* (Eva, 22). A lot of the respondents expressed this concern in relation to a variety of different campaigns ranging from #JeSuisCharlie and #PrayForParis in the wake of the French terrorist attacks to the recent #MeToo.

> I remember like, when you were saying Je Suis Charlie it was like okay, what does it actually mean, are you like sharing the political ideas of this newspaper or is it like… So sometimes it's a bit… you don't really know what it means the hashtag you're sharing. Or you don't know why this person is sharing this hashtag, or sharing this post.
>
> (Paul, 20)

The concern regarding the hashtag Je Suis Charlie was shared by multiple interviewees due to the implications it may have. The campaign could supposedly signify support for the newspaper and the political ideas it stands for, or solidarity for the country due to the terrorist attacks, among others. In a similar way, some interviewees discussed the confusing aspect of the #MeToo campaign, due to different interpretations of what constitutes sexual harassment, while others saw its meaning to be clear and straight-forward. Either way, these insights show that different people interpret the campaigns differently which means that

"there is somewhat a risk to it (...) [because] it can be misinterpreted" (Adam, 21). These reflections also signify political interest and knowledge of these students, as they consider the political and social meanings of the campaigns, which contradicts slacktivist de-politicization of this generation as narcissistic, politically unengaged and selfish. This is reinforced through another interesting insight into political implications of social media campaigns in the wake of tragic events, which also corresponds to criticisms of the popular campaigns for France and undermining other happenings around the world or distant suffering.

> Today, this fire happened in Russia, there isn't a Russian flag, Even... I don't know why is that... Although, it's also political issues, because it was handled really, really poorly in Russia, so what would this flag signify? Would it signify solidarity, or would it, it would be contradicted by the message of how poorly it was handled and if for example, we would have a Kenya flag, do you just celebrate that the world doesn't give a damn?
>
> (Anna, 28)

Again, these reflections present some criticism of social media campaigns and their simplicity, on the grounds of their political implications. In this case, Anna's reflections appear to be even more critical of the politics behind social media campaigns and their intent. These in-depth, critical and political reflections could indicate that she commonly engages in similar discussions, which may originate from her educational background as a research master student, which likely fosters curiosity and critical thinking. On the one hand, these insights also indicate an evident selection of social causes and events that are brought to light or raised support for. Again, this illustrates a prioritization of "some places and therefore some human lives [which] deserve more news time, more attention, and more resources than do others" (Chouliaraki, 2008, p. 375). On the other hand, the simplicity of campaigns can lead to miscommunication of an individual's actual thoughts and intentions.

4.2.4. Possibility to show support and awareness

One of the most common perceived impacts of participation in social media campaigns is raising awareness and starting a discussion about the subjects directly or otherwise related to the campaign.

> If no one was participating, I feel like we wouldn't really talk about it, because it wouldn't be such a big thing, so participation is important, uh... yeah, I think it does make a difference.
>
> (Emma, 19)

According to Emma, social media campaigns cannot in themselves directly lead to substantial, tangible social or political change, but the discussion and awareness they initiate are highly important, in order to push further action. Thus, if the audience becomes convinced that their participation can contribute to spreading awareness or starting a discussion about the subject, they are more willing to take part. In addition,

to raising awareness, a variety of campaigns also aim to show support to minorities or victims of tragic events. Some of the interviewees expressed that it is important to show support to people, and if it can have any positive implications on their lives, it is a good reason to participate.

> We need to show respect, to show sorrow for their loss, because they did something that not everybody
> has got guts to do (…) So I'm in favour of it if it makes people feel better.
>
> (Giorgio, 23)

> I think it is a big moral support for people that were affected by it, to see how much people are… trying
> to help in a way. And as a victim, you are probably really psychologically affected by whatever
> happened. And I think it was a big shock for whoever was there. And knowing that people… are aware of
> it.,. and by… I think it is a nice gesture for the victims.
>
> (An, 22)

Both Giorgio and An reflect on the positive impact that even symbolic, online support can have on the victims or their families. This again emphasizes the human need for acceptance and support, as well as the increasing mediatization of relationships and human interactions, where solidarity can be expressed through one's own social media identity.

4.2.5. Perceived chance of cause realization

Allegedly, the power of social media campaigns lies in gathering many people into an influential community, which then has the potential to set political agenda. According to the interviewees, as politicians are interested in satisfying society's interests and needs, speaking up and raising awareness about important issues can push it to the political agenda. Therefore, one of the conditions for participation is the belief that the campaign can actually lead to some social change, or further action. This resonates Klandermans' (2004) suggestion that in order to motivate people to participate in social movement campaigns, the goal and the steps that must be taken to achieve it must be clear. Since people often base their participation on cost vs. benefit perspective, a clear presentation of the campaign and what participation can lead to is likely to encourage people's involvement. This category closely relates to perceived value or contribution that participation can bring, or the fact that social media campaigns must present a clear goal. However, in this case, interviewees reflected on the possible discourse or perceived action that their participation can initiate or contribute to, especially in terms of political agenda.

> I'm happy people are sharing this type of stories, let me chip in, because maybe It will create a discourse,
> yeah move the society further and then I wrote also on my timeline. I said ok, #MeToo.
>
> (Anna, 28)

They have support from a larger and larger group, which just cannot be there, so I think it gives confidence to activists.

<div align="right">(An, 22)</div>

People individually can't make a difference, they can't go to the government and say I don't like this, but if they're in this big group then they're making a statement and then it turns it into a policy, they make it on the agenda, and then get like... policy cycle.

<div align="right">(Robert, 20)</div>

Interviewees thus suggest that they decide to participate in a social media campaign, because they see actual value that evolves from a community participation, and the pressure it can exert on authorities. Another interesting insight in condition for participation was whether participation can achieve any kind of change or improvement in the society. This is a similar idea to that discussed in relation to the goal of the campaign.

I think it would not have changed anything, because the thing had already happened. #MeToo – it starts from there, the change starts from there. So… the fact that you just put a little me too there, oh shit, a lot of people are talking about it, then it's mediatized and you know, things are changing. The terrorist attack, yeah, the people are already dead, so… the fact that now I'm posting something I don't think it would change anything.

<div align="right">(Eva, 22)</div>

Eva argues that she does not see any value or contribution in symbolic participation, which aims to show support or solidarity. Even though she is a French citizen, she states that seeing people's symbolic support through profile picture changes and hashtags did not make her feel better, or any different. Accordingly, she argues that she does not see the reason to participate in campaigns, which focus on past events, but do not have a clear goal for the future, or potential to realize certain social or political change. Nevertheless, all participants reflect on participation in the light of prospects for political change, illustrating their awareness of political discourse, likely based on their educational background. Additionally, it also illustrates their concern, which is based on deeper meaning than superficial, narcissistic intentions as suggested by various critiques.

<div align="center">**Costs for participation**</div>

As previously discussed, the biggest tendency among the interviewees when considering their decisions whether to participate in a social media campaign was to mention personal conditions, the type of the campaign and its perceived impact, as well as the effort it takes to participate. In terms of effort, university students tend to reflect on the resources it takes to participate, generally in tangible terms of time or money. Therefore, this meta-theme is denoted as costs of participation, and will overview how interviewees reflect

on participation as effortless, and in what ways it can be considered to be effortful (see overview in figure 6 below).
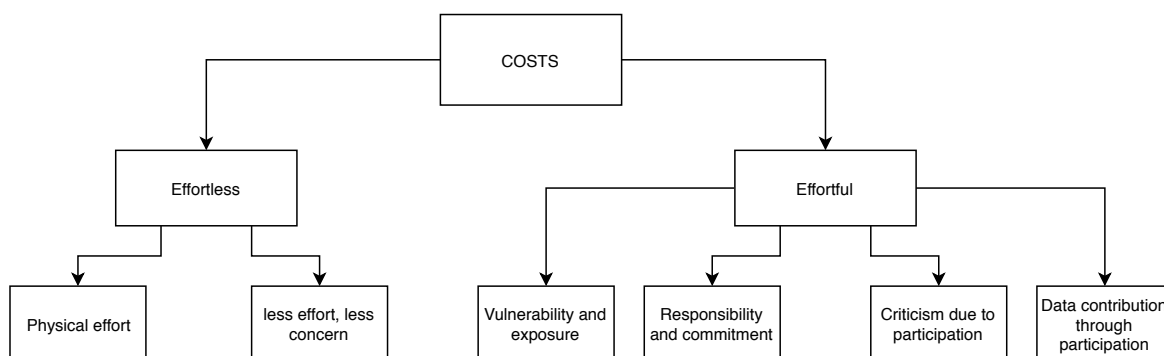


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Figure 6: Overview of the second meta-theme, its main themes and sub-themes

4.3. Effortless

Interviewees expressed concerns with time constraints and the time that social media takes up, arguing for reasons to stay aware and limit their social media use and participation. This may be due to the target group of university students and their busy lifestyles. Therefore, one of the common motivations to participate in social media campaigns was that it requires little effort and resources, which the interviewees often do not have or are not willing to dedicate to participation.

4.3.1. Physical effort

In general, interviewees mentioned the fact that participation in social media campaigns is often effortless as a factor determining their decision to participate. If It can have any kind of positive change, people are willing to pay that little amount of effort to share a hashtag or an image, but often would not be willing to do more.

> If it takes too much active participation, like shooting a video or some other stuff that's gonna take my free time, or you know personal time, that I'm off to many things and I don't want to invest my time then I wouldn't do that.
>
> (Giorgio, 23)

> How much does it cost you right? you're not even requested to do charity for that, you don't even have to pocket out your money.
>
> (Giorgio, 23)

Giorgio indicates that if participation is too time-requiring, seemingly referring to the Ice Bucket Challenge, which required more active participation through user-generated content in the form of a video, he would not be willing to participate. However, he also adds that if participation is easy, in terms of time and money, he does not see a reason for people to not take part, if it has the potential to contribute to some change or impact. This perspective strongly indicates a rather passive audience, and resonates slacktivist criticism of participation as an effortless, symbolic contribution. Similarly, other interviewees discussed comparable views in terms of the Ice Bucket Challenge:

> The Ice Bucket Challenge, I think… there was a couple of them that did it, but not many, I think that
> takes like a bigger effort you know? Do something, prepare something, prepare the ice bucket [laughs].
>
> (An, 22)

An hypothesizes that the reason she did not observe as common participation in the Ice Bucket Challenge in comparison to some of the other viral campaigns such as the French flag filter, is because it required much more effort and time. Additionally, this campaign not only required to film a video and post it online, but also to take part in a challenge, which to some people can appear "silly" (Giorgio, 23) or otherwise threatening their online identity or reputation. A further indication that people's participation can be judged as slacktivism emerge in interviewees' comparison of online versus offline action.

> Changing my profile picture is like you know, 5 seconds, and maybe I have to think if I want to change
> my profile picture then it takes maybe a bit more time. Whereas going to an event, well you have to book
> it in your timetable, you have to go there, you have to talk to people there, you have to… there's much
> more effort.
>
> (Adam, 21)

> It's kind of an easy way out; if you're like on Facebook, did the hashtag me too and are like oh I did
> something, but you didn't really do something in real life.
>
> (Marie, 21)

Adam discusses how offline action takes up much more effort and time in comparison to changing a profile picture. Marie reinforces the slacktivist perspective on social media participation, stating that if the participants do not make the effort to follow up their online actions, participation online is quite hypocritical and meaningless. In accordance to this, some of the respondents also reflected on the fact that the amount of effort made to participate is related to the amount of concern or interest the person feels about the issue.

4.3.2. Small effort, small concern

Most of the interviewees have not participated in offline activities and mention that the fact that social media campaigns take little effort plays a role in their decision making. Yet, many have also stated that the

amount of effort signifies the extent of individual's concern and real, authentic interest in the cause. Based on this, it can be assumed that in reality, concern with the issue is not the main motivation behind participation online.

> If… somebody changes a profile picture but doesn't go to the event, but somebody goes to the event, but doesn't change their profile picture, I'll probably be more likely to say that the person that went to the event felt more concerned about it (…) I'd say he's more likely to feel more concerned about it, because he… exerted a higher effort in contributing to this cause
>
> (Adam, 21)

> If initiative is just sharing a post, can you consider that initiative? It's not actual action, it's just like, it's so easy to share something
>
> (Paul, 20)

Interestingly, these statements reflect the majority's view on participation in social media campaigns and the participants' concerns. Yet simultaneously, people were willing to admit that they do not participate in offline activities, and did not express in-depth interest in specific causes or participation in offline action. These insights appear to contradict the previously discussed motivations for raising awareness, showing support and other concerns, as well as higher-educated students' interest and engagement in social and political issues (Egerton, 2002; Hillygus, 2005). However, often participation is reflected in different contexts, such as participation versus no action and online participation versus offline action. In general, the tendency appears to reveal a hierarchy, where interviewees indicate that online participation is better than nothing, but offline action has more impact, or that the two can reinforce each other. One of the exceptions that appeared, indicated a different level of commitment or effort taken for different types of online participation:

> Like for me personally, changing a profile picture is more, like a stronger statement, because like writing a hashtag is pretty easy right, so… it kind of can get lost and it can post a lot of stuff right, and then changing a profile picture makes it more a part of your social identity like you mentioned before.
>
> (Robert, 22)

According to Robert, changing one's profile picture takes more effort both in terms of time, but also commitment to the issue. In a world where social media identity plays an increasingly significant role, a lot of attention is paid to the choice of profile pictures, since they are a more 'permanent' commitment than a single post, which soon disappears from the network's radars. Nevertheless, the small interest in taking part in offline action can indicate passiveness of the audience, and reinforce the human nature of being preoccupied with self-interest. On the other hand, university students might undermine the political possibilities that online participation can bear, even if on a smaller scale, due to common exposure to critical

thinking and constant criticisms of this type of participation as effortless and meaningless. In general, the motivations for both – online and offline participation are similar, among the most important ones being a sense of community and belonging. Yet, most of the interviewees expressed that they believe offline action to be more powerful in its impact – both in emotionally affecting people, as well as in obtaining actual social or political change. This leads to the pressing question whether people do participate for selfish reasons rather than deep interest in societal circumstances, and reveals the multifaceted complexities beneath people's thought processes and motivations.

4.4. Effortful

Participation in social media campaigns is often criticized as an easy way out, since it does not take much 'physical' effort in terms of leaving home and planning to attend an event. This is especially highlighted in criticism of slacktivism, where participants of social media campaigns are denounced as slackers. These ideas have also been illustrated in the previous section, where interviewees reflect on physical effort that participation in social media campaigns takes, and what this type of action indicates. Yet, the gathered data also implies that participation on social media, and social media campaigns can take some mental strength, have reputation risks and create a sense of responsibility, all of which can be considered to be effortful.

4.4.1. Vulnerability and exposure

Social media environment is quite public and approachable to most people. Interviewees discuss that on Facebook they have hundreds or even above a thousand connections or 'friends', which means constant 'social surveillance' of and by others (Marwick, 2012). Therefore, participation in social media campaigns can render the person exposed to their extended network and vulnerable, especially when it comes to sensitive topics such as sexual harassment or mental health. Interviewees discuss participation in the #MeToo campaign as *"daring"* (Anna, 28), while Amita (23) states that participation in *"the #MeToo movement and the mental health thing, especially the mental health thing, that took a lot, a lot of thought. Because it was so close to me"*. The choice of words such as daring and brave to describe participation indicate that it can pose some risks, and thus, often requires some thought before participation, or even the decision to not take part in it.

> Because on Facebook you also have those friends who are closer friends, and kind of also these people you just know. So… They are not in a position to know… Because that is a very private part of my life, that I don't want, don't think they need to know.
>
> (An, 22)

While most of the time the extensive reach on social media networks is named as an advantage in terms of marketing purposes and raising awareness, it can also pose certain risks for individuals participating in social media campaigns. Thus, as indicated by the interviewees, sometimes it also causes them to refrain from participation, in fear of the big exposure it creates. On the other hand, some of the interviewees also discussed that if their network would not approve their participation or *"have any problems with this, they can unfollow"* (Giorgio, 23). This indicates that indeed, social media campaigns often deal with issues that the large network of people on social media may not all approve of and participants must be prepared for the consequences it can bring.

Furthermore, in the context of mental effort and exposure, offline action can seem less challenging than participation online. While offline participation may be more physically demanding, it can be done anonymously, without further commitments or exposure. On social media, participants are exposed to a network of friends or acquaintances, thus they can be approached and held accountable for their participation, stance and opinions. In relation to this, some interviewees discussed that their personal background affects their online participation.

> It's a little like complicated for my family, personally, because they have very different opinions from me, and I don't necessarily want to go against them [laughs], but I didn't want to go with them either, so I didn't post anything related to that (…) it's more like social media, I didn't necessarily feel like sharing my opinion with my circle, because of the differences…
>
> (Emma,19)

This example illustrates how participants are aware of people in their network (often family members), who have different views, and are not willing to express contradicting perspectives or opinions in order to avoid conflict. The same opinion is expressed by Amita (23), who discusses her Napalese background where:

> People are pretty, they have a conservative view when it comes to sexuality and stuff like that, it's very traditional, so often when it comes to LGBTQ, it is easily categorized as crazy, women easily categorized as whiney and… you have to more or less battle your own family members, for you do have those opinions.
>
> (Amita, 23)

These insights again reinforce how different positions in society and cultural backgrounds can influence participation. It can also be argued that participation in (at least some) social media campaigns cannot be considered effortless. Furthermore, physical effort may be considered less harmful or have less impact on the participant in the long term, than the discussed vulnerability and exposure of online participation.

4.4.2. Responsibility and commitment

Participating in a social media campaign means exposure of not only oneself and one's experiences, but also one's opinions and stance about a certain cause or issues. This can act as a commitment to the audience, pushing the participant to really back up what they believe in or even participate in further action.

> It's like going on a diet. When you go on a diet and you tell it to everybody else, so that they vote you against it. so… like vice versa, or vis á vis, before you decide to make something so public, you need to be sure that you're gonna back it up.
>
> (Amita, 23)

> They kind of lock themselves in from being able to do crappy things, because they stood up for it, even if the reason was… [ornamental].
>
> (Anna, 28)

> I think compared to this person not sharing anything, uh… probably because there's this like group, group effect kind of, where you feel, where you feel like you have to do something because you're part of the group that actually does something, if the group does something…
>
> (Paul, 20)

Through these statements interviewees express a similar opinion that participation in a social media campaign can be committing. As boundaries between online and offline worlds continuously merge, what happens on social media gains increasing importance in reality. Therefore, in contrast to slacktivism ideas, participation is not only 'costly' in terms of exposure and commitment, but also can push further change and physical action. Making a statement online means that people can hold you accountable for it, and according to some interviewees, people should take on this responsibility of ensuring that social media campaign participants follow up on their statements.

4.4.3. Criticism due to participation

As previously mentioned, participation also exposes people to judgment of the audience, and thus, it often leads to criticism. Not only are participants held accountable for their actions, but often criticized for their participation, judged to be idle or unconcerned. Furthermore, social media campaigns are often focused on political or even personal issues and positions, which can be considered rather sensitive and controversial subjects. Such subjects often cause a reaction from the network, as suggested by one of the interviewees:

> Sharing a politically sensitive or deeper cause or beliefs um…can lead to like debate or people judging you or, even without you actually seeing it, people talk about you, you don't want that.
>
> (Paul, 20)

Interviewees discuss that this is especially common in social media environments, where people are at a safe enough distance *"behind the screen"*, so they *"can be super harsh"* (Eva, 22). This can cause discomfort and as suggested by Paul, even have further consequences on one's reputation and image. Social media environments are also discussed as too superficial for actual debates, fostering cyber violence and insults. This highlights the vulnerability of participation, which, while physically safe, can have some threatening implications for one's psychological well-being. Therefore, it often requires the participants to defend their participation and their opinions, which demands further effort, time and even mental strength. This also suggests some limitations to potential participants, as participation must be well considered, and the participant must be knowledgeable enough to not only express their opinion, but also be able to respond to criticism. Participants also discuss that they get judged not only for their opinions, but also the type of participation, resonating slacktivism critique, which can cause self-doubt and insecurities:

> I remember comments like 'oh my god, changes are happening in America, why are you putting those filters?' That was the comments I remember, but I don't remember anyone going like yeah!
>
> (Amita, 23)

> At first I was doubting myself, I was like is it really that way? Um… because you feel like you are doing something positive right, you are changing your profile picture to show that yeah, I'm with you and uh…. And you get like this feedback of why are you doing it, it's not changing anything, you're doubting do I actually have an impact doing that or why do I do that?
>
> (Robert, 22)

These examples illustrate the power that criticism can have in affecting participant's opinions and even behaviour. It emphasizes that participation is not only about the physical effort it takes to create a post, share a hashtag or change a profile picture, and that the act of taking part in a social media campaign does not end with the small physical action. Instead, consequences of participation can extend to a much larger timeframe, during which the person can be confronted with comments, questions and critique. Thus, according to these insights, it must be noted that taking part in a social media campaign requires much more than the physical aspect, but must involve some thought and dedication to the cause in order to be able to defend and discuss it later on. These insights have implications on conceptualization of audience and participation, illustrating that even if participation is a passive decision at that moment, it often forces people to evaluate and reflect on their behaviour in an active way.

4.4.4.   Data contribution through participation

The final sub-theme, which illustrates the costs and consequences of participation in social media campaigns, is based on data contribution through participation. Based on interview data, university students are conscious and aware of the power that social media holds, and are able to discuss this aspect in-depth,

using technical language, which is likely due to their educational background. More specifically, they discuss how content is tailored to their liking based on the data provided through their participation, in this way influencing their behaviour and thinking processes. This is a perceived cost of participation, as it provides the algorithms with data, that can later be used to shape further opinions. This view is especially reinforced by multiple participants' use of a metaphor of being 'fed' information. Interviewees discuss that their participation online *"contributes to algorithm and now I am fed articles"* (Amita, 23). She further reflects on the possible dangers of tailored content, stating that *"if I'm completely fed by a source at all times or like just reinforced what I already believe then… that pushes people into extremes"*. This perspective implies that social media does not encourage critical thinking, but constantly reinforces what the participants already believe. It emphasizes the risk factor that can be associated with the use of social media, especially as a way to express one's opinions regarding socially or politically important topics. Based on the risk factor, no participation online can be considered to be "low-risk, low-cost activities via social media" (Lee & Hsieh in Leyva, 2017, p.465) to the individual and their social media identity.

The dangers of data contribution through participation on social media were also commonly discussed in the light of Cambridge Analytica scandal, due to implications that the data was used to influence political election.

> I mean the fact that they can collect your data is not the problem, but the fact that they can influence you in ways that you wouldn't necessarily want to with that data is more (…) they can influence you and then kinda like numb you and… kinda push you to being, by <u>feeding</u> you things that you agree with, because that's the page that you like or whatever, they don't really push you to be very critical with what's happening.
>
> (Adam, 21)

The strong statement by Adam reinforces the dangers of social media and the powers behind it. However, the words 'numb' and 'influence' also imply a passive audience, who can be easily manipulated and shaped by the capitalistic powers and elites. This is further indicated by Mia (23), who mentions that she is worried about the fact that *"things you delete consciously can still be found somehow"*. Overall, the majority of the interviewees implied that they feel powerless and not in full control of their content and image online, as well as what content they are exposed to. Therefore, while participation in social media campaigns provides the opportunity to voice opinions and foster democracy, it appears to be under strong supervision of the network, but also the powers behind social media, who in turn, attempt to shape the audience and the society, based on the information they provide.

5. Conclusion and discussion

Throughout the history of audience research there has been an ongoing debate attempting to categorize audiences as passive or active in terms of their participation and interpretation of media texts. Questioning of audience agency and autonomy continued into the digital age of social media where new forms of participation, including social media campaigns for social change emerged. The ongoing debates conceptualize the audience in one of two extremes. On the one hand, there is the slacktivism perspective, which conceptualizes audiences as narcissistic, self-involved and passive. In this case, audience is seen as passive in terms of their effortless participation, but also in terms of their autonomy, implying that they are governed and exploited by media powers, unable to govern themselves and their decisions. On the other hand, social media campaigns and participants are celebrated in their newly evolved power to have a strong voice, express their opinion and use it to revolutionize the world. It argues that people participate in social media campaigns for public good and social change, unaffected by shallow motivations such as feel-good factor or their personal image (Atkinson, 2006). This perspective puts a lot of faith and pressure in people's participation, emphasizing the supposedly endless possibilities of their active contribution to the society.

However, both positive and negative perspectives identify a lot of assumptions about the users merely based on their social media behaviour, such as passive or active participation through content creation, consumption or interactions. This limits the conclusions about the audience, as they themselves are not provided with their own voice, or the possibility to provide a context of their participation, and reflect on the subjective aspect of motivations. Additionally, these categorical conclusions are often based on "number-crunching" (Brown in Atkinson, 2006, p.150-151) quantified methods, which categorize people based on self-evaluation methods, such as surveys or Likert scales. In this way, people are degraded to unidentifiable parts of a single mass under the influence of media, or as users of the media, whose motivations are unaffected by external, societal and personal factors. Yet, the subjective matter of people's experiences and motivations to participate in social media campaigns has not been studied in depth, through qualitative means. Based on this, and the ongoing debate and ambiguity of perspectives on people's participation in social media campaigns, this study aimed to examine how people themselves reflect on their participation in social media campaigns, and how they place this practice in a broader context of their social media behaviour and offline action. The goal of this study was thus to focus on the participants of social media campaigns themselves, allowing them to reflect on the subjective and multifaceted concept of motivations and thought-processes that linger prior, during and post participation. Therefore, this thesis attempted to answer the research question: **How do university students reflect on their use of social media as a way to contribute to social media campaigns?** through in-depth, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews.

5.1. Summary of results

In the early minutes of the interviews, participants themselves inclined to state that their participation is just 'automatic' and doesn't involve in-depth thought process. These views resonate a lot of critique grounded in slacktivism and Media Effects tradition among others, which conceptualize audiences as passive users unable to reflect and attach meanings to their participation. However, during the progression of interviews, when asked to reflect on it, interviewees found a lot of reasons and ideas describing why they participate, leading to certain criteria. Many of the interviewees pointed out that in-depth discussion made them reflect on the subject and think about details of their participation, which normally appears to be thoughtless and meaningless behaviour. These insights emphasize the need for qualitative methods, which allow the participants to take the time to reflect on the meaning of their participation, because it is not 'obvious' and 'automatic' behaviour, even if it appears so.

The gathered results reinforced a lot of theoretical ideas overviewed in this thesis, most notably, confirming the importance of distinguishing people according to their context of social membership, rather than removing them from their position in society and ignoring the notions of power. Media text readings and interpretations, as well as motivations for participating indeed appear to be influenced by discursive resources as suggested by Morley (1980), but also other factors including age, amount and type of exposure to different media and cultural background. Also, some of the suggested motivations for participation, such as sense of belonging, self-realization and self-expression (Shao, 2009), being part of a community of like-minded people (Bakardijeva, 2009; Klandermans, 2006) and feel-good factor appeared in interviewees' reflections on their participation. However, the interviews revealed a much more complex interrelationship of motivations behind participation, which cannot be expressed through a single number, theory or formula. One of the biggest ideas that emerged from the data is that people consider their participation largely based on cost vs. benefits analysis – the perspective, which was also suggested as one of the motivations in relation to traditional social movements (Klandermans, 2006). Interviewees tend to compare the conditions of the campaign, both personal implications it may have (negative and positive) and the perceived social impact, versus the costs or efforts participation will take. This implies a rather selfish perspective, where people are not willing to make an effort if the campaign will not be personally valuable, or the efforts appear too physically demanding in relation to the perceived impact.

Personal motivations

Insights into interviewees' own, personal motivations revealed that participation highly depends on personal interest, closeness and relevance the individual feels to the campaign. It appears that the individual's network has a big influence on participation in multiple ways. First of all, people tend to be inspired by others' participation and thus, follow the example of their peers. This supports the idea that social media environment, where network is identified as friends, has persuasive powers and fosters shared

identity (Penney, 2014). Following the example of observed popular behaviour is also either influenced by the need for inclusiveness in a community, or results in a shared identity and communities, which can lead further civic engagement (Bakardjieva, 2009; Dahlgren, 2009). Following the example of popular participation can also be seen as a way to evaluate the 'right' type participation and protect one's image and online reputation. University students communicate their concern with the increasing importance of one's online appearance. This leads to the obligation to consider what their participation in a particular campaign would communicate to their network and the consequences it can lead to career-wise in the long term, which appears especially applicable to this specific social group. Finally, interviewees discuss the sense of satisfaction participation can bring, whether it's due to being a part of a community or the sense of doing a good deed, which can also act as a motivation. These ideas suggest that these people are driven by self-interest, and are mainly concerned with issues that are in close proximity, resonating Chouliaraki's insights of post humanitarian era (2008, 2010). In a way, it also resonates some aspects of slacktivism, which suggests that people act out of self-interest, rather than *real* concern for the cause.

Instrumental motivations

In contrast to slacktivist ideas, interviewees expressed concern about the impact and value their participation can add to the campaign, indicating their desire to make a change within political or social circumstances. These insights support Atkinson's (2006) positivist perspective, that people participate in social media campaigns for the public good, rather than ornamental, selfish reasons. However, at the same time, interviewees do express their motivation to participate only if the perceived impact they can achieve is at an appropriate cost, which is discussed as instrumentality motivation in social movements (Klandermans, 2006). Evaluation of participation in terms of possible benefits and costs does not imply a serious concern with issues that people would be willing to fight for at *any cost*, and again indicates a rather self-interested human nature.

Effortless and effortful participation

Based on costs of participation, people are generally concerned with concrete resources, such as money, time and effort participation will take. Therefore, one of the common motivators to participate is if the campaign requires little effort and resources, which the potential participant does not have or is not willing to dedicate. This again supports criticisms of social media campaigns as an easy way out, since it does not take much 'physical' effort in terms of leaving home and planning to attend an event. Yet, it may also be especially relevant to university students, who often mentioned their preoccupation with educational and professional investments in their future. While 'business' may be seen as a common excuse for low effort or interest in public issues, many of the interviewees substantiated this argument with their conscious choices to also give up the entertaining aspects of social media use due to time constraints. Furthermore, gathered data

also implies that the use of social media, and participation in social media campaigns can take some mental strength, have reputation risks and create a sense of responsibility, all of which can be considered to be effortful. In terms of mental effort and psychological implications that participation can lead to, generally, the interviewees expressed their willingness to stand up for their beliefs and expressed opinions. This perspective defies the critique of self-involved and narcissistic participation, indicating that participants are willing to take certain social risks with their participation, which can lead long-term costs, in comparison to physical effort.

5.2.   Answer to the research question

Summary of results illustrates the complex interrelationship of different aspects behind participation in social media campaigns. While the participants demonstrate aspects of narcissistic and selfish behaviour, they also indicate their concern for the public good and desire to contribute to social and political change. First of all, the majority of the personal motivations to participate included the need to feel a personal connection to the issue of the campaign, whether it is cultural, geographical or based on personal experiences. The tendency to sympathize and engage with issues that are closer to the participant is evident, and implies a post-humanitarian era of self-interest. However, this is also often reinforced by the media framing of issues as strategies to evoke pity and sympathy (Chouliaraki, 2008, 2010). Second, people appear to be concerned and aware of the instrumentality of the campaign, meaning that they do reflect on the possible social impacts it can bring, often using it as part of the decision making whether to participate. Finally, the participants indicate that they aren't willing to dedicate a lot of money, physical effort and time into participation, but these insights may be related to the societal context and lifestyle of university students. However, the amount of mental effort and risks that participation can have appears to have much more costly implications than physical effort. Despite this, participants explain that they are willing to stand up for their opinions and expressed beliefs, if it is necessary. This implies a serious view on online participation, but also indicates an active audience in terms of motivation and interpretations of media participation.

Evidently, the relationship between selfish participation and interest for the public good is paradoxical. While the data shows some support for ideas of slacktivism, including low physical effort and personal interests, it is balanced with public concerns and the desire to achieve social change. This further indicates the complexity of human psychology and behaviour online, and the fact that audiences cannot be categorized as a single, oversimplified 'type', such as narcissists or empowered activists. In general, most interviewees revealed characteristics of a variety of motivations and intentions of their participation and cannot be considered a complete example of a certain existing type of a participant. The conflicting perspectives of feeling motivated to participate due to self-interest, but also, in the interest of the public good appear to be contradictions, which rule each other out. Yet, the relationship is of paradoxical nature, because the concepts coexist, displaying characteristics of both – celebratory and critical views simultaneously. The

data indicates an ongoing tension between people's motivations to engage in social media due to the constant pressure of the 'right' type of participation, the right construction of one's identity and personal satisfaction. The inherent interrelationship and constant seeking for a balance between good citizenship and personal interest indicates that a binary approach to participation – slacktivism versus empowered citizenship on social media is not possible. Therefore, the illustration of the relationship between the different themes and the complex thought processes that take place when engaging with social media support the initial argument of this thesis, stating that the highly critical or celebratory perspectives on participation are too simplistic.

5.3. Reflections and limitations

The revealed complexities behind the suggestively simple participation in social media campaigns highlight the importance of qualitative methods. Qualitative methods, and interviews in particular, proved to be an effective way to study people's reflections about their personal behaviour on social media and their motivations and thoughts about its perceived impact. The gathered data reinforced the initial observation that these matters are subjective and based on individual factors such as background and education, and therefore cannot be generalized through quantified, objectifying methods. I aimed to de-objectify the participants by allowing them to reflect on their own opinions and ideas, but also followed a structured interview guide, in order to retain control of the interview and stay relevant (Hermanowicz, 2012). Yet, some limitations to this research were observed and difficult to avoid, such as bias due to self-consciousness, self-enhancement and self-presentation, which are common attributes of self-reporting methods (Paulhus & Vazire, 2007). Despite the attempt to choose non-clinical surroundings and employ a casual, conversational interview, participants did not appear to forget about the intent of the conversation and the presence of the recording device, which was indicated through conscious attempts to be diplomatic. For example, multiple of the interviewees would feel uncomfortable, or even make an apologetic comment (towards the recording device) if they use 'inappropriate' language. Thus, even during an interview, people appear to try to construct their identity, by attempting to appear knowledgeable and mindful, often leading to long discussions on off-topic subjects. On the one hand, the chosen group of people for this study, namely university students, may place more importance on identity construction, reputation and awareness of their input during interviews. On the other hand, interviews are often described as a form of identity construction or researcher's "constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to" (Geertz in Moores, 2000, p.62).

Social media fosters similar behaviour, as it is also seen as a tool for identity construction. As illustrated in the results, university students express that they create certain conditions under which they make the decision to participate in social media campaigns or in other ways engage with the content online. These decisions are not mindless, but based on the possible implications or consequences their participation can have on their identity. Thus, it can also be assumed that their participation in an interview and the provided input may also be influenced by their intention to create a specific identity. While this can provide some

limitations to obtaining interviewees' *real* motivations and thoughts, it also reinforces, once more, the appropriateness of the chosen qualitative method for this study. This is because the ways in which people believe they should participate on social media, present themselves and create their identity is one of the central aspects of this study. This phenomenon of self-presentation is also already inherent to the practice of qualitative research and interviews as a form of self-reporting and presentation (Paulhus & Vazire, 2007). This makes interviews a suitable method to examine this behaviour and accordingly can contribute to validity of this study. Furthermore, as indicated in criticisms of Morley's (1980) research, it is important to not "produce" (Hartley in Moores, 2000, p.29), audiences for the project, meaning to place them in an unfamiliar context, but instead, to examine participants in their natural behaviour and habitat. Therefore, this study focused on university students, allowing them to contribute with reflection on their own behaviour, and construction of their identity through interviews. In this way, the interviewees were simply taking part in behaviour, which is natural to them in other forms, such as communicating on social media. Thus, interviews as a construction of one's identity may not be seen as a limitation, but rather a valuable insight that needs to be kept in mind when conducting this type of qualitative research.

By allowing the participants to reflect on themselves and their participation online, this study also aimed to provide them with their own voice, in order to de-objectify the often-discriminated audiences based on inspiration from Feminist research traditions (Moores, 2000; Radway, 1987). I also attempted to overview the expected nuances to how people reflect on their media behaviour when asked to do so in research, as well as to be reflexive in terms of my own social identity, such as my being part of an international community. These insights were considered prior to the interviews, in terms of their possible influence on the research process and results (see sections 2.6 and 3.1). Yet, according to Yates (2013), a much more complex perspective on reflexivity must be employed, taking into account not only researcher's identity, but rather the mutual influence between the interviewer, respondents and the research process, as well as power relationships, which in interview settings are always asymmetrical (Yates, 2013). The researcher is not only in control of the questions and the interview situation, but also determines what data is included in the analysis, judging what is important or trivial based on their own identity, which influences the final results of the study. These insights are based on Theories of Self, indicating the importance of an individual's societal contexts, since identities and understating of the world are formed and created through interactions with others (Yates, 2013). Therefore, in future research, interviews should be considered as a social practice, similar to everyday communication via social media or real life, rather than a neutral tool to gather data. More specifically, interviewees' reflections and input should be placed in the context of uneven power relations and identity construction to a higher extent during interviews and analysis of data. Also, aspects such as the research process and the role of the researcher could be included and acknowledged, by examining how the social position, discursive recourses and other contextual details of the researcher can affect the interviewees and their answers (Yates, 2013).

Another observed limitation may have been caused by the chosen socioeconomic position of the participants, who are higher-educated, privileged, young members of society. Members of this social position were recruited due to indication that these people are likely to be active social media users (Statista, 2014), produce oppositional meanings to media messages (Morley, 1980), as well as engage in political discussion and their role in the society as contributors to social change (Egerton, 2002; Hillygus, 2005). The particular group was also attainable in the short timeframe, contributing to feasibility of this research. While this to an extent proved to be sufficient, university students often challenged the consideration that their age group would be active social media users. A lot of the participants revealed awareness of the perceived dangers of social media, and their efforts to limit their use due to time constraints produced by a busy university lifestyle. This indicated the anticipated awareness of this particular group of participants in terms of social media use from different perspectives. The participants produced 'oppositional' readings by expressing negative aspects of social media in terms of its addictive nature and low-educational value. Yet, they were also able to reflect on the positive aspects, such as participation for social change and political implications behind it. In this way, the gathered data also defies objectifying stereotypes of the young generation and their participation on social media, which indicate a passive, selfish, idle and politically unengaged population (Christensen, 2011: Morozov, 2009). The extent of university students' reflection and awareness about their participation re-politicizes this generation by indicating an active audience, who is attentive towards the advantages, dangers and other implications their participation may carry. Yet, while providing rich data and insights, the recruited group also presents some limitations to generalizability of this research.

This research focused on providing participants with their own voice to reflect on their participation in social media campaigns, and the importance of de-objectifying people by distinguishing them according to their context of discursive resources and social positions (Morley, 1980). Recruitment for this study was based on insights that political knowledge and civic engagement was higher in people who entered higher education and those, who come from a higher social class (Egerton, 2002). Therefore, the gathered data may not be generalizable beyond the social position of the recruited sample. To further explore how the discursive resources affect people's readings of media texts and motivations to participate, further research could focus on participants belonging to different social positions, such as working class or lower educated, young people. It can be suggested that higher educated students are exposed to similar resources and information, which shape comparable perspectives and ideas on social media participation. Thus, a sample of people from a different social position may produce more varying perspectives, based on their own discursive resources.

Furthermore, the insights gathered through research of motivations to participate in social media campaigns can provide valuable information to activists and NGOs, who aim to promote social change. Exploring how and why people decide to participate and what convinces them to do so can help in improving

promotional strategies to contribute to social change. To improve insights of this study, future research might benefit from examining participants of a variety of different social positions and backgrounds, which can result in further insights into how to approach and engage those people, who are not considered as politically engaged or interested (Egerton, 2002; Zuckerman, 2013). Additionally, distinguishing between the different types of social media campaigns, or focus on a single type of campaigns may be beneficial. Future research could focus on solidarity campaigns such as the French flag filter, or donation-based campaigns such as the Ice Bucket Challenge, since different types of participation involve different motivations (Klandermans, 2004), which was also illustrated in this research. Additionally, since the interviews in this study were based on in-depth reflections on participation in social media campaigns between the years 2013 and 2018, the participants may have been subject to recall bias. Thus, interviewees could have relied on their present conceptualization and construction of possible motivations and thoughts about their participation, rather than remembering and expressing what the *actual* motivations and the intent of participation was. Focusing on a single, recent campaign could provide clearer insights and minimize recall bias.

The key finding of this study indicates a paradoxical relationship between participation for ornamental reasons and interest for the public good. Therefore, in future research it is important to acknowledge this paradoxical relationship between people's motivations to participate for reasons of self-interest **and** for the public good, rather than focusing on one **or** the other.

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Appendix A – Interview guide

Part 1: Introduction

First of all – thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this interview, I really appreciate it! To begin with, let me tell you a little bit about myself and my research. My name is Viktorija, I come from Lithuania, but have lived in Copenhagen, Denmark the past 11 years or so. There I obtained my bachelor in Media technology. I moved to Rotterdam in August last year to study master in Media, Culture & Society. I have always been interested in social media and social media campaigns, questioning why people participate, do they feel like they contribute to something, etc. My thesis research focuses on participation in social media campaigns specifically; thus, throughout this interview, I would like to discuss topics, which involve some self-reflection regarding your opinions and judgements in regards to social media in general, as well as participation in social media campaigns for social change, your own experiences with it, its impacts and importance. Do you have any questions at this point?

To begin with, I would like to get to know you a little more, so maybe you can tell me a bit about yourself…

Part 2: Interviewee introduction /demographics

1. Age, education (previous education), current occupation, nationality

(In order to get an overview of the respondents)

Part 3: Social media habits in general

2. How would you describe your social media habits? What are your most used/favorite applications?
3. What is the main purpose for your social media use – e.g. networking, socializing, "keeping in touch" with those abroad, news?
4. Where would you say you get most of your news from?

Part 4: Social media campaigns

5. What are some of your thoughts and opinions regarding social media campaigns in general?
6. What social media campaigns have you participated in that you can remember of / on which applications?

(Maybe we can discuss them one by one)

7. Can you tell me the story of how you decided to participate? Where were you at the moment, how did you make the decision to do it, what were your thoughts at the moment?

8. What would you say are the main contributors to making this decision?

9. Did a lot of your network participate as well at the moment?

10. What were your goals when participating in this campaign, what does such participation mean to you? Do you feel like you contribute to some sort of change, join a community or other?

11. How do you make the decision about which campaigns to participate in? e.g. Are you particularly interested in the issues?

12. Do you think participation, standing up for what you believe online can affect your social network/you personally? How?

13. Did you receive any comments (good/bad), acknowledgement for participation from your network? How did it make you feel?

Part 5: Network participation

14. In general, does your Facebook network participate in social media campaigns? Do you notice, others' participation? e.g. recently in the #MeToo campaign for example? How does it make you feel? Do you acknowledge it, support them in participation? Why?

15. Why do you think people participate in general?

16. In your opinion, does such participation have any effect on larger social movements and change?

17. When we talk about young people and politics, social media always come up. Do you think social media influences youth engagement in political issues? In what way?

18. Do you think social media stimulates people to take action? (e.g. not just through online participation, but also offline?) How?

Part 6: Political activities/participation offline and online

19. In general, do you participate in political campaigns, or other kind of politically-engaging activities?
e.g. offline: political mobs, riots, etc. attending lectures, talks…
e.g. online: sharing political messages other than social media campaigns, raising awareness about political issues through your social media profiles (e.g. videos, photos, articles, etc.)

20. How do you think these political activities compare to your participation in social media campaigns?

Part 7: Conclusion/additional comments, insights, questions

21. Do you think in the digital age everyone can be a contributor to social change?

22. Do you have any additional comments or questions?

Appendix B – Consent form

FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, PLEASE CONTACT:

Viktorija Gaizutyte

VGAthesis@gmail.com

DESCRIPTION

You are invited to contribute to a research about participation in social media campaigns for social change. The purpose of the study is to understand people's opinions and judgements of participation in online campaigns.

Your acceptance to participate in this study means that you accept to be interviewed. In general terms, the interview questions will be related to self-reflection regarding your opinions and judgements in regards to online participation in campaigns for social change and your own experiences with it.

Unless you prefer that no recordings are made, I will use an audio recorder for the interview.

You are always free not to answer any particular question, and/or stop participating at any point.

RISKS AND BENEFITS

As far as I can tell, there are no risks associated with participating in this research. Yet, you are free to decide whether I should use your name or other identifying information in the study. If you prefer, I will make sure that you cannot be identified, by using a pseudonym and only general demographic information such as age and gender.

I will use the material from the interviews exclusively for academic work.

TIME INVOLVEMENT

Your participation in this study will take approximately an hour. You may interrupt your participation at any time.

PAYMENTS

There will be no monetary compensation for your participation.

PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS

If you have decided to accept to participate in this project, please understand your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. If you prefer, your identity will be made known in all written data resulting from the study. Otherwise, your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS

If you have questions about your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact –anonymously, if you wish— supervisor of this thesis Jiska Engelbert.

I give consent to be audiotaped during this study:

 Name   Signature   Date

I prefer my identity to be revealed in all written data resulting from this study

 Name   Signature   Date