The Race for Attention in an Era of Post-truth

Analysing Andrew Tate's discourse in a time of post-truth and online attention economies

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Abstract

This paper examines how popular social media influencer Andrew Tate was able to attract vast amounts of attention and amass millions of followers in the year of 2022. Focus is placed on Tate due to the controversy of his online communications as well as the relevancy of his negative influence concerning the young males he targets. As a result, this study takes a qualitative exploratory approach where a multi-modal discourse analysis was conducted in order to understand how Tate constructs his message and personal brand in order to garner the attention he has received. With the research question: How does Andrew Tate construct his personal branding in podcasts, interviews and talk shows in order to compete within online attention economies? A subject of study that remains unexplored academically due to the recency of Tate's popularity. The phenomenon of Tate's success also highlighted the incompleteness of current research regarding personal branding, of which this study aimed to solve. This was done by combining academic frameworks regarding attention seeking, personal branding and authenticity management strategies. This study found that Tate was able to compete in the attention economy by making use of strategies including engaging in disruptive discourse, creating ante-narratives (stories with no end), orientating (the practice of delivering advice) and attuning his message to an audience of men who feel disenfranchised, of which demonstrate 'attention capacity.' Another motivating factor for why this study was conducted was to bring awareness to the societal importance of critical thinking in this era of digital communications. This is due to how developments in communication technologies have brought about an increased relevance of economies of attention and post-truth. Phenomenon which research argues contributes to the quantity and quality of information available, loss of trust as well as the fragmentation of values. The reason for the relevancy of post-truth is that this paper argues that online economies of attention are contributing to the dissemination of alternative 'truths' into the mainstream. Where influencers such as Andrew Tate can take advantage of this for enhancing their own influence and monetary gain.

KEYWORDS: *Andrew Tate, Attention Economy, Post-truth, Personal branding, Social media, Discourse, Masculinity.*

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1. Introduction

Andrew Tate, former professional kickboxer and online social media influencer has taken the world by storm in recent times amassing billions of social media views and became the worlds most googled man in 2022 (Nicol, 2022). This being a year of significant crisis where internet users have proven to be more interested in the supposed 'truths' which Tate proliferates than prominent figures such as Biden, Trump and Putin (Copland, 2022). Tate has been able to successfully capture the attention of millions in large part due to his controversial and polarizing discourse regarding masculinity, misogyny as well as exposing 'truths' of the "Matrix" society we live in, specifically targeting disaffected young men (Copland, 2022). However, his ability to do so has been profound especially considering the negative publicity he has received from legacy media as well as his on-going human trafficking case (Das, 2022). Furthermore, efforts to cancel the influencer and remove his content from social media platforms have failed as his content is still being circulated by alternative accounts (Copland, 2022; Das, 2022). An interesting notion as attempts to remove him from social media have only fuelled his narrative as a protagonist against the tyranny of legacy media and against a more elusive enemy, the 'Matrix' with users flocking to protest his cancellation (*"Censorship Is Never the Answer": Influencers Flock to Twitter over Ban on "Menace" Worth $350 Million*, 2022).

The phenomenon of his success is significant due to a multitude of factors. Firstly, Tate makes an interesting case for discourse analysis due to the polarity and complexity of his character as well as the discourse he participates in. In doing so Tate has positioned himself and his brand in the middle of a contentious political debate regarding polarizing topics such as censorship, gender, democracy where he specifically targets established institutions under the guise of a war against the 'Matrix' (*Cobratate | Live What You Dream*, 2023; Copland, 2022; Das, 2022). Secondly, the phenomenon of his success is significant due to its recency causing for it to be relatively unexplored in academic contexts. Furthermore, a large point of contention regarding Tate is the detrimental effects his views are having, considering his reach and potential influence he has on young males. Especially how they perceive women with some teachers reporting increased misogyny of their male students coming from his content (Dodgson & Dawson, 2023). This is relevant, especially concerning how information can be disseminated into the mainstream where it can reach vulnerable audience members who are more prone to influence. This being a process that is becoming increasingly easier through contemporary means of consuming information and the personalization that takes place via the use of computational algorithms. Being a motivating

factor for this study for the way Tate as a case can open a discussion into the way information is produced and consumed in an era of post-truth and online economies of attention. Raising interesting questions such as whether the problematic influence he has is a problem of Tate and his message, or rather if it is a problem of the internet and the market he competes in?

To elaborate, the acceleration of digital communication technologies has had a major impact on the lives of many, especially considering the quality and quantity of information that is exchanged. Online social networking sites have facilitated spaces for users to engage in discourse, especially as a space for people to come together and explore complex systems of meaning such as gender, sexuality, status and success (Ging, 2017; Marwick & Lewis, 2017; Mountford, 2018, p. 3). Web 2.0 technologies have facilitated spaces for these discussions both in niche spaces such as online internet forums as well as mainstream spaces such as your TikTok or Instagram feed (CİBAROĞLU, 2019; Ging, 2017). Furthermore, the acceleration of digital communications has made a hyper-flow of information accessible in developing and developed countries (De Feis et al., 2016). Where users now have access to more information that they can possibly consume. Uprooting past principles of market structures where information must be cut, filtered and procured in order to convince the onlooker that it is worth their time and engagement. This coupled with the use of computational algorithms to target users with personalized content with the goal of engagement has placed major emphasis on user attention as a commodity (Ven & Gemert, 2022). Thus, establishing online economies of attention (OAEs), which are platforms where user attention is a finite resource of which players compete by seeking to attract as much attention as possible (Smith & Fischer, 2021). However, the use of computational algorithms poses a separate risk, especially considering the effect filter bubbles can have on the attitude of individuals which has made these platforms a place where social media influencers who brand themselves as 'public intellectuals can have real influence (Ven & Gemert, 2022). These developments have not only changed the way information is consumed but has also changed the way information is produced. Especially, due to how social media influencers (SMIs) and content creators are now forced to compete in these economies of attention. Where different strategies must be incorporated such as making appeals towards emotionality, narrative storytelling, offering advice or engaging in controversy (Mäkelä et al., 2021; Smith & Fischer, 2021). Where factors such as objective truth and reason become less prevalent in favour of virality, sensationalism and entertainment further contributing to the post-truth world order (Cosentino, 2022; Mäkelä et al., 2021; Marwick & Lewis, 2017).

In 2016, OxfordLanguages coined the word of the year as 'post-truth' which they defined "relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief" (Oxford Word of the Year, 2016). Whilst the concept has been in academic discussions for the past decade, it has become far more prevalent in recent discourse. In 2019, comedian Sacha Baron Cohen gave a speech targeting the 'silicon 6' as running "The greatest propaganda machine in history" where he concluded that the large 'imperialistic' tech companies can no longer be trusted to regulate their business practices (Anti-Defamation League, 2019). Whilst the post-truth discussion covers several inter-related elements, social media are usually pinned at the centre of the discussion. Especially in regards to academics being critical towards platforms such as Facebook which have been critiqued due to how the "logic of their algorithms and the phycological incentives it generates are seen as culprits for the problems of political-polarization, the 'siloing' of users into cognitive and cultural echo-chambers and the circulation of various forms of false information" (Cosentino, 2020, p.5). This is also in large part due to Web 2.0 technologies facilitating a hyper flow of information as it affords users the 'prosumer' role which enable the free flow of user-generated content as well as constant connection to emotionally charged economies of attention. 'Prosumer' role referring to how Web 2.0 technologies afford users the ability to produce and consume online content. Furthermore, in line with growing economies of attention, much of these practices are done out of profit driven incentives, where information and content are pushed towards individuals who demonstrate 'attention capacity'.

Post-truth is of significant importance within this study as it contextualises OAEs in a digital world where emotional appeal is often a defining factor that overrules the user's decision to watch one video over another (Smith & Fischer, 2021). Furthermore, a significant motivating factor for this study is to highlight the relevance of critical thinking in all aspects of citizenry in times of post-truth. Regardless of political agenda, post-truth is facilitating a space of discourse that corrupts the "process by which facts are credibly gathered and reliably used to shape one's beliefs and perceptions about reality" (McIntyre, 2018, p. 1). A notion this study argues to be of both significant societal and academic importance as corroborated by the work of Jiménez-Aleixandre and Puig (2022). As a result, SMIs with an understanding of post-truth and the attention economy such as Andrew Tate are able to take advantage and compete for large amounts of attention by engaging in controversial discourse, thus making him a relevant case in the context of understanding personal branding and the attention economy in times of post-truth. Therefore, this paper seeks to answer the following research

question: How does Andrew Tate construct his personal branding in podcasts, interviews and talk shows in order to compete in online economies of attention?

2. Theory

2.1 Hyper-flow of Information and the Value of Attention

      Information in today's society is of abundance to the point where it now constitutes a hyper-information flow (De Feis et al., 2016, p. 27). The acceleration of communication technologies, birth of social media and cloud computing, hyper-information flow has become ubiquitous with day-to-day use in developed and most developing countries (De Feis et al., 2016, p. 27). Hyper-information in short refers to the large flows of information facilitated by user generated content and Web 2.0 technologies (Salomon, 2006). This being a phenomenon that has drastically changed the way individuals consume information, products and services. De Feis and others (2016), summarize a new market theory characterized by the hyper-globalization following the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991, with the birth of the internet happening soon after, leading to an ever-developing information flow (p. 27). This new conceptualization is relevant in understanding contemporary markets as the transmission of products, services and content can no longer be accounted for based on traditional economic paradigms such as supply and demand, but instead requires a further contextualized assessment where factors such as trust and emotional appeal have become more influential in the consumers decision to consume a product and/or service (De Feis et al., 2016). In continuation, in 1997 Goldhaber coined the term 'attention economy' which De Feis and colleagues (2016), corroborate as a force that will upend major pillars of market-based exchange and demand new ways of thinking (Kubler, 2023).

      Focus placed on mediated content is of importance as this paper seeks to explore how the current media landscape funnels the flow of information. Furthermore, whilst information is in abundance, our attention is not, bringing about the relevance of OAEs where SMIs are required to distinguish themselves in order to compete for the valuable commodity of audience attention (Smith & Fischer, 2021). Platforms which fall under the definition of OAE's are any digital platform which facilitates the distribution of user generated content whilst also facilitating audience interaction with said content via commenting, liking/disliking and sharing such as YouTube, Twitch, Rumble as well as social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc (Marwick & Lewis, 2017 & Smith & Fischer, 2021). The online attention economy has become a dominant model within digital commerce with much criticism from the academic field. These critics include detrimental effects of mental health and cognitive capacities, surveillance of personal data and the fostering of addictive behaviour (Chomanski, 2022). As a result, OAEs as facilitators of

discourse is a problematic notion, especially when the value of content is determined by how much attention it is worth. This paradigm breeds a market and circulation of information that thrives off of sensationalism and clickbait in the post-truth era of the internet (Leroy et al., 2018).

2.1.1 Personal Branding and Authenticity in the Attention Economy

As previously discussed, social media and web 2.0 technologies have facilitated and brought about the prevalence of user generated content, facilitating a marketplace where social media influencers (SMIs) compete for attention (Smith & Fischer, 2021). This shift originated from the mass economic globalization taking place in the late 20th century and early 21st century which introduced new arenas of competition facilitated by new information and communication technologies (Lair et al., 2005). As a result, the employment marketplace became saturated and more competitive calling for market players to take further steps to differentiate themselves. Employee and employer relationships also changed where employees could no longer depend on the employers for life-long employment commitments and obligations (Scheidt et al., 2020). This can also be defined as the "widespread shift of the responsibility of employees' careers from organisations to individuals" (Gorbatov et al., 2018, p. 1; Scheidt et al., 2020). This brought about an increased relevance of employees to undertake their own entrepreneurial practices in order to enhance visibility in the marketplace. Thus, visibility has become something akin to a currency in everyday life for which market players need to prioritize, which is a notion that has only been accentuated in the developing attention economy (Scheidt et al., 2020). These entrepreneurial practices essentially functioning as personal branding strategies.

Personal branding as a concept has received significant academic attention due to this, however the resulting outcome is that the research in this field is diverse and disconnected without an integrated definition (Gorbatov et al., 2018; Scheidt et al., 2020). Originally, personal branding research was situated in a discussion of self-presentation and impression management. Such as the work of Schau & Gilly (2003), who conceptualized self-presentation strategies in the context of Web 1.0 technologies. However, more contemporary research such as that of Scheidt et al (2020) has argued that no self-presentation framework has arisen from academic research that can be universally applied as the topic remains heavily context dependent. However, systematic reviews of the literature such as that of Gorbatov et al (2018), and Scheidt et al (2020), do well to conceptualize the main trends,

drivers, processes and outcomes of personal branding. This can be used to build understanding of the main thought processes and intentions behind SMIs messages and media output in the context of Web 2.0. Furthermore, a multi-disciplinary literature review conducted by Gorbatov and his colleagues work to provide an integrated definition of personal branding which follows: "Personal brand is a set of characteristics of an individual (attributes, values, beliefs, etc.) rendered into the differentiated narrative and imagery with the intent of establishing a competitive advantage in the minds of the target audience" (Gorbatov et al., 2018, p. 6). This study makes use of this definition going forward due to how it places emphasis on competitivity, which encapsulates previous research on positive impression management, authenticity and attention seeking strategies (Gorbatov et al., 2018; Scheidt et al., 2020). However, some researchers such as Audrezet and colleagues (2020), argue that SMI's need to look past self-presentation in favour of communicating authenticity.

Authenticity in the context of the individual's and marketeers' motivations can be defined with the use self-determination theory. In this context, authenticity involves an individual's engagement in intrinsically motivated behaviours – "Those that emanate from a person's innate desires and passions" (Audrezet et al., 2020, p. 559). Audrezet et al (2020), clarify two main authenticity strategies used by SMI's including passionate authenticity and transparent authenticity. Passionate authenticity refers to how the "notion of authentic people or brands are those that are intrinsically motivated rather than extrinsically motivated", whereas transparent authenticity refers to "providing fact-based information about the product or service at the centre of the brand partnership" (Audrezet et al., 2020, p. 565). Regardless, authenticity management is a relevant factor to be addressed, of which generating a positive audience perception of authenticity requires strenuous attention labour for SMIs to successfully foster.

Attention labour can be conceptualized as a valorization activity which generates a surplus value which is then monetized and turned into profit (Bueno, 2016). In large part attention labour is done with the end goal of communicating and generating an audience perception of authenticity which is necessary in the 'celebrification' process of online influencers (Audrezet et al., 2020; Brooks et al., 2021). Celebrification referring to the enhanced status acquired via successful SMI practices. Authenticity is key as individuals who operate in OAEs rely on 'person branding' (Fournier & Eckhardt, 2019). Authenticity is also key in understanding the relationship SMIs have with monetizing their attention labour, especially if they are partnering with brands in exchange for the advertising of products and services. Within OAEs, SMIs have been a key tool for which companies can use to

communicate their brand as SMIs function as trusted opinion leaders for which work to enhance advertising effectiveness as well as positively effect consumer attitudes towards the brand (De Jans et al., 2020). This is due to how SMI followers construct meanings of authenticity via the SMIs perceived intrinsic motivations, transparency and non-commercial orientation (Audrezet et al., 2020). As a result, brand affiliations can create conflicts of interest and complicate the authenticity management of SMIs (Audrezet et al., 2020). This can be avoided when SMIs undertake their own personal entrepreneurial efforts alongside their media output as it allows them to remain autonomous over the monetization of their own content (Guinez-Cabrera & Aquaveque, 2022). Despite this the acquisition of audience attention and maintaining of it via constant engagement is a necessary step required for SMIs to compete in OAE's.

2.1.2 Competing for Attention in OAEs

Digital entrepreneurship has been a popular topic within academia with more consumers taking on the producer role in order to monetize attention within OAE's. SMIs thereby form "an entrepreneur who funds their venture and creates financial wealth by promoting knowledge, competence, and abilities in their chosen interest" (Lee & Theokary, 2021, p. 860). These SMIs participate in a hyper contextualised market for which they have to distinguish themselves in order to foster audiences and monetize their efforts (2.1.2). Key indicators of success have changed in the attention economy which is of significant importance when it comes to both measuring success but also in understanding the messengers' intentions. As an example, viewership has lost its importance in favour of indications of attention which involve items such as commenting, liking and the sharing of content (Smith & Fischer, 2021). If key indicators for success call for SMIs to attract as much attention as possible, this will thus have an effect on how SMIs produce their content and engage in attention labour. In that regard, previous research has made distinctions between 'aversive attention' and 'attractive attention.' Aversive attention refers to when people pay attention to escape and avoid negative experiences, whereas attractive attention refers to when people pay attention because it may have value in helping then achieve positive experiences (Davenport & Beck 2001). These distinctions are of importance as it implies that attention can be acquired by either appealing to the escapism gratifications of audience

members or by achieving positive audience perceptions of value which can be gained by consuming the content in question.

As a result, for the purposes of this study it is important to understand the tools used by influencers in order to attract, maintain and compete for audience attention in OAEs. Smith and Fischer (2021) provide a theoretical framework of the tools used which include attuning to attentive audiences, distilling, constructing 'antenarratives', orientating, disrupting and encouraging amplification (p. 268). See Table 1 for the definition of attention seeking constructs conceptualized by Smith & Fischer (2021).

Table 1

Definitions of Attention constructs illustrated by Smith & Fischer (2021)

Construct Label	Definition
Attuning to Attentive Audiences	Observing audiences and targeting those that demonstrate 'attention capacity'
Distilling	Creating headlines or titles that succinctly signal that a post has audience relevant content.
Constructing 'Antenarratives'	Creating "Antenarratives": texts that include narrative elements (Such as settings, plot and characters) that get added and dropped over time, and that incorporate different perspectives and themes overtime, without ever reaching a formal narrative closure.
Orientating	Offering direct, well rationalized, advice or guidance to audience members about potential decisions that are relevant to them.
Disrupting	Offering novel and counter-intuitive perspectives on events, issues or objects, and doing so in provocative ways
Encouraging Amplification	Encouraging audience members to engage in actions that will help attract further attention.

(Smith & Fischer, 2021, p. 268).

2.2 Discourse and Gender

The following section is dedicated to conceptualizing contemporary discourse in online digital communications as well as the role gender plays in it. More specifically, gender discourse is a salient topic within this body of research due to how it is a popular topic of conversation contributing to Andrew Tate's popularity in 2022 (Artsy, 2023; Suguira, 2023). Furthermore, a conceptualisation of discourse is mandatory as it is the object of study in this paper.

2.2.1 Conceptualizing Discourse

Discourse is primarily associated with a vast amount of research concerned with understanding human communication through complex and inter-related systems of shared meaning (Gillen & Peterson, 2005). Not to be confused with linguistics which primarily concerns the study and analysis of language. Discourse instead takes a historical approach to the construction of meaning taking into account a variety of socio-cultural elements including power relations, ideologies, institutions, social identities and so forth (Fairclough, 2013). For the most part discourse is still understood as a linguistic action, "be it written visual or oral communication, verbal or non-verbal, undertaken by social actors, in a specific setting determined by social rules, norms and conventions (Mautner et al., 2017, p. 5). Another characteristic of discourse as the object of study is that it takes advantage of social constructivism where concepts such as race, gender, ability, identity and sexuality are socially constructed phenomenon shaped by cultural and historical contexts (Stetsenko & Arievitch, 1997).

2.2.2 Conceptualizing Gender

Gender is a complex multifaceted concept, of which the meaning has changed significantly overtime. It refers to the cultural and social roles, behaviours and expectations

that are associated with one's sex being male, female or non-binary (Richardson, 2008). Before continuing, it is important to distinguish the biological from the social. Whilst ones predetermined sex refers to the biological dimension, gender more specifically is a socially constructed phenomenon for which societal members design (Stets & Burk, 2000). Furthermore, gender is not determined by one's biological sex but instead relies on factors such as interpersonal differences and experiences, culture, family and society (Richardson, 2008). It also encompasses a vast range of identities, expressions and sexual orientations. This is further corroborated by how gender is performed and illustrated differently in different cultures (Gutmann, 1997).

The concept of gender has also evolved overtime and has been a prevalent point of discussion in academic literature. There are several different theoretical perspectives on gender, including the essentialist view, social constructivist, feminist gender theory, intersectionality and finally the post-modernist view (Richardson, 2008). Early accounts of academic gender discourse were concerned with 'natural' and 'biological' explanations for differences in human behaviour causing for gender to be viewed one in the same with one's sex (Richardson, 2008). This was known as the essentialist view. Further sociological research would bring about the social constructionist approach which highlighted the socio-cultural relevancy of gender and how it is defined differently in different cultures (Gutmann, 1997; Richardson, 2008). Feminist gender-theory supports the social constructionist perspective but places emphasis on the role of power and discusses how gender relates to social, economic and cultural constructions of power (Richardson, 2008). Intersectionality takes this further by discussing gender in relation to race and introduces new perspectives on power relations taking into account layers of oppression (Richardson, 2008). Finally, researchers such as Judith Butler reconceptualized gender and argued its performativity which was incredibly influential as it illustrated that gender is continuously produced and shaped through everyday practices and social interactions (Richardson, 2008). Taking into account the academic perspectives discussed it is important to realize the notion of gender being an ambiguous concept, where modern gender research tends to characterize it as a form of identity expression. A performance that requires understanding of complex contexts, not only pertaining to a particular speech event but also requires knowledge of cultural expectations of gender as well as social structures (Kiesling, 2001). As a result, gender has become a popular topic of contemporary discourse where people come together to explore their gender identity, including and increasingly in online settings (Bowker, 2001).

2.3 Crisis of Masculinity? Exploring Masculinity Discourse Online

Masculinity can be "understood as a repertoire of authoritative stances that implicate a social hierarchy" (Kiesling, 2001, p.250). In recent times there has been a growing niche of men feeling emasculated and blaming modern society for it (Munsch & Gruys, 2018). This is a significant topic in a discussion surrounding gender as research has shown that feelings of emasculation are synonymous with outcomes such as physical aggression, victim blaming as well as the expression of misogynistic and anti-gay attitudes (Bossom et al., 2009; O'Connor et al., 2017; Weaver & Vescio, 2015; Munsch & Gruys, 2018, p. 375). Following the acceleration of communication technologies after the birth of the internet and introduction of web 2.0, the internet has afforded digital spaces online where users can connect and establish discourse with each other. Especially as a safe space for users to collectively explore their gender identity (Mountford, 2018). But also, as safe spaces for users to express contrarian and controversial ideas. Further exaggerated by how dominant discourses of masculinity provide competing scripts for how male solidarity and heterosexuality is structured, with research suggesting that men actively negotiate dominant cultural discourses in their everyday interactions (Kiesling, 2005).

In regards to masculinity discourse, an example of this would be the manosphere which is termed as a loose collection of groups of androcentric communities including men's-rights activists, gamergate, the alt-right and pickup artist forums (PUA) (Van Valkenburgh, 2021). Androcentrism referring to the propensity to centre society around men and men's needs, values and priorities relegating women to the periphery (Bailey et al., 2019). These online communities also serve as a place of discourse for more niche groups such as incel's (involuntary celibates), androphiles (same-sex attracted males who don't identify as homosexuals), and more fringe groups (Marwick & Lewis, 2017). For the most part discourse between members of these groups is relegated to platforms which afford users with anonymity. It is this same anonymity that attracts users with counter-cultural beliefs and often non-socially-acceptable views as it alleviates risks of these controversial takes having an effect on them in real life (Mountford, 2018). Key characteristics of these niche groups and what they share in common is their misogynistic and anti-feminist takes as well as an aversion to ideas of political correctness and virtue signalling (Marwick & Lewis, 2017).

Another shared trait amongst groups within the manosphere is the interest in discourse surrounding masculinity and its alleged crisis (Lily, 2016).

In continuation, a new philosophy has been derived and as such further transcends the borders of groups within the manosphere. This new philosophy has been termed as 'The Red Pill' (TRP), which Van Valkenburgh (2018), defines as superficially solving hegemonic masculinity's prescriptive emotional walls with the inherent desire for connection by constructing women as exchangeable commodities (p. 1). A very important aspect of the TRP is the ante-narrative it is based on. As the name insinuates TRP is derived from *The Matrix* where the main character is given a choice of taking a 'blue pill' which means switching off and living a life of delusion or being a 'sheep' to be herded; or taking the 'red pill' which means becoming enlightened to life's ugly truths (Ging, 2017). This same metaphor is used in constructing anti-feminist discourse under the gaze of TRP, especially in counter to the institutionalization and professionalization as well as the emergence of widespread postfeminist cultural sensibility (Messner, 2016, p. 639). For which they argue to be the cause of young male disenfranchisement (Ging, 2017; Van Valkenburg, 2018). Whilst groups within the manosphere partake in differing topics of discourse Ging (2017), argues that TRP remains the philosophy that theoretically unites different groups of the manosphere. This is largely accomplished by how these groups use economical, psychological and rational androcentric logics to commodify women in the conquest for sexual and/or external/internal validation, status, legacy and success (Ribeiro et al., 2021; Van Valkenburg, 2018).

Whilst these discussions are for the most part relegated to niche online spaces of the internet, TRP has been able to transcend these niches and make its way into mainstream discourse (Marwick & Lewis, 2021). This was accomplished with the uptake of Men's rights activists following the writings of Warren Farrell and his work *The myth of male* power (Jaye, 2016). An understanding of the discourse that takes place within the manosphere can give insight into the meanings which these masculinists in general identify themselves with. More importantly little is known about the influence this discourse is having due to the topic receiving little empirical research (Van Valkenburg, 2018). Especially regarding how information from these niche groups can be disseminated into the mainstream where it can reach vulnerable audience members who are more prone to influence. Furthermore, the socio-cultural relevance is apparent due to the concerning reality of TRP discourse with journalists characterising TRP channels as the "online heart of modern misogyny" (Marche, 2016). With some of the most striking manifestations of TRP discourse being the defence of rape culture and paleo-masculine beliefs of male superiority and domination (Ging, 2017).

2.4 Post-Truth Era: Information, Manipulation and Indoctrination

As previously mentioned, the notion of post-truth refers to "relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief" (Oxford Word of the Year, 2016). Where factors such as emotion have become far more salient in regards to receptivity of online information. However, post-truth does not imply that there are now 'more emotions' that mediate online communications, but instead that there is a shift in awareness to emotion as a determining factor (Boler & Davis, 2018). Where concepts such as truthiness which refers to the "quality of seeming or felt to be true, even if not necessarily true" become more apparent (Boler & Davis, 2018, p. 75). Post-truth specifically functions as an ordering device, a concept that serves as a means to create order in a complex reality (Braun, 2019). However, for the purposes of this study as corroborated by Braun (2019), an important question for post-truth is "what aspects of reality it helps us to understand better and what aspects it rather obscures" (p. 432). As a result, post-truth functions as a lens for which complex discourses, relationships and systems of meaning can be viewed. Salgado (2018), elaborates on the socio-cultural development of post-truth and the role post-modernism has played summarizing:

> No absolute and definitive truths exist and values, knowledge and ultimately reality are relative to discourse and interplay, which often gives rise to contradictory interpretations of reality (…). The difference between modernity and postmodernity lies precisely in the proposal of an ontology of reality versus a construction of reality, that is, if reality pre-exists to be discovered or if it is instead constructed through subjective discourse and interpretation (Salgado, 2018, p. 321).

Thus, as corroborated by Cosentino (2020), Postmodernism functions as a precursor to ideological fragmentation and cultural relativism in the current post-truth era, where "the subjective personal experience of reality supersedes any ontology of a pre-existing reality" (p. 18). As previously mentioned, I would argue that OAEs are contributing to the dissemination of alternative truths into the mainstream. It is within these economies of attention where researchers have argued that participants take part in 'truth-games', examples of which include the Q-Anon conspiracies which circulated throughout the Trump presidency

(Cosentino, 2020). This is due to how the internet affords the ability for individuals to seek out and connect to others with the same alternative beliefs and foster the creation of specific ideological filter bubbles (Boler & Davis, 2018). Where participants exchange ideas or 'truths' in exchange for gratification, status and identity (Consentino, 2020). Participation in these truth-games is much a like to what Cohen was referring to with "lies spreading faster than truths" (Anti-Defamation League, 2019). Harsin (2015), elaborates upon this by creating an argument for differing regimes of post-truth used to manage citizen-consumers by making them believe "(a) accept that there is no way ultimately to verify truth, (b) believe their own truth arbiters in their markets, and subsequently (c) engage in vigorous counterclaiming and debunking" (p. 6). Where actors who succumb to these truth games slowly become siloed into differing fragmenting groups.

It is in these truth games that ideas are shared, agreed or disagreed upon. However, the isolated nature of these discourses fosters the creation of new ideologies or regimes. Ideologies function as shared ideas or 'belief systems' that are not constrained on the individual level but on the social (Van Dijk, 2011). As a result, they can be contrasted to the sharing of socio-cultural knowledge in developing online communities. The reason for this relevancy is that the same online spaces that foster and facilitate masculinity discourse are producing nuanced counter-cultural ideas such as that of Red Pill (Ging, 2017). Furthermore, as ideologies function within group thinking they can be appropriated in a way to protect the shared existence of said group. Ideologies protect the shared interests of groups by often articulating relationships with other more dominant groups (Van Dijk, 2011). The red pill ideology does this through the systematic objectification of women, pro free speech rhetoric as well as deeming normal folk as sheep succumbing to the matrix (Marwick & Lewis, 2017; Ging, 2017). Creating an insider-outsider mentality in order to safeguard ideals of the group's rhetoric. In a discussion of ideology and discourse, manipulation is another key facet. Manipulation concerns the abuse of power by means of discourse: "Manipulators make others believe or do things that are in the interest of the manipulator, and against the best interest of the manipulated" (Van Dijk, 2006, p. 360). The reasoning for the relevance of ideology and manipulation is due to accounts of individuals falling or succumbing to the Red Pill. As an example, there is a subreddit titled *r/exredpill* which is devoted to 'detoxing' red piller's from there ideology and provides academic and non-academic literature to counter Red Pill arguments as well as for former red piller's to find common ground (*R/Exredpill*, 2023). The subreddit also features several accounts of users calling for advice on family members who have fallen into the ideology, detailing how their behaviour is being negatively

shaped (R/Exredpill, 2023). Implying that these ideologies are having an indoctrinating effect, as well as a negative effect on behaviour.

Social media contributing to the hyper-information flow has also changed how information is exchanged and received with narrative storytelling coming to the forefront of multiple disciplines of discussion (Mäkelä et al., 2021). As an example, Mäkelä and colleagues (2021), conclude that narrative storytelling contributes to post-truthfulness in the public sphere as it shields itself from fact checking on three levels: experientiality, representativeness and normativity (p. 19). Firstly, personal experience is resistant to falsification, secondly dialogues of representation are cemented by the consensus of 'affective publics' (Mäkelä et al., 2021). Finally, affective consensus of a 'good cause' eclipses criticism of individual stories in favour of the 'greater purpose' the story is serving (Mäkelä et al., 2021). In short post-truth can be further characterised by compelling storytelling usurping the place of empirical facts in determining our shared social reality (Kraatila, 2019). This strategy of storytelling is then appropriated by SMIs corroborated by Smith & Fischer (2021), with one of the attentions seeking constructs being the use of ante-narratives in order to attract audience attention. Largely due to how we consume stories better than information with storytelling shown to aid in voluntary cooperation and with character driven story-telling shown to elevate levels of oxytocin, the "It's safe to approach others" neurochemical (Zak, 2014, p. 1).

The reasoning for the relevancy of understanding post-truth is that the same patterns of discourse are being seen in that of gender discourse. More specifically with groups of young men of privilege feeling a growing disdain and disenfranchisement as a result of the emerging post-feminist cultural sensibility (Ging, 2017: Marwick & Lewis, 2017; Messner, 2016). These groups or individuals are then pulled towards alternative viewpoints and engage in discourse within ideological filter bubbles where their counter cultural beliefs go unchallenged (Marwick & Lewis, 2017). It is within these groups that individuals can foster social identities of which have been shown to shape perceptions of truth whilst furthering the fragmentation of values (Wang et al., 2022). In OAEs where attention is heavily commodified, it can be argued that SMIs that brand themselves as 'public intellectuals' take advantage of this by attuning their message to a specific audience and their values (Smith & Fischer, 2021). What is significant however, is when these messages are disseminated into the mainstream where vulnerable users have the potential to be indoctrinated. This is where civil discourse stops as reaching a consensus is no longer the goal, but it is instead to convert

audience members from one side to the other, or to persuade audience members to pick a side if they have not done so yet.

3. Method

3.1 Qualitative Approach

This section is dedicated to a discussion of the methodology as well as ethical considerations. This will be done so in order to lay the ground work for analysis in an attempt to answer the RQ: How does Andrew Tate construct his personal branding in podcasts, interviews and talk shows in order to compete in online attention economies?

As this study is aimed towards the construction of meaning between discursive events, a qualitative research approach will be taken. This is due to how meaning is a socially constructed phenomenon which individuals define in their interaction with the world, which cannot be measured by a fixed and measurable phenomenon that positivist, quantitative research relies upon (Merriam, 2002). In doing so, qualitative research is equipped for assessing questions involving the 'how' as it allows for the analysis of phenomenon within it's given context. Whilst discourse has several definitions, it is for the most part understood as a linguistic action, "be it written, visual or oral communication, verbal or non-verbal, undertaken by social actors in a specific setting determined by social rules, norms and conventions" (Mautner et al., 2017, p. 5). Adopting the social constructivist approach this paper will analyse content featuring Andrew Tate published by third parties and the way meaning is constructed within the context of the post-truth world order, the current landscape of masculinity discourse and strategies used to compete in online attention economies. This paper will exclude content produced and published by Andrew Tate and his team in order to address the way he engages in discourse transparently without having to navigate factors such as the editing of content to serve his image and brand. The analysis of third-party content featuring Tate also allows for further discursive elements to be assessed such as the way his ideas are critiqued, debated and distributed by him to his community.

3.2 Motivating MCDA

In order to answer the research question, a multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) will be conducted. The main motivating factor for choosing MCDA is due to how it facilitates a methodology that allows for a contextualised analysis. By combining traditions of social analysis with language studies, it allows for the critical analysis of social elements including "power relations, ideologies, institutions, social identities and so forth" (Fairclough, 2013, p. 9). Critical discourse analysis can be summarized as a combined use of

differing linguistic approaches. The use of linguistic tools embedded in a detailed analysis allows for the interpretation of actors or authors, more precisely addressing how they use language and grammatical features to produce meaning and influence audiences in a particular way, sometimes concealing their communicative intentions (Machin & Mayr, 2012). This process is facilitated by how MCDA views discourse as a 'social practice' where a dialectical relationship is described between a particular discursive event and the situations, institutions and social structures which frame it (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016). For which construction of meaning is subject to discursive interplay as actors involved are aware of the social and societal contexts that frame their speech.

MCDA's long history of development combined with the interdisciplinary use of multiple methodologies, provides an advanced approach towards conducting multi-modal studies (Wang, 2014). However, as a result it is subject to multiple academic perceptions. Within the context of this study, focus will be placed on the functional semiotic perspective which highlights that meaning is constructed through multiple modes of communication (Wang, 2014). With interest in combining semiotic analysis with MCDA, Machin and Mayr (2012), provide a framework facilitating the combination of MCDA and multimodal analysis. Therefore, tools used for the following analysis include signs of meaning both denoted and connoted, overlexicalization, suppression, structural oppositions, lexical choices and genre of communication (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Referring to the semiotic distinction in line with the work of Machin & Mayr (2012), denotation refers to a relationship between the content and expression whereas connotation refers to the signs or more specifically, the underlying metalanguage in use (Sonneson, 1998). Overlexicalization refers to the meaning that is produced when something is emphasised within a given text. Usually found when words and synonyms are used in an abundance of which can give meaning to the persuasion taking place often concerning notions that are deemed problematic or that are of ideological contention (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Suppression or lexical absence on the other hand refers to aspects of the text which we would expect appearing absent or under emphasised and the meaning that this subsequently produces. Structural opposition refers to oppositions within texts such as good or evil, young or old, etc. Structural opposition refers to how meaning is produced when one of these qualities is mentioned as it implies differences from the qualities of its opposite without these qualities being overtly stated (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 39). Much in line with the social semiotic theory that words function within networks of meaning and not just on their own. Finally, lexical choices and genre of communication more specifically refer to the context of which communication is taking place, where more emphasis is placed on the

meaning that is created due to relations of power. An example of this would be when authors attempt to influence us by convincing that they have power over us (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Likewise, meaning can also be generated when authors attempt to informalize their message as it could seem that they are communicating to us on equal terms. The semiotic tools described above will be used in order to analyse and contextualise the semiotic choices of the actors being assessed.

To continue, as previously mentioned MCDA does not access language exclusively, but instead takes into account multiple factors which contribute to the construction of meaning and communication. In order to assess these factors, Machin & Mayr (2012), provide the tools which represent speech, people and actions. Presentation of speech provides language and visual resources for the analysis of social actors which can be used to signify broader discourses as well as ideas and values which are not overtly stated (Machin & Mayr, 2012). In regards to language resources, Machin & Mayr (2012), differentiate the use of verbs within texts which can be used to signify guilt, lack of agency and emotional intensity. Whereas the visual resources provided place emphasis on the social actor's gaze and pose as additional evaluated aspects as part of meaning construction (Machin & Mayr, 2012). The second set of tools proposed by Machin & Mayr (2012), discuss representations of people which allow us to place and contextualise social actors in world, highlighting aspects of their identity according to the messengers' intentions. Some of the tools provided include 1) Personalisation and impersonalisation, 2) Individualisation versus collectivisation, 3) Specification and genericisation, 4) Nomination or functionalisation, etc. Similar to the previous example, these tools can be used for the analysis of visual texts as well. These conclude the tools provided by Machin & Mayr (2012), which proved relevant in the analysis. However, a tool not mentioned concerning the representation of others which proved relevant in this study was generalization. Generalization in the context of representing others can be defined as a categorization practice of using statements about people or groups of people as a basis of stating something about a category (Hauser, 2011). Generalization is of prevalence in this study as it allows for meaning creation regarding instructions on how to understand individuals and groups (Hauser, 2011). As a result, the process of generalization has discursive and ideological implications in the way the individuals or groups are represented by others and was found to be a linguistic tool relevant in this analysis.

In the context of this research MCDA will prove invaluable in dissecting Andrew Tate's discourse in relation to the way he is able to construct his personal branding to compete within OAEs. The tools discussed above will provide the framework for the analysis

of both language and visual texts. This MCDA analysis will be completed by the strategies presented in the theoretical framework in order to contextualise the analysis within the attention economy as well as personal branding. Tracing Tate's discourse to niche and mainstream masculinity rhetoric as well as post-truth era will further aid in contextualising this analysis and contribute to the discussion of this paper. Secondly, another advantage of MCDA as a research method is the criticality which it offers. It is through this criticality that MCDA emphasizes the use of interdisciplinary research via: "(1) Critical Theory should be directed at the totality of society in its historical specificity and (2) Critical Theory should improve the understanding of society by integrating all the major social sciences, including economics, sociology, history, political science, anthropology and psychology (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016, p. 6). As a result, MCDA allows for the inclusion of multiple facets of theoretical disciplines which can aid in: firstly, understanding how Tate constructs his image, and secondly contextualizing the reasoning behind his message and the construction of his persona gaining vast amounts of popularity in recent times. MCDA also emphasizes the critical approach the researcher must take into evaluating their position as a member of society and not someone who is emancipated from it (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016). In order to achieve this, various steps will be taken to ensure the analysis is not biased and standardised (See Section 3.3). Furthermore, a practice of constant reflexivity will be taken in the process of writing this paper to ensure topics are covered in a non-biased manner and that a big picture approach is taken in regards to the discussion of the findings.

3.3 Research Design

3.3.1 Sample Description

In order to conduct an MCDA analysis, 12 videos will be examined comprising of podcasts and talk show formats which feature Andrew Tate. This is due to how his long form content is clipped and reposted by individuals within his affiliate marketing scheme which acts as his main strategy of accessing OAE's (Das, 2022). The podcasts/mediated discussions will be selected as they are the main source of content where Tate engages in discourse surrounding his polarizing views, where the concept of masculinity is often present as it is central to addressing the majority male following, he has amassed. Furthermore, the reasoning for assessing both podcasts and talk shows is that they both share the similarity of

facilitating discussions on polarising topics where ideas are introduced and contested. The time frame for selecting these texts will range between year of 2022 stating 1st January 2022 before he was arrested and detained on charges of human trafficking on December 29th 2022 (Das, 2023). 2022 will be analysed for context building up to these events, but primarily due to it being the year where Tate managed to become the worlds most googled man (Nicol, 2022). Furthermore, as previously mentioned several of the texts chosen for this analysis his ideas are often heavily critiqued by the interviewer or other guests present in the discussion. This is especially the case when he is featured in mainstream media and his ideas are challenged due to the influence he is having on younger generations. As a result, he is forced to defend his beliefs both to protect his image as well as his brand. Making use of the tools supplied by MCDA could further aid in dissecting his argumentation as well as positioning the concept of masculinity in contemporary discourse. Please see Table 2 for a detailing of media items analysed.

Table 2: Items Assessed

Items	Title	Duration	Link
1.	ANDREW TATE - THE TRUTH about ILLUMINATI , and EXPOSING BALENCIAGA	2:00:43	VIBEZ. (2022). ANDREW TATE - THE TRUTH about ILLUMINATI , and EXPOSING BALENCIAGA !!! [YouTube Video]. In *YouTube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t8-43XC5ZL4&t=47s
2.	Andrew Tate & Pearl DEBATE Modern Women The Pregame Ep 100	3:08:06	JustPearlyThings. (2022). Andrew Tate & Pearl DEBATE Modern Women | The Pregame Ep 100 [YouTube Video]. In *YouTube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7TuilbZ1j58
3.	ANDREW TATE AND CHIAN DO NOT GET ALONG Grilling S2 Ep 7	1:08:09	Stand Out TV. (2022). ANDREW TATE AND CHIAN DO NOT GET ALONG | Grilling S2 Ep 7 [YouTube Video]. In *YouTube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1S9oOgnGp0
4.	Andrew Tate Predicted his Arrest Will Tate do BJJ UFC 280	1:46:52	O'Malley, S. (2022). Andrew Tate Predicted his Arrest? Will Tate do BJJ? | UFC 280 [YouTube Video]. In *YouTube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pYnDBSMMaGk&t=3070s
5.	ANDREW TATE UNCENSORED - Fighting Logan Paul, Reverting to	2:27:04	TK Talks. (2022). ANDREW TATE UNCENSORED - Fighting Logan Paul, Reverting to ISLAM, Attacks from ILLUMINATI -Exclusive [YouTube Video]. In *YouTube*.

	ISLAM, Attacks from ILLUMINATI		https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tDn7Ey I-E48&t=1s
6.	Andrew Tate Uncensored Interview Samuel Leeds October 2022	2:04:39	Leeds, S. (2022). Andrew Tate Uncensored Interview: Samuel Leeds October 2022 [YouTube Video]. In *YouTube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TjJwo MhIU-U&t=3185s
7.	Andrew Tate vs Piers Morgan The Full Interview	1:14:49	Piers Morgan Uncensored. (2022). Andrew Tate vs Piers Morgan | The Full Interview [YouTube Video]. In *YouTube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VGWG cESPltM&t=1351s
8.	Andrew Tate's LAST Interview Before Arrest! (MUST SEE)	2:27:20	STRIKE IT BIG. (2022). Andrew Tate's LAST Interview Before Arrest! (MUST SEE) [YouTube Video]. In *YouTube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a4Ta3sr GmXo&t=375s
9.	Exclusive Andrew Tate UNCENSORED Interview with Patrick Bet-David	4:52:10	PBD Podcast. (2022). Exclusive: Andrew Tate UNCENSORED Interview with Patrick Bet-David [YouTube Video]. In *YouTube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iv-C4CVGk28
10.	FULL SEND PODCAST - With ANDREW TATE!!!	2:21:36	Full ReSend. (2022). FULL SEND PODCAST - With ANDREW TATE!!! [YouTube Video]. In *YouTube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJyTkL gW_KI&t=1s
11.	Piers Morgan Takes On Andrew Tate AGAIN! The Full Interview #2	0:46:05	Piers Morgan Uncensored. (2022). Piers Morgan Takes On Andrew Tate AGAIN! | The Full Interview #2 [YouTube Video]. In *YouTube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2QcZS Vu3CCY&t=1s
12.	Your Mom's House Podcast w Andrew Tate - Ep.636	2:42:28	YMH Studios. (2022). Your Mom's House Podcast w/ Andrew Tate - Ep.636 [YouTube Video]. In *YouTube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vsp69j YlYsg&t=5346s

3.3.2 Operationalization

In order to conduct this analysis, the linguistic framework of MCDA provided by Machin & Mayr (2012), will be used to critically assess the way Andrew Tate constructs his personal brand in order to compete within OAEs. As a result, this analysis will be contextualized in the sphere of the attention economy, making use of literature regarding factors which determine success within OAE's, as well as strategic self-presentation in

OAE's (Please see table 3 for operationalization of assessed concepts). This will be done in an attempt to explore how Andrew Tate has successfully captured and monetized the attention of millions of users throughout 2022. This will be done making use of the constructs for acquiring user attention as put forward by Smith & Fischer (2021), including: Attuning to attentive audiences, Distilling, constructing 'Ante-narratives', Orientating, Disrupting and encouraging amplification. In order to situate this analysis in a discussion of personal branding, relevant in a discussion of SMI branding, Gorbatov et al (2018) and Scheidt et al (2020) provide systematic reviews of personal branding which will aid in further contextualising this analysis. Furthermore, as previously discussed, the above-mentioned personal branding research undermines the prevalence of authenticity management. Communicating authenticity is essential towards dictating success of SMIs so there for Audrezet et al (2020), conceptualizations of both passionate and transparent authenticity will be used to further contextualise the analysis.

Further examples of research regarding strategies used by social media influencers (SMI) have pointed to factors such as constructions of digital likeness, the reorganization of narrative structures as well as the portrayal of self-fulfilling prophecies (Schau & Gilly, 2003; Smith & Fischer, 2021). These are constructs that will aid in MCDA of Andrew Tate's rhetoric. Furthermore, SMI's that brand themselves as 'public intellectuals' who of which engage in often polarizing discourse have been shown to promote filter bubbles instead of furthering democracy. This is where personality and emotion is favoured over the message, where SMI's attract the valuable commodity of attention through the use of self-representation, 'clickbait', extreme emotions and polarizing discourse (Ven & Gemert, 2022). This is the reasoning for why Tate's rhetoric and the potential influence it can have should be contextualised within the post-truth order where the relationship between emotion and truth has been uprooted. This can work to open the discussion into how SMI's are potentially taking advantage of the increased fragmentation and polarisation of ideas in order to build their audience following.

Table 3: Operationalization of assessed concepts

Smith & Fischer (2021): Constructs for attention seeking strategies	
Attuning to attentive audiences	Observing audiences and targeting those that demonstrate 'attention capacity'

As this is an analysis of discourse, we cannot assess who is being targeted or not. What can be observed is the 'us and them' division, or how does Tate depict his supporters as well as people who oppose them. Or methods he uses to make his message appealing and target young men as an example.

Distilling	Creating headlines or titles that successfully signal that a post has audience relevant content.
	Also, not particularly relevant as we are not assessing the 'click bait' of his content. It is important to note that every title of video assessed in this study exhibits clickbait strategy with ANDREW TATE's name in bold or "Last interview before his arrest."
Constructing 'Antenarratives'	Creating "Antenarratives": texts that include narrative elements (Such as settings, plot and characters) that get added and dropped over time, and that incorporate different perspectives and themes overtime, without ever reaching a formal narrative closure.
	This will be assessed and coded based on Tate's usage of narrative storytelling in order to get his ideas across.
Orientating	Offering direct, well rationalized, advice or guidance to audience members about potential decisions that are relevant to them.
	This will be assessed and coded based on the advice and guidance Tate offers especially in the case of competition, wealth creation and mental health.

Disrupting	Offering novel and counter-intuitive perspectives on events, issues or objects, and doing so in provocative ways
	This will be coded based on Andrew Tate's contrarian or novel ideas used to create controversy, instigate and attract attention.
Encouraging Amplification	Encouraging audience members to engage in actions that will help attract further attention.
	This will be assessed based on Andrew Tates ability to direct his audiences in dispersing his content, both directly and indirectly.

Audrezet et al (2020): Conceptualizing Authenticity

Passionate Authenticity	Notion of authentic people or brands are those that are intrinsically motivated rather than extrinsically motivated.
	This will be assessed and coded based on Tate's ability to defend his ideals as well as his motivations for the content he produces. Motivations based in his intrinsic beliefs were also coded as passionate Authenticity.
Transparent Authenticity	Transparent authenticity refers to providing objective fact-based information about said product and/or service whilst also disclosing the contractual terms of the partnership if present.
	This will be assessed based on his ability to communicate, remain objective and transparent about processes that serve himself and his brand.

Other Codes used:

Masculinity, Femininity, Gender Roles, Call back to tradition/history, Mental Health, Lexical choices of communication, Generalization.

3.3.3 Data Analysis

All items collected for the analysis have been analysed and stored via the Atlas.ti software to ensure organizational validity. In the interest of processing the data efficiently, software will be used in order to provide textual transcripts for the videos. These transcripts will be analysed alongside the video format texts in order to reduce the negative effects which computational and human errors would cause, reducing the consequence this could have on the results. The transcripts cannot be analysed exclusively as the MCDA being conducted will make use of the tools for analysis presented by Machin and Mayr (2012), which include semiotic choices, presenting speech and speakers, representing people as well as representing action. Additional tools that will be used includes Machin & Mayr's (2012), framework for representing actors and language. These facilitate the analysis of 'gaze' and 'pose' but also additional linguistic structures such as the use of honorifics, objectification, suppression etc. (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

It is important to note that none of the content analysed was produced by Andrew Tate and his team, but by third party actors. This was done due to this study focusing on discourse, especially in the case of how Tate responds to alternative viewpoints as well as how he defends his own. Furthermore, it eliminates the variable of the content being edited to suit his own image and brand. This distinction is prevalent, especially when considering that the results of this study will likely differ if focus was places on conduction an MCDA on content produced by Tate and his team.

3.4 Positionality and Ethical Considerations

In order to address a qualitative research study of this nature it is important for the positionality of the researcher to be addressed. Especially, when discussing my position as an 'insider' or an 'outsider' to the field of this study (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Before continuing it is important to rectify the non-dichotomy of this perspective as Dwyer & Buckle (2009),

illustrate that it is rather based on a continuum where the researcher can occupy both insider and outsider roles. This is especially due to how the research is an ongoing process of which perceptions of the subject matter can change over time (Merriam et al., 2001). The paradox of qualitative research can be described as "to be acutely tuned-in to the experiences and meaning systems of others – to indwell – and at the same time to be aware of how one's own biases and preconceptions may be influencing what one is trying to understand" (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 123). Regardless, this is a significant feat to accomplish especially since I fall within the target audience of the influencers being analysed.

      To further elaborate upon my position as the sole researcher of this study, I would argue I fall between the insider and outsider perspectives. As mentioned, I fall within the target audience as I carry some relation to the topics discussed and critics of society. Partly due to my own research as well as my own social media behaviour. As a result, I am the target of masculinity discourse as social media sites like Instagram, TikTok and YouTube push the content towards me making it almost impossible to escape when I access these services. However, I am also very much an outsider as I have never once felt compelled to engage with this type of content nor seek out more niche groups online apart from satisfying my own curiosity. Furthermore, apart from raising interesting existential questions I have never found the content to influence my core values or impact the way I identify with myself. I am also of the belief that one set of governing rules cannot be used to explain or generalize human behaviour. For which these dialogues often try to do by referring to traditional paleo-masculine norms. I also carry the bias of being harshly opposed to Red Pill ideals as I think it fosters anti-human behaviour. Despite all of this my aim is to approach the data without bias by treating Tate as a product designed to acquire vast amounts of attention, maintain it and subsequently monetize it. A secondary aim of mine is to build a greater understanding of the bigger picture of this debate and understand how human behaviour is changing in relation to the communication technologies we have at our disposal.

4. Results

This section will detail the outcome of the MCDA analysis seeking to answer the research question: How does Andrew Tate construct his personal branding in podcasts, interviews and talk shows in order to compete within the attention economy? The results are the product of the analysis of twelve podcast and talk show formats which feature Andrew Tate. In order to contextualise the MCDA, the results section starts with an elaboration of the main attention seeking constructs as described by Smith & Fischer (2021). These constructs will be the governing framework for which this section is structured. This is due to how the constructs facilitate ample means for to discuss a variety of factors allowing for a contextualised output of results.

4.1 Attention seeking strategies

This section places focus on the attention seeking strategies constructed by Smith & Fischer (2021) discussed in the methodology (See section 3.2.2 for operationalization of assessed constructs). The strategies include disrupting, creating ante-narratives, orientating, distilling and attuning to attentive audiences. Personal branding being an elusive concept by nature as it entails a variety of factors such as impression management and self-presentation, it essentially refers to how the actor positions and portrays themselves online (Gorbatov et al., 2018; Scheidt et al., 2020). This includes factors such as strategies which signal attention as well as strategies which communicate authenticity as these contribute to the construction of the self-image of an online persona. As an example, an SMI cannot engage in disruptive discourse without it reflecting on their image by communicating their personal disregard for the repercussions. Regardless, following the MCDA, constructs disrupting, orientating, creating ante-narratives and attuning to attentive audiences were found most prevalent. In regards to distilling, which involves the use of attention-grabbing titles or clickbait; the construct was less prevalent as this was an analysis of discourse as well as content that was not produced by himself or his team. It is important to note however that every item analysed had an attention seeking title which can be deemed as distilling including Andrew Tate's name in bold or 'LAST INTERVIEW BEFORE ANDREW TATES ARREST' as an example.

4.1.1 Engaging in Polarizing Discourse and Disrupting

Disrupting refers to offering novel and counter-intuitive perspectives on events, issues or objects and doing so in provocative ways (Smith & Fischer, 2021, p. 272). Being the most prevalent strategy identified within the analysis, it is clear that engaging in polarizing discourse is one of Tate's main strategies for competing for attention. In line with much of the criticism he has received some of his most polarising discussions concern that of women, femininity, female promiscuity as well as the double standard of monogamous relationships. Take for example in the Full Send podcast Tate makes the remark "It's kind of unfortunate because women are completely and utterly judged on how they look" (Full ReSend, 2022, [00:46:27]). This is an example of Tate making an objectifying and generalized claim followed by "[I]f you're gonna be a feminist, at least get hot first" (Full ReSend, 2022, [00:46:31]). This can be taken as an example of Tate purposively and directly antagonizing a notoriously vocal community. Likely, as by inspiring action from this community, it will serve to bring more attention to his content, both positive and negative. Furthermore, this can also be seen as an example of attuning to attentive audiences as his target audience are likely not feminists and would possibly find humour in this antagonization. Furthermore, his style of argumentation is in line with TRP rhetoric as it is based in rationality suppressing alternative subjective experiences coming from differing perspectives (Ging, 2017; Van Valkenburgh, 2018).

Throughout the analysis it is evident that he also does this indirectly based on is lexical choices of communication. Take for example "Anything violence related, women should be nowhere near. So, I'll give an example. My woman is very well trained that if it goes off on the street, she needs to just run and scream" (Full ReSend, 2022, [00:48:22]). The lexical choice of 'my women' and 'trained' indirectly conveys and connotes Tate's misogynistic views that men should have authority over women. These examples where taken from a particularly androcentric discussion featuring Andrew Tate. However, in a separate interview, Piers Morgan confronts Tate on these views with his defence being "I believe she belongs to the man in marriage, correct" (Piers Morgan Uncensored, 2022, [00:10:41]). Demonstrating passionate authenticity as he backs his claim with his genuine beliefs regardless of the consequences such as being labelled a misogynist. With overlexicalization of derogatory terms such as 'bitch' further emphasizing the disruptive nature of his rhetoric. Tate maintains a defence of his views in that the message he carries is pulled out of context and lost in translation.

Secondly, he also holds disruptive views regarding the double standard of female promiscuity and monogamy, where he calls back to tradition and history to defend his views. This argumentative strategy of calling back to tradition and history was prevalent throughout the analysis and is used in several of his arguments. This is displayed in a reoccurring argument of his with "Every single man since the dawn of human time had more than one woman. Every single king, every single emperor, every single sultan, every single conqueror. Since the dawn of human time had more than one woman" (Stand Out TV, 2022, [00:15:57]). Calling back to tradition and history is another argument used especially in Tate's discussion of gender as well as justifying that 'high status' males can justifiably cheat. The same arguments are used to justify why it's not the same for women with:

> Females shouldn't even want to cheat. The reason women can't cheat is because there is no way to ensure paternity if a females cheating. Modern science in and of itself, just because you can now find out who the dad is, doesn't undo 5000 years of human evolution in which a female had to be loyal to one man (Stand Out TV, 2022, [00:17:18]).

In a generalized discussion about gender roles claims such as these only hold true for the audiences that believe or agree with the sentiment and Tate understands this. Overlexicalization of absolutes such as 'every' further add to the persuasive element of Tate's rhetoric. The continued trend of basing his claims on personal belief further add to the persuasive element of Tate's rhetoric, denoting passionate authenticity creating emotional appeal to his argument (Audrezet et al., 2020). This when coupled with disruptive takes such as "I think 99% of the world's problems would be solved if females walked through life with their body count on their forehead" (Stand Out TV, 2022, [00:19:55]). Contribute to the polarity of his personal brand as his rhetoric treads the line between satire and hate. Furthermore, discourse such as this subscribes to TRP rhetoric due to how it associates female promiscuity as a leading cause for several of the world's issues further villainizing females and feminization (Ging, 2017).

Taking into account these bold claims, the argument for his misogynistic ideals is an easy one to make as well as the subsequent influence he could be having on the youth as a result. However, it is important to also clarify the context of these discussions. Full ReSend (2022), and Stand Out TV (2022), were particularly controversial interviews where his discourse went unchallenged by the host. In regards to setting, Full ReSend (2022), was

androcentric where Tate was almost idealized for the controversy of his online persona, and with everyone present in the discussion being male and aligned towards pro free-speech the conversation was particularly flagrant. On the other hand, Stand Out TV (2022), followed the format of a date with the host where it did not make sense to have a serious debate about these issues. Furthermore, the host was not equipped to provide counter claims or arguments which only served Tate's image. In a separate interview with Samuel Leeds, a well acclaimed real estate millionaire confronts Tate on his views on women as well as referring to them as 'bitches.' Tate starts by defending himself with "I don't think I say the publicly, but I don't think I say that often" (Leeds, 2022, [1:42:20]). Contradicting himself as he uses the term in almost every item assessed excluding items 1, 7 and 11. Leeds continues to compare Tate's online coaching company to his own, which targets both men and women equally. Tate responds with "I truthfully believe that men and women are very different" followed by "I don't mean to be disparaging or insulting towards women, but I will say the truth" (Leeds, 2022, [1:43:09]). Here Tate demonstrates passionate authenticity as he bases his opinions off of genuine beliefs, however it can be argued that the transparency of his response in the Samuel Leeds interview is lacking. This is due to the contradicting nature of his argument, especially when he makes generalized claims such as "They have no interest in world conquest. They want to be comfortable. If you show a woman how to make $1000 an hour, she'll think. I can work 2 hours a week. If you show a man how to make $1000 an hour, he'll think I can make $18,000 a day" (Full ReSend, 2022, [01:07:55]). These contradictions go to show that if Tate could be more transparent about his real views towards women without negatively effecting his brand, he would likely do so.

4.1.2 Creating Ante-narratives

Ante-narratives consist of incorporating story elements such as settings, plot fragments and characters, however unlike traditional narratives, they never reach a formal narrative closure (Boje, 2001). Working as a method to grasp attention due to how individuals have an affinity towards storytelling when compared to the consumption of information (Mäkelä et al., 2021). This being the 2nd most common attention seeking strategy used by Andrew Tate throughout the analysis. Two major reoccurring ante-narratives were identified throughout the MCDA. One of the most common reoccurring ante-narratives identified within Andrew Tate's discourse is the matrix society we live in, much in line with

the red pill discourse discussed in section 2.3. The second most common ante-narrative found is the failure and degradation of western society. In regards to the matrix, in the Samuel Leeds interview Tate explains:

> That their body is being used for what is important and they just distract their mind so the body can stay alive long enough to give the machines what they want. And I really, truly believe that's a perfect analogy for the world today. We live in a world where people are being extracted for their value, their physical value. Whether you digging holes or carrying garbage or whatever, and your mind is constantly distracted by garbage. It's distracted by TV shows, concerts and clown world. I call it clown world because it's a never-ending circus (Leeds, 2022, [00:04:39]).

The word matrix appeared in almost every item analysed, excluding the Piers Morgan interviews (Items 7 and 11), and this ante-narrative has become synonymous with Andrew Tate's brand. The notion of the matrix narrative in that of itself, implies a structural opposition. This opposition takes place between people who are victims of the matrix who live within the rules of the simulation, constantly distracted from real world societal issues as well as the unfortunate realities of their own circumstances. On the other hand, people who see through the matrix and are able to break free from it are afforded wealth, freedom and true happiness. Tate exemplifies this notion with "I think that money buys freedom, and freedom buys happiness" (Stand Out TV, 2022, [00:42:26]). Essentially pinning wealth creation and money as the solution to existential concerns of freedom. For which it is important to note that he monetizes the solutions for achieving this wealth and supposed freedom. On the other hand, it is important that appropriate attention is given to the way Tate articulates this message regarding the Matrix as well as his gaze and pose (See Figure 1 showing Tate's body language when discussing the Matrix).

Figure 1: Leeds, 2022, [00:04:56]

In conversation with real estate entrepreneur Samuel Leeds, Tate posture and mannerisms denote humility and respect towards the guest. It is clear he is not trying to be disruptive and persuade his argument but instead articulates it in an understanding manner both towards Leeds as the guest speaker but also his audience who may lack familiarity with Tate. Furthermore, lexical choices such as "I really truly believe" further adds to the emotional appeal of his argumentation connoting intrinsic motivations, denoting passionate authenticity. Furthermore, Tate uses the ante-narrative of the Matrix to target men specifically and address existential concerns of their disenfranchisement and supposed growing lack of freedom. This is shown in a podcast with YMH studios where Tate explains "when I talk about the Matrix, it primarily applies to men because men are the backbone of the slave force. We always have been an always will be. And unfortunately, now, if you're a law-abiding man inside the Matrix, your future and the life that is laid out for you is nothing but depressing." (YMH Studios, 2021, [01:05:16]). Here we see Tate negatively characterising what life may or may not look like for a lot of people. However, in doing so it indirectly suppresses any alternative values especially those that are open to subjective interpretation. As an example, people have different goals for what they would define as successful or fulfilling. However, if you were to make generalized claims filtered through the ideological lens of red pill, it allows for the simplification of complex concepts such as systems of meaning and interpersonal values. This is due to the goals of TRP being binary

such as the acquisition of wealth and status which serve the argument especially when it is based on logic and rationality. As an example, if it is possible to achieve your goals faster and more efficiently by ignoring your feelings, than what reason do you have not to do so? This argument eliminates subjectivity of the human experience which is an easy argument to defend especially if you deem every counter to the claim as an excuse which Tate does repeatedly. This same strategy of heavy generalization was the third most prevalent code within the dataset and is a strategy used for a variety of topics including his views on women and female promiscuity discussed previously. Furthermore, by mentioning that the majority of people are constantly being distracted, it indirectly raises the question to Tate's audience of why he deserves their attention. Or, why his truth is the one that should be heard in post-truth internet.

This is where the ante-narrative of the failing western society becomes relevant. In the STRIKE IT BIG interview, Tate explains this reoccurring ante-narrative: "I think Western society is failing. I think it's breaking down in real time. I think by any metric you can measure a society (…) Anything you can measure. We're just losing. And on a long enough timescale, I think places like England and the United States are going to be unliveable" (STRIKE IT BIG, 2022, [00:53:43]). In doing so Tate creates a narrative and message to his audience about what's at stake if financial freedom and liberty is not achieved. A practice that conveniently funnels his audience into his monetized courses and network. For example, "The biggest problem with men today is that I think the world is becoming hyper competitive. Most men are not aware in understanding how quickly there's going to be a genuine shift between those who have things and those who do not have things" (JustPearlyThings, 2022, [00:05:49]). In doing so, Tate is appealing to a genuine fear people are having due to a loss of trust in democracy which was elevated following the Covid 19 pandemic. Tate references Covid himself with "The reason I call it the Matrix is because a false reality is being projected onto humanity, and they do that by controlling the narratives. If they allowed people to have open and critical discussions about, let's say, Covid at the height of the pandemic, it would of never lasted three years" (Leeds, 2022, [00:04:39]). Furthermore, this ante-narrative of life becoming harder in the future rather than easier, reinforces other aspects of Tate's rhetoric such as the way he conceptualizes masculinity. As an example, the notion of the male existence being hypercompetitive is over-lexicalised within Tate's rhetoric and feeds into an ante-narrative Tate builds surrounding masculinity. Where the core tenants are similar to that of red pill discourse (Ging, 2017), where focus is placed on status, conquest and legacy. This is shown with "The masculine imperative and the

masculine perspective is you have to understand that life is war. It's a war for the female you want. It's a competition. It's a war for the money you want, it's a war for the car you want. It's a war for status. Masculine life is war. If you're a man that doesn't view life as war, you're going to lose" (Stand Out TV, 2022, [00:32:22]). This notion of hyper competitivity that Tate perpetuates is core to understanding red pill and androcentric discourse in general. If red pill represents an ideological lens for which the world can be viewed, where the male experience is chopped down to the pursuit of wealth, conquest, legacy, favourability with women and status. Two major goals are achieved with this. Firstly, subjectivity is eroded from the discussion in favour of logic, rationality and conservative values. Secondly, the suppression of alternative experiences is achieved as their relevance is brought into question in a hypercompetitive world. In doing so, Tate positions himself and his brand at the top of the food chain, for what a high value/status man looks like, with his influence, stories and constant flaunting of wealth and women being testament to his credibility as an influencer.

This notion is further denoted by the way Tate positions himself as a force for good against the Matrix and censorship. Especially concerning how he engages in discourse surrounding the consequences of his censorship on social media. He draws a comparison of the general consensus towards social media companies and their tyrannical business models towards pressure building behind a dam, positioning himself as the actor that will create the final crack. This is shown with "I think if someone could pave the way and put a crack in the dam by maintaining massive relevancy, despite of a ban and still having social media and presence which is respected on other platforms, I think it's going to do them significant damage" (PBD Podcast, 2022, [00:12:42]).

4.1.3 Orientating

Orientating "refers to the practice of offering direct, well rationalized advice or guidance to audience members" (Smith & Fischer, 2021, p.271). In essence orientating encapsulates the SMI strategy of creating value for audience members by offering advice and information that could potentially help them. Within this study orientating was the third most common attention seeking strategy observed amongst Tate's rhetoric. Regarding the content for which Tate gives advice about it mainly concerns topics of masculinity, mental health, wealth creation and becoming favourable with women, in line with his content being predominantly androcentric, targeting male audiences. Firstly, masculinity and mental health

will be discussed as they were commonly coded adjacently within the dataset. One of the more disruptive ways Tate engages with mental health issues is by combating the feminized dialogue of men's mental health which argues that men should be open with their emotions. Tate combats this with "You know what happens when you tell men to just react to their emotions? Anger. You have school shootings, you have rape, you have violence. That's what happens when you tell men to have no emotional control" (PBD Podcast, 2022, [01:04:51]). This is much in line with his discourse surrounding masculinity and mental health where he argues that "I think that the most dangerous men on Earth are the weak men" (PBD Podcast, 2022, [01:04:51]). Another disruptive take Tate presents are his views towards clinical depression and why he does not believe it. In the PBD podcast Tate explains and attempts to debunk one of the main criticisms made towards him regarding his views on mental health:

> Their little quote is they say, you said depression isn't real. What about the men who kill themselves? You don't care about men's mental health. We've already discussed how I care more about men's mental health than these people who pretend they do. That's the first thing. I didn't say depression isn't real. I said feeling depressed is real. But the idea that depression is going to strike you in your mind and there's nothing you can do about it. I think that is promoting helplessness amongst depressed people, and that's the reason why they kill themselves (PBD Podcast, 2022, [01:58:30]).

In essence, this message is core towards Tate's views on mental health and sets the foundation of which he advises his audience on improving their circumstances. He brings a disruptive point of view that criticizes current mental health discourse in the way that it distinguishes an individual's mental health from their real-life circumstances. He further emphasizes this point, specifically targeting men, with "Stop defending this. And they're defending this because it is a cure all excuse. Depression and sadness is a cure all excuse for men to use for failure" (PBD Podcast, 2022, [01:58:30]). He bases this notion on the ideas of positive affirmation with "I refuse to believe in things that take power away from me. I'm only going to construct a mental model that allows me to be as powerful as possible" (PBD Podcast, 2022, [01:58:30]). In the same podcast one of the guest speakers summarises Tate's views on mental health with "Here's what I've heard from you so far. Personal responsibility straight up. And number two, positive affirmation. I don't want negativity in my life. I don't want depression around me. I don't want weakness around me. I want to be the best person I can be and take full responsibility for that" (PBD Podcast, 2022, [01:58:30]). Tate goes on to

agree with the sentiment. Whilst this messaging is unique and could be construed as positive advice and helpful for some, it follows the same line of argumentation as his other topics. This strategy being the heavy use of generalized points which are filtered through his own ideological lens and beliefs. Which further feed his previously discussed ante-narratives of masculinity and competitivity.

4.1.4 Attuning to Attentive audiences

Attuning to attentive audiences refers to the SMIs ability to observe audiences and target those who demonstrate 'attention capacity' (Smith & Fischer, 2021). As illustrated in table 3, due to the mode of study for this analysis being discourse, we cannot assume what went into the construction of Tate's strategy and who specifically he has targeted. However, we can analyse specifically the way he refers and represents groups of people and postures an 'Us – Them' division which allows us to deduct which audiences he is appealing to. We also see this with how he positions himself and his message. In item 11, Tate explains:

They feel disenfranchised with the media machine and the things they're supposed to believe. They don't feel an affinity with the educational system or the culture. And they look at a person like me who stands up and sees the things that many young men think. I haven't put a magical spell on the world. The fact that people like what I say means that they agree with me. Deep inside. They may be afraid to say it themselves, but I am seen as a bastion of free speech and a bastion of masculinity as a whole, because a lot of men are largely forgotten about. (Piers Morgan Uncensored, 2022, [00:05:00]).

Here we seen an example of how Tate frames himself and his message as a bastion of free speech and masculinity. More specifically we see how he specifically speaks to young men who feel disenfranchised. In doing so he also frames the 'media machine' as the culprit for this disenfranchisement, of which he often refers to as the Matrix. Furthermore, the theme of speaking to young men who feel disenfranchised is common throughout Tate's discourse. In this example he refers to these men as 'largely forgotten.' He expresses this notion in other ways such as "So for women to come along and pretend they give a **** about the fact that most men are basically invisible" (Stand Out TV, 2022, [00:39:56]). Here Tate is shown

again speaking to disenfranchised young men characterizing them as 'invisible.' However, frames women responsible in part, for the issue, in line with TRP rhetoric blaming feminization for male disenfranchisement (Ging, 2017).

Tate continues this trend of speaking to disenfranchised men by defining status and respect as attributes men need in order to be 'visible' by further comparing generalizations of the male and female experience. Engaging in this debate in the Stand Out TV interview with:

"There is not a female on the planet who is invisible today. You can be a four, overweight, fat and still go to the club and get attention. 99% of men go to the club and nobody even ****** talks to them. If they try and talk to a girl, they get blanked, ignored and told to **** off. Most man are absolutely and utterly invisible, this is the truth about masculinity" (Stand Out TV, 2022, [00:39:56]).

Here Tate is making a point about how it is a necessity for men to acquire status in order to be recognised, however completely suppresses and makes generalized claims about the female experience. However, body language and tone that Tate expresses denote confidence and conviction which could be indicative of his views being intrinsically motivated connoting passionate authenticity (Audrezet et al., 2022). Doing so can work towards generating audience appeal especially towards individuals who agree to a certain extent with his views regardless of how controversial they are. This is exaggerated by the content of his argument which denotes a genuine care he has for men who feel disenfranchised. Especially concerning how passionately defending his views in this disruptive manner can make appeals to emotion rather than reason (See figure 4.2 as an example).

Figure 2: Stand Out TV, 2022, [00:40:18]

In the above figure we can see how Tate's passionate authenticity is connoted through his body language and expressions, as if he is angry about the circumstance men are dealing with. Doing so arguably further polarizes audience members to his message as those who don't agree may perceive him as threatening. However, it also works to create emotional appeal towards audience members who resonate with his message. In doing so Tate attunes his message towards young men who feel disenfranchised whilst also following the TRP formula of saying that women and feminization are to blame.

Tate also attunes his message politically. Whilst describing himself as apolitical due to how he does not trust any government body he makes this point when confronted on his conservative views. "I think that it is based in the natural. I think it's a natural tendency to be conservatively minded if you are masculine and also if you are competent. I feel like a lot of my traditional masculine values just come from my respect in myself and my confidence in myself in dangerous situations" (PBD Podcast, 2022, [03:46:47]). Here simply by aligning competence and masculinity with conservative values, Tate attunes his message to an audience who hold conservative masculine values that seek competence in themselves or others, as he subscribes competence as a reward for doing so.

Another example where Tate attunes to attentive audiences is by engaging in disrupting discourse surrounding controversial topics such as censorship and COVID 19. With regards to his views on censorship, in item 6 Tate elaborates:

But the reason they censor and delete one entire side of the argument, then you're only left with their version of reality, they're projected reality. And they do that with every subject. There are so many subjects you can't have an open discussion on, and if they only control, they delete all of one side and only keep one side there, then that's a false paradigm. It's a false reality. And that's what they're doing to convince people to act in certain ways and do certain things which are not necessarily in their best interest or necessarily true (Leeds, 2022, [00:04:39]).

During a discussion of COVID 19, Tate targets social media companies for contributing to the lies and misinformation that was spread whilst also hinting towards them having a sinister agenda. This can be taken as an example of Tate participating in 'truth games' as the points he is making are backed by logical rather than objective reasoning (Cosentino, 2020). Furthermore, by engaging in disruptive areas of discourse, doing so can take advantage of igniting a very vocal minority and appeal to audience members who exhibit the same school of thought. Another benefit of doing so is the ante-narrative he constructs around the social media companies and the Matrix feed other aspects of his argument, such as his views towards mental health discourse. Especially concerning the feminization of mental health discourse where men are told to be emotional rather than stoic, which he and other actors in male self-help and manosphere discourse perpetuate. Another way this ante-narrative serves his message is that it further villainizes Matrix actors of which he positions himself as the protagonist to combat against.

By engaging in disruptive discussion on a variety of topics it produces an abundance of content which can be used to serve and promote his image and message. For example, from what has already been analysed it is clear Tate is a formidable character in open debates and articulates himself well around a variety of different topics. Taking is previous quote on censorship as an example, it can be clipped and shortened to suit the TikTok format and target audience members with interest in this niche. Doing so works to generate audience appeal and also target a wider demographic with his message.

4.1.5 Encouraging Amplification and Distilling

Encouraging amplification is an attention seeking strategy that refers to the SMIs ability to "encourage audience members to engage in actions that will help attract further attention" (Smith & Fischer, 2021, p. 269). This strategy was not found prevalent throughout the analysis. This is due to the data procured for this analysis being that of third-party content where Tate is featured as a guest. Therefore, it is likely that there are less opportunities for Tate to directly speak to his audience as his motivations may be more orientated towards engaging audience members that fall out of the scope of his fandom. Making strategies such as disrupting, orientating and creating ante-narratives more prevalent. However, there is an argument to be made for how Tate indirectly encourages amplification. This is made possible by his affiliate marketing program which offers users of his online course commission for each new customer brought to the platform with their personalised link which has since been closed (Das, 2022). A post in the hustler's university discord discusses the closure of the programme stating that although it was successful it had many issues with the main being that Tate's content had been "used out of context and in bad taste by many students desperate to get attention to their profiles" (Das, 2022). Regardless, the programme was closed August 2022, therefore content where he encourages users to join his online course after the fact, cannot be deemed as indirectly encouraging amplification. The same cannot be said for content posted before that. Despite this, directly encouraging his audiences to amplify his content is not something he was observed doing within the dataset.

Similarly, distilling was also not a predominant strategy found throughout the analysis. Distilling refers to the creation of headlines or titles that successfully signal that a post has audience relevant content (Smith & Fischer, 2021). However, due to the content assessed not being produced by Tate or his team, distilling was not a strategy which was identified as Tate using himself. It is worth noting that every item analysis still had features of distilling in the title or thumbnail of the video with Andrew Tate's name in bold and with titles such as 'last interview before Tate's arrest.'

5. Discussion and Conclusion

I would argue that the attention economy is facilitating the dissemination of alternative beliefs and truths into the mainstream. With SMIs taking advantage of audiences by participating in truth games with the circulation of controversial discourse (Van Dijk, 2011). It can be further argued that one of the most significant culprits to have taken advantage of this system for their own gain has been Andrew Tate. In line with previous research, the most prevalent attention seeking strategies used by Tate identified were the strategies most aligned with the production of compelling content including disrupting, constructing ante-narratives, orientating and attuning to attentive audiences (Smith & Fischer, 2021). Whilst distilling falls under these categories, it was not found prevalent due to reasons previously mentioned.

In regards to the strategy Tate gained notoriety for, especially regarding his views towards women, disrupting was the most prevalent strategy identified. Whilst the results mostly discussed disrupting in the context of his views on women and misogyny, it can be argued that he practices this strategy in various aspects of discussion including the Matrix society, mental health and masculinity. Where it is likely he could engage in these discussions in a less provocative manner if he chose to. Instead, he opts for expressing his views in novel, counter-intuitive and often abrasive ways with the goal to entertain, provoke and disrupt (Smith & Fischer, 2021). An interesting finding was the interplay this strategy of disruption has with communicating perceptions of authenticity. To elaborate, Tate has no affiliations with third-party organizations or companies that he directly expresses within his communications. This eliminates the factor of third-party agendas negatively effecting perceptions of transparent authenticity, as he chooses to forgo them or completely avoid their disclosure (Audrezet et al., 2020). Furthermore, he positions his novel and disruptive views within his genuine beliefs, showing his views are intrinsically motivated connoting passionate authenticity (Audrezet et al., 2020). Whilst he has no partnerships, Tate and his team advertise their own solutions to the issues at hand. This being his online coaching school *The Real World* and his private male-only network *The War Room*. For which, like any product/service sold in OAEs is sold based on strategies which appeal to emotion rather than objectivity. This can be argued as manipulation, since manipulators make others believe or do things that are in the best interest of the manipulator, and against the best interested of the manipulated (Van Dijk, 2006).

Another aspect that compounds this perception of passionate authenticity is his use of ante-narratives and storytelling. By expressing views and constructing narratives based on

personal experiences, it contributes to post-truthfulness in the public sphere as focus is placed on experientiality, representativeness and normativity (Mäkelä et al., 2021). This is due to how the personal experiences he uses to justify his beliefs are protected from falsification. Secondly, the way he positions himself as a protagonist standing up for disenfranchised men and combatting censorship, cements his ideas in the consensus of 'affective publics.' Affective publics being the audience of men who feel disenfranchised, of which he attunes his content towards. It is this same affective consensus established amongst his audience that normalizes the stories he tells in favour of a 'greater purpose' being his fight against the Matrix and feminization. This 'greater purpose' works to eclipse well founded criticism towards his polarising ideas such as his misogynistic views in the eyes of his audience (Mäkelä et al., 2021).

Another problematic notion is the way Tate positions himself as a public intellectual. Despite addressing the fact that he is not expert on topics such as gender, history and politics he still engages in generalized, provocative and orientating discourse around these topics. Similarly, to other controversial figures such as Jordan Peterson, Tate's discourse is instrumental in determining what information his followers should or should not receive. Which places Tate as an actor who does not brand themselves as a public intellectual, but by definition can be classified as one (van de Ven & van Gemert, 2020). Public intellectuals hold significant relevance in shaping discourse especially in the context of post-truth and times of information overload. This is due to how they operate in a way that filters information for their audience (van de Ven & van Gemert, 2020). As argued by van de Ven & van Gemert (2020), when public intellectuals such as Peterson engage in discourse that readers can fail to grasp the meaning of, they often judge them profound creating the 'Guru Effect.' I would argue that Tate takes an alternative approach to Peterson whilst also taking advantage of post-truth, opting for a strategy of emotional appeal making use of narrative storytelling to generate an affective consensus behind his more traditional views (Mäkelä et al., 2021). This is due to the way Tate articulates himself in a digestible manner allowing his message and views to appeal to a wider audience. An alternative characterisation of this is Tate using compelling storytelling to usurp the place of empirical facts in order to create an alternative shared reality amongst his audience (Kraatila, 2019). This when coupled with his ability to orientate on topics such as becoming favourable with women, masculinity, mental health and wealth creation allows him to attune his message to an audience who share these conservative values as well as disdain for the Matrix society we supposedly live in.

Where this notion becomes problematic is when it reaches a vulnerable audience, shaping their values, thus having an indoctrinating and sometimes a radicalizing effect. This is where the ambiguous nature of the Matrix red pill argument becomes concerning especially considering how the argument can be ideologically appropriated to serve different causes (Marwick & Lewis, 2017; Ging, 2017). Firstly, the red pill argument raises a distinct binary choice of identity to the audience. Do you take the blue pill, numbing yourself to the simulation, living within the paradigm which mainstream media perpetuates. Or instead, do you take the red pill, arising out of the simulation and reclaiming your autonomy for dictating your own reality? Marwick and Lewis (2017), equate the red-pilling argument to consciousness-raising, or the leftist argument of becoming 'woke.' This is of significant ideological relevance as the red pill argument can be appropriated to serve the interests of the group whilst also articulating relationships with more dominant groups (Van Dijk, 2011). As an example, people who succumb to the red pill ideology may believe they are survivors of the Matrix with everyone else being victims of it. Furthermore, the red pill ideology does not just serve the interests of the group but also that of the individual. This is due to how it serves base human gratifications of esteem, especially when analysed through the lens of contemporary uses and gratification theory (Ruggiero, 2000). This is where the mainstream dissemination of ideology has an indoctrinating effect, as users are initially sold on the idea based on how it reacts to their individual values. It is only after this that the ideology can become strengthened through factors such as group think as the individual must take action to enter the group in the first place (Van Dijk, 2011).

In conclusion, it is clear that Andrew Tate and his team had a plan to attract attention as fast as possible and executed it efficiently. This was done via incorporating different strategies mainly concerning disrupting, attuning to attentive audiences, creating ante-narratives and orientating, that work together to create a product worthy of attention. Especially when the product at hand is Andrew Tate who is well articulated and is able to successfully communicate an authentic image, coupled with a skillset that serves compelling storytelling. This in short, being the first factor, which facilitates his monumental success in competing for attention in OAEs. The second factor facilitating his success is the increasing prevalence of post-truth and the way that OAEs facilitate its development. If an environment where emotional appeal out ways objective reality did not exist, Tate's success would not have been possible. This is corroborated by the fact that when social media companies censored him, it only fuelled his credibility and position as a 'force for good' against the

Matrix. Which begs the question if Andrew Tate and the potential negative influence he has is the problem, or is he just a product of attention economy he competes in?

This paper was a qualitative exploration into the factors contributing to Andrew Tate's success and ability to compete within OAEs. Steps were taken to contextualise this MCDA within the paradigm of post-truth and the relationship this has in effecting the market of OAEs. This was done so to allow for a contextualised assessment of how Tate's message is constructed in order to successfully compete for attention in OAEs. Whilst shedding light on the current post-truth era and the turbulence it has created in current discourse. This is of societal significance as if left unaddressed the influence social media influencers have will likely have consequences that are yet to be seen, on impressionable individuals that are unable to distinguish the good from bad in Tate's message. (Marwick & Lewis, 2017; Ging, 2017; van de Ven & van Gemert, 2020). This is an area requiring further academic study especially concerning the extent to which users are influenced by the information they consume online. This could shed light on potential solutions towards protecting the youth.

In addition, a plausible framework for person branding has yet to be formulated (Gorbatov et al., 2018; Scheidt et al., 2020). This paper attempted to solve this by combining the works of respective scholars including frameworks for attention seeking and authenticity management strategies combined with personal branding two personal branding meta studies (Audrezet et al., 2020; Gorbatov et al., 2018; Scheidt et al., 2020; Smith & Fischer, 2021). This was done so in an attempt to address the gap in academic research and potentially contribute to a solution of a new personal branding framework. Especially if proper consideration is given to SMIs participation in 'truth games' (Cosentino, 2020). This is due to a lack of research contributing to how SMIs, especially those who brand themselves as public intellectuals', appropriate political discourses in order to attune their messages towards what their targeted audience values. Subsequently growing their audience by shaping the values of others through means of emotional appeal and manipulation (Mäkelä et al., 2021; Marwick & Lewis, 2017; Van Dijk, 2006; Van Dijk, 2011).

This study took steps towards standardising the MCDA and eliminating bias. Whilst minimizing the risk of subjectivity and bias influencing the results, it does not negate the risk entirely. This study attempted to combat this by viewing Tate as a product designed to acquire vast amounts of attention, influence, engagement and monetize it effectively. Furthermore, this study only assessed third-party content featuring Tate engaging in discourse and not content produced by himself or his team. This was done purposefully but is still worth mentioning as the results may vary if the content assessed was produced by Tate

and his team. Regardless, this does not undermine the necessity of further qualitative research to be done regarding the way we consume information within the context of post truth and economies of attention. Furthermore, whilst this study discusses the potential influence of Tate's rhetoric, these conclusions cannot be generalized as this study did not assess participants or the extent which his content may influence them. This being a direction for further qualitative research where participants belonging to Tate's audience can be interviewed in order to better understand how his messages are perceived. Especially concerning the increasing prevalence of public intellectuals and their ability to filter information in times of information overload and post-truth. It is becoming more apparent to be able to gauge the influence this content could have on audiences with varying degrees of vulnerability. This may bring nuanced results in the field of critical thinking, more specifically, educating it effectively in order to counter-act the negative consequences of post-truth.

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