

The Influence of Emotional Involvement on Online Activist Behaviour

A visualized representation of my original bachelor thesis



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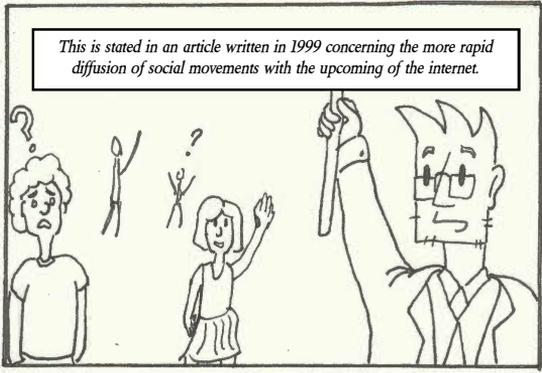
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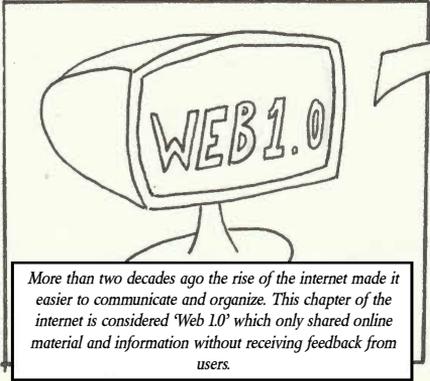
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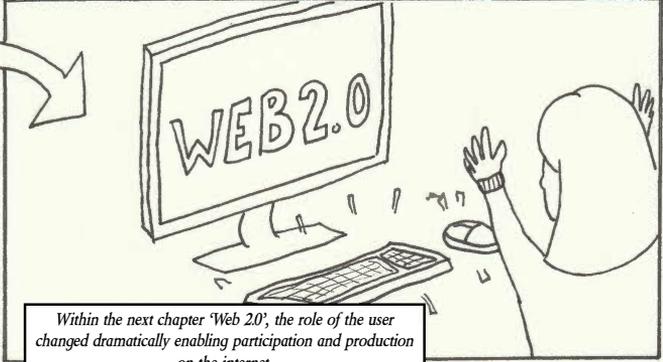
The Internet, which includes Websites, listservs, and e-mail, is promoting a revolution in both the means of communication and dynamics of popular contention. Perhaps nowhere is globalization's impact being more visibly and dramatically felt than in this revolution of communications technology.



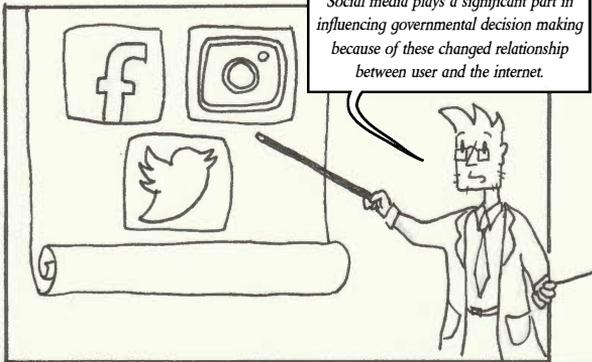
This is stated in an article written in 1999 concerning the more rapid diffusion of social movements with the upcoming of the internet.



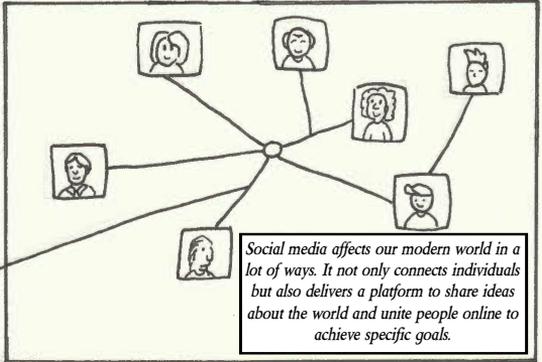
More than two decades ago the rise of the internet made it easier to communicate and organize. This chapter of the internet is considered 'Web 1.0' which only shared online material and information without receiving feedback from users.



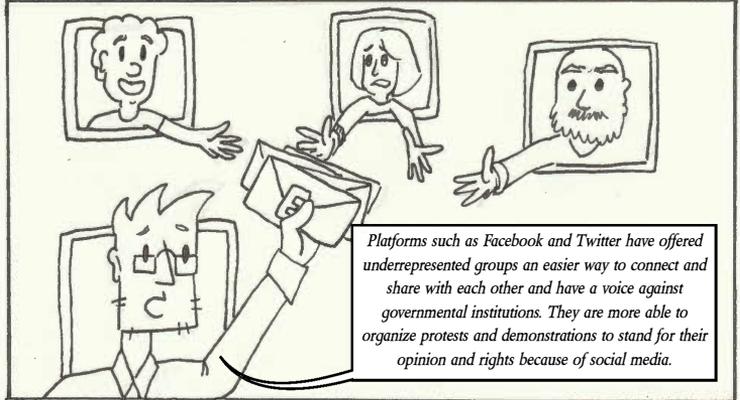
Within the next chapter 'Web 2.0', the role of the user changed dramatically enabling participation and production on the internet.



Social media plays a significant part in influencing governmental decision making because of these changed relationship between user and the internet.



Social media affects our modern world in a lot of ways. It not only connects individuals but also delivers a platform to share ideas about the world and unite people online to achieve specific goals.



Platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have offered underrepresented groups an easier way to connect and share with each other and have a voice against governmental institutions. They are more able to organize protests and demonstrations to stand for their opinion and rights because of social media.



This new form of protest has received the new name of cyberactivism.

such as the 2011 Arab Spring which contains the Egyptian revolution that utilized social media to benefit their protests...

Another successful mobilization is the growth of the online 'outraged' movement in Spain following the revolution in Egypt.

In an article regarding the 2014 Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong, a divide was made between support generation and behaviour activation which were both found significantly influenced by social media.

Despite this attention that has been paid to the internet as a tool for civic engagement, little is still known on how 'active' online activists are.

Though it has been concluded that an important factor in participation in a social movement were social psychological factors such as grievance and anger, or broadly stated the emotional involvement.

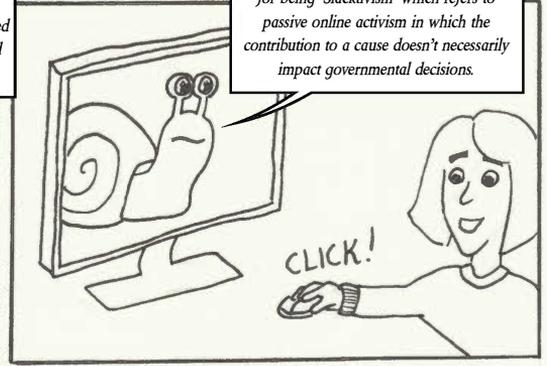
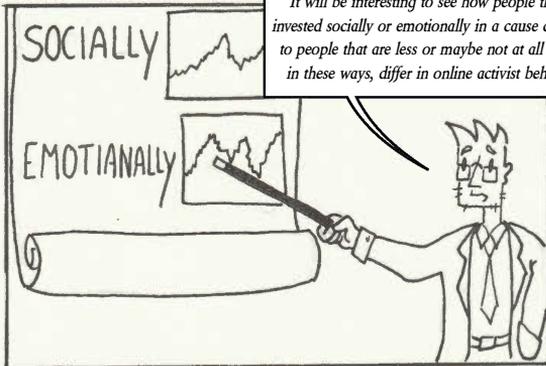
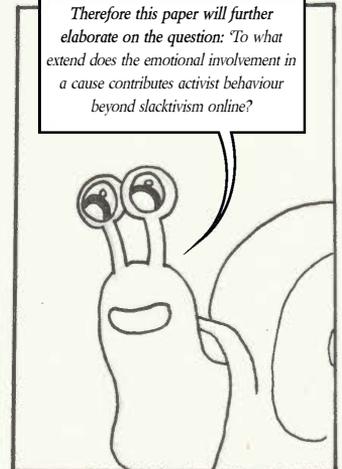
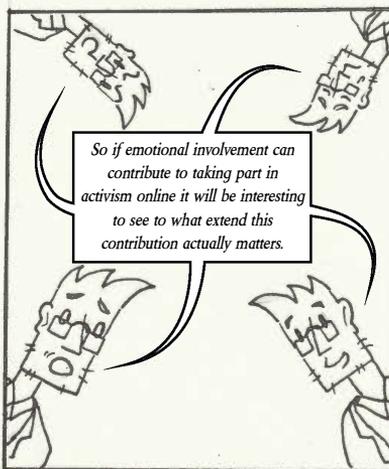
It will be interesting to see how people that are invested socially or emotionally in a cause compared to people that are less or maybe not at all invested in these ways, differ in online activist behaviour.

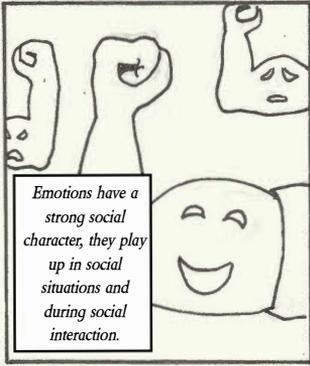
Activity on social media has been criticized for being 'Slacktivism' which refers to passive online activism in which the contribution to a cause doesn't necessarily impact governmental decisions.

Participants or slacktivists show support online but merely do this to feel better about themselves than to actually support social or political matters. Activism on the other hand is meant to actually influence change in governmental decision making.

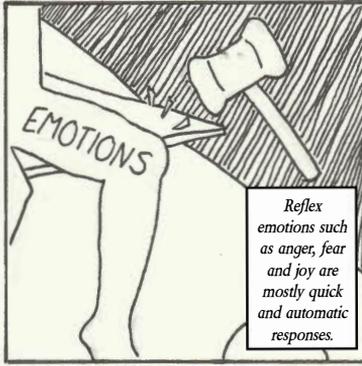
So if emotional involvement can contribute to taking part in activism online it will be interesting to see to what extend this contribution actually matters.

Therefore this paper will further elaborate on the question: 'To what extend does the emotional involvement in a cause contributes activist behaviour beyond slacktivism online?'

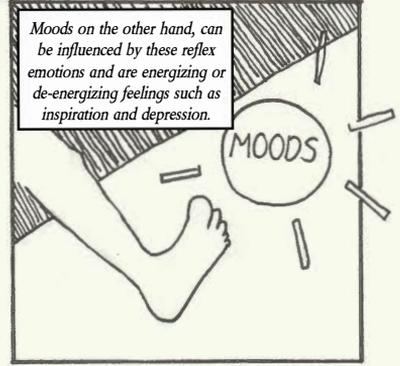




Emotions have a strong social character, they play up in social situations and during social interaction.



Reflex emotions such as anger, fear and joy are mostly quick and automatic responses.

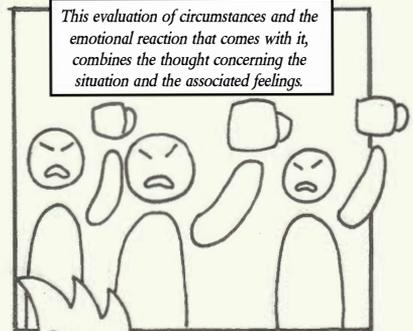
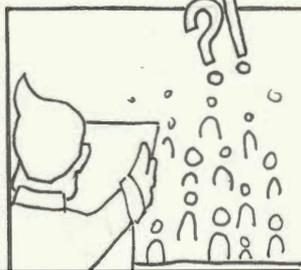
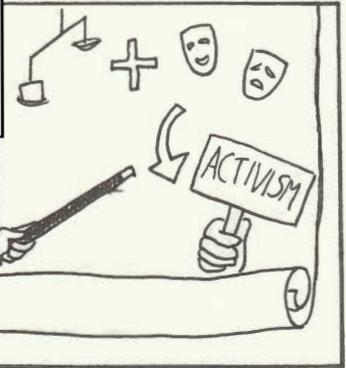


Moods on the other hand, can be influenced by these reflex emotions and are energizing or de-energizing feelings such as inspiration and depression.



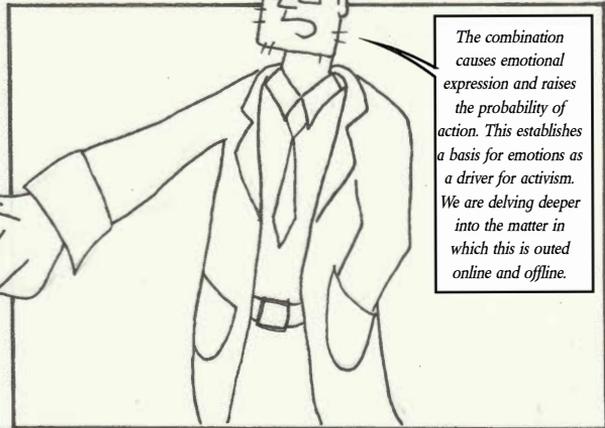
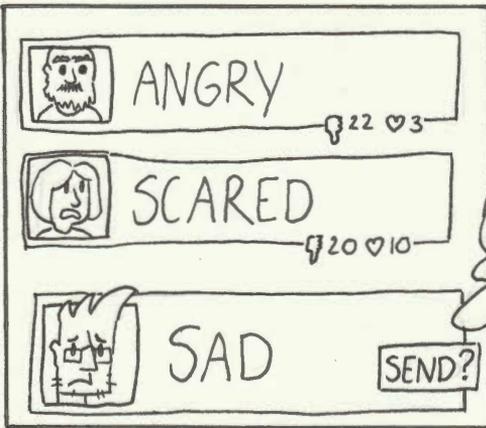
Reflex emotions like anger, are activated when social injustice arises.

This effect of emotional involvement activated by social injustice, would presumably forecast the greater likelihood of progression into activism if one's more emotionally involved with a cause.



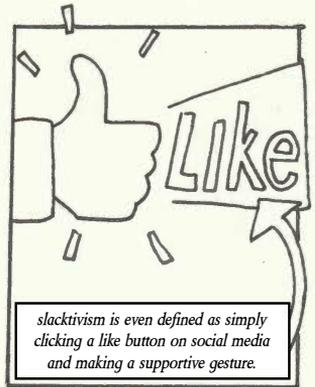
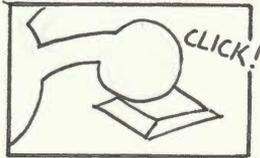
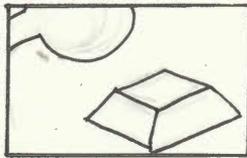
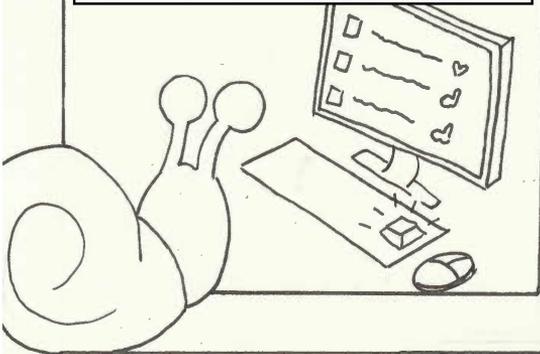
This evaluation of circumstances and the emotional reaction that comes with it, combines the thought concerning the situation and the associated feelings.

According to the appraisal theory of emotion elaborates on emotions being evoked when events or situations of any sorts is evaluated or in other words, appraised.



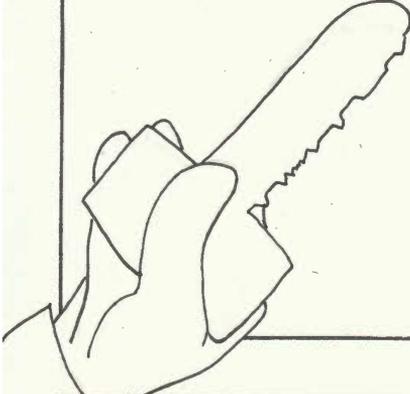
The combination causes emotional expression and raises the probability of action. This establishes a basis for emotions as a driver for activism. We are delving deeper into the matter in which this is outed online and offline.

As stated before in the comic, slacktivism is often thought of, as passive online activism without the ability to make a difference.

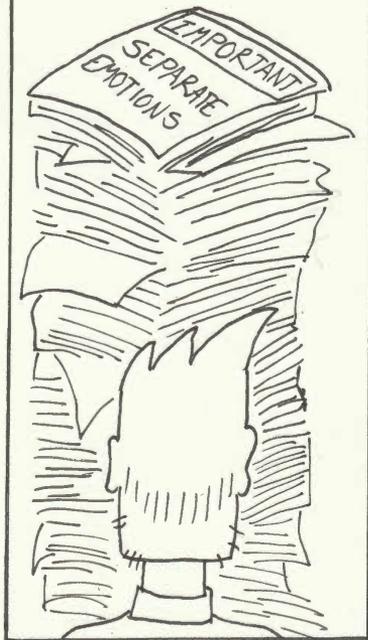


slacktivism is even defined as simply clicking a like button on social media and making a supportive gesture.

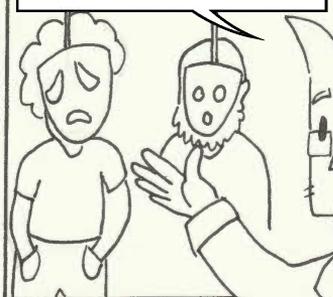
the key element is wanting to make a difference, that defines if a person proceeds into activism beyond slacktivism. If according to the appraisal theory of emotion, a situation is evaluated and concluded to require action, then an individual wants to create change in this situation. Therefor they would proceed into activism beyond slacktivism.



it is meaningful, beside the overall importance of emotional involvement, to further research different emotions and the influence on support for a cause. This is interesting because different emotions could have a different effect on the undertaking of action.



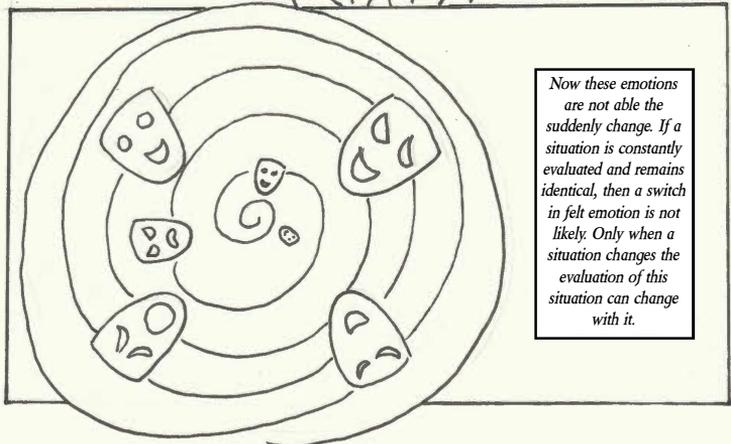
emotions such as fear and sadness encourage to avoid risk while on the other side,

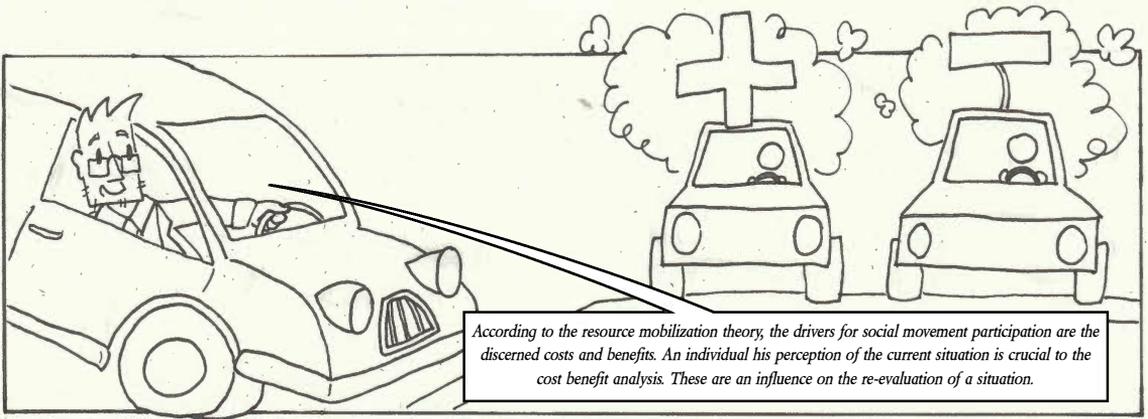


emotions such as anger, joy and pride influence the acceptance of incurred risk.

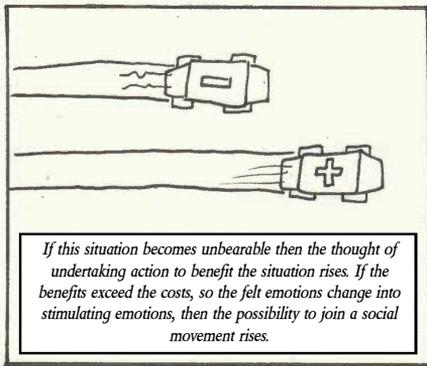


Now these emotions are not able the suddenly change. If a situation is constantly evaluated and remains identical, then a switch in felt emotion is not likely. Only when a situation changes the evaluation of this situation can change with it.

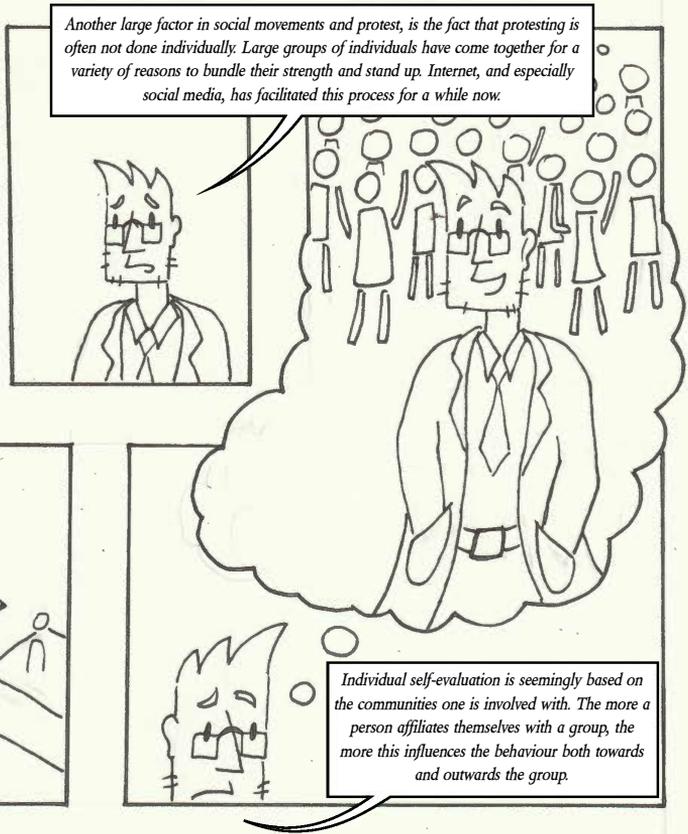




According to the resource mobilization theory, the drivers for social movement participation are the discerned costs and benefits. An individual his perception of the current situation is crucial to the cost benefit analysis. These are an influence on the re-evaluation of a situation.

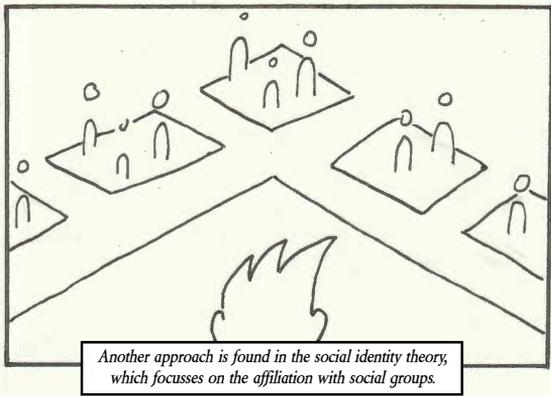


If this situation becomes unbearable then the thought of undertaking action to benefit the situation rises. If the benefits exceed the costs, so the felt emotions change into stimulating emotions, then the possibility to join a social movement rises.

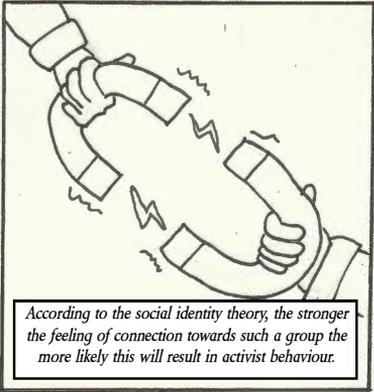


Another large factor in social movements and protest, is the fact that protesting is often not done individually. Large groups of individuals have come together for a variety of reasons to bundle their strength and stand up. Internet, and especially social media, has facilitated this process for a while now.

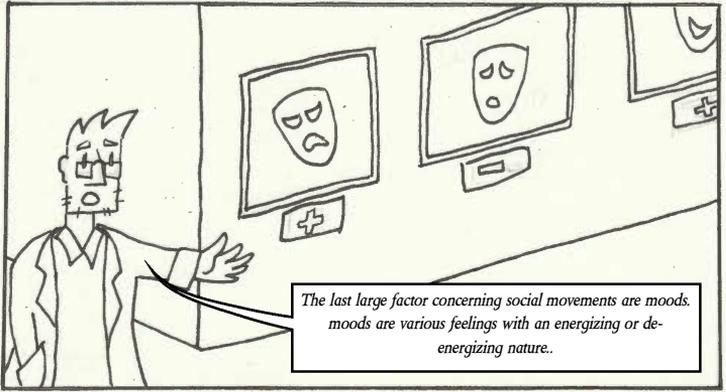
Individual self-evaluation is seemingly based on the communities one is involved with. The more a person affiliates themselves with a group, the more this influences the behaviour both towards and outwards the group.



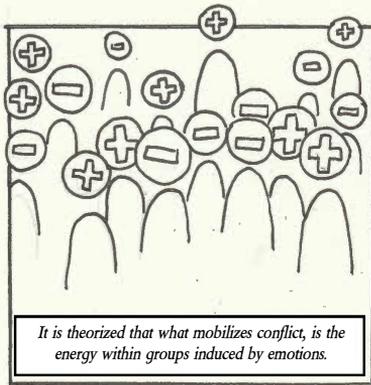
Another approach is found in the social identity theory, which focusses on the affiliation with social groups.



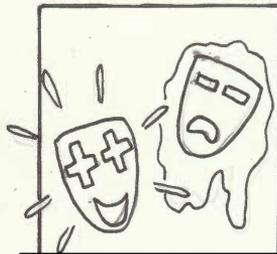
According to the social identity theory, the stronger the feeling of connection towards such a group the more likely this will result in activist behaviour.



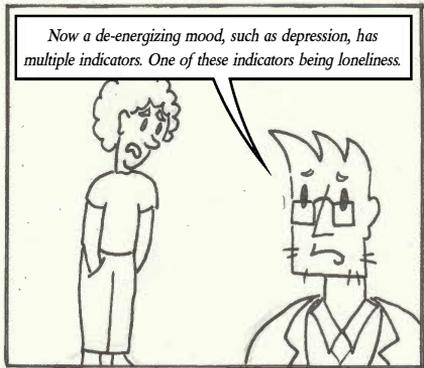
The last large factor concerning social movements are moods. moods are various feelings with an energizing or de-energizing nature.



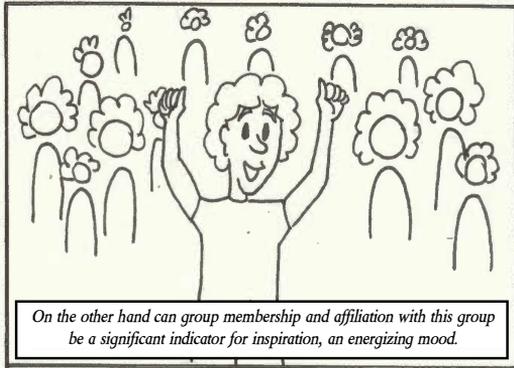
It is theorized that what mobilizes conflict, is the energy within groups induced by emotions.



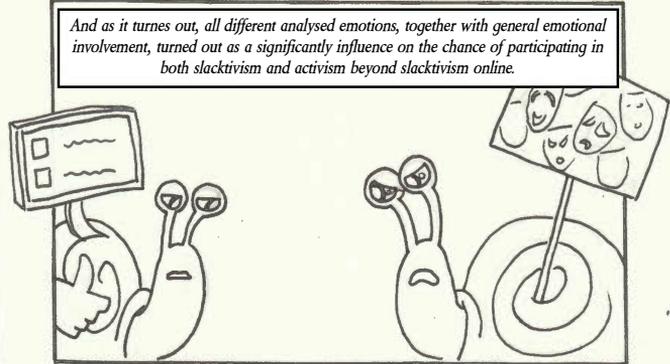
Emotional energy is not just a factor that make certain individuals feel good while depressing others, it contains Durkheim's 'Moral Sentiment'. This depicts different feelings that define right and wrong and tests one's morality.



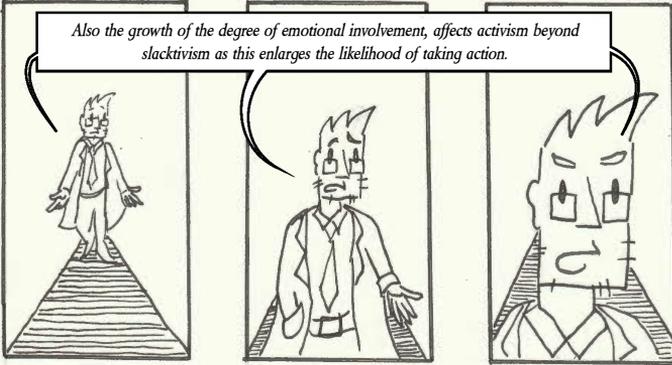
Now a de-energizing mood, such as depression, has multiple indicators. One of these indicators being loneliness.



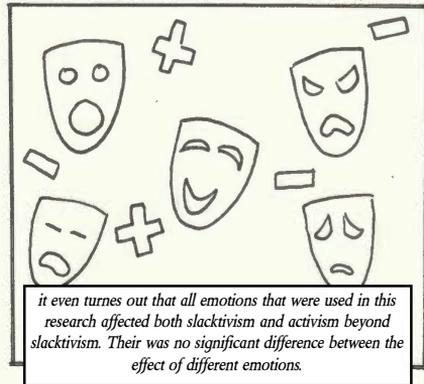
On the other hand can group membership and affiliation with this group be a significant indicator for inspiration, an energizing mood.



And as it turns out, all different analysed emotions, together with general emotional involvement, turned out as a significantly influence on the chance of participating in both slacktivism and activism beyond slacktivism online.



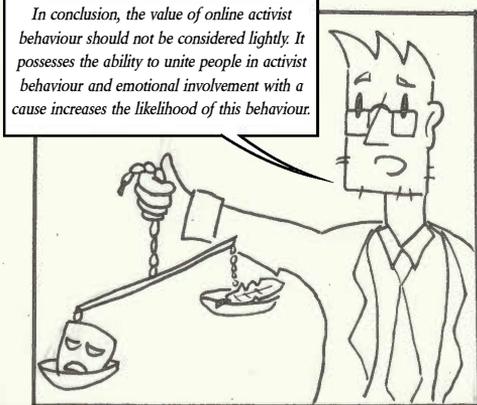
Also the growth of the degree of emotional involvement, affects activism beyond slacktivism as this enlarges the likelihood of taking action.



it even turns out that all emotions that were used in this research affected both slacktivism and activism beyond slacktivism. Their was no significant difference between the effect of different emotions.



So although the debate on whether online activism should be considered to be slacktivism or not is still ongoing, online activism in combination with emotional involvement cannot simply be seen as one of the two but the boundaries of these terms are still quite vague.



In conclusion, the value of online activist behaviour should not be considered lightly. It possesses the ability to unite people in activist behaviour and emotional involvement with a cause increases the likelihood of this behaviour.



More research in this field will hopefully shine more light on online activism beyond slacktivism.