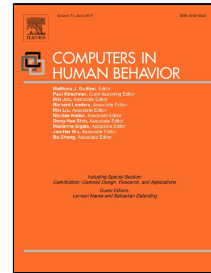


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Reading more vs. writing back: Situation affordances drive reactions to conflicting information on the internet

Brett Buttlere, Jürgen Buder



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Brett Buttlere

Leibniz-Institut für Wissensmedien

Schleichstraße 6, Rm 6.419

72076 Tübingen

+49 7071-979-239

b.buttlere@iwm-tuebingen.de

Jürgen Buder

Leibniz-Institut für Wissensmedien

Schleichstraße 6, Rm 6.418

+49 7071-979-239

j.buder@iwm-tuebingen.de

ABSTRACT

A growing literature suggests that situational cues have a strong influence on behavior, especially online. Here we conducted a within subjects experiment where participants saw 16 forum discussion posts on the topic of alternative medicine, twice. The participant's reactions to conflicting information are modulated by changing the possible affordances of the situation. In one condition, designed to be similar to Wikipedia or other information seeking websites, participants were asked how much they would like to read more about information they are presented. In the other condition, the opportunity to respond to the author was provided (i.e., more like Facebook, Twitter or a blog post). In line with the hypotheses, the participants avoided uncongenial information when they only had the opportunity to read more, but wanted to respond to most to conflicting information. These results might help explain the differences in tone and content between Wikipedia, a more passive website, and Facebook or Twitter, which often thrive on controversiality and argument.

General Terms

Affordances, Social Media, Information Selection, Website design, Cognitive Conflict.

Keywords

Cognitive Conflict, Confirmation Bias, Information Selection, Online Communication, Psychology, Social Media,

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