

Emotional mobilisation in Swedish alternative media

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Abstract

Alternative media can be a positive force in democratic societies, contributing to journalistic diversity and contributing to dialogue. However, there are an increasing number of actors that challenge, criticise and question journalism by establishing their own channels for communication, spreading disinformation and propaganda. These actors often position themselves as anti-establishment and thus challenge mainstream journalistic agenda-setting and credibility in certain groups.

Research shows that news media can play a role in normalising racism in society (e.g., Pollack 2021; Ekman & Krzyżanowski 2021). Furthermore, the internet has proven to be an important arena for disseminating far right discourse into public debate and political actors with racist views have benefitted from online platforms for seeking, obtaining and spreading information (Titley 2019; Åkerlund 2022; Ekman 2015). Research further shows that affect and emotion are crucial for political engagement and aid in creating a sense of belonging and recognition (Ahmed 2014; Ekman 2023).

The aim of this study is to gain understanding of how racist imaginaries are shaped and circulated through posts on the social media pages of five Swedish alternative media: (1) *Samhällsnytt*, (2) *Fria Tider*, (3) *Nya Tider*, (4) *Exakt24*, och (5) *Nyheter Idag*, and how these are contributing to a form of digital racism (Ekman 2023).

Drawing on Ahmed's concept of 'cultural politics of emotion', social media posts constitute 'objects of feeling' which people feel love, anger, pity, or fear towards (2014, pp. 8–9). These emotions can be collective or individual, established historically and culturally, and are manifest in responses to events in what Ahmed calls 'emotional economies' (Ahmed in Gregg & Seigworth 2010, pp. 29– 51). This study explores the characteristics, compositions and constitution of the mediated emotions of political expression embedded in social media posts, together with comments and interactions from followers/users while investigating the sociocultural, economic, and political contexts of posts and comments.

Keywords

Racism, far-right, media, affect, social media

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Bio

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I am a PhD candidate at the Department of Media Studies at Stockholm University. My research interests are centred around social media and emotions, online communications, online politics and racism, as well as cultural studies and anthropology. My PhD research focuses on emotions in British far-right Facebook communication.

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I am a senior lecturer in Journalism at the Department of Media and Journalism at Linnaeus University. My research concern visual practices, photography and migration, the role of emotions and embodiment in the making of photographs, and media/journalism ethics. In earlier studies I have investigated the possibility for photographs to serve as a space where people appear rather than being represented.