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Satirizing the Clothing Industry on *YouTube*: How Political Satire and User Comments Jointly Shape Behavioral Intentions

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ABSTRACT

Recently, scholars have started to investigate how the valence of user comments presented alongside online videos influences viewers' experiences of and responses to those videos. The present experiment adds to this literature by investigating the role of user comments that accompany an online political satire video in particular. Moreover, it advances our knowledge of the effect of comments by investigating firstly how user comments shape viewers' experiences of political satire and, secondly, how these experiences subsequently influence viewers' behavioral intentions. The results show that the valence of comments influences viewers' behavioral intentions and that this effect is mediated by viewers' subjective knowledge gain and their eudaimonic entertainment experiences in response to the political satire video. Although the valence of comments also affects political satire viewers' hedonic entertainment experiences, these specific entertainment experiences do not impact viewers' behavioral intentions. These results show that comments do not only shape viewers' experiences as they are watching political satire online, but they also have consequences for what viewers intent to do offline.

Social media are among the most used platforms to access audiovisual media content. *YouTube* is a clear example, being one of the most popular social media platforms today and centered around the consumption of videos (Perrin & Anderson, 2019). To learn about the consequences of *online* video viewing, researchers have started to investigate how *user comments* accompanying videos influence viewers. So, scholars are looking not just at the effects of exposure to media content – but also at the effects of the context in which the content is presented. Studies report that comments accompanying entertaining videos indeed influence viewers' entertainment experiences of those videos (Krämer et al., 2021; Möller, Baumgartner, Kühne & Peter, 2021a; Waddell & Bailey, 2019; Waddell & Sundar, 2017; Winter, Krämer, Benninghoff & Gallus, 2018). Hence, media effects not only depend on the videos that people are exposed to, but also on the comments presented alongside those videos.

Research on the effects of comments has mainly focused on viewers' responses to entertaining videos (Krämer et al., 2021; Möller, Baumgartner, Kühne & Peter, 2021a; Waddell & Bailey, 2019; Waddell & Sundar, 2017; Winter, Krämer, Benninghoff & Gallus, 2018) and some scholars investigated this topic in the context of videos of speeches by politicians (Cameron & Geidner, 2014), or persuasive videos presenting anti-smoking Public Service Announcements (Shi, Messaris & Cappella, 2014; Walther, DeAndrea, Kim & Anthony, 2010). The present study ads another video genre to this list and investigates the influence of user comments accompanying *political satire* videos. There are three reasons why it is relevant to study the influence of comments on political satire viewers.

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First, political satire is likely to elicit not only entertainment experiences or have information effects, but instead a combination of viewer responses may be expected (e.g., Becker & Bode, 2018; Weinmann & Vorderer, 2018). Hence, comments may not only influence how viewers experience political satire, they may arguably also impact alternative outcomes that have not often been studied before; namely, viewers' behavioral intentions, such as consumer behavior. Concretely, comments in which other viewers support the message in a critical satire video could potentially motivate viewers to address the satirized issue through their own actions. Thus, whereas political satire may encourage specific behavioral outcomes (Boukes, 2019; Long, Jeong & Lavis, 2021), these effects could be further strengthened by the social context in which the satire is presented.

Second, studying political satire's interaction with user comments adds to the robustness of previous research that examined the effects of comments in the context of different video genres (e.g., focusing on entertainment, political, or persuasive videos). Characteristic for political satire is that it *humorously* critiques power relations and interrogates societal issues (Holbert, 2013); satire uses jokes and humor to discuss serious, political topics and to address societal issues (Borum Chattoo & Feldman, 2020). However, there are different ways through which this satirical critique can be expressed (e.g., parody). The current study zooms in on a specific type of political satire, so-called "news satire," in which the look-and-feel of news programs (e.g., news studio setting, host sitting behind a desk in suit) is combined with investigative efforts on stories that normally are outside of the regular news cycle (Davisson & Donovan, 2019): The most well-known program in this sub-genre of political satire is *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*, which format has been transposed to other national contexts (e.g., *Zondag met Lubach* in the Netherlands, see, Nieuwenhuis, 2018). Allowing a funny though serious storyline, this kind of satire is an alternative (or: "reinvented") form of journalism that can uncover major social abuses (Baym, 2005); for example, about the Iraq war (Haigh & Heresco, 2010) or populist politicians' rhetoric (Richmond & Porpora, 2019).

Third, political satire is increasingly watched via social media (Baym & Shah, 2011; Yang & Jiang, 2015), making it important to understand how viewers of political satire are affected by the social context in which this content is consumed. For satire viewers, the potential impact of comments seems especially relevant, because people may consume satire with different motivations or expectations (i.e., to be entertained or to learn, see, Young, 2013) – which potentially are influenced by the social context in which satire is watched.

We study how comments influence satire viewers by focusing on political satire that discusses a particular societal issue, namely the clothing industry and problems regarding the working conditions of many laborers within this industry (Huq, Chowdhury & Klassen, 2016). Although this study uses a political satire video discussing problems related to the manufacturing of clothing as an exemplar of political satire videos in general, studying how comments affect viewers of political satire discussing the clothing industry specifically is an important objective in itself too. Problems related to the manufacturing of clothing is a topic that is frequently discussed in the context of human rights and corporate social responsibility challenges (Księżak, 2016), and this study can lead to new insights into how social media users influence *each other* when they discuss *media content* addressing the topic of clothing industry matters through the comments that they write and read.

In sum, previous studies often focused on the effect that comments have on viewers' experiences of videos that are entertaining, persuasive, or political. We add to this literature the role that comments play for viewers of political satire. The present study is a follow-up on our previous study demonstrating the effect of user comments on entertainment experiences and knowledge gain (Möller & Boukes, 2021). Using the same dataset, we take the next step by investigating how comments can also affect *the behavioral intentions* of satire viewers. Moreover, it advances the understanding of our previous finding that comments can affect political satire viewers' experiences by investigating how these experiences function as *mediators* to also influence viewers' behavioral intentions. The findings, practically, are relevant for corporate actors that regularly measure "media reputation" by how a firm or industry is represented in the media (Deephouse, 2000) or how people discuss them on

social media (e.g., Manaman, Jamali & AleAhmad, 2016); after all, we go beyond assuming that media presentation on itself has an effect and demonstrate that the reputation of a firm or a complete industry is actually dependent on the interplay of media content and the audience's responses to this.

User Comments and Political Satire Viewers' Behavioral Intentions

Although research on the influence of online comments is emerging, we know little about the effects of comments on viewers of political satire videos in particular. Political satire is characterized by the fact that it uses humor and sarcasm to discuss political matters in a critical way (Baym, 2005; Richmond & Porpora, 2019). These discussions often highlight situations characterized by injustice or inequality (Borum Chattoo & Feldman, 2020), which is further emphasized by calls-for-action by the satire host (Becker, 2021). Watching political satire videos can motivate people to take action to address the issues discussed in them (Bode & Becker, 2018; Hoffman & Young, 2011; Reilly & Boler, 2014). This has mostly been studied from a political perspective, but equally often the target of satire is within the domain of corporations and their products or production processes. Accordingly, it may also be consumers' behavioral intentions that are affected by the satire (or the context in which satire is presented).

Literature on persuasive communication indicates that people's behavioral intentions are, partially, dependent on how they believe other people react toward the behavior in question (Ajzen, 1991; Davison, 1983; Gunther & Storey, 2003; Madden, Ellen & Ajzen, 1992). Concretely, if people believe that others are influenced by a media message (i.e., third-person effect, Davison, 1983), this might influence their own behavior (Tsfati & Cohen, 2003). In addition, individuals' intention to execute a specific behavior is strengthened if they believe that other people think that they should engage in this behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Madden, Ellen & Ajzen, 1992). When individuals watch a political satire video that humorously critiques social injustices and thereby clearly attacks a certain actor and promotes particular behavior in a funny manner, then the comments that accompany this video will demonstrate how other people react to its content and its message. For example, positive comments strengthened entertainment video viewers' belief that others liked this program more and would be more willing to recommend it to their friends compared to exposure to negative comments (Waddell & Bailey, 2019; Waddell & Sundar, 2017). When it comes to political satire videos, positive comments could lead viewers to believe that others support the video's message. This may strengthen their intention to execute the behaviors promoted by the video, namely to act against the actor or industry that is "satirized" (Holbert, 2016, p. 172) in the video. To test this notion, we hypothesize a main effect of user comment's valence on behavioral intentions:

H$_1$: *Exposure to positive user comments accompanying a political satire video increases viewers' intention to act against the satirized industry actor compared to exposure to negative user comments accompanying the same satire video.*

How Comments May Strengthen Satire Viewers' Behavioral Intentions

To understand the underlying mechanisms that explain the potential effect of comments on political satire viewers' behavioral intentions, we focus particularly on viewing experiences because extant research repeatedly found that these are shaped by comments (Krämer et al., 2021; Möller, Baumgartner, Kühne & Peter, 2021a; Shi, Messaris & Cappella, 2014; Waddell & Bailey, 2019; Waddell & Sundar, 2017; Winter, Krämer, Benninghoff & Gallus, 2018). When it comes to political satire videos, there are three specific types of viewer experiences that user comments may influence.

First, comments may indirectly influence political satire viewers' behavioral intentions by affecting viewers' learning experience (i.e., their *perceived* knowledge gain). Political satire provides information and facts about societal issues and political topics (Fox, Koloen & Sahin, 2007; Haigh & Heresco, 2010;

Kilby, 2018). Hence, political satire consumption is associated with knowledge gain (Baek & Wojcieszak, 2009; Becker & Bode, 2018). But the extent to which people *feel* that they learn from political satire may also partly be determined by the comments that accompany videos. This is explained by the notion that people's own motivations to learn from media content predict how much knowledge they actually gain from it (Eveland, 2001). Extant research suggests that comments can motivate viewers to focus on specific aspects of a video (Möller, Baumgartner, Kühne & Peter, 2021a). When it comes to knowledge gain, the valence of comments may influence viewers' motivation to learn from a video by paying more or less attention to the information that is provided in political satire videos – thus, having an impact on viewers' feeling that they learned something from it.

On the one hand, reading comments in which other viewers discuss a political satire video positively may motivate viewers to focus on the information provided in the video and pay careful attention to the matters discussed in it. This way, positive comments may increase viewers' subjective knowledge gain from the video. On the other hand, reading negative comments may lead viewers to be less attentive to the issues that are discussed in the video, making them feel less like they learned something from it. This way, comments may reduce political satire viewers' subjective knowledge gain.

Subjective knowledge gain refers to the feeling that one has learned something from media content. Viewers' subjective knowledge gain is not necessarily equal to how much knowledge they objectively gain from consuming media content (Ellen, 1994; Radecki & Jaccard, 1995). However, when it comes to (indirectly) influencing behavioral intentions, subjective knowledge seems to be an important predictor. Boukes (2019) points out that for people to become actively engaged in a political matter, they first need to feel that they have a sufficient understanding of the issue at hand. Subjective knowledge gain thus empowers citizens to take action: Without feeling that one understands an issue, a person will also not know what action to take. In line with this notion, political efficacy was found to be a mediator between exposure to political satire (not considering user comments) and civic participation (Hoffman & Thomson, 2009; Hoffman & Young, 2011). Based on this, it is likely that an increase in subjective knowledge gain caused by the valence of comments can subsequently impact political satire viewers' behavioral intentions. Thus, we hypothesize:

H_2: *The effect of the valence of user comments on viewers' intention to execute the behavior that is promoted by a political satire video is mediated by viewers' subjective knowledge gain, such that (a) positive user comments increase viewers' subjective knowledge gain compared to negative user comments and (b) an increase in viewers' subjective knowledge gain leads to a stronger intention to act against the satirized industry actor.*

User comments may also influence viewers' eudaimonic entertainment experiences. Eudaimonic entertainment experiences arise when people watch media content that inspires them and that makes them reflect on thought-provoking matters. This can make them *appreciate* the content that they see because they feel moved by it. This appreciation is what scholars refer to as eudaimonic entertainment experiences (Bartsch & Hartmann, 2017; Oliver & Bartsch, 2010; Waterman, 1993; Wirth, Hofer & Schramm, 2012). Political satire often discusses serious societal issues through engaging societal messages (e.g., Borum Chattoo & Feldman, 2020). This may lead viewers to contemplate about these thought-provoking messages and give rise to eudaimonic entertainment experiences. Similar to the potential effect of comments' valence on video viewers' subjective knowledge gain, comments can influence viewers' eudaimonic entertainment experiences in response to political satire. Specifically, positive comments may increase viewers' motivation to reflect on the thought-provoking themes discussed in political satire, increasing the appreciation or eudaimonic entertainment that they experience. Negative comments, in contrast, may demotivate viewers to engage in these kinds of thoughts. In line with this notion, extant research found that compared to negative comments, positive comments accompanying online videos evoke viewers' eudaimonic entertainment experiences (Krämer et al., 2021).

When individuals watch online political satire accompanied by comments, the eudaimonic entertainment that they experience may subsequently affect their behavioral intentions. Eudaimonic entertainment is a multidimensional experience that is comprised of a range of concepts. Amongst others, Wirth, Hofer and Schramm (2012) identify a dimension labeled "activation of central values," which describes how viewers can become particularly aware of the core values that are most important to them when watching thought-provoking media content. With such normative values becoming salient, people will become more likely to judge or act upon these. In addition, the competence dimension defined by Wirth, Hofer and Schramm (2012) describes how evaluating their experiences when watching thought-provoking media content can lead viewers to experience a sense of self-development. Such a feeling of competence can lead people to feel empowered and motivated to act in response to the message that is presented. Thirdly, thought-provoking media content can lead viewers to experience a strong sense of being connected to others, which Wirth, Hofer and Schramm (2012) label the relatedness dimension. An increased sense of connection and belonging to the people whose problems are discussed in political satire shows may make viewers more willing to act against these problems.

Based on the examples discussed here, we expect that the valence of comments influences viewers' behavioral intentions indirectly by increasing their eudaimonic entertainment experiences. Supporting the idea that eudaimonic entertainment experiences play an important role in predicting individuals' behavioral intentions, Oliver, Hartmann and Woolley (2012) found that exposure to meaningful films was associated with a desire to be a better person and to do good things for others. To test the notion that by strengthening viewers' eudaimonic entertainment experiences in response to political satire videos, comments can also strengthen viewers' intentions to act against the injustices discussed in satire videos, we hypothesize:

H_3: *The effect of the valence of user comments on video viewers' intention to execute the behavior that is promoted by a political satire video is mediated by viewers' eudaimonic entertainment experiences, such that (a) positive user comments increase viewers' eudaimonic entertainment experiences compared to negative user comments and (b) an increase in viewers' eudaimonic entertainment experiences leads to a stronger intention to act against the satirized industry actor.*

How Comments May Weaken Political Satire Viewers' Behavioral Intentions

Based on the above, it seems plausible that comments can increase viewers' intentions to perform the behavior that is promoted in political satire videos (H_1) by influencing their subjective knowledge gain (H_2) and eudaimonic entertainment experiences (H_3). However, comments may potentially also influence an experience that can reduce viewers' intentions to act in a way that aligns with the political satire video that they see: hedonic entertainment. Hedonic entertainment refers to a positive experience of enjoyment or pleasure that arises when people are exposed to funny or "light" media content (Bartsch & Hartmann, 2017; Oliver & Bartsch, 2010; Waterman, 1993; Wirth, Hofer & Schramm, 2012). Because political satire typically contains humor, viewers are likely to experience hedonic entertainment (LaMarre & Grill, 2019; Peifer & Landreville, 2020).

Extant research indicates that exposure to positive comments can increase the hedonic entertainment of online video viewers, while exposure to negative comments can decrease hedonic entertainment (Möller, Baumgartner, Kühne & Peter, 2021a; Waddell & Bailey, 2019; Waddell & Sundar, 2017; Winter, Krämer, Benninghoff & Gallus, 2018). Scholars explain that positive comments lead viewers to focus on the aspects of the video that they like, leading them to experience more enjoyment; reading negative comments, in contrast, causes viewers to focus on the aspects of the video that they dislike or find boring, thereby decreasing their enjoyment of it (Möller, Baumgartner, Kühne & Peter, 2021a).

This potential change in viewers' experiences may subsequently influence viewers' behavioral intentions: A strong focus on the funny and amusing aspects of political satire videos may distract viewers from its serious message. Moreover, research indicates that when people predominantly

experience satire as funny (i.e., likely the outcome of positive user comments), they perceive it as "just a joke" (Nabi, Moyer-Gusé & Byrne, 2007) and therefore discount the substantive message (Becker & Anderson, 2019; Boukes, Boomgaarden, Moorman & De Vreese, 2015), which will consequently limit any persuasion of satire in terms of encouraged behavior. This way, by strengthening viewers' hedonic entertainment experiences when watching political satire videos, comments may weaken viewers' intentions to act against the injustices discussed in them. To test this notion, we hypothesize:

H$_4$: *The effect of the valence of user comments on video viewers' intention to execute the behavior that is promoted by a political satire video is mediated by viewers' hedonic entertainment experiences, such that (a) positive user comments increase viewers' hedonic entertainment experiences compared to negative user comments and (b) an increase in viewers' hedonic entertainment experiences leads to a weaker intention to act against the satirized industry actor.*

Figure 1 presents an overview of the hypotheses that are tested in this study.

Method

An online experiment was conducted in which participants were exposed to a political satire video. The video was presented in a mimicked *YouTube*-environment displaying four manipulated user comments (either negative or positive). The current study was part of a more comprehensive experimental design initially focusing on political satire viewers' video *experiences* (see, Möller & Boukes, 2021).[1] The full design also included a manipulation of user comment focus (hedonic entertainment value *vs.* eudaimonic entertainment value *vs.* informative value). The effect of this focus factor and of the valence of comments on viewers' video experiences (i.e., hedonic entertainment experiences, eudaimonic entertainment experiences, and knowledge gain) were tested and reported in a separate paper about the influence of the focus of comments on viewers' experiences (i.e., Möller & Boukes, 2021). For the current hypotheses about behavioral intentions, the focus of comments as an independent variable does not play a role.

Hence, the conditions were collapsed into two conditions: negative valence versus positive valence. This allows more space for the unique findings presented in the current manuscript. For a full description of the study procedure that participants went through, please see the online appendix on the procedure.[2] Ethical approval was given by the Institutional Review Board of the authors' university faculty (ID: 2020-YME-12363).
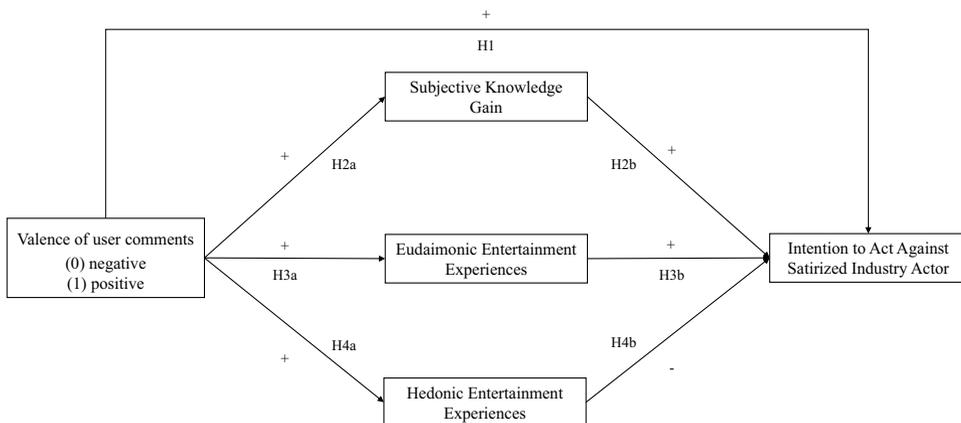

Figure 1. Conceptual model.

Participants

Participants were recruited from the panel members of online survey company *Dynata*. Participation was only possible if panel members used *YouTube* at least once a year. Because a good presentation of the stimulus material required participants to use a large screen, panel members were only allowed to participate if they were using a desktop computer or a laptop. To verify that all the technical features of the stimulus material worked properly, participants were shown a neutral music video embedded in the same mimicked *YouTube*-environment that was used for the stimulus material at the start of the study. Finally, participants who failed an attention check at the start of the study asking them to select "2" on a 7-point Likert scale could not complete their participation.

The experiment was completed by 565 people who had an average response time of approximately 29 minutes. The 31 participants who needed longer than 1 hour to complete the study and the 24 participants who indicated that they experienced technical problems during the experiment were excluded from the data analyses as is in line with the pre-registered criteria for data exclusion (see Footnote 1). The final sample size, thus, consisted of $N = 510$ participants (52% women, $M_{age} = 36.40$, $SD_{age} = 14.02$).

Participants were randomly assigned to the positive valence condition ($n = 216$), the negative valence condition ($n = 221$), or the control condition ($n = 73$).[3] Randomization was successful on several demographic characteristics, namely education level, $F(2, 507) = 0.86$, $p = .424$, age, $F(2, 507) = 0.08$, $p = .919$, political satire consumption, $F(2, 507) = 0.27$, $p = .762$, and TV news consumption, $F(2, 507) = 0.50$, $p = .951$. The randomization check also revealed that conditions differed significantly in terms of gender $\chi^2(4, N = 510) = 12.79$, $p = .012$. Accordingly, additional analyses were run with gender as control variable (i.e., covariate). No differences in terms of hypothesized effects' significance or direction were found for analyses with and without gender as covariate.

Stimulus Materials

Participants watched an episode from *Zondag met Lubach*, a Dutch political satire show comparable to *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver* (see, Nieuwenhuis, 2018). This 7 minutes and 36 seconds video specifically discussed the clothing industry. It provided information about the role that the clothing industry plays when it comes to ensuring better work conditions for laborers in South-Asian countries, which is likely to elicit subjective knowledge gain among viewers. The video also discussed moral questions regarding the conditions for laborers working in the clothing industry, such as the absence of safe working environments and questions about child labor. This thought-provoking content has the potential to give rise to eudaimonic entertainment experiences. Finally, the video is likely to make people laugh because it used jokes and sarcasm to discuss the serious issue of the clothing industry and its problems.

Comment valence

Along with the video, participants saw four comments (see Figure 2). The comments were manipulated to be either positive or negative. Positive comments focused on joy that people experienced when watching the video (e.g., "strong episode. it is hilarious when Lubach talks about 'cottons'"), what they learned from the video (e.g., "This really gave me some good information about the problems within the clothing industry"), or how it inspired them (e.g., "I think this is so important; I really want to think about this more!"). Negative comments highlighted the absence of those outcomes (e.g., "weak episode. it is so 'been there, done that' when Lubach talks about 'cottons,'" "This really gave me no good information about the problems within the clothing industry," "I think this is so unimportant; I really do not want to be thinking of this!").

Manipulation check

To verify that participants perceived the valence of the comments as intended, they were asked to indicate how positively or negatively the comments discussed the video. They could do so by selecting one point on a 7-point scale ranging from −3 (*very negatively*) to 3 (*very positively*). An analysis of
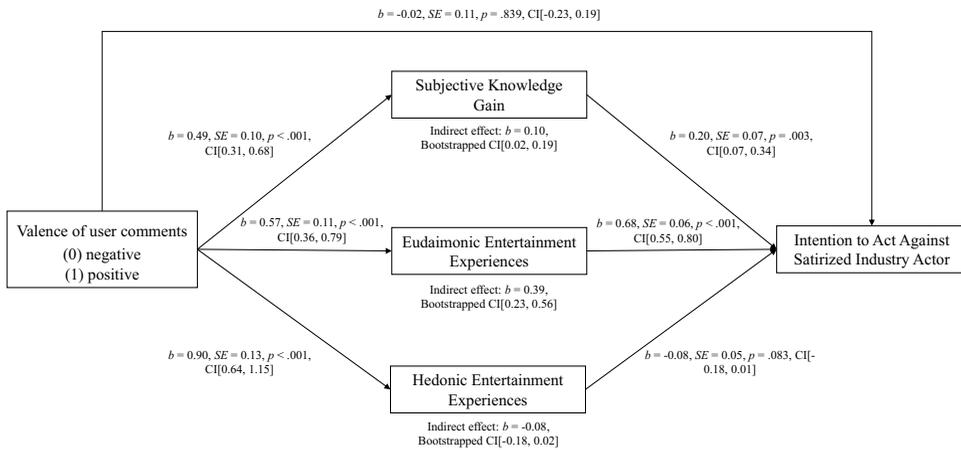
Figure 2. Screenshot of the mimicked *YouTube*-environment depicting negative comments.

variance (ANOVA) confirmed that participants exposed to positive comments perceived the comments to be more positive ($M = 1.65$, $SD = 1.31$) than participants who were exposed to the negative comments ($M = −1.80$, $SD = 1.28$), $F(1,435) = 773.54$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .64$.

Measurements

After watching the online video, participants answered questions that measured five variables of which the conditions for reliability and one-dimensionality were pre-registered.

Behavioral intentions

Participants' intention to perform behavior promoted by the video was measured using items based on the work by Ohme, de Vreese and Albæk (2018), Schneider, Weinmann, Roth, Knop and Vorderer (2016), and Van Deth (2014). Participants were asked to indicate how likely it is that they will execute each of 12 actions (see, Table 1 which is also available in the online pre-registration documents) on a scale ranging from 1 (*very unlikely*) to 7 (*very likely*). A principal axis factor analysis with oblique rotation (direct oblimin) showed that the items loaded on one factor (eigenvalue = 7.58) and explained 63.12% of the variance. Together, the items formed a reliable scale (Cronbach's α = .95, McDonald's ω[4] = .95). By averaging participants' scores on the items, we created an overall score ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 1.38$, Skewness = −0.25, Kurtosis = −0.63). Higher scores indicate stronger intention to take action against the misbehaviors of the clothing industry.

Subjective knowledge gain

Participants' feeling that they learned something from the video was measured using six items based on the studies of Hoffman and Young (2011), Schneider, Weinmann, Roth, Knop and Vorderer (2016), and Mattheiß et al. (2013). Participants were asked to indicate their agreement with these items on a scale ranging from −3 (*strongly disagree*) to 3 (*strongly agree*). The items were as follows: (a) on the basis of the video, I am able to discuss the topic with others, (b) I felt well-informed by the video, (c) I can sum up the essential points of the video, (d) I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the most important issues facing the clothing industry, (e) I am better informed about the clothing industry than most other people, and (f) the clothing industry is such a complicated topic that it is hard for people like me to understand it (reverse coded). A principal axis factor analysis with oblique rotation (direct oblimin) indicated that the items loaded on two factors (eigenvalue factor 1 = 3.12, eigenvalue

Table 1. Survey items measuring behavioral intention.

	Behavioral Intention Scale
	How likely is it that you will execute one of the following behaviors in the future?
(a)	Seek further information about the clothing industry.
(b)	Consider the circumstances in which a piece of clothing was fabricated when deciding whether or not to buy it.
(c)	Talk about the problems within the clothing industry with others.
(d)	Support a campaign or organization that aims to make the clothing industry more sustainable.
(e)	Act as a volunteer against the clothing industry.
(f)	Sign an (online) petition calling for legislation aimed at increasing transparency within the clothing industry.
(g)	Check where a piece of clothing was produced before buying it.
(h)	Share this video with other people.
(i)	Tell other people about the injustice within the clothing industry.
(j)	Donate money to an organization fighting child labor.
(k)	Encourage other people to stand against the clothing industry.
(l)	Boycott specific clothing brands (e.g., Primark, H&M, C&A).

factor 2 = 1.03) that explained 52.03% and 17.20% of the variance, respectively. Further inspection of the results indicated that five out of six items loaded highest on the first factor while one item (i.e., [f]: "The clothing industry is such a complicated topic that it is hard for people like me to understand it") did not load on any factor. Therefore, this item was excluded from the scale. A reliability check using the five remaining items indicated that these items formed a reliable scale (Cronbach's α = .85, McDonald's ω = .85). We created an overall subjective knowledge score by averaging participants' responses to the five items ($M = 0.73$, $SD = 1.03$, Skewness = −0.34, Kurtosis = 0.04).

Eudaimonic entertainment experience

We used nine items based on the work of Bartsch (2012) and Waterman (1993) to measure viewers' eudaimonic entertainment experiences. Participants indicated how much they agreed with items stating that it was good to watch the video, because the video (a) encouraged me to focus on things that are important to me, (b) inspired me to think about meaningful issues, (c) gave me new insights, (d) made me think about myself, (e) gave me a great feeling of being alive, (f) made me feel more intensely involved in the topic than when I receive information about this topic in other ways, (g) gave me the feeling that I know what I stand for, (h) will impact my own choices, and (i) gave me a feeling of being connected to other people. Participants could select one point on a scale ranging from −3 (*strongly disagree*) to 3 (*strongly agree*). Results of a principal axis factor analysis with oblique rotation (direct oblimin) showed that all items loaded on one factor (eigenvalue = 5.85) and explained 64.99% of the variance. Furthermore, the items formed a reliable scale (Cronbach's α = .93, McDonald's ω = .93). By averaging participants' scores on the items, an overall score was created ($M = 0.51$, $SD = 1.20$, Skewness = −0.65, Kurtosis = 0.38).

Hedonic entertainment experience

To measure participants' hedonic entertainment experiences, they were asked to indicate their agreement with six statements on a scale ranging from −3 (*strongly disagree*) to 3 (*strongly agree*). The items were based on the articles by Waterman (1993) and Wirth, Hofer and Schramm (2012) and were as follows: (a) I felt well entertained watching the video, (b) it was fun to watch the video, (c) it was pleasurable to watch the video, (d) I felt more satisfied watching this video than I do when watching most other videos, (e) it felt good to watch the video, and (f) I felt happier watching this video than I do when watching most other videos. The items loaded on one factor (eigenvalue = 4.77) and explained 79.45% of the variance as was indicated by a principal axis factor analysis with oblique rotation (direct oblimin). Together, the items formed a reliable scale (Cronbach's α = .95, McDonald's ω = .95). Averaging participants' scores on the items lead to an overall hedonic entertainment score ($M = 0.57$, $SD = 1.42$, Skewness = −0.54, Kurtosis = −0.22).

Results

The Valence of Comments and Viewers' Behavioral Intentions

Behavioral intentions (H₁)

Hypothesis 1 posited that viewers exposed to positive comments accompanying the political satire video would have a stronger intention to execute the behavior against the satirized industry as promoted by the video compared to viewers who were exposed to the same video in the context of negative comments. An independent samples t-test with the valence of comments as the independent variable and behavioral intentions as the dependent variable showed that viewers who saw positive comments had a stronger intention to execute the behavior that was promoted by the video ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 1.36$) than viewers who saw negative comments ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 1.36$), 95% CI [−0.65, −0.13], $t(435) = −3.00$, $p = .001$ (one-tailed, following the directionality of the hypothesis), Cohen's $d = .29$. Thus, viewers were more likely to take action after exposure to a satire video with positive comments surrounding it.

The Mediating Role of Viewers' Experiences (H₂, H₃, and H₄)

Hypotheses 2, 3, and 4 predicted that the effect of the valence of comments on viewers' behavioral intentions would be mediated by viewers' subjective knowledge gain (H₂), eudaimonic entertainment experiences (H₃), and hedonic entertainment experiences (H₄). To test these hypotheses, we used Version 3 of the SPSS PROCESS macro developed by Hayes (2018). We ran a mediation model (Model 4) that included the valence of comments as the independent variable, viewers' behavioral intentions as the dependent variable, and viewers' subjective knowledge gain, their eudaimonic entertainment experiences, and their hedonic entertainment experiences as the mediators (all in one model to control for the influence of other mediators while testing each hypothesis). Figure 3 represents the results of this mediation model.

In the mediation model, the direct effect of the valence of comments on viewers' behavioral intentions was not significant any longer (see Figure 3). This suggests that the influence of the valence of comments on viewers' behavioral intentions is *fully* mediated by viewers' experiences. To learn more about this, we inspected the results regarding each of the three mediators.

Regarding viewers' subjective knowledge gain (see Figure 3), we found that exposure to positive comments leads to more subjective knowledge gain compared to exposure to negative comments. In addition, an increase in viewers' subjective knowledge gain led to stronger intentions to execute the
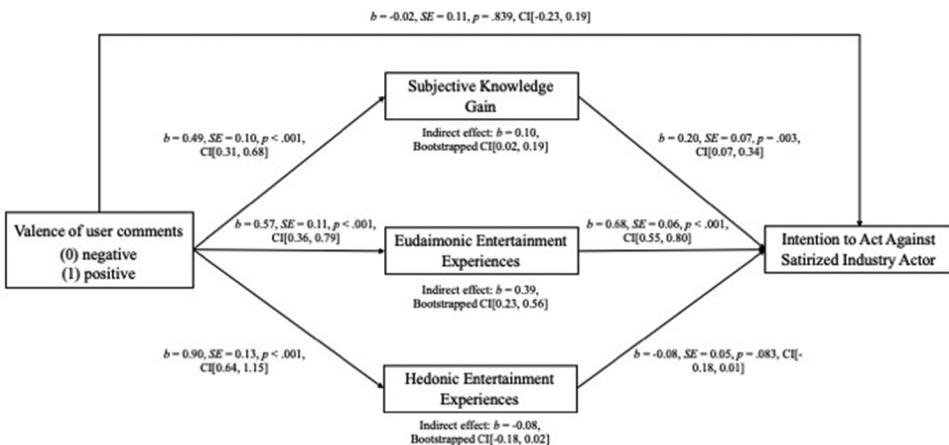

Figure 3. The tested mediation model including the valence of user comments (independent variable), behavioral intentions (dependent variable), and subjective knowledge, eudaimonic entertainment experiences, and hedonic entertainment experiences (mediators). Path coefficients indicate unstandardized effects.

behavior promoted by the video. Finally, the indirect effect of the valence of comments on viewers' behavioral intentions via subjective knowledge gain was significant. Taken together, these results support Hypothesis 2: Positive user comment valence causes a stronger intention to act against the satirized industry actor through its effect on subjective knowledge gain.

The results regarding viewers' eudaimonic entertainment experiences (see Figure 3) showed that exposure to positive comments leads viewers to experience more eudaimonic entertainment than exposure to negative comments. Stronger eudaimonic entertainment experiences, subsequently, led to stronger intentions to execute the behavior promoted by the video. The indirect effect of the valence of comments on behavioral intentions through eudaimonic entertainment experiences was significant. These results support Hypothesis 3: Intentions to act against the satirized industry are evoked by positive user comments via the indirect effect through eudaimonic entertainment experience.

Regarding the mediating role of viewers' hedonic entertainment experiences (see Figure 3), the results showed that exposure to positive comments increased viewers' hedonic entertainment experiences. However, viewers' hedonic entertainment experiences did *not* significantly influence their behavioral intentions. Thus, although the results support the notion that the valence of comments influences viewers' hedonic entertainment experiences (H$_{4a}$), they do not support the notion that viewers' hedonic entertainment experiences predict their behavioral intentions (H$_{4b}$). Finally, the indirect effect of the valence of comments on viewers' behavioral intentions mediated by their hedonic entertainment experiences was not significant either. These results do not support Hypothesis 4.

Discussion

The present study demonstrates that the valence of user comments accompanying a political satire video impacts viewers' behavioral intentions. We showed that this effect was fully mediated by two viewer experiences: viewers' subjective knowledge gain (i.e., the feeling that they learned something from the video) and viewers' eudaimonic entertainment experiences (i.e., the appreciation that they felt when watching the video).

Our results show that viewers who saw positive comments in which other viewers support the video had a stronger intention to execute the behavior promoted in the video than viewers who saw negative comments. Theoretically, this finding aligns with the notion that other people's remarks regarding a behavior is an important determinant of people's intentions to execute that behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Madden, Ellen & Ajzen, 1992). However, our finding that this effect was mediated by viewers' subjective knowledge gain and their eudaimonic entertainment experiences also demonstrates that other factors play a role: an increased cognitive empowerment of citizens (subjective knowledge gain) and experienced inspiration to "do good" (eudaimonic experience). Whereas previous studies already demonstrated that elicited emotions (Chen, Gan & Sun, 2017), discussion frequency (Lee, 2012), and increased political efficacy (Hoffman & Young, 2011) act as mediators that explain the effect of satire on civic participation, we thus add two new mediators to this process – although perceived knowledge gain and efficacy are closely related.

While viewers' subjective knowledge gain and their eudaimonic entertainment experiences explained the effect of comments on their behavioral intentions, viewers' hedonic entertainment experiences did not. This finding contradicts our expectation that a focus on the funny aspects of a video would lead viewers to take the video and its message less seriously, thereby weakening their intentions to execute the behavior promoted in it. Our finding suggests that viewers' behavioral intentions remain stable regardless of how much hedonic entertainment was experienced. Arguably, the type of satire in *Zondag Met Lubach* (similar to the passionate monologues of John Oliver or Samantha Bee) – and the topic that it discussed – made clear that this was *not* "just a joke," which potentially made viewers realize that they should not easily discount its critical message about the clothing industry.

In addition to their theoretical implications, the findings of this study have practical relevance for social media users. Social media are often used as platforms to distribute messages that contain a call to collective action (Kende, Van Zomeren, Ujhelyi & Lantos, 2016; Zhang & Pan, 2019). Our results emphasize that the effectiveness of videos motivating viewers to execute specific behavior partly lies beyond the content of a video itself. Instead, the social context in which videos are presented plays an important role. It is important that content creators who broadcast their messages via social media platforms are aware of this; especially when they have the potential to moderate the comments section. At the same time, the findings of this study are relevant for social media users who contribute to the social context of online videos by writing comments. Through their commentary, viewers can not only shape how other people experience videos, but also influence the behavioral intentions of others. Being aware of this is an important prerequisite for responsible social media usage.

Although the current study focused on *YouTube* videos in particular, our findings are equally relevant for other social media platforms. Platforms that primarily present audiovisual content, such as *Instagram* and *TikTok*, are increasingly popular and already attract a larger *young* audience than the older, often text-based, social media platforms, such as *Facebook* and *Twitter*. Although to our knowledge, the effects of social information have not been studied in the context of *Instagram* and *TikTok* yet, it has been found in various other context, such as social information in the form of *tweets* (Cameron & Geidner, 2014; Waddell & Sundar, 2017) or in the form of comments created on platforms that were custom made for particular studies (Hsueh, Yogeeswaran & Malinen, 2015; Möller, Baumgartner, Kühne & Peter, 2021a). The results of these studies imply that the effects of comments are not limited to one platform only, making our findings particularly relevant to any social media platform that focuses on videos as its main content format.

So, on the one hand, the findings of this paper potentially reach beyond just the context of *YouTube*-videos and similar patterns might be expected for other social media platforms. On the other hand, though, participants in our study all watched the stimulus material using a laptop or a desktop computer – because this allows a simultaneous exposure to video and comments. In real-life, however, many people use their smartphone or tablet to watch videos on *YouTube*. Compared to laptops and desktop computers, smartphones and tablets offer much smaller screens and viewers using these devices, accordingly, have to scroll down or click a button to see the comments. Hence, in contrast to the participants in our study, not everybody who watches *YouTube* videos using a smartphone or tablet will also be exposed to the comments that are available: Viewers have to make an extra effort for this. Although this poses a certain limitation to the external validity of the current findings, extant research does indicate that when video viewers can choose whether they want to examine comments by scrolling down on a *YouTube* webpage, most viewers choose to do so and a valence effect of comments on their experiences of a video emerges (Möller, Baumgartner, Kühne & Peter, 2021b). Based on this, we expect our findings regarding comments' effect on viewers' behavioral intentions to emerge in a similar way under regular conditions.

The present study investigated the effect of comments in the context of one single political satire video. This raises the question of how our results generalize to the plethora of political satire videos that is available online. As a genre, political satire includes many different videos addressing different topics, discussed in different settings and by different hosts, and including varying calls to action (e.g., Bode & Becker, 2018; Boukes et al., 2022; Young, Holbert & Jamieson, 2014). It is unlikely that all these different aspects are covered by the one specific example of political satire that we used. However, the video used in this study was specifically selected because it includes those elements (i.e., factual information about a societal issue, thought-provoking content about the problems that this issue causes, and a humorous way of discussing topics that normally receive little media attention) that scholars identified to be characteristic for political satire shows (Baym, 2005; Richmond & Porpora, 2019), similar to *Last*

Week Tonight with John Oliver (Davisson & Donovan, 2019; Nieuwenhuis, 2018). Ensuring that the one video used in this study contains the central characteristics of the genre that it represents increases the generalizability of our findings (Slater, Peter & Valkenburg, 2015). Nevertheless, future studies could investigate similar mechanisms in the context of different political satire videos.

Finally, participants in our study were exposed to positive or negative comments that discussed either the video's informative value, its eudaimonic entertainment value, or its hedonic entertainment value. This raises the question of whether the focus of the comments plays a role in the effects that we found. In a previous publication studying the effect of comments on political satire viewers' experiences in more detail, the effects of the valence of comments and of their focus were examined separately. These findings indicated that the valence of comments influences political satire viewers' experiences when controlling for the influence of the focus of comments (see, Möller & Boukes, 2021). However, comments sometimes do not discuss the video that they accompany at all. Additional research is needed to understand whether the valence of comments that do not discuss the content that they accompany still affects viewers' experiences of and responses to that content.

This study built on previous research investigating the effects of comments and showed that comments do not only influence how viewers experience videos presented on social media, but that this subsequently affects how they intend to behave once they leave these platforms. Thus, it seems that the influence of comments extends well beyond our online experiences. For both scholars and social media users, it is important to realize that citizens' online communication can shape our offline reactions to media content as well.

Notes

1. The larger experimental design and the hypotheses regarding the effect of the valence of comments on viewers' video experiences were pre-registered. Please see https://osf.io/jw2yr/ for the full pre-registration. The hypotheses regarding the effect on viewers' behavioral intentions were not explicitly pre-registered, but they were already announced and suggested in the Pre-registration Appendix, Figure 4, see: https://osf.io/r9zmy/.
2. Please find the online appendix with a description of the procedure here: https://osf.io/aw7c9/.
3. Although a control condition in which participants were exposed to the same satire video without any accompanying comments was included in the experimental design, the data of participants in the control condition were excluded from the analyses testing the hypotheses of this paper. The role of the control group is not further discussed in the remainder of this manuscript as this is not a part of the tested hypotheses (all hypotheses deal with negatively *vs.* positively valenced comments). The role of the control group is discussed in the separate paper testing hypotheses that do focus on the role of the control group (see, Möller & Boukes, 2021).
4. McDonald's ω was calculated using the OMEGA macro for SPSS developed by Hayes and Coutts (2020).

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Data Availability Statement

The data described in this article are openly available in the Open Science Framework at https://osf.io/jw2yr/.

Open Scholarship

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