

Exploring Trust on a Hybrid Cryptomarket: an Interactionist Approach

ANDREAS ZAUNSEDER (UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN)

ANGUS BANCROFT, IRENE RAFANELL, TIM SQUIRRELL

05.10.2018

EUROPEAN SOCIETY FOR SOCIAL DRUG RESEARCH, 29TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2018



Agenda

1. Theoretical Framework: Affective Sanctioning, Empathetic Communities, Trust
 2. Object of Study: PsychForumMarket
 3. Methodology: Digital Ethnography
 4. Findings
- 

Theoretical Framework

- ❖ Trust as a social convention:
 - sharing of common purpose or goals constitute its own very conception of trust in and through *evaluative judgements* of actions of the members of the collective directed to such goals re-asserting and negative evaluations (Rafanell et al 2017)
- ❖ Trust as communal social reality:
 - 'trust is the attitudinal ground – in affectively motivated loyalty for acceptance of solidary relationships'. (Luhmann and Parsons as cited in Lewis & Weigert, 1995:968)
- ❖ Trust constructed on an emotional base which underpins the 'cognitive' experience (Hardwig 1991)
- ❖ Empathic and factual statements (Preece 1999)
- ❖ granting or withdrawing of empathy as positive or negative affective reinforcement
 - 'emotion work' in Scheff's (1988) deference-emotion system
- ❖ 'Broscience': forum member evaluated trustworthiness of online user-generated drug content (Bilgrei 2017)
- ❖ Features of cryptomarkets that allow to build trust & trust as interpersonal element in relationships (Tzanetakis et al 2015)

Object of Study: PsychForumMarket

- ❖ Located in the Darknet (TOR security features)
- ❖ Moderators, admin, members
- ❖ Primarily forum, secondarily market (embedded)
- ❖ Rules and Guidelines
- ❖ Allowed substances defined
- ❖ Two-tier membership reflected in authorisation to contribute in forum sections
- ❖ Elaborate user profiles (awards, statuses, karma, etc.)
- ❖ Admission: verification effort of moderators
- ❖ Interactions a la forum style (discussion threads / sections)
- ❖ Operational Security enjoys high priority
- ❖ Major cryptomarket-features absent: escrow, commissions

Online Ethnography

- ❖ March 2017 – September 2018: Digital Ethnography
- ❖ Firstly, thematic coding of 24 discussion threads
- ❖ Secondly, observation only
- ❖ Semi-covert – only admin knows (Rönka and Katainen's (2017))
- ❖ Anonymised user profiles
- ❖ Textual content difficult to change
- ❖ Thick description (C. Geertz)

Findings



Motivations of Vendors

'Deal with more mature and professional people Than I normally would on the other marketplaces The Vibes are amazing Here!!!'

'So not gonna lie, originally I came to [PFM] just to see if I could sell some bomb ass shrooms and make an extra buck. There was alot I had to learn in order to become a good vendor. This is when i discovered how helpful the fellow members here are. Everybody was eager to share info and help a new guy out. It really is quite a friendly community. I really would like to make a shout out to [Tony] he really has been quite the bro I would've had a much harder time without him. He gave me tips and led me in the right direction when I had questions. [...] [Tony] u da man!'

Motivations of Non-Vendors

'Gain and share knowledge, insights, and product to expand the consciousness of myself and like-minded psychonauts!'

'Not going to lie. I came here strictly for some LSD. I could get it on other markets but wanted known quality and good prices.

What keeps me here is how awesome this community is. The vendors are all super chill and helpful. There is a lot of really good knowledge to absorb. Everyone seems so eager to help each other. It is the exact opposite of my experience on AB [...] when it comes to these things. Plus, I don't have anyone I can talk to [...] about this shit as I like to keep my OPSEC nice and tight. I have a few friends who trip occasionally, but none of them are as into talking and learning about it. They are more just in it to get fucked up and have a good time occasionally, which I don't mind, but it isn't the reason I use LSD.'

Positive Affective Sanctioning

@ [Mark] you are doing an incredible job vetting the keys posted here and saving people from their own OpSec disasters. In the past few weeks alone you must have identified close to 10 cases where people have completely doxxed themselves right out the gate with their first few posts.

This community owes you a debt of gratitude that will never be repaid in full but if you can save even just one person from making a life changing mistake it will all be worth it.

I concur. [Mark], you have been a blessing on here. Thank you

100% agreed! Thanks [Mark] for saving people from themselves :)

Positive Affective Sanctioning

Response to Reports published by Connoisseur's Club:

¡Beautiful read! ¡Inmense love to everyone!
Great team, nice reports with strong accuracy.
It is really impressive how consistent the reports/effects are!

Negative Affective Sanctioning

Joe: So am I able to put in an order {REDCATED} I'm ready whenever you are :)

Martin: you should edit out that information [Joe]. There is no reason to ever publicly post what you're ordering.

Joe: Got it , thank you for the help! I've changed and edited my post

John: It has nothing to do with WHAT you're ordering, but that you're ordering at all. As far as anyone is concerned, you are here only to discuss the psychedelic experience and lifestyle...

Joe: You're most definitely correct. It's always about having plausible deniability in any situation. gotcha boss Like the format – just needs to be anonymised (and paraphrased?)

Awards



Posts: 232

Karma: 38

And on the 8th day God
created psychedelics.



Awards:



Connoisseurs
Club



Critical
Update
Provider



Awesome
Contributor

The Crying Poop Troll Award aka "The Grumpy"

Gold Guts:

HAHAHAHA What a fucking circus!

This is going on for almost a year and still brings flies to the trap like shit does.

Only by simply looking at the art on the paper u push as blotters i can say their a joke. With real LSD u would have some real art drown on them not this childish scribbles. But again, some good advertising, some faked up stories and some lies from the Labs and maybe cash will start flowing...

Tztztzt...

[mod]: Enjoy your award Grumpy Guts, the crying poop troll award of 2017

[Trevor]: Epicly amazing. I think he needs to be back awarded for 2016 too.

[mod] I'm thinking more along the lines of a lifetime achievement award

[Lucy]: Call it, "The Grumpy"

[mod]: I like it!

Conclusion

community built on shared goals, norms, rules (relational, constructed)

--- In constant flux and development (e.g. negotiation, transformative, and enforcement) -> active

----- affective sanctioning regulative (of development)

----- empathic and factual information (not necessarily separated posts)

----- reinforce trust through community

----- if trust is a condition for the formation and development of knowledge, then so is
empathy (and affective sanctioning)

A market embedded in the community points to several other interesting conjectures (increased security, harm reduction, longevity – and the “communitisation” of the market (reversing Polanyi’s Great Transformation)).

‘For a community to survive, it must have a story. That story must be one that individuals can relate to, feel a part of, and affirm. It is a communicative vision of where they are going and why that keeps a community vibrant and healthy,’ (Arnett 1986)

