

“Shared Online, Made People Envious, Felt Good”: Motivations to Share Non-Media Types of Content Online

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ABSTRACT

An online survey of 200 participants was conducted on the experiences of sharing material and immaterial artifacts, focusing on interaction with non-media content types. The survey included six categories of sharing: music preferences, travel plans, sports activities, apartments and vehicles, virtual items in online games, and dietary preferences. The study identified factors that motivate participation in content-mediated interaction: discovery, curating self, connectedness, collaboration, enjoyment, and instrumental motivations, as a set of six motivating factors driving contemporary sharing practices. The authors consolidated findings from earlier work on motivations to share personal content, validating the set of motivating factors with the six selected non-media types of content. The results suggest that both extrinsic and intrinsic motivations affect content sharing practices. Furthermore, motivating factors were mapped to the reported positive and negative experiences, in order to understand their relation and to discuss their capacity to guide user experience design.

KEYWORDS

Apartment Sharing, Car Sharing, Content Sharing, Content-Mediated Interaction, Food Preferences, Music Preferences, Physical Exercises, Travel Plans, User Experience, Virtual Possessions

INTRODUCTION

User-generated content dominates contemporary online services. Today, users can produce and share a large variety of digital content online, often in the form of status updates on social networks, pictures, audiovisual content, and text messages. Understanding user motivations to share this information has long been the focus of research on human–computer interaction (HCI) and computer-supported collaborative work (CSCW). Understanding the underlying user motivations to share and consume

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content is essential for both service designers and researchers in the fields of HCI and CSCW. It guides decisions on the features that content-sharing services should incorporate.

The range of novel online services and connected devices has dramatically expanded the content and objects to share. Shared content and objects range from new types of digital content, such as music preferences and workout data, to sharing, renting, and loaning physical things, including household items, cars, or even apartments. Sharing economy services enable users to share their possessions and resources. In the sharing economy, the digital artifact that enables the sharing can be an advertisement for the resource (e.g., on a network hospitality platform) and is an act of communication, while an actual sharing activity often happens through physical interaction and is an act of distribution (John, 2013). Whereas a plethora of research has focused on the motivations of sharing on online social networking platforms, such as Facebook—especially on sharing photos—the sharing economy and other non-media sharing services have been studied less. This work extensively investigates and compares motivations to share different non-media types of content. With this work, the focus shifts towards understanding the recurrent motivating factors with various types of content.

Non-media types of content share similarities with traditional media content, such as photos, video, and audio. Non-media content can be derived or aggregated from standard content types, for example, travel data, which is often a collection of pictures and other metadata. Another example of non-media content is exercise data, which may include privacy-sensitive information. Moreover, the sharing enabled by sharing economy services is a fundamentally different phenomenon. These new phenomena require an extension of existing knowledge of the motivations and reasons that drive the sharing of personal physical possessions and resources. The design of this study involves unveiling the differences and similarities that motivate the sharing of non-media types of content. Furthermore, this work approaches the different types of content as diverse categories of items to share, whereas most earlier work has considered digital content as one entity (John, 2012; John, 2013).

The study focuses on six non-media types of content: (1) music preferences and playlists, (2) travel plans and trip details, (3) details of physical exercise and sports activity, (4) personal physical possessions such as apartments and vehicles (“sharing economy”), (5) virtual possessions in video games and virtual social worlds and (6) personal culinary and dietary preferences. Despite the wide variety of *objects* to share within the six typologies we selected, they all construct social relations (John, 2012) and provoke social intensification (Kennedy, 2016), which is manifested in communicative and distributed acts of sharing (John, 2013).

This paper focuses on two specific research questions:

1. What *motivating factors* are present within non-media types of content?
2. How do the *motivating factors* map to the *positive and negative experiences* reported by users of a content-sharing service?

Previous work on user-generated content has traditionally focused solely on content sharing, whereas in this work, we term all the identified activities around digital content sharing as content-mediated interaction (CMI) (Ojala, 2017). We define CMI as human-to-human interaction that is mediated by digital content. In addition to sharing, this study extends our knowledge of the “motivation to share content” and, more broadly, on participation in content-mediated interaction. The paper compares the findings from the current analysis to previous work on motivations to share. In particular, the study furthers our understanding of user experiences with novel content-sharing services. It also expands our theoretical understanding of content-mediated interaction by validating the content-mediated interaction model presented by Ojala (2017).

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