

User's Motivation in Sharing Information on Social Media

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Abstract. This article mainly focuses on the sharing behavior of users on social media. To understand better their sharing motivation by looking through some previous research papers. With the popularization of the Internet, various social media software has gradually become an essential communication channel for human society. People use social media software to share content, express support and communicate with each other. The underlying motive of this behavior of sharing is well worth studying and discussing. This article explains some of the psychological changes in users' motivation to share, which make people share content more dominated by external factors and less driven by self-driven factors. Here mainly focuses on China's social media market and explores the impact and potential problems brought about by changes in users' sharing motivation from three perspectives. The changes in the content shared in WeChat moments are analyzed, as well as the phenomenon of commercial content in social media and the gradual integration of social media into the social culture to have a further understanding of the influence brought by the change of users' sharing motivation from spontaneous to external causes. At the same time, an in-depth understanding of the deep logic of users' sharing behavior can better allow more users to share and achieve a better dissemination effect.

Keywords: Social media; sharing behavior; sharing motivation; self-presentation; commercial value; culture.

1. Introduction

"Social" refers to sharing information and bonding with others, and "media" refers to a way that people could use to acquire information from. There is no denying that social media, where people use to share content, exchange information, influences everyone in different perspective now. Despite using social media may brought negative impact on human society, it is vital to human society as a whole because of the countless advantages, and the fact that it is part of human life. It remains debateable about whether social media is a boon or disaster. Today, various social media software has been introduced to people's lives. According to an analysis from Kepios, there are 4.74 billion social media users around the world in October 2022 [1]. However, different users have different understandings and usage patterns of social software depend on their personality traits [2]. One of the features of social media software is that it can share various content with users, such as Facebook, Instagram, WeChat, and TikTok. As a behavior of human beings, sharing includes a series of processes. When users get in contact with social media and expect some satisfaction rewards, the sharing behavior appears. Therefore, the behavior of sharing is spontaneous behavior by a user to fulfilling their own needs [3]. Even though sometimes sharing seems for others, it is ultimately self-satisfying on some level, a human survival instinct. Since different users have different ways of using, length of use, and perceptions of using these social applications, a concept called "sharing motivation" has been proposed. Through some previous research findings, this research will divide the intrinsic motivation of sharing behavior into two major categories here. The first category is the sharing behavior that does not involve others but only lies in its sharing motivation. This kind of sharing will make users use the product to generate positive emotions, pleasure, excitement, and more, and they will then take the initiative to share [4]. There is also self-interest behavior when the user is promised to give a certain degree of reward to the user for sharing out [5]. The second type of motivation is sharing involving others, such as when the user feels that the content shared is beneficial to others, and sharing can help the user connect and strengthen interpersonal relationships [6].

Due to the global epidemic in recent years, the motivation of social media users to share has changed significantly. The author's previous research with the research team found that people now tend to use social media to solve their problems in life and at work. The presence of social media has gradually become more diversified from just content sharing. It is not only determined by the internal psychological needs of users. The internal factors include the spontaneous sharing of some people's ideas, the record of sharing feelings, and more, while the external factors are influenced by the social ecology of the general Internet environment. Over the years, people's motivation for social media sharing has gradually changed from internal to external factors. Gradually, there is less purely emotional expression, such as sharing one's mood and impressions of certain things as archiving of life, but more by some external factors such as value embodiment, reciprocity, or to brush up the sense of existence. Studying changes in users' motivations for sharing cannot only help sociologists better understand the reasons for group behavior but can also help some internet company practitioner's better judge and interpret users' mindsets.

2. The Changing of Sharing Content

In recent years, there have been many changes in sharing content on social media. According to a research paper from Zhang, many social media platforms add the function that users can manage their past posts, to make their posts visible to others for only a short term. The findings suggest that with people have a different attitude toward life and social networks lead to the evolution of self-presentation and increase the burden of impression management [7]. One of the webchat's core functions is called "moments", where users can share content with their friends, but around 2017 a new feature appeared in "moments" that allows other users to see only a certain range of their posts, such as "visible for the last six months" and "visible for three days only". Moreover, the official data from Tencent shows that by April 2022, 200 million users of WeChat have set their "moment" to be visible only for three days. The "Law of 150", once proposed by anthropologist Robin Dunbar, states that most people can establish an actual relationship with up to 150 people [8]. The number of WeChat friends has been too much for users to bond with. The spike in the number of friends has not led to a corresponding proportional increase in communication. As the base of WeChat users increases, theoretically, there is more and more content to see in the "moment". As can be seen from the official data, the number of people who click into the "moment" to see it every day has been growing since it was released, and there is no sign of stagnant. However, the enthusiasm for the release is decreasing year by year. As the concentration of "familiar strangers" on WeChat increases, the circle of friends is gradually becoming a burden. In a survey conducted by the China Youth Daily Social Survey Center in conjunction with Questionnaire.com, 62.8% of respondents felt that using "moment" saved them unnecessary trouble, and 51.5% felt that they could better protect themselves [9]. As the private imprint of the "moment" continues to ebb, the phenomenon of self-representation increases [10]. People are still posting on it, but both the desire to share privately and the motivation to open the articles shared by friends are disappearing. The content of the "moment" gradually becomes distorted and increasingly utilitarian.

Social media triggers comparisons between users. Because on social media, users are more inclined to post Landscaping pictures, and don't want to live a bad life on social media. Moreover, the power of social media reinforces the sense of comparison. For example, if the article is forwarded and liked, people will unconsciously compare the number of likes with others by publishing a travel circle of friends [11]. Now, the more common comparison is to solicit votes on social media. The number of solicited votes seems to indicate the influence of oneself on social media. Because of the comparison, people are more diligent in updating their social media and more diligent in giving likes to others, hoping to get interaction. These unconscious social media use all increase the feelings of anxiety of people.

3. The Explosion of Commercial Value

TikTok is a short video social software that has become popular in recent years. According to TikTok's official data, it will have around 800 million users and 700 million daily active users by 2022 [12]. Most of the users of TikTok are young, with strong consumption desires and high consumption power. In addition, these users like novel advertising ideas and can accept fresh information, which is very conducive to the transformation of advertising promotion. As a result, many e-commerce companies have gradually entered the TikTok platform, and various promoters and products cooperate to shoot videos. Burcu's study pointed out that there were a group of users who contributed significantly more information than they consumed, which was called promoter [13]. TikTok has positioned itself as a content platform, which makes it served for mass users, which also build the foundation of its prevalence. TikTok's operations make full use of content, coupled with strong promotion, to continuously grow the user base and achieve economies of scale. In addition, external influences of the network, such as communication between users, are used to further widen the gap with other competitive products [14].

Commercialization on social media brings human society a new mode of operation. The gradually rising commercial operation mode has brought strong vitality to Chinese social media, and also enabled social media to obtain various resources in the process of economic independence. [14]. Commercialization makes social media closer to users' life needs, and brings social benefits, further increasing the value of social media. But the commercialization of media is also a double-edged sword. While the limited commercial model has brought great vitality to the media, it has also created some problems that cannot be ignored, such as false communication for profit, political misinformation, and even spreading vulgar culture. A very common reality in the social media market today is that marketers only seek to bring in a lot of views and consumption for themselves, and do not care about the means of sharing, only look at the final data results. This leads to the clutter of shared content. The over-commercialization of shared content makes users care more about self-presentation online and even want to become promoters themselves. Many people are overly immersed in the self-presentation of various social media applications and are unable to accept the imperfections of real life. They go for some unreasonable consumption due to the excessive pursuit of that luxury sharing—the over-commercialization of social media to the neglect of real-life family and friends. Thus, whether the self-presentation in the commercialized social media software remains as real as it was and whether it brings more happiness or stress and anxiety to the users, need to be studied and discussed.

4. Society Culture Force Some Users to Integrate

Sharing motivation reflects people's need for social interaction and social relations. It is human nature to socialize and need to socialize. People are social animals, and every behavior on their social media is trying to establish interaction and connection with the society, friends and readers. Expression and sharing are naturally no exception. In addition to establishing a connection based on real relationships, the easiest common topic between oneself and friends is social public topic. Participation in the expression of social hot spots cannot only effectively establish interaction, but also generate their own sense of existence. Through these social activities, people feel that they live in a circle and are not abandoned by society. The popularity of social software has gradually become a way of life in the new age of human society. In a study on the motivation of information sharing in WeChat moments, the results show that familiarity and recognizability in interpersonal relationships are of great significance when using social networking sites [15]. Social media has become closely related to people's life. It is no longer limited to the communication between celebrities, but gradually changes the communication mode of the whole human society. According to the book by Bu Zhong, *Social Media Communication: Trends and Theory*, indicate that social media not only connects other people in the world but also changes the human brain and forms new social relationships [16]. Most people define a person they meet for the first time as a friendship in three main ways, direct

communication, asking about the situation, and observing the person's interaction with others. However, now the introduction of social media platforms becomes the fourth approach. This is because social media platforms are filled with much information related to individuals, such as photos, friend networks, and more. This is all useful information for people who want to build friendships.

Although the shift in socialization brought by social media has brought great convenience to human socialization, there are some disadvantages to the change in the way of making friends. Because of the way social media communication floods people's lives, it can make some people feel disconnected from society if they do not fit in. Many hot topics on social media have become the talk of everyday life, and if people do not actively learn about these topics, then they are likely to lose some of them when they socialize. There are even some people who initially try to get to know someone through the content his/her post on social media. The content and pictures shared by those people to figure out their personality, hobbies, and lifestyle. It would be hard to be understood if there were no sharing. These ideas are gradually gaining popularity with the popularity of social software. So many people will be forced to share something about their lives on social media, not because they want to, but because they do not want to be different.

5. Suggestion

In view of the anxiety of sharing content that social media may bring to users, the knowledge popularization of media education should be enhanced to teach students how to cope with social media well from the beginning and improve their media literacy. Media literacy is also a manifestation of culture, and schools are the main field of education cultivation. Students are also the main user group of social media, and their perception of the world will be more fragile, compared to adults. Therefore, we should first attach importance to the establishment of media-related courses to popularize media-related knowledge for students. More importantly, we should reasonably guide college students to contact and use social media well, enhance students' media awareness and better ability to cope with social media, so as to avoid anxiety problems that social media may bring to them.

To deal with the adverse effects of media commercialization, we should formulate countermeasures from three aspects: media content, media staff, and user influence. The first is to ensure the quality of content [17]. The quality of a publisher's content on social media is one of the fundamental conditions for business conversion rates. Only by continuously providing high-quality, non-fake content, can users continue to pay attention and love. In addition, media employees should adhere to professional ethics. To survive in the fierce competition, moderate commercialization can bring benefits to many people. However, if promoters keep ignore the moral line, which may be profitable at first, it will have an excessive impact on users and consumers, which is very unfavorable to long-term development. Third, improve the monitoring mechanism. The audience is both a consumer and a political citizen. Consumers are important to support media development, and their rights and interests deserve to be protected. False media products will make consumers' rights and interests suffer and should be investigated and punished by the law.

Finally, social media units should strengthen user research and improve the media service system [17]. Due to the powerful influence of the Internet today, social media units should not only pay attention to economic benefits but also have more responsibility and pay more attention to the psychological impact of social media users and social effects. At the same time, in the new media era, companies should increase the research on users' media behavior pattern and potential psychological problem beneath, pay attention to the impact of social media on users and society, and promote the benign development of society. Social media functions should be improved when deficiencies are found. At the same time, we should also pay attention to user privacy protection, so that people can feel more secure when using social media. In a word, the impact of social media on human society should not be underestimated, and the social media company should take the lead to cultivate the positive internet environment for users.

6. Conclusion

Now, sharing information is an important part of individual and collective behavior, especially in the post-pandemic era, where many times people must spread information quickly to understand what is going on without being disconnected from society. Some changes in social media behavior should serve as a wake-up call for people to be aware of differences. What causes the psychological changes that a group collectively produces? As an entry point of new media research, this opportunity can be explored and analyzed from different perspectives. Today, the presence of social media has become a part of people's lives. Self-sharing, business value, and social relationships are all inextricably linked to the existence of social media. An in-depth study of users' sharing behavior on social media is equivalent to studying the complex phenomenon of modern human society. As times change, people's motivations for sharing had changed significantly from the days when social media first emerged. While these changes have brought great benefits to the Internet economy, they also bring with them some problems that cannot be ignored. The disappearance of the once fun of sharing and the proliferation of overly commercialized performance-shaped sharing creates anxiety for users and the forced integration into social media due to social pressures. The emergence of problems brought about by these changes in social media users' desire to share can largely reflect the social problems encountered by people in modern society, so studying users' motivation to share is very necessary for human society.

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