

Draft synopsis – Data Capture and Metrics

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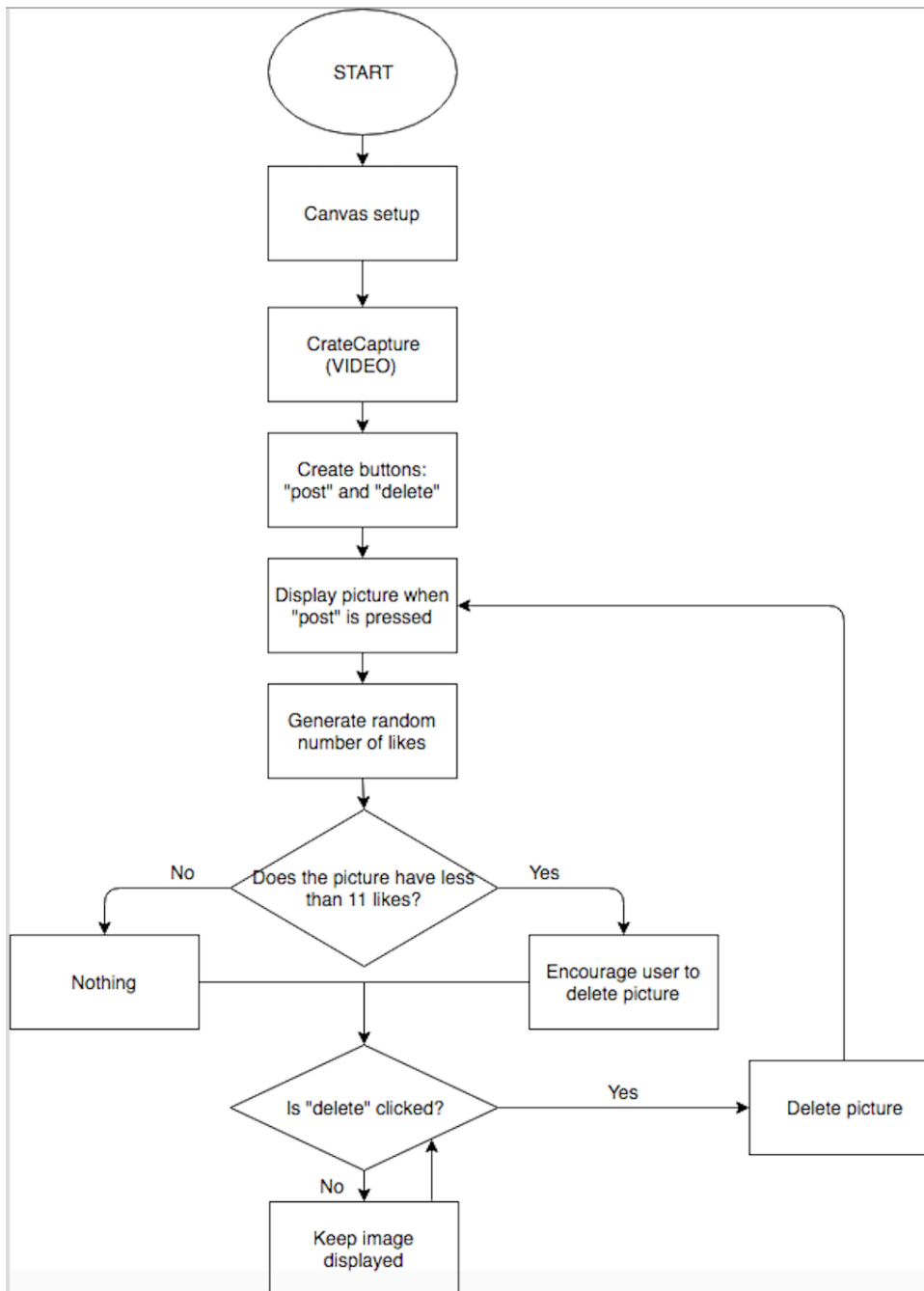
Presentation of problem

The overall problem that we choose to base our final project on, revolves around social media, and how the way we act on these are being affected by quantifications and buttons. Social media are a big part of our everyday lives, and therefore they change our actions and opinions to such a degree, that we sometimes doubt our own judgmental skills. We base what we post online on the acceptance of others, often in the form of “likes”, and if the numbers don’t add up to our own expectations and is equal to the numbers needed for it to be socially accepted, we often find ourselves deleting them, even though we actually liked them ourselves. In this way, the opinion of others determines whether we are good enough, and the quantity of likes become more important than the quality of those likes and the post itself.

Hereby our overall problem is: *“Why are likes so important, and how do social media affect our social culture?”*

The reasoning for choosing this specific problem is first of all based on our own personal experiences; we are a part of this social media culture, and we ourselves experience the pressure of the acceptance of others online. Even though we are a part of it, we don’t find ourselves thinking about this problem on a daily basis, but the interest in the subject mainly started when reading the text *“What Do Metrics Want?”* by Benjamin Grosser. In this text he, among other things, mentions how the quantity of numbers are becoming more important to us than the quality of these numbers, and how these numbers affect the way that we behave online. In relation to this, he also puts a focus on how this development is beneficial for the specific social media, because this behavior from the user often results in a greater use of this specific media. Based on this, we found the idea of a program putting a greater focus on this subject interesting.

Flowchart and description of our idea



Our idea is about data capture using the webcam. We want to create two buttons; a “post” button and a “delete” button. When clicking the “post” button, the picture is posted on the side of the screen. The program will then randomly give the pictures likes. If a picture has less than 11 likes, a text will appear encouraging the user to delete this picture. If you click the “delete” button, the picture will be deleted and if not, it will be kept.

We have chosen the two buttons mentioned above because they seem to represent the essence of social media platforms. The “post” button is what constitute these platforms, that depend on user contribution to actually have content to show. The “delete” button ensures the user that if they change their mind about a post, it can be removed. The random number of likes symbolizes how many people acknowledge the content you posted. Hereby, the program is able to simulate a possible situation on a social media, and highlights how a lack of acceptance from others can ultimately lead to a removal of the content. Our program is also supposed to symbolize the importance of the number of likes, where quantity is more important than quality: it is more important to get many likes, rather than focusing on who the like is from.

The number of likes, 11, is based on the early years of Instagram. If your photo did not get 11 likes, the number would not be displayed, instead all the names of the users who liked the photo would be shown. When the picture had under 11 likes, it became very obvious for everyone that the picture did not even have enough likes to get a number displayed. Therefore 11 became the minimum number that a lot of people wanted to reach for them to feel like their picture was acceptable.

Our behavior on social media is quite different from how we act in real life. On social media our behavior is highly influenced by how we think others would respond to what we do and post, and how it makes us look on the surface. In real life we cannot delete our actions, but on social media it is possible to change the data, or delete it, if the response does not live up to what was expected. This is an aspect that we also want to emphasize in our program by including the “delete” button.

The technical aspects of our program

Our program is combining a webcam function, with the “like” and “post” possibilities as seen on Facebook and Instagram and other social media. We are using the syntax “createCapture(VIDEO);” to gain access to the user’s webcam. Next to the webcam picture, we want to create two buttons, a post button and a delete button. To do so we use “createButton(‘name’), and we are combining this with button.mousePressed(function). After doing this we have to create the function which we want executed when the button is pressed. The function for the “post” button looks like this:

```
“function takepicture () {  
  snapshots.push(video.get());  
}
```

“Snapshots” is a variable consisting of an empty array.

When the picture is posted, we want to generate a number that illustrates the number of likes the picture gets. For this we are thinking about creating an array consisting of the different numbers. When the number is displayed, the program needs to check if the number is higher or lower than 11. To do so we create a boolean expression saying “if the number of likes is under 11, display a text asking if they want to delete the picture. Else, do not display anything”

Presentation of theory

- Benjamin Grosser, ”What Do Metrics Want? How Quantification Prescribes Social Interaction on Facebook,” in Computational Culture no. 4 (2014).

<http://computationalculture.net/article/what-do-metrics-want>

We want to use the text *What do metrics want* to support our thesis about how like buttons generates a culture where quantity is more important than quality, where it is more important how many likes you get rather than who likes it. Also, we want to use the text to support our thesis about how all the numbers and counting’s affects the way we act on the web, and how the purpose for these metrics is to increase the use of Facebook or other social medias.

- Gerlitz, Carolin, and Helmond, Anne. "The like Economy: Social Buttons and the Data-Intensive Web." *New Media & Society* 15, no. 8 (December 1, 2013): 1348–65. (can access via e-library):

The text *The like economy: Social Button and the Data-Intensive Web* is supposed to be used as an examination of data sharing and also to support our thesis about how the like economy, data and numbers consist of performative and productive capacities, which enables generation of user effects, which enact more activities and also multiply themselves.

- Pold, Søren. "Button." *Software Studies\ a lexicon*. Eds. Matthew Fuller. MIT Press, 2008. 31-36:

The text *Button* is supposed to support our thesis about how pressing a button generates data capture and how buttons creates binary choices, where you only have a certain option to answer or comment on something according to what there is buttons for – in this sense it is kind of like “all or nothing”.

- Kirschenbaum, Matthew G. *Mechanisms: New Media and the Forensic Imagination*, 2007, 25-71:

We also want to raise the question about erasing things on the internet, and for this we want to use the text *New Media and the Forensic Imagination* to support our thesis about how it is almost impossible to delete things on the internet, when it has been posted.

Oral discussion points

There are several further aspects of our program that we believe could be interesting to discuss more. From the perspective described above, we would like to address how the social media affects how you act on these platforms. Therefore, it is relevant to discuss what and why some content become popular, and what content does not leave an impression. Even though our program tries to imitate the post possibilities of platforms like Facebook and Instagram, it does not include the option to upload a picture you took on your phone the day before. It adds another perspective on the content posted on Facebook and how much thought you put into a post. Would you dare to post a picture you took directly from the webcam/app with no editing? Are factors like popularity and number of previous likes more important, than the immediate quality of the content, when you have to decide whether or not to like a post? Are buttons like the 'like'- and 'share'-button neutral, or do they have an agenda that manipulate you on the platform?

Aside from this social aspect of sharing data, it is also interesting to consider where this data ends? For example, what happens to the picture you have shared? Who can use this data? What if you decide it is not worthy to stay and therefore delete it. Where does this data go? To a virtual trash can?