

# Research Paper Review

Fitness Motivation

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The paper I chose to do a review on is “When Fitness Meets Social Networks: Investigating Fitness Tracking and Social Practices on WeRun”, an investigative research summary that focuses on analyzing the effects of social media and social networks on fitness motivation through an analysis into WeRun, a plugin for WeChat, which is a popular Chinese social media app.

WeRun is a plugin for WeChat that allows users to import their step tracking data from their fitness tracker or phone, and compete with other users in their friend network on a ranking board. The plugin has been extremely successful due to WeChat’s massive user base, and everyone wanted to be at the top of the ranking board among their friends. The authors of the paper were interested in why the fitness app was so successful, and how being built on a preexisting social network impacted the app’s success. The research was done by interviewing 32 WeRun users who were part of the authors’ social networks.

The result of the research concluded that even though WeRun only had the step tracking feature, users tend to use it over competing apps that are more comprehensive, due to the social aspect and the ease of use of being a plugin into an existing app. Users preferred interacting with their own social network instead of competing with, for example, local strangers or global competitions, as they related more to their friends and acquaintances and can share part of their journey emotionally. The social atmosphere also encourages users to exercise more, partly due to pressure of not wanting to be low on their ranking among friends, and partly just wanting to be more healthy with their friends. The benefits went the other way as well, with the sharing of fitness data actually increasing and encouraging more social interaction, particularly about said fitness data, often being a good conversation starter between friends and even acquaintances. However, exposure of their fitness data could have a negative impact on users as well, with some users hesitant about their bosses or others knowing about their daily exercise routine, being frightful that unexpected behaviour would make them look bad.

This research paper was very insightful for me, as our group’s problem space was about exercise and fitness motivation. Humans are social animals, and social networks are extremely popular right now, so incorporating a social network into fitness tracking apps and devices for support and camaraderie was a good idea to look into. The paper clearly outlined how social networks was able to encourage and motivate more exercise, while also giving insight into some features of a fitness app that users liked and valued more. Integrating the solution we do come up with into multiple platforms, especially existing social media apps is extremely valuable, as users can easily gain validation and support, and hence more motivation, by sharing their progress with their social network, and more platforms means more reach into new potential user bases. Users should also be allowed to have full control over what they share to their network, so that the solution won’t overshare without permission. We can also use the fact that the solution is aware of the user’s social network to help them schedule workouts with friends, which furthermore increases a user’s likelihood and motivation to workout. And finally, users should be allowed to share their fitness status to other social media apps in order to spark new conversation and encourage further social interaction.

## References

Gui, X., Chen, Y., Caldeira, C., Xiao, D., & Chen, Y. (2017, May). When Fitness Meets Social Networks: Investigating Fitness Tracking and Social Practices on WeRun. In Proceedings of the 2017 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (pp. 1647-1659). ACM.

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