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Social Interaction and Co-Viewing With YouTube: Blending Mass Communication Reception and Social Connection

Paul Haridakis and Gary Hanson

This study examined whether motives and individual differences (social activity, interpersonal interaction, locus of control, sensation-seeking, innovativeness and YouTube affinity) predicted viewing videos on YouTube and sharing videos with others. Consistent with uses and gratifications assumptions, motives and individual differences differentially predicted viewing and sharing behaviors. Participants viewed videos for information seeking, and viewed and shared videos for entertainment, co-viewing and social interaction. Results suggest that while people watch videos on YouTube for some of the same reasons identified in studies of television viewing, there is a distinctly social aspect to YouTube use that reflects its social networking characteristics.

YouTube is one of the new forms of social network-oriented online communication that have emerged in the past few years. It exemplifies a social environment in which everyone has the potential to be both a consumer and purveyor of content (Holtz, 2006), and illustrates the speed with which social networking innovations can achieve widespread penetration and utility.

YouTube was created in 2005, and 15 months later the site was delivering 100 million videos per day, accounting for 60% of all videos watched online in 2006 (''YouTube serves up 100 million videos a day online,'' 2006). The most popular clips are viewed by millions of users, providing a new form of appointment television—one that is built around the calendars of individual users and not rigid network program schedules. The audience is now an integral part of the media distribution chain.

Since YouTube resides on the Internet, it can take advantage of the Web's social-networking capabilities. Viewers can share opinions about the content through

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online comments and ratings systems, and can share the content itself by e-mailing links to family and friends. It allows users to move seamlessly between traditional mass communication activity of watching mediated content, and interpersonal or social connection activity of sharing it with others.

The centrality of the individual audience member suggests the value of applying audience-centered perspectives to studying media use in an environment in which users can receive, publish and modify Web content (Pisani, 2006). The predominant research framework for studying media use from the audience's perspective is Uses and Gratifications, which assumes that people use media to satisfy underlying needs or interests. This study applies a Uses and Gratifications approach to examine the communication motives of YouTube users' viewing and sharing of videos.

Uses and Gratifications

Uses and Gratifications theory emphasizes how and why people use media (Klapper, 1963). This perspective assumes that media uses and effects are influenced by a host of factors working in concert. It suggests that such factors as one's social environment and psychological circumstances, needs, motives, and expectations about mediated communication influence media use and effects (e.g., Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974; Rosengren, 1974). Summarizing these assumptions, Rubin et al. (2003) explained that ''(a) media behavior is purposive, goal-directed and motivated, (b) people select media content to satisfy their needs or desires, (c) social and psychological dispositions mediate that behavior and (d) the 'media compete with other forms of communication—or functional alternatives—such as interpersonal interaction for selection, attention, and use' '' (p. 129). The assumption that media behavior is goal-directed and purposive makes motivation a central concept in the perspective. Research suggests that motivation influences communication behavior such as the selection, use, interpretation, and sharing of media fare (e.g., Haridakis & Rubin, 2005; Levy & Windahl, 1984).

Motivation

The videos on YouTube come either from the traditional mass media (e.g., television, movies), or are created and uploaded by YouTube users. Therefore, one basic question to consider is whether motives such as entertainment, information, arousal, habit, pass-time, escape, and relaxation identified in prior studies (Greenberg, 1974; Haridakis, 2002; Kim & Rubin, 1997; Rubin, 1983) for watching media fare may be salient reasons for viewing YouTube content. By the same token, the ability to share videos with others offers a social component to YouTube that suggests interpersonal motives such as inclusion, affection, and control, identified in prior studies (e.g., Barbato & Perse, 1992; Downs & Javidi, 1990; Rubin, Perse, & Barbato, 1988), also may contribute to YouTube use.

Several years ago, Rubin and Rubin (1985, 2001) argued that people can use media to satisfy interpersonal needs, and use interpersonal communication to satisfy media-related needs. The Internet, in particular, is both an interpersonal and mass communication medium (Flanagin & Metzger, 2001). Prior Internet research has identified both traditional media-related motives and interpersonal motives for using the Internet. Media-related motives include entertainment (Ebersole, 2000; Kaye & Johnson, 2002; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Wolfradt & Doll, 2001), information seeking (Ebersole, 2000; Kaye & Johnson, 2002; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Sjoberg, 1999; Wolfradt & Doll, 2001), and passing time or alleviating boredom (Ebersole, 2000; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000). Interpersonal motives for using the Internet include interpersonal utility (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000), social utility (Kaye & Johnson, 2002), social or interpersonal interaction (Ebersole, 2000; Wolfradt & Doll, 2001), and chatting with others (Sjoberg, 1999).

Activity

Uses and Gratifications researchers have long argued that there are links between media-use motives and audience activity before, during, and after media exposure (e.g., Levy & Windahl, 1984). Much of the research has focused on the influence of pre-viewing activity (e.g., viewing intention), and during-viewing activity (e.g., attention, involvement) on media use and effects (e.g., Kim & Rubin, 1997; Perse, 1990; Rouner, 1984). For example, Rubin (2002) suggested that purposive viewers are more intentional in their pre-viewing planning and more attentive and involved during viewing. Lin (1993) also suggested that motivated viewers are more active during television viewing.

Media researchers have long felt that post-viewing activity also could influence media effects. Rubin and Perse (1987) found links between motives and the post-viewing discussion of televised soap operas and concluded that lonely viewers were more passive and less likely than non-lonely viewers to watch soap operas for social interaction. The ability to share YouTube videos provides researchers an opportunity to examine a new form of post-viewing activity.

Affinity

The argument also has been made that level of motivation and activity affect attitudes toward the media and/or their content. Media affinity is one attitude that has received considerable research attention. Rubin (2002) found that more habitual and less active viewers tend to exhibit an affinity with the medium of their choice, whereas more instrumental and active viewers tend to exhibit an affinity with the content selected. Rubin (1983) found that more instrumental use is evidenced by greater activity levels, more purposive motives (e.g., for information), and relatively greater affinity with the content than with the medium, whereas more ritualized use is evidenced by lower activity levels, more passive motives (e.g., to relax, escape,

pass time), and relatively more affinity with the medium than the content. Affinity with particular programming (e.g., soap operas) has been linked to post-viewing program discussion (e.g., Rubin & Perse, 1987).

YouTube User Background Characteristics

The Uses and Gratifications model posits that people's motives for media use are shaped by their particular social and psychological characteristics. Locus of control and sensation-seeking are two traits that should be relevant in an online environment in which users can exercise considerable control in selecting from among millions of videos, ranging from very exciting (e.g., sports fights), to very relaxing (sounds of an ocean breeze). Since viewing of videos requires at least a minimum level of computer skills, and the service itself was less than 2 years old when this study was conducted, innovativeness also could be an important user characteristic to consider.

Users' ability to share YouTube videos with others in their social circles suggests that the extent of their offline social activities and interpersonal interaction with others may influence their social use of YouTube.

Social Activities and Interpersonal Interaction. There has been significant discussion about the relationship between online media use and offline social activities and interpersonal interaction (DiMaggio, Hargittai, Neuman, & Robinson, 2001). Some researchers have suggested that greater Internet use results in smaller social circles, less communication in homes, and loneliness (e.g., Kraut et al., 1998). Others have suggested that Internet users have wider social circles than nonusers, and that the Internet enhances existing social networks (Hampton & Wellman, 2003). Regardless of the position taken, each view highlights the importance of one's offline social activities and interpersonal interaction (Haythornthwaite, 2002). Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) found that those who were satisfied with their face-to-face interactions tended to use the Internet for informational reasons, while those who were not satisfied with their face-to-face interactions tended to use the Internet for interpersonal interaction. The research suggests that offline interaction and social activity are background characteristics that would be particularly salient in the use of a technology such as YouTube, which has been specifically described as a social medium (Fernando, 2007).

Locus of Control. Locus of control is a personality trait that reflects one's belief in the relative power to control events in one's life. Those who are more internally controlled tend to believe that they can control external circumstances in their lives. Those who are more externally controlled believe that external circumstances such as fate, luck, and influential other people tend to control events in their lives (e.g., Levenson, 1974). Locus of control has been positively associated with the amount of television viewing (Wober & Gunter, 1986), post-viewing perceptions

(Wober & Gunter, 1982), and attitudinal and behavioral effects (Haridakis, 2002). Some research has suggested links between locus of control and attitudes toward the Internet and its content (e.g., Hoffman, Novak, & Schlosser, 2003), and there is at least some evidence that external locus of control may be linked to Internet addiction (Chak & Leung, 2004). Among males, internal locus of control may be associated more strongly with involvement in social activities (Levenson, 1974). Since locus of control has been tied both to social activity and traditional media use, it may predict the use of a medium such as YouTube that can be used in both realms.

Sensation Seeking. Sensation seeking is a trait that reflects an individual's willingness to search for novel, varied, and intense stimuli (Perse, 1996). Prior research has linked this background characteristic to motives for choosing media content (e.g., Conway & Rubin, 1991; Krcmar & Greene, 1999; Perse, 1996), and selection of media content that stimulates arousal (e.g., Oliver, 2002) such as violence and pornography (e.g., Krcmar & Greene, 1999; Perse, 1996). It's also been suggested that sensation seekers tend to socialize (Frost & Stauffer, 1987). Because YouTube provides video options ranging from highly arousing sports and fighting to passive, tranquil content, sensation seeking is a trait that may affect the selection of YouTube content.

Innovativeness. Prior research has related innovativeness to a person's level of Internet use (Busselle, Reagan, Pinkleton, & Jackson, 1999) and the adoption of new technologies, such as computers (Lin, 1998) and Webcasting (e.g., Lin, 2004). Recently, researchers have found innovativeness to be a predictor of online social activities such as forwarding content and chatting with others (Sun, Youn, Wu, & Kuntaraporn, 2006). Such research suggests innovativeness would be relevant to use of a relatively new online phenomenon such as YouTube.

Research Questions

YouTube shares an important attribute with traditional television in that both are delivery systems for video content. Therefore, it is reasonable to examine whether viewers watch YouTube videos for the same mass communication motives identified in prior research of traditional television programming (e.g., Greenberg, 1974; Rubin, 1983).

Unlike television, the Internet has long been regarded as a medium that is particularly amenable to interpersonal connection and social activities (e.g., Hampton & Wellman, 2003; Harasim, 1993). Therefore, it has been argued that people also use the Internet for interpersonal reasons (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000).

However, there has been a tendency to presume that traditional media-use motives and interpersonal motives are mutually exclusive. Their distinctiveness primar-

ily lies in the fact that separate sets of motives have been operationally defined in studies that focused either on mass communication (e.g., Greenberg, 1974; Rubin, 1983), or interpersonal communication (e.g., Rubin, Perse, & Barbato, 1988).

YouTube gives users a forum for viewing videos and sharing information with others (e.g., ''7 Things You Should Know About YouTube,'' 2006; Fernando, 2007). In an environment in which users can move rather seamlessly between viewing and sharing content, YouTube provides a research opportunity to consider that mass communication and interpersonal communication motives identified in previous research may not be mutually exclusive. Accordingly, research questions asked were:

RQ_1: What communication motives predict viewing YouTube video content?
RQ_2: What communication motives predict sharing YouTube video content?

According to Uses and Gratifications, media effects are the consequence of various factors working in concert to influence effects. This study's model suggests that (a) individual background characteristics of media users (e.g., psychological and social circumstances) (b) influence their motivation for using media, (c) and influence attitudes which (d) influence selection and use (i.e., viewing YouTube videos and sharing them with others). As this model guided the research, the principal research question of the study asked about the relative contribution of all of the antecedent variables to explaining the viewing and sharing of YouTube videos:

RQ_3: How do users' background characteristics, motives, and affinity with YouTube predict the viewing and sharing of content?

Methods

Sample

The sample was comprised of students from various majors enrolled in a communication course required as part of a large university's liberal education requirements. Only students who indicated that they used YouTube and volunteered to participate in this study completed self-administered questionnaires. About 427 questionnaires provided usable data: 41.5% men (coded 0), and 58.3% women (coded 1). The mean age was 19.67 ($SD = 2.78$) years.

This college sample seemed appropriate for the exploratory nature of this study. Research has suggested that college students tend to use a variety of Internet functions (Morahan-Martin & Schumacher, 2000) including YouTube (Hansell, 2006). Evidence suggests that YouTube appeals to younger viewers. Some measures suggest that 40% of early adopters of YouTube were aged 15 to 24 (Tancer, 2006). As of

December 2006, it was estimated that 85% of college age Internet users (18–24 demographic) had watched videos on sites such as YouTube (Joly, 2007). Educators too have recognized YouTube use among college aged populations in suggesting ways to incorporate it in the classroom ''to engage students of the Net generation'' (Skiba, 2007, p. 100).

Measurement

The questionnaire measured: (a) social and psychological antecedents (i.e., locus of control, innovativeness, sensation seeking, interpersonal interaction, social activities), (b) motives for using YouTube, (c) affinity with YouTube, and (d) amount of time spent watching YouTube videos and sharing them with others.

Locus of Control. Locus of control was measured with Levenson's (1974) index. Respondents rated their agreement with 12 items (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*), reflecting three dimensions of locus of control: powerful others control (e.g., ''my life is chiefly controlled by powerful others''), chance control (e.g., ''when I get what I want it's usually because I'm lucky''), and internal control (e.g., ''my life is determined by my own actions''). Responses to the first two dimensions, which reflect external control, were recoded. Higher scores indicated greater internal control. This method has proven to be a valid and reliable assessment in past research (e.g., Haridakis, 2002; Rubin, 1993). One item (''I can pretty much determine what will happen in my life'') was deleted to increase reliability. Responses for the combined 11-item scale were summed and averaged to create an internal control index (M = 3.59, SD = 0.50, α = .79).

Innovativeness. The Goldsmith and Hofacker (1991) innovativeness scale was used to measure innovativeness with newer technologies. Unlike more general conceptualizations of trait innovativeness (e.g., Rogers, 2003), this 6-item measure is domain-specific (i.e., focused on innovativeness for a specific product or products in a particular area of interest). The scale has been found to be a valid and reliable measure of innovativeness (e.g., Goldsmith & Flynn, 1992; Goldsmith & Hofacker, 1991). Users rated their agreement with six items (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) adapted from previous research that tapped their perceptions (e.g., ''In general, I am the last in my circle of friends to know about the latest electronic equipment'') and behaviors (e.g., ''Compared to my friends, I own few pieces of electronic equipment'') pertaining to new technology adoption and use. Items reflecting low innovativeness were reverse coded so that higher scores on the index represented greater innovativeness. One item, ''I am willing to buy new electronic equipment even if I haven't tried it yet,'' was deleted to increase reliability. Responses were summed and averaged to create the innovativeness index (M = 3.24, SD = 0.86, α = .83).

Sensation Seeking. Sensation seeking was measured with form V of Zuckerman's (1979) scale, an instrument that is widely used in social science and communication research. It is comprised of four subscales: thrill seeking, experience seeking, disinhibition, and boredom susceptibility. It was a well-suited measure in this study because it taps a person's personality-based optimal level of arousal that can affect media content choices (e.g., Krcmar & Greene, 1999). Respondents indicated their agreement (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) with 40 items. Responses for each dimension were summed and averaged to arrive at separate scores for thrill seeking ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 0.87$, $\alpha = .86$), experience seeking ($M = 2.91$, $SD = 0.70$, $\alpha = .77$), disinhibition ($M = 2.93$, $SD = 0.80$, $\alpha = .86$), and boredom susceptibility ($M = 2.75$, $SD = 0.56$, $\alpha = .70$).

Social Characteristics. Two dimensions of a life-position measure adapted from prior research (e.g., Rubin & Rubin, 1982, 1986, 1989) were used to measure respondents' (a) level of social activity and (b) interpersonal interaction. Respondents rated their agreement (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) with five statements assessing their social activity ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 0.65$, $\alpha = .62$), and five statements to measure their interpersonal interaction ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.59$, $\alpha = .63$).

Motives for Using YouTube. YouTube-use motivation was measured with a 45-item Internet-motives scale adapted from previous research (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000). In response to focus-group discussions, six items reflecting arousal motivation and social interaction motivation adapted from Rubin's (1983) Television Viewing Motives Scale were also included.

Respondents were asked to indicate how much each of the 51 motive statements was like their own reasons (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *exactly*) for using YouTube. Principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation was used to analyze the motive statements. The analysis identified 6 factors that accounted for 67.3% of the total variance. Responses to items that loaded on each factor were summed and averaged to create indices of the respective viewing motives. Results of the factor analysis are summarized in Table 1.

Factor 1, Convenient Entertainment, was comprised of 13 items related to using YouTube for entertainment, habit, and passing the time ($M = 3.37$, $SD = 0.96$, $\alpha = .95$). Factor 2, Interpersonal Connection, was comprised of 9 items related to using YouTube for inclusion, expressive need, and time control ($M = 1.54$, $SD = 0.72$, $\alpha = .92$). Factor 3, Convenient Information Seeking, was comprised of 5 items related to using YouTube because it was inexpensive, and a novel way to search for information and keep up with current issues ($M = 2.21$, $SD = 0.95$, $\alpha = .84$). Factor 4, Escape, was comprised of 3 items related to escape (i.e., "get away from what I'm doing"; "get away from family, friends, or others"; and to "forget about school, work, or other things") ($M = 2.19$, $SD = 1.00$, $\alpha = .77$). Factor 5, Co-viewing, was comprised of 3 items that reflected using YouTube because it is something to do with friends or family, and to talk about ($M = 2.04$, $SD = 0.98$, $\alpha = .78$). Factor 6, Social Interaction, was comprised of 2 items that reflected using

Table 1
Primary Factor Loadings of Motives

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
Because it is entertaining	.86	.06	.10	−.02	.04	.05
Because it amuses me	.86	.11	.09	.04	.10	.02
Because it is enjoyable	.85	.04	.15	.07	−.03	.08
Because it is fun just to play around and check things out	.85	.03	.04	.04	−.01	.04
Because I just like to use it	.80	.08	.24	.08	.07	.01
Just because it is there	.69	.16	.11	.21	.23	−.04
Because it gives me something to occupy my time	.69	.11	.20	.46	.16	−.01
Because it passes the time away, particularly when I'm bored	.69	.16	.02	.37	.14	−.02
When I have nothing better to do	.67	.12	−.07	.41	.11	.01
Because it is exciting	.66	.29	.14	.15	.34	.03
Because it is thrilling	.64	.32	.14	.14	.34	.05
Because I can use it anytime	.60	.19	.28	.33	.25	−.04
To see what's out there	.60	.22	.31	.11	.15	−.08
To show others encouragement	.13	.82	.13	.04	.10	.10
To belong to a group with same interests as mine	.12	.81	.20	.05	.14	.17
To let others know I care about their feelings	.10	.78	.19	.14	.05	.18
Because I can talk as long or as short as I want	.12	.75	.16	.16	.14	.12
Because I can express myself freely	.22	.74	.17	.11	.21	.12
Because I enjoy answering other people's questions	.11	.73	.15	.07	.22	.09
Because it makes me feel less lonely	.17	.67	.13	.16	.07	−.12
To communicate with family and friends	.06	.64	.10	.13	.16	.38
Because people don't have to be there the exact time you send the message	.11	.58	.36	.35	.09	.11
Because it is easier to get information	.25	.32	.72	.21	.11	−.04
To search for information	.09	.10	.71	.04	.07	.28
To get information for free	.31	.30	.68	.13	.07	−.14
Because it provides a new and interesting way to do research	.16	.37	.66	.11	.14	.12
To keep up with current issues and events	.15	.20	.65	.06	.19	.22
So I can get away from what I'm doing	.37	.18	.15	.74	.06	.06
So I can forget about school, work or other things	.42	.21	.14	.70	.13	.03
So I can get away from family, friends or others	.11	.22	.16	.55	.03	.21
So I can talk to other people about what is going on	.13	.30	.24	.04	.75	.07
So I can be with other members of the family or friends who are watching YouTube with me	.16	.38	.17	.08	.70	.13
Because it is something to do when friends come over	.44	.17	.09	.16	.65	.04
To meet new people	−.04	.30	.09	.10	.02	.76
To participate in discussions	−.05	.29	.26	.07	.15	.67
Eigenvalue	13.75	4.67	1.62	1.32	1.12	1.08
% variance explained	39.28%	13.36%	4.6%	3.76%	3.21%	3.08%
Mean	3.37	1.54	2.21	2.19	2.04	1.34
SD	.96	.72	.95	1.00	.98	.57
Cronbach's alpha	.95	.92	.84	.77	.78	r = .43

Note. Factor 1 = convenient entertainment; Factor 2 = interpersonal connection; Factor 3 = convenient information seeking, Factor 4 = escape, Factor 5 = co-viewing, and Factor 6 = social interaction.

YouTube to meet new people and participate in discussions ($M = 1.34$, $SD = 0.57$, $r = .43$, $p < .001$).

Affinity With YouTube. YouTube affinity was measured with a 5-item adaptation of a widely used television affinity index (see Perse, 1990). The index was adapted to assess respondents' level of affinity with YouTube. Respondents rated their agreement (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) with the five affinity statements. One item, "I could easily do without YouTube for several days," was deleted from the summed and averaged index to increase reliability ($M = 1.50$, $SD = 0.63$, $\alpha = .74$).

Amount of YouTube Use. Respondents were asked to indicate how often (1 = *never*, 5 = *very often*) they watched videos falling within several designated categories of content gleaned from focus group discussions. The categories were: traditional news and information videos such as segments of CNN, ABC, or local newscasts; comedy-related news and information videos such as *The Daily Show*, the *Colbert Report*, and monologues by Jay Leno or David Letterman; video clips from non-news entertainment programs such as *Lost* or *The Simpsons*; video clips taken from movies; videos created by other YouTube users; and instructional or tutorial videos. Respondents were also asked to indicate how often they shared or recommended videos falling within these same categories. An additional category "other" was added to give respondents an opportunity to list content not falling within the above categories.

The 5-point measures of activity (i.e., *never* to *very often*) were summed and averaged to create indices of YouTube use: watching videos ($M = 2.70$. $SD = 0.68$) and sharing videos ($M = 2.32$, $SD = 0.87$). Responses to the "other" category were omitted from the summed and averaged scale due to the small number of responses to that category.

Results

Multiple regression analysis was used to examine the contributions of background characteristics, motivation, and affinity in explaining the amount of viewing and sharing of YouTube content. The overall regression analyses were used to answer each research question. Guided by the Uses and Gratifications model described above, variables were entered into the equations in the following conceptual order: (a) user background characteristics, (b) user motives, and (c) affinity with YouTube. Two demographic variables—gender and age—were entered on an initial step in the regression analyses to control for any influence they may have had on the viewing and sharing of videos. Results of the regression analyses are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2
Summary of Results When Regressing Video Viewing and Sharing on Audience Background, Motive, and Affinity Variables

Predictor Variables	Viewing β	Sharing β
Step 1		
Age	−.02	−.03
Gender	−.16**	−.06
Step 2		
Age	−.02	−.04
Gender	−.19***	−.09
Social activity	.24***	.23***
Interpersonal interaction	−.08	−.08
Locus of control	−.08	.01
Thrill seeking	−.12*	−.11
Disinhibition	−.05	−.04
Experience seeking	.16**	.13*
Boredom susceptibility	.13*	.15**
Innovativeness	.02	.02
Step 3		
Age	.05	.00
Gender	−.11*	−.03
Social activity	.13*	.11*
Interpersonal interaction	−.03	−.01
Locus of control	.00	.11*
Thrill seeking	−.05	−.06
Disinhibition	−.02	−.04
Experience seeking	.06	.05
Boredom susceptibility	−.01	.00
Innovativeness	.01	.01
Motives		
Convenient entertainment	.36***	.17**
Convenient info seeking	.20***	.09
Interpersonal connection	.03	.10
Escape	−.03	.07
Co-viewing	.15**	.16**
Social interaction	.12**	.21***

(*continued*)

Table 2
(*Continued*)

Predictor Variables	Viewing β	Sharing β
Step 4		
Age	.05	.00
Gender	−.10*	−.03
Social activity	.13*	.11*
Interpersonal interaction	−.02	−.01
Locus of control	.01	.11*
Thrill seeking	−.06	−.06
Disinhibition	−.02	−.04
Experience seeing	.06	.05
Boredom susceptibility	−.01	−.01
Innovativeness	.01	.02
Motives		
Convenient Entertainment	.35***	.16**
Convenient info seeking	.20***	.09
Interpersonal connection	.02	.08
Escape	−.04	.06
Co-viewing	.15**	.15**
Social interaction	.12**	.20***
YouTube affinity	.04	.06

Note. Video viewing: $R = .16$, $R^2 = .03$, $F(2, 422) = 5.59$, $p < .01$ for Step 1. $R = .33$, $R^2 = .11$, $\Delta R^2 = .09$, $F(10, 414) = 5.20$, $p < .001$ for Step 2. $R = .68$, $R^2 = .46$, $\Delta R^2 = .35$, $F(16, 408) = 21.94$, $p < .001$ for Step 3. $R = .68$, $R^2 = .46$, $\Delta R^2 = .00$, $F(17, 407) = 20.69$, $p < .001$ for Step 4.

Video sharing: $R = .06$, $R^2 = .00$, $F(2, 421) = .80$, $p = .45$ for Step 1. $R = .27$, $R^2 = .07$, $\Delta R^2 = .07$, $F(10, 413) = 3.14$, $p < .01$ for Step 2. $R = .59$, $R^2 = .35$, $\Delta R^2 = .28$, $F(16, 407) = 13.61$, $p < .001$ for Step 3. $R = .59$, $R^2 = .35$, $\Delta R^2 = .00$, $F(17, 406) = 12.91$, $p < .001$) for Step 4.

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

Predicting the Activity of Viewing YouTube Content

Control variables (gender and age) entered on the first step accounted for 2.6% of the variance. Male gender was a significant predictor of watching YouTube videos. Background characteristics entered on the second step (locus of control, sensation seeking, innovativeness, social activity, and interpersonal interaction) accounted for an additional 8.6% of the variance. Social activity and three dimensions of sensation seeking—experience-seeking, thrill-seeking, and boredom-susceptibility—predicted

watching videos on YouTube. Entering the motives on the third step added an additional 35.1% to the explained variance. Convenient entertainment, convenient information-seeking, co-viewing, and social interaction motives were significant predictors of watching videos. Experience-seeking, thrill-seeking, and boredom-susceptibility ceased to be predictors at this step. Entering affinity with YouTube on the fourth step increased the explained variance by less than 1%, and affinity was not a significant predictor.

Accordingly, after all variables were entered, male gender, one background characteristic (social activity), and four motives (convenient entertainment, convenient information-seeking, co-viewing motivation and social interaction) were significant contributors to the final equation. The final equation accounted for 46.4% of the variance in watching YouTube.

These results suggest that males who were socially active and used YouTube for purposes of entertainment, information seeking, social interaction, and to watch videos with others, reported that they used YouTube more often than did their counterparts.

Predicting the Activity of Sharing YouTube Content

Gender and age entered on step 1, accounted for less than 1% of the variance. Neither predicted sharing YouTube videos. Entering background variables (locus of control, sensation seeking, innovativeness, social activity, and interpersonal interaction) on step 2 accounted for 6.7% of the variance in sharing YouTube content. Social activity and two dimensions of sensation seeking—boredom-susceptibility and experience-seeking—were significant predictors. Motives, entered on step 3, increased explained variance by 27.8%. Social interaction, convenient entertainment, and co-viewing motives significantly predicted sharing videos found on YouTube. In addition, locus of control emerged as a predictor at this step; boredom-susceptibility and experience-seeking ceased to be predictors. YouTube affinity (entered on step 4) again accounted for less than 1% of additional variance. Affinity was not a predictor.

The final equation accounted for 35.1% of the variance in sharing YouTube videos. Two background characteristics (locus of control and social activity) and three motives (social interaction, co-viewing, and entertainment) were significant contributors to the final equation. The results suggest that internally controlled YouTube users who are socially active tended to share videos for purposes of social interaction, co-viewing and convenient entertainment.

Discussion

This particular group of participants viewed YouTube videos for purposes of leisurely entertainment and information seeking. Entertainment (Wright, 1960) and

information seeking (Lasswell, 1948) have long been considered functions of using traditional media such as television (Haridakis, 2002; Perse, 1990; Rubin, 1981, 1983). The results suggest that selecting and watching videos on YouTube is done for some of the same reasons identified in prior studies for watching television. Perhaps this isn't surprising, considering that much of the fare on YouTube comes from television.

But there also is a distinctly social aspect to YouTube. That social component was reflected in two specific motives: social interaction and co-viewing. The underlying elements of the co-viewing motive suggest that people watch, share, and discuss videos they like with family and friends. (Focus group discussions with college students prior to the data collection indicated that they sometimes called friends, roommates, and others in their dormitory to watch videos with them.)

These social reasons for using YouTube are intriguing. In prior research, co-viewing has been studied in the context of parents helping their children understand and be more literate about content (e.g., Nathanson, 2001). The results of this study suggest that co-viewing is a means of sharing content with others, and supports Lull's (1980) research regarding the social uses of television. Researchers have long recognized that people use media such as television to have something to do with friends and family members (e.g., Haridakis, 2002; Rubin, 1983), and that media content serves as topics for post-viewing discussion (Levy & Windahl, 1984). The on-demand nature of YouTube may make it a unique social resource both for enhancing during-viewing interaction and post-viewing social activities.

While the motives were the strongest predictors of watching and sharing videos, as Uses and Gratifications would suggest, the background characteristics also were predictive. Social activity predicted both watching and sharing. It may be that socially active people, particularly those watching for purposes of social interaction and co-viewing, use YouTube as a way of sharing online activities with family and friends with whom they have existing social ties. This would support research that has suggested that Internet use tends to supplement and enhance one's social circles (e.g., Hampton & Wellman, 2003). It challenges some prior research suggesting that Internet use displaces users' social circles and leads to greater isolation and/or loneliness (e.g., Kraut et al., 1998).

The findings also may challenge suggestions that those who are less satisfied with offline face-to-face interaction are those who tend to turn to media to compensate (e.g., Armstrong & Rubin, 1989; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000). If, as the results of this study suggest, socially active people are the ones who are turning to YouTube, rather than their less socially active counterparts, it may help explain the speed which newer social networking innovations are achieving widespread penetration and utility.

Internal locus of control predicted the sharing of videos. This finding supports prior research suggesting that, at least among males, internal locus of control may be associated with involvement in social activities (Levenson, 1974).

Internally controlled users appear to be the ones actively doing something with the video content once they watch it. This would suggest that individuals who tend

to feel they are more in control of events in their lives are more comfortable finding interesting or relevant media content and disseminating it to others in their social circles. This latter finding may speak to the perception of self-confidence among internally controlled users. Internet research has suggested links between attitudes of confidence in perceived control of the Internet and Internet self-efficacy (e.g., Wu & Tsai, 2006).

Future research should explore a broader spectrum of social and psychological characteristics that might predict the various forms of YouTube use. For example, a measure of self-efficacy might help determine the level of self-confidence that may be present in the finding that internally controlled individuals were more likely to watch and share videos. Likewise, an examination of gender and age differences might determine the impact of demographic variances. For example, the fact that male gender predicted watching YouTube should be investigated in future research. Some research has suggested there are gender differences in Internet use (Wu & Tsai, 2006), and in the utility of social networking (Lin, 2006). That also may be the case with YouTube, which is accessed on the Internet and is, in part, a social networking innovation.

Future research also should consider possible motives not explored here. It is possible that other motives may be more salient to a media environment that permits users to occupy both receiver and sender/sharer roles. The items comprising some of the motive factors for using YouTube, particularly co-viewing and social interaction motives, were not easily categorized as purely interpersonal or media-related.

The consideration of a wider array of individual and motivational differences may help researchers flesh out profiles of those most likely to use YouTube and other social network media channels primarily to receive information, and those most likely to take advantage of social aspects of use reflected in sharing videos and information about them with others.

It appears that this activity was motivated by broader social reasons as opposed to interpersonal reasons. This was reflected in the finding that the interpersonal connection motivation did not predict either viewing or sharing, while the social interaction and co-viewing motives did predict both viewing and sharing. It may be that those seeking less social and more intimate interpersonal connection rely on face-to-face communication or on more intimate, one-to-one mediated vehicles such as e-mail and cell phones.

Taken as a whole, the findings suggest that people do use sites such as YouTube to enhance their social circles and social lives. That, coupled with the finding that social activity was a significant predictor, supports the description of YouTube as a social medium rather than an interpersonal one (Fernando, 2006).

Since the early days of the Internet, researchers have suggested that the medium was blurring the lines between mass and interpersonal communication (e.g., Morris & Ogan, 1996). However, the findings in this study suggest that, in the era of social networking sites, those lines are not blurred, but blended. Sites such as YouTube permit users to move seamlessly between being receivers of mass communication messages and social and interpersonal disseminators of content. Users appear to be

well aware of when they are occupying the different roles. At times, YouTube users view videos at their leisure and discretion. At other times, they view videos they choose on demand with others. At still other times, they share videos or information about the videos by sending links, posting comments, and rating the videos online. These are very different communication activities, and it is likely that some users engage in all of them, others engage in only some of them, and some simply view videos alone. The fact that participants in this study viewed and shared videos for entertainment, co-viewing and social interaction reasons (but not for interpersonal connection) provides evidence that the lines between mass communication, social interaction and interpersonal communication may not be as blurred as some have asserted.

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