

Why do we share information on Instagram?

With over 100 million photos and videos uploaded each day, Instagram is one of the most popular social networking sites (SNS). The popularity of Instagram is largely attributed to the fact that it allows users the opportunity to share personal information with others. This sharing of personal information by the user is referred to as self-disclosure. Self-disclosure on SNS has been the subject of research in the past. However, a standardised set of factors that determines the willingness of users to self-disclose has proven elusive.

A research study by Schalk van der Merwe, a [Master's](#) student in the [Department of Marketing Management](#), was conducted to investigate self-disclosure on Instagram. This research study contributes to the understanding of self-disclosure by measuring the factors that can influence self-disclosure on Instagram. Specifically, escapism, enjoyment and trust in other users were chosen as factors because they closely link to Instagram use and self-disclosure. Furthermore, previous research has shown that males and females tend to participate on SNS for different reasons. Because the factors identified for this study are closely linked to the use of Instagram, the gender differences in each factor, as well as self-disclosure, were also included in this study.

A secondary database containing 420 respondents was used to collate the findings for this study. These findings suggested that escapism, enjoyment and trust in other users showed a relationship with self-disclosure, with escapism been the most significant of these relationships. This was followed by enjoyment and trust in other users, respectively. This study illustrates that hedonics, embedded with escapism and enjoyment, play an important role for users when considering self-disclosure on Instagram. Additionally, although trust has shown to mitigate the effect of perceived risk, this study also offers a perspective that trust in other users can be measured as factor on its own and can have a direct influence on self-disclosure.

The findings also suggested that hedonic experiences, such as escapism and enjoyment, are experienced differently by males and females, with females showing a stronger inclination to both escapism and enjoyment. Despite female's disposition towards hedonic experiences, the gender differences among both escapism and

enjoyment were, however, relatively small. In addition, trust in other users and self-disclosure showed no difference between males and females.

This study not only contributes to the theoretical understanding of self-disclosure, but also allows companies to better understand what encourages users to share information about themselves on SNS. This could potentially lead to improved engagement with users online and more information sharing. The general lack of gender differences in self-disclosure and the factors that influence it, also shows that companies do not necessarily have to change their engagement on SNS between males and females.

The research was conducted as part of the fulfillment of the [Master's degree](#) in Marketing Management in 2018 with the [Department of Marketing Management](#) by Schalk van der Merwe under the supervision of [Dr Liezl-Marié van der Westhuizen](#).