

HITTING SHARE: WHAT MOTIVATES USERS TO INTERACT ON SOCIAL MEDIA?



Social media, and in particular Facebook, has dominated recent research. Everybody has an online profile, be it on Facebook or another site. We all want to belong to an online community of some sort. With the easy access of information and the ability to share this information within a matter of seconds, companies want to be a part of this. They want their content to be shared, liked and talked about. In this age of digital economy, companies need a better understanding of how they can add value to consumers through their websites and the information or applications available thereon.

A recent study was conducted in order to explore student's motivations for sharing links within their social network and specifically on Facebook. The study was conducted by Lize Maartens, a [Master's](#) student in the [Department of Marketing Management](#), amongst a sample of 299 BCom students at a South African university.

It has been suggested that media users play an active role in choosing as well as using the media. Users take an active part in the communication process and are goal oriented in their media use. Theory states that a media user seeks out a media source that best fulfils the needs of the user. It is assumed that the user has alternate choices to satisfy his/her need.

Findings of the study suggest that there is a positive correlation between consumer motivations for sharing links and their intensity of using Facebook. Findings also indicated a clear difference relating to gender and intensity; with females using Facebook significantly more than males. The type and number of motivations might be dependent on the sample surveyed for this study, but the findings nevertheless suggested that there are five motivations why students share links. This is an area that needs further investigation.

Looking at the functions that the platforms offer and why people engage in them could help marketers with their current communication approaches in new media. Understanding what motivates users to share certain content could help expand media producers and industry professionals to expand their digital reach. This indicates that future researchers and marketers should look into different approaches when targeting males and females on social media platforms.

This research was conducted as part of the fulfilment of the [Master's degree](#) in Marketing Management in 2013 with the [Department of Marketing Management](#) by Lize Maartens under the supervision of [Dr G. van Heerden](#).