Sharing or not sharing online video on social media

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• **Abstract (300/500 words)**

The phenomenon of the social web (Web 2.0) and the proliferation of devices that are always connected to the Internet, such as smartphones, are transforming Internet studies. Nowadays, studying online and offline activities separately is unthinkable, since the Internet plays such a great part of everyday life (boyd & Ellison, 2007). The same is true about computer and telephone. For example, user can start an email on their smart phone and finish it on their computer. Reflecting on abundance of online audio-visual content, several questions may be raised: How certain video become viral? Why do people want to share certain type of video?

For this paper, I will use my current work for my PhD thesis that explores the role of online videos in interpersonal communications and groups of users. Videos are an unavoidable Internet phenomenon (Purcell, 2010). Videos move from one site to another, from computer to phone, they are spread through word of mouth, and broadcast on television. This paper examines how people decide to post a video on their Facebook wall or friend's wall. It shows that it can be done to share information, a feeling or an experience.

Each individual has a unique practice and motivation for sharing online video, whether through a social networking site, by email, showing it directly to a friend and family member. This paper aims to better understand why ordinary people share online videos via social networking sites. The data used in this paper is from semi-structured and open interviews. I proceed by conducting three interviews per participant, allowing the construction of a dialogue. During the first interview, I asked participants to simply describe their everyday experiences related to online videos. A second interview allows me to elaborate on some details. The last meeting is directly inspired by the notion of reflective practices (Finlay, 2002) and I make a first analysis of previous meetings. Thus, researcher and participant discuss the initial interpretations and the research process.

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Full paper

> ***Aurélie[1], 1st interview****: My use of Internet? It is pretty much the first thing I do when I get up in the morning.*

Introduction

One of the most significant current discussions in communication studies is the embeddedness of Internet in everyday life, in particular, social media. The arrival of web 2.0 with its social network sites[2] (SNSs) created new social spaces and new issues for researcher. The participation in Web 2.0 is described by the word sharing (John, 2012). In order to better understand how people use social media in their communication, I chose to study how users share online videos.

Online videos constitute a major part of online activities (Purcell, 2010). While a variety of definitions of the term "online video" have been suggested, this paper will use the definition suggested by Bondad-Brown et al (2011) who saw it as

> video content delivered or available over the internet. Like internet television, this content can reach the consumer on multiple devices (e.g., PC, cell phone, PDA) regardless of any specific carrier or operator. Online

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[1] The names used in this paper are pseudonyms. They were chosen by the author to reflect similar gender as the participants' given names. All identifying information in the quotes has been altered to maintain confidentiality.

[2] web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. (boyd, 2007 p.211)

video content includes any type of video content (e.g., television programs, music videos, amateur video clips, home movies) made available by a variety of content providers.

Regarding online video, many studies have focused on issues related to copyright. After the impact of P2P (peer-to-peer) on the record industry, the audiovisual is violently defended against all forms of reappropriation (Jenkins, 1992; Lessig, 2008). The major platform is YouTube, which is studied in a wide range of academic disciplines (Snelson, 2011). Distributing a link to a video clip is called sharing, and a study showed that participants were very excited to share content (Cesar, 2008). Since sharing is at the heart of the social media site, there is a strong link between watching online videos and interpersonal communication (Oumard, 2008). Recent developments in Internet studies have heightened the need for more research regarding sharing on SNSs (John, 2012). This paper aims to better understand why ordinary people share online videos via social networking sites, emails, and face-to-face conversation. The data used in this paper are from semi-structured interviews. The paper concludes by suggesting that sharing online content takes on many forms and meanings.

Methodology

The qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the perspectives of the subjects to discover the meaning of their experiences (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008). Since knowledge is constructed in the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee, a conversation needs to be established. In the original sense of the word, *conversation* means "wandering with", so the researcher is a traveler (building knowledge) (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008).

I conducted three interviews per participant with a total of 10 participants[3]. In the first interview, I ask participants to describe their daily experiences with online video, what they do with it, and what it means to them. After this interview, the participants are

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[3] My participants are ordinary Internet users living in Montreal, selected because they are accessible in terms of distance and costs involved. I recruited participants by word of mouth through colleagues and friends and put up posters in public places, such as cafés, public libraries, and campus locations. The posters included a brief description of the research, a description of the participants sought, a URL (Uniform Resource Locator), and a QR code to a website with more information and a registration form (http://etudeinternet.com/).

instructed to install and run software to record their online activities for at least a week. Because it is difficult to remember everything one does online, the recording from the software helps participants remember what they have done online.

The second interview captures the dynamics of the everyday use of online video. Participants explain what they have done with online video and give typical examples of such uses as well as exceptional videos. Certain participants showed me the videos or Facebook pages on their laptops to illustrate their comments. The traces registered by the software helped the participants to remember the details and context of each video and the people with whom they shared it. The participants and I were thus able to recreate the history of their video activities in just a few mouse clicks. It is the details and explanation behind the clicks that help understand daily Internet users. Using an ordinary and easy-to-use technology enabled a richer and thicker response from participants, mostly because it can help think about their past weeks. It showed them how they really spend time online. All the participants who installed an add-on were surprised by the proportion that Facebook takes on their daily Web browsing. Participants learn about their own habits and practices and reflect on them.

The final interview took place a few weeks after the second interview, giving participants time to think about what they said and what they experienced during the first two interviews. During this time, I conducted preliminary analysis of the previous meetings. The last meeting was directly inspired by the reflective practices by Finlay (2002), where the researcher and participant discuss interpretations and the research process. The last interview involved not only the collection of data, but also a co-construction of meaning by the researcher and the participants.

The third interview is described as active, as defined by Holstein and Gubrium (1995), where *active* refers to the fact that the interview is itself a narrative with its own plot. The interview is moderated by the interpretation that involves the interaction of the two protagonists, that is, the researcher and the participant. The purpose of the last interview is similar to that of Fontana and Frey (2000), where the researcher must take on the role of the respondents and see the situation from their point of view rather than superimpose academic or preconceived ideas about them.

I analyze the interviews using grounded theory, developed by Glaser and Strauss (2010), which is an inductive analysis where the themes and categories emerge from the

data rather than being prescribed on them before data collection and analysis. This systematic approach allows for the conceptualization of a phenomenon with rigor.

I used a qualitative data software to manage data and ideas. I wrote my thoughts and comments as I coded, capturing my impressions, questions, and other comments. Reorganizing codes and coded elements is the software's most useful aspect. This flexibility allows for changes in conceptualization and organization as a project develops (Bazeley, 2007, p. 59).

Results

Through the interviews, several interesting ways of sharing online video emerged. Several example show how old and new media are used together, very much a part of everyday life, and how deeply the need to share is embedded in human activity.

Nine out of ten interviewees use Facebook as their main social media. Twitter is the second most used, but it is mostly used as a source of information. This differs from Facebook, which is used as a source of information and to keep in touch with friends and family members.

The average length of the tree interviews was three months, which was enough time for the life of the participant to change. Aurélie was a young mother finishing her maternity leave and just starting to work again. She also changed her cellphone and got an iPad. Another participant, Pascal, also changed his old iPhone for an Android and got a Samsung Galaxy Note 10 for his birthday. Nathan was a European man on a visa looking for work and found a job in between interview two and three. As for Martin, he got his first ever cellphone.

All these changes in the lives of participants showed that they do not have a fixed routine regarding the use of technology. Pascal explained that he had a period where he was more inclined to share more content and other periods where he wanted to be mysterious and stop sharing on Facebook. He even deleted an old post he found too personal.

Even though social media sites are conceived to share content easily, users do not always click on the icon "share". Whether it is adding comments or making the posts visually pleasing, users will deliberately and carefully craft the posts they care about. Depending

on the content and the personality, posts will be published differently. Many participant prefer sharing content privately, since they assume it will not interest everybody.

In the first interview, Aurélie explained how she shared video she filmed herself on Facebook. Since she knows that Facebook is the owner of content published on the site, she has a YouTube account where she uploaded her videos. She shares these videos differently from other videos she found on Facebook that were posted by others. She simply "reshares[4]." them, which means that it will be published on her wall. The same goes for Twitter; when she finds something funny, she just retweets However, for her own videos, she wants to know how many people saw them, so she creates a Bitly[5]. Frederic also uses Bitly to share links on Facebook, but mostly for esthetic reasons. He wants his post to be pleasing to look at. He will not click on an ugly post with a long URL, so he makes sure his look good. When Pascal posts video with political or controversial content, he will write several lines of comments to accompany the video, making sure that his Facebook friends understand why he posted it.

Another aspect of the more interpersonal aspect of sharing online video onto social media is the use of tag[6]. The content is visible to everyone, but specifically directed to one person. Users will do this when they think the video could be interesting to everybody on their Facebook but that it will particularly interest one friend. If they think the video will only be interesting to this one person, they will send it directly to him or her via a Facebook private message.

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[4] The possibility to share other people's updates on Facebook might come from Twitter, where forwarding someone else's message is a common practice and called retweet. Retrieved from http://mashable.com/2009/06/22/reshare-on-facebook/

[5] Bitly (formerly Bit.ly) is a URL shortening and bookmarking service. The website provides tools to view statistics related to users that click on generated links.

[6] A tag is a special kind of link. When you tag someone, you create a link to their timeline (or newsfeed). The post you tag the person in may also be added to that person's timeline. Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/help/tag-suggestions

Nathan films private events, such as parties or birthdays, uploads the videos on YouTube and sets them as private[7]. He also shares them on Facebook with private messages because he wants to respect the private lives of his friends. He uses social networking sites as archives for his personal videos.

YouTube is mostly described as a social medium rather than an interpersonal one (Haridakis, 2009). Despite this, YouTube video can be used for interpersonal communication. Nathan and his little sister had posted over and over for several months the trailer of the movie Despicable Me 2, once a week. It's like a private joke between them.

Aurélie explained how she was watching the television series Lost, and she posted a particular scene she liked on Facebook. Although the scene she shared on Facebook is very personal, she knew that it would be understood by others since she has many friends who like the show as well. Aurélie expressed this by saying, "But another show that I know I'm all alone to listen, even if it is a scene that touched me so much, I would not put on Facebook, because it does not speak to anyone" (3rd interview with Aurélie). This is an example of sharing as having something in common with someone (John, 2012). Many of the participants in my research said they refrain from posting video that would not reach anybody else. They are aware that they have special interests, and nobody else on their social network will care to watch videos based on those interests.

One evening, while doing the dishes, Aurélie was listening to an old CD of a famous Quebec singer. Upon hearing her favorite song, she stopped what she was doing, dried her hands, and went on YouTube to find the music video of the song to share on Facebook. She could not explain why, but she had to share how she felt with her friends and how happy she was listening to an old favorite.

Sharing an online video is also a way of showing your interest in another person. Almost all the participants said that if they saw a video they liked and it made them think of someone, they shared it with that person. It is a way of saying that you not only think about this person, but also remember his or her interests, hobbies, sense of humor, and

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[7] Only the owner and up to 50 other users who are invited to view the video will be able to see it. Also, the video will not appear on the owner's channel, in search results, or in playlists. http://support.google.com/youtube/bin/answer.py?hl=en&hlrm=fr&answer=157177

likes and dislikes. Either the video is sent directly to that specific person via email or the person is tagged in the comment to the video when shared on Facebook.

Moreover, sharing a video is a form of paying attention to others. Frederic's girlfriend was feeling low and updated her Facebook status regarding the large amount of bad news she recently was given. To make her laugh, Frederic looked for good news on YouTube. He found video from the satirical magazine The Onion. Instead of writing a comment, he made an effort to look for funny videos corresponding to the message posted.

Conclusion

This paper identifies some of the most important aspects of sharing video online, which is to maintain communication in interpersonal relationships. One way to keep in touch with friends and relatives is to share lived experiences with others by filming events and uploading the video on a social networking site. Participants sent video to one person because they knew it might not interest everybody expect that one friend.

This study addresses the lack of knowledge about daily user behavior with online videos by analyzing their daily activities. The results of this study indicate that online videos are integrated in daily communication. Other studies have described YouTube more in terms of a social medium and less as an interpersonal one (Fernando, 2007). However, this study showed that when videos are shared outside YouTube, they are more often used for interpersonal communication. The issue of online content sharing is an intriguing one, one which could be usefully explored in further research.

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