"Pin"pointing the Motivational Dimensions behind Pinterest

Ian R. Mull and Seung-Eun Lee

Central Michigan University

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This study examined the user gratifications obtained from Pinterest, an image-sharing social networking site, by applying the customary two-study uses and gratifications (U&G) approach. In the first study, using an open-ended questionnaire, a preliminary list of descriptive terms was collected from 27 college students who use Pinterest. From the list, an item analysis extracted 54 descriptive terms, which served as the basis for the item generation in the second study. In the second study, using a quantitative online survey method, data was analyzed from 243 college students who use Pinterest. A confirmatory factor analysis revealed five dimensions of uses and gratifications obtained from the image-sharing SNS.

Pertaining to the principle research question, the central findings from this study are the uses and gratifications, or motivations, for using Pinterest. The five main motivations include: 'fashion', 'creative projects', 'entertainment', 'virtual exploration', and 'organization. These findings may suggest that image-sharing SNSs share several key motivational dimensions with SNSs but also have unique factors that were not identified in previous U&G studies pertaining to SNSs.

As the factor with the highest total variance, 'fashion' included the following five items: 'style', 'outfits', 'fashions', 'clothing', and 'shop'. This implies that Pinterest users and perhaps other image-sharing SNS users are using their social network to search, or shop, for fashion-related products. For 'creative projects' participants identified five items: 'crafts', 'creating', 'DIY', 'creative', and 'projects'. These findings suggest that participants are motivated to use Pinterest to search, get ideas, and share specific information related to creative projects. The motivational dimension, 'entertainment', was

identified by the following four items: 'entertaining', enjoy', 'easy to use', and 'everyday life'. These items suggest that Pinterest users are motivated to interact with image-sharing SNSs because it is entertaining. The motivational dimension, 'virtual exploration', included the following four items: 'inspiration', 'ideas', 'interesting', and 'learning'. These items indicate that Pinterest users are motivated to use the site to explore images for interesting ideas and to learn new things. The final motivational factor found in the present study, 'organization', includes the following four items: 'browse', 'collection', 'all in one place', and 'boards'. This suggests users are driven to Pinterest because it provides an easy access to view their collection of images in one place.

This study provides empirical support for consumer motivations to use Pinterest. Pinterest is a relatively new image-sharing SNS that has amassed a wide audience in a short period of time, which makes this research timely and relevant. While there have been several studies examining the U&G of general SNSs, such as Facebook and MySpace, the present study is the first to investigate the U&G of the image-sharing SNS Pinterest. For retailers, the results provide significant implications of 'how' and 'why' consumers use Pinterest, which may be applied to other image-sharing SNSs. The motivational dimensions identified in this study can serve as a roadmap to navigate the complex nature of consumer interactions on SNSs and can offer direction to retailers interested in allocating resources on Pinterest, other image-sharing SNSs, and SNSs in general. In addition, this study contributes to the body of literature for U&G of mass media and more specifically of SNSs. By using the two-study approach, this study identifies specific motivational dimensions in the words of the users themselves, which increases the robustness of these findings. Furthermore, the results of the second-order model contribute to the U&G body of literature by providing support to the theoretical framework in establishing the connection between uses and gratifications and overall motivations.