

Motivations for content generation in social media

Janne Matikainen

University of Helsinki, Finland

Abstract:

The aim of this article is to explore motivations for content generation in social media, where the audience plays a more active role in producing and sharing content. The concept of user-generated content (UGC) describes this turn and provides the starting point for this article, proceeding from an overview of previous research on motives for content production. The second section presents an empirical study, which includes both qualitative and quantitative parts. From the analysis of findings, three motives are identified for content production: (1) development of Web ideology and self – a desire to be involved in the development of the Internet and to develop oneself accordingly; (2) self-expression – people, especially the young, want to act independently and freely on the Web and to share information about their lives; and (3) community – people want to belong to online communities and to interact with one another.

Keywords: content generation, user-generated content (UGC), motivation, social media, participation.

Introduction

Social media have grown quickly in popularity in a relatively short time. As a result, many people produce content (conversation, blogs, photos, videos, etc.) for social media purposes. This content is often called user-generated because it is parallel to professional production (van Dijck 2009). In these circumstances, it is interesting and relevant to ask what motivates people to produce this content and to participate in social media. This article aims to explore such motivations. Despite the significant amount of research in this area (Bishop 2006; Kaye 2007), in many cases, the empirical studies are too narrow, or the empirical data are limited (e.g. Oreg & Nov 2008). This article's empirical section presents the main results of a representative survey of Finnish Web users. Internet penetration in

Finland is very high (over 90% of the 5.5 million population), and the country topped the wireless broadband subscriptions worldwide in 2014 (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] 2014). Half of the population, aged 16 to 89, uses social network services; the use of social media, such as blogs and chat groups, is increasing (Official Statistics of Finland 2014). Finland presents an interesting example of the diffusion of information and communication technology (ICT) and social media in an advanced welfare society. Finland shows that the information society and the democratic welfare state can support and reinforce each other (Castells & Himanen 2002). Although the results cannot be directly generalised to other countries, Finland undoubtedly has much in common with other Western nations, especially Nordic countries.

In this article, the term 'social media' refers to Web services whose form and content are for the most part produced by the users. Theoretically, the definition of social media encompasses three characteristics (Bechmann & Lomborg 2012: 767). First, communication is de-institutionalised and decentralised despite the centralised ownership of social media services. Second, content is user-based, and the central concept is user-generated content. Third, communication is interactive and networked, especially among users. Social media may also be regarded as an umbrella term that covers many kinds of user-based platforms, such as blogs, Facebook, YouTube and Wikipedia (Lietsala & Sirkkunen 2008: 161). Of course, different platforms and environments and their affordances differ quite a lot regarding user-generated content. Social media may be too general a concept, and motivations may vary depending on whether the context is a social network site (Facebook), a content community (YouTube) or a collaborative project (Wikipedia). Regardless of these notions, in this article, the motivation for content generation is related to several forms of social media.

The structure of this article is as follows. First, it introduces the concept of user-generated content, which frames the study as a whole. The second section provides an overview of previous research, including models of the motivations for content generation, with the aim of identifying the most essential motives for content production. The third section focuses on the empirical study, presenting the data, methods and results. The fourth and final section summarises both the theoretical and empirical results and draws some conclusions.

User-generated content

As mentioned above, a central feature of social media is that much of the content is produced by the users themselves. User-generated content (UGC) is the most common concept used to describe this essential feature. According to Östman (2012), UGC has two distinctive features. First, it refers to the production of original content or alteration/remixing of existing content. Second, it involves sharing this content with others. Although social media are based on UGC, it is estimated that only a small proportion of users actually produces content; instead, most users distribute content (Villi & Matikainen 2015). However, producing content is not the only way of being active in the social media

context. Many users participate by redistributing content or 'liking' in Facebook, for instance. As Östman (2012) pointed out, UGC should be distinguished from online social networking despite only a slight difference. It is important to emphasise that UGC refers not only to content production but also to alteration or remixing, and especially to sharing of content. New concepts have been developed to describe this phenomenon. For example, Villi (2012: 616) introduced the concept of social curation, which is closely related to distribution but adds value judgement, critique, assessment and selection to the distribution process. This description neatly captures the idea that content generation is a continuum ranging from the origination of content to its curation and distribution.

Although the UGC and social media concepts emphasise content (Lietsala & Sirkkunen 2008), its boundaries are often unclear; what is and is not content? Most UGC could not be compared to the content produced by professionals, such as journalists, and the related concepts of distribution, sharing, curation and participation are a good indication that content essentially involves a kind of interaction, while original content creation may be scarce. Blank (2013) presented a useful classification of content into three categories: *skilled* (maintaining a personal website, writing a blog and posting articles, stories, poetry or other creative work), *social and entertainment* (visiting social network sites, posting photos and uploading music videos) and *political* (sending emails with political content and commenting on political or social issues). Based on Blank's classification, in this article, 'content' refers to any kind of content on the Web and social media – blog posts, comments, links, Facebook status messages, photos, videos and so on. The essential point is that the user is somehow actively engaged with the content rather than being a passive receiver.

The broad understanding of content is closely related to the concepts of *participation* and *interaction*. Participation is in many ways a problematic and ambiguous concept. Sometimes participation is assumed to be the crucial feature that distinguishes the idea about the active, new media audience from the older one about the passive audience. Audiences are becoming more participatory, and participation is ever more mediated (Livingstone 2013). On the other hand, participation has a strong political meaning. For example, as Carpentier (2011) argued, participation always has a political aspect, or more precisely, 'every social process (including [the] cultural [type] and participation) has a political dimension' (Jenkins & Carpentier 2013: 5). Interaction has no such political meanings as participation does because participation always entails power dynamics, but interaction does not (Jenkins & Carpentier 2013). Notwithstanding the close relationship among UGC, participation and interaction, this article concentrates on UGC. Participation and interaction could more profoundly describe all the activities associated with social media. However, a broad understanding of content (skilled, social and entertainment and political content) enriches UGC; therefore, UGC is a satisfactory and appropriate starting point.

Generally, UGC is based on macro-theoretical ideas of participatory culture (van Dijck 2009). Participatory culture contrasts with traditional media, as contemporary media

producers and consumers interact with each other (Jenkins 2006). As the subject of considerable interest in recent years, UGC has been the target of high, positive expectations in terms of its potential (Mitchelstein & Boczkowski 2009). For example, UGC might be expected to challenge the relation between journalists and audiences (Mitchelstein & Boczkowski 2009), or it could have positive implications for political engagement (Östman 2012). Because of this perceived potential, it is pertinent to focus on the factors that motivate content production.

Earlier Research on Motives for Content Generation

The motives for generating Web content have been widely researched, but most of these studies focus on describing people's reasons for participating in online communities. Interestingly enough, with few exceptions, these studies have not been linked to a more general study of the psychology of motivation. Clearly, the definition of motivation depends on a psychological frame of reference; generally speaking, motivation refers to a psychological state of individuals, pertaining to the fact that their actions are directed (Gleitman 1991: 62). In other words, motivation is the reason for goal-oriented behaviour. As the main focus here is on motivations for using social media rather than on the concept itself, this definition is a sufficient point of departure for present purposes.

Motives for producing content are usually presented in the form of lists, which have been formulated from very different starting points. Some contributions are largely educated guesses, as in the case of the four factors motivating people to participate in online communities – self-expression, sharing, communication and collaboration – proposed by Nuxoll (2006). Some lists draw on theoretical or scientific premises without being based on actual research. For example, Deragon (2007) built on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, proceeding from the idea that physiological needs, which represent the lowest level, should be met before it becomes possible to satisfy higher needs (e.g. sociality and self-actualisation).

Systematic research has also been carried out on motivations for content generation. Kollock (1999) proposed a different set of four motivating factors for participating in and producing content for online communities: reciprocity, reputation, sense of efficacy and need. However, Kollock's list was presented before the emergence of social media.

Huberman, Romero and Wu (2008) statistically analysed a massive data set that they collected from YouTube. Their main observation was that attention increased eagerness to upload new videos – in other words, the more attention a video received, the more new videos the author produced or uploaded. In reverse, low attention decreased the production and uploading of videos. The researchers concluded that attention was a key motivational factor in video production. Among the previously mentioned classes of motivation, attention fits rather well into the category of identity because (positive) attention gives building material to self-esteem and identity. Huberman et al. (2008) did not suggest any other motivating factors, and the observation was grounded only on an

overview of the videos and their number of views, so the motivational basis remains unclear.

Bishop (2006) presented a model based on cognitive psychology to explain participation in online communities. This model, which is more extensive than the lists referred to above, consists of three levels. The first level deals with desires, which are connected with social, existential and creative forces, as well as the desire for order or vengeance. However, people do not realise their desires or dreams as such; rather, these are filtered from the cognitive factors of the second level, including goals, values and plans. Because people strive to avoid any conflict between desires and cognitions, they are forced to reshape and restrict their desires according to cognitive criteria. The second level includes people's skills and abilities to interpret their environment. In the case of Web users, this means experiences and interpretations of the user interface. The last of Bishop's three levels is the environment, which comprises other actors, artefacts and social, physical or technological structures. What is essential about Bishop's model is that participation in online communities is based on people's desires, but these desires are limited by cognitive processes and the environment, as well as by the ways in which the environment is interpreted.

The cognitive model succeeds in showing that how people will behave cannot directly be concluded from their desires, as their actions are shaped and limited by their cognitive processes and environment. Nonetheless, this model is strongly oriented towards the individual, viewing motivation as intrinsic to the individual and the social environment as extrinsic. However, human behaviour is fundamentally social (Burr 1995), and motivations for engaging in online communities can just as readily be found in social factors. By their very nature, lists of motives generally remain rather superficial and individual-focused. A more social approach is required because social media are all about communal activity, at least in principle, and while social media offer a means of self-presentation, it happens in a social context.

According to Sirkkunen (2006: 146–148), the motivations for participating in social media are both individual and communal although in practice, these two levels are intertwined. Self-expression, development of personal skills, peer feedback, building social networks and social capital, as well as the individualising media culture (i.e. identity production), are individual motives. In turn, communal motives include sharing information and skills with others, new types of cooperation (e.g. open source or Wikipedia) and learning in communities. Although in this study, motivations are also presented in the form of a list, individual and collective motives have at least been distinguished, which offers a more multifaceted and social framework of explanation.

Blogging motivations have been studied a lot. Kaye (2007) focused on motivations among blog users (N = 3747). Based on a quantitative analysis, she formulated the following ten motivation classes: blog presentation/characteristics (16.8% of respondents), personal fulfilment (16.1%), expression/affiliation with bloggers (15.3%), information seeking (14.7%), intellectual/aesthetic fulfilment (10.2%), anti-traditional-media sentiment (8.2%),

guidance/opinion seeking (7.8%), convenience (5.2%), political surveillance (3.4%) and fact checking (2.3%). This list's ranking of information (information seeking and fact checking) is somewhat surprising because many blogs are arenas of opinion rather than sources of information.

In their study on blogging motives, Ekdale et al. (2010) offered the well-grounded observation that motivation would depend on the nature and content of the blog. They clearly distinguished between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Their baseline assumption was that in blogs focusing on personal and social life, intrinsic motivations would rank high, whereas in blogs emphasising politics and society, extrinsic motivations would be of greater importance. Their empirical study examined the most popular political bloggers (N = 154) in the US. Their main conclusion was that when people started blogging, intrinsic motivations took precedence, but over the course of time, extrinsic motivations would prevail. Moreover, motivation for blogging was generally found to increase over time; in other words, blogging itself strengthened the motivation. This is an effect of the positive feedback received through blogging, which also explains the growing importance of extrinsic motivations as the blogging continues over time. Ekdale et al.'s (2010) study is an excellent attempt to provide a deeper understanding of blogging motives. Of particular interest is the observation about how motivations change as blogging experience grows. The motives for producing content do not necessarily remain the same but change according to situations and the blogger's experiences and stage in life.

Among recent studies, Fullwood et al. (2014) developed a Blogging Motivations Questionnaire (BMQ), which was completed by 160 bloggers. The BMQ results confirmed six motivations for writing blogs: personal revelation, emotional outlet, creative outlet, selective disclosure, social networking and advertising. Chen (2015) studied women bloggers (N = 298), but the research objective was about motivations for social media use in general. This study found that three motivations drove women to use social media: information, engagement and recreation. Interestingly, differences in the use of Facebook, Twitter and blogs were considered. Blog writing was motivated by recreation, Facebook use by engagement and Twitter use by information. These findings are taken into account in the discussion of the current study's results.

In summary, five key areas of motivation were identified to synthesise the reviewed lists: *identity, sharing, social interaction and community, benefit and need, and society and social order*. Clearly repeated across different studies, these areas were rather extensively and loosely treated but effectively reflected the motivations for content production. On one hand, some studies might be too general; for example, identity could be connected with content production in a variety of ways. From this perspective, it would seem necessary to delimit each area of motivation in more detail. On the other hand, most studies were limited to one perspective or a one-dimensional scale for measuring motivations (Rafaeli & Ariel 2008), and very few studies considered the division of motives into individual and collective types (Sirkkunen 2006) or the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations (Ekdale et al. 2010). This study did not aim to develop a new multidimensional

model but to examine how the presented areas of motivation occurred among online users. An additional aim was to interpret the separate motivations by using social and psychological viewpoints.

Research Question, Data and Methods

This study asked an essential, empirical research question. *What motivates people to generate content and participate in social media?* This question was exploratory; in other words, the objective was to seek motivation factors rather than to present and test hypotheses.

There is no single effective method for researching motivation. Interviews and surveys are the most typically applied methods. In the psychology of motivation, personal project analysis is a common method; individuals name their life projects and goals and assess their relative importance (Little & Gee 2007). However, project analysis was not suitable for this study because producing Web content would not necessarily be a central life project for the person engaging in it. Since this study dealt with a specific sphere of life, the basic methods applied were interviews and a questionnaire survey.

Two empirical data sets were compiled, which were interconnected and part of the same study. The first was qualitative, based on interviews with ten content producers, consisting of eight bloggers, one active Wikipedia writer (in Finnish) and one administrator and participant of a hobby online discussion. All interviewees were also active in social network sites. The main criterion for selection was that participants should be active content producers, but they did not comprise a representative random sample. The interviewees were individually selected through an Internet search, comprising five each of men and women. However, the analysis did not consider gender as an explanatory factor. The interviewees were not asked about their age, but they came from the 30–50-age group. The decision was made to interview adults because more research had been carried out on younger users actively engaged in the Web (e.g. Vainikka & Herkman 2013). Generally, each interview lasted from one to one-and-a-half hours.

The so-called ‘qualitative attitude approach’ (Vesala & Rantanen 2007) was applied in the interviews. Its main feature was that the interviewees were presented with statements, about which they were asked for their comments or opinions and the grounds for such responses. As a way to operationalise motives, seven statements were formulated on the basis of the previously discussed studies, as follows:

1. Belonging to an online community and sharing its common goals increase my inspiration to produce content.
2. When producing material for the Web, I get to use the kind of information, skills or capacities I wouldn't be using otherwise.
3. An important aspect about producing Web content is independence (I get to decide what I produce and where to do so).

4. Reciprocity is important (if I give something on the Web, I also get something from there).
5. I want to produce content if it is useful or enjoyable for others.
6. The more readers or viewers I get for my produced material, the better.
7. I prefer to participate in non-commercial, online communities or services than in commercial ones.

The analysis was based on these statements, with particular regard to the interviewees' supporting arguments. For the purposes of this article, the analysis was condensed into the two main motivation areas reported in the results. The interviews were conducted and transcribed in Finnish, and the quotations presented in this article are translations.

The second data set was compiled by means of a questionnaire distributed by a Finnish market research company's Internet panel. The number of respondents totalled 1065, randomly sampled from an Internet panel within the target group (Finnish Internet users). The panel members were recruited from the general population by using methods based on random sampling. The survey data included age, sex and place of residence. As such, the sample was representative of Finnish online users, and the results could be generalised to that entire population. The margin of error for the results ranged between 0.9 and 3.2 percentage points, depending on the answer ($p < 0.05$). There were twenty-three questions, based on a five-point Likert scale. The statistical data were analysed by using a factor analysis and sum variables.

The empirical part of the research was conducted in 2009, which is slightly dated in relation to the rapid development and change in social media services. On the other hand, Facebook, Wikipedia and blogs were already very popular platforms in 2009. Additionally, mental factors, such as motivation, are stable; presumably, the changes in motivation in a few years' time are insignificant.

Results of Qualitative Research

Overall, the interviews confirmed that producing Web content was a significant aspect of the interviewees' lives, beyond entertainment or a way of passing time. Their stated motivations for producing content were varied; after the analysis, these could be divided into two classes: *self-expression* and *community*.

The first area of motivation, self-expression, emerged from many of the interview themes. Blog writing was perceived as writing for one's own sake, not just for others:

Well, I guess in some way, not all the content is always ... I mean, it's also about doing something for oneself. You produce content just to get something written down for yourself. I do have this certain ... I've kind of taken a role of an educator and want to make people think about their behaviour and the decisions they make and what has led up to them (3¹).

This response highlighted both aspects of writing for others and for oneself. It also stressed a desire to exercise influence, a motivation that otherwise appeared surprisingly rarely. It is important to note that the blogger emphasised the relationship between herself/himself and the audience and therefore her/his position and identity in this relationship.

Regarding self-expression, the interviewees referred to having an opportunity to use skills or capacities that they could not otherwise use, for example: 'Yeah, like, I could have used them elsewhere of course, but I, like, wouldn't know I had the skills' (5).

Despite the possibility of using different kinds of information and skills online, the interviewees did not consider information or skill improvement a substantial motive for online actions. More likely, the Web increased the visibility of the information and skills that did not surface elsewhere.

One important reason for producing Web content was independence: 'When it comes to online, like [the] Internet, it's definitely independence, from the whole thing took off. It's still a matter of striving, the whole thing' (6). Generally, independence was deemed important, not just as a motive but as a principle for the entire Internet.

As mentioned in the theoretical discussion, attention and popularity seemed to be one aspect of self-expression. All interviewees had contemplated the idea of gaining popularity and considered it a motive, especially when starting to generate Web content. 'Yeah, yeah, of course that [popularity] is why it's done' (4). 'That's [popularity] not like, important to me; of course, maybe talking to empty chairs [is] a bad thing' (6).

One way of gaining popularity was to entertain others. Some stressed the motivation of generating enjoyment, for instance: 'It's mostly entertainment, what I do. So I guess that makes it enjoyable, too. Sometimes you try to write in an entertaining manner so that it's fun to read' (2).

The aspect of self-expression took on various forms, with *freedom and independence to produce any chosen content* as the most emphasised one. At the same time, popularity seemed to be viewed as another aspect, as stated. Moreover, self-expression was regarded as involving the development of personal knowledge and skills. From these themes, producing content and writing blogs can be observed as a significant arena of identity and production of self. It is a question of 'real' identity, in other words, in the face-to-face world, not a question of invented identity, which in many contexts has been found as a phenomenon centrally connected to the Web (Chester & Bretherton 2007).

The second motivation was related to a sense of community, which seemed to inform most interviewees' accounts. They all agreed on the importance of community and communality:

I don't just post them for the sake of writing; I post them for the community of which I'm a member (5).

Yeah, I guess that's true, when it comes to getting comments. When someone comments on something, it's more fun to write. When you know someone will

read it, and you're not just tapping on the computer alone, and no one ever comes to comment (2).

In the second comment, the interviewee emphasised the interaction in the online community. The comment could also relate to identity or self-expression, but in this connection, it is interpreted as a sign of the importance of the online community.

The interviewees also pointed out that the nature of the community determined how important or motivating it was perceived:

It is, if an online community feels nice, but I have to say, there are of course also communities that just feel repelling somehow. Nasty comments can make you feel that way, and a lot of people have stopped blogging because the comments have been so out of line (10).

I've been surprised how encouraging and positive the comments have been. It's not like ... you know, it's the community that does it. It's like this feeling or sense that I know these people, so of course you'd rather be encouraging than put someone down (3).

It's a good community; I mean, it's a very nice community (8).

Common goals were also mentioned to increase motivation: 'I'm motivated by common goals' (4). There were also doubts about common goals: 'But I'm not so sure about these common goals' (7). 'These common goals; I'm not sure about that, how far that is true. How can someone define the common goals of an online community?' (3). The relationship to common goals seemed dependent on what kind of content the interviewees generated. Common goals were stressed by the interviewee who produced content for Wikipedia, while the bloggers did not regard them as very important. The difference is quite understandable.

The encouraging and positive nature of a community was thus regarded as an essential aspect of motivation, accounting for the nature of the emerging online community. The question of communality in social networks had given rise to discussions about how effectively an online community could be defined or delimited (Haythornthwaite 2007). It should be noted that the idea of community arose from the interviewees' speech. Thus, the online community had no exact definition in this context. Even the interviewees were not quite able to define the community to which they felt they belonged:

It's like this welling mass, but what it is and what it's made up of or how it's structured, I don't know. And people keep joining and dropping out or just coming and going (3).

I guess I don't, not in any one specific community ... but if you don't pay attention with whom you're doing it, you don't know if you're in a community or not. You just see the contribution, like what's being brought in (6).

I started thinking if I belong to a community or if I'm part of it or if I just write there, am I, like married to it? (9).

Another common issue was the idea that in their early stages, Web platforms, especially blogs, were more strongly communal in character – or at least, that was the general view – and many felt nostalgic about the bygone days of communality:

And the other thing is, blogs are not like this one big family anymore. Maybe when I started doing it, I could check out every new blog that showed up, but now it would of course be an impossible task (3).

It was like this popular movement, way back when. I don't know if it still exists, this spirit of "we're all in this together" (7).

Communality was thus regarded as an important motivational factor, but common goals were considered such only in some respects. The interviewees' comments are consistent with the findings of earlier research, where communality was perceived as one of the key motivational factors for generating Web content (Sirkkunen 2006). It is interesting that communality was considered so important although the nature of online communality remained unclear. Based on the interviews, it is as yet impossible to gauge the truth of this element of communality. On the other hand, the subjective experience of participants in online communities speaks of communality, with particular reference to an element considered essential to social networks – the sense of affinity. Blog writers and other content producers feel that they are part of a community, which is an important aspect of their social reality and is therefore also significant in terms of motivation.

The social motivations were related primarily to communality, and the element of pro-sociality was clearly stressed in the interviews. This is interesting because in many contexts, the social dynamic of the Web has been regarded as weak, which has been offered as an explanation for the aggressive communication and weak level of communal commitment observed on the Web (Spears & Lea 1992). In this study, the interviewees' accounts represented a different perspective although the issue of aggressive behaviour on the Web was also addressed.

Results of Quantitative Research

The survey part of the study was constructed on the basis of the interviews described above. Similar statements were used in both the qualitative and quantitative parts. Additionally, the statements in the quantitative part were constructed on the basis of the

qualitative analysis. As mentioned earlier, there were twenty-three questions in total, and the question format used a five-point Likert scale. The respondents totalled 1065. Almost one half of the respondents ($n = 526$) had generated Web content themselves, and they were selected for the purpose of analysis.

A factor analysis was performed on the responses, based on which two key factors were formulated (varimax rotation, 37.4% total explained variance). Each factor is listed below, along with the variables and factor scores (the criterion was a factor score > 0.5).

The first factor is *development of Web ideology and self* (4.1 eigenvalue, 18.7% explained variance). The idea of this factor is that the motivation for content production is participation on the Internet and Web ideology; at the same time, the person develops himself/herself:

- I learn new things on the Web (0.729).
- An important aspect of producing Web content is independence (i.e. I get to decide what to produce and where to do so) (0.654).
- Common goals increase my inspiration to produce Web content (0.633).
- I want to produce content if it is useful or enjoyable for others (0.632).
- Reciprocity is important (i.e. if I give something on the Web, I also get something from there) (0.585).
- I prefer to participate in non-commercial communities or Web services (e.g. Wikipedia, communities of practice) (0.580).
- When producing Web content, I can use the kind of information, skills or capacities I wouldn't be using otherwise (0.580).

The second factor is *self-expression and identity* (4.1 eigenvalue, 18.7% explained variance):

- I want to become famous on the Web (0.813).
- I want others to know through the Web that I exist (0.783).
- I want my photos on the Web to have as large an audience as possible (0.751).
- I want to tell others about my life through the Web (0.646).
- I want to influence other people's opinions through the Web and change the world (0.579).
- New phenomena are born on the Internet, and I want to be part of them (0.578).

Based on these factors, sum variables were formulated, as follows:

- development of Web ideology and self (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.796$) and
- self-expression and identity (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.803$).

It is interesting that two motivations comprising the quantitative part (development of Web ideology and self and self-expression) were not consistent with those of the qualitative part.

Variables related to the community and interaction were also presented to the questionnaire respondents, but they did not comprise consistent factors.

The factors did not demonstrate the importance of the motivation. Accordingly, the strength of the motivation is examined in **Table 1** by using sum variables.

Table 1: Strength of motivation factors for producing content (%), n = 526.

Motivation	Strong	Moderate	Weak	Total
Development of Web ideology and self	59	34	7	100
Self-expression and identity	5	22	73	100

Development of Web ideology is clearly a more important motivational factor than self-expression and identity. Only 5% of the respondents felt the need to talk about one's life as a strong motive. There were hardly any differences in terms of background factors (gender, education and stage in life). The age factor revealed some differences in motivations for producing content but only in relation to self-expression. There were no statistically significant correlations between age and development of Web ideology and self. Instead, a correlation existed between age and self-expression ($r = 0.133$, $p < 0.01$). Although the correlation was not strong, self-expression was obviously more important to the younger than to the older participants. This result could be associated with the phase in life; young people at the stage in life where identities are developed have the strongest need to talk about themselves.

In summary, as a result of the statistical analysis, two motivational classes were formed: 1) development of Web ideology and self and 2) self-expression and identity. Of these, the former was much more important than the latter.

Discussion and Conclusion

By combining the results gained from the qualitative and quantitative data sets, the following can be identified as motivations for content generation and participation:

- *Development of Web ideology and self:* People want to be involved in the development of the Internet and also want to learn things themselves.
- *Self-expression and identity:* People, especially the young, want to act independently and freely on the Web and to share information about their lives.
- *Community:* People want to belong to online communities and interact with one another.

There are some inconsistencies between the qualitative and quantitative analyses. In the qualitative study, community is the most important idea, but in the quantitative part, it is completely lacking. Again, the development of Web ideology and self is relevant in the

quantitative data but not in the qualitative one. These inconsistencies reflect the differences in method which, rather than being considered problematic, can be viewed as complementary. The results should be integrated as a means of improving the study as a whole.

The three motivations identified here are largely consistent with those proposed in the literature as motivations for producing Web content. I compiled the presented motivations into the following classes: *identity, sharing, social interaction and community, benefit and need, and society and social order*. The clearest differences emerge with respect to development of Web ideology and self, which is highlighted by the data here and had not been brought up so directly before despite similar suggestions. On the other hand, the data from this study do not point to motivations centred on society and social order.

This study has made its own contribution to the stock of motivation lists. Individual motivations can be perceived as offering a somewhat one-dimensional perspective. Rafaeli and Ariel (2008) suggested that motives for online participation should be examined from several distinct perspectives: professional vs. non-professional, constructive, confrontational or vandalistic, continuous vs. one-time, anonymous vs. identifiable, as well as in terms of content contribution, community involvement and (silent) participation in the form of lurking. In relation to these dimensions, motives for content generation can be characterised especially in terms of non-professional, constructive and community involvement. Taken together, these dimensions seem worthy of further investigation.

Theoretically, three motivations can be integrated under the issue of identity from social and psychological viewpoints, most especially with reference to the social identity theory. According to this theory, an individual's self-concept derives from perceived membership in a relevant social group (Burr 2002). Social identity explains the relevance of community, which is the basis for social categorisation and belonging. In this study, online communities are an important starting point for social identity. A key point is that these communities are perceived positively, and they are a source of self-esteem. In this regard, it is evident that being part of the development of a Web ideology is also viewed as one dimension of social identity by clearly providing a positive building material for the latter.

It should be remembered that identity also includes the individual aspects of personal identity. This runs parallel to social identity and includes a person's unique traits and temperament. In this study, self-expression is combined with personal identity, yet self-expression occurs in a social context and is therefore social in nature. As a whole, the three motivation areas derived from the qualitative and quantitative analyses are interwoven in the theory of social identity. This paper's main argument is that the motives for content generation in social media are closely connected with identity, especially social identity.

To understand social identity as a whole in a social context, it might also be useful to study the role of social media in people's lives as part of their lifeworld (Macek 2013). This would position social media as part of the individual's ordinary daily life, social relationships and world of meanings. It would also enable drawing more comprehensive conclusions about motivations for using social media and online content generation.

Interestingly, in this study – as in earlier studies – journalistic motivations do not appear significant. By journalistic motivation, I mean people’s motivation to produce journalistic content or take part in a journalistic process. Journalistic motivation is interesting because social media are in many ways comparable to traditional media; indeed, social media are sometimes considered a rival or threat to traditional media (Bowman & Willis 2005; Jenkins 2006). The presented motivations seem to indicate that in social media, it is expressly the aspects of social engagement and interaction that matter; the motive of acting as a citizen journalist seems less significant.

In reviewing the results of this study, two methodological challenges arise. To overstate the case, it can be suggested that it is not known what motivations operate ‘in reality’. On the other hand, there is no pathway to exploring an individual’s motivations other than through the accounts that emerge from interview situations or survey responses, which means that the motivations revealed in this study are, in all their subjectivity, also real. In the case of this study’s interviewees, it can also be assumed that they may be more familiar with the discourse around social media and blogs and have learned the relevant manner of speech. On the other hand, in their articulation, they also construct social media – in other words, they do not repeat the discourse but use it as a tool to generate their own reality, that is, the world of social media.

The second methodological challenge stems from the relationship between motivation and behaviour. People reflect on and monitor their own behaviour and motivations (Harré 1979). This implies that there is no causal relationship between motivations and behaviour but that they are in many ways intertwined, and it is not always clear whether a given motive is the cause of a given behaviour or if a given behaviour is explained by a given motive. Due to this reflective nature, both the research literature (with the exception of Bishop 2007) and the participants in this research project express mainly positive motivations. On the other hand, various studies have long reported on antisocial behaviour on the Web in such contexts as de-individuation and flaming (Spears & Lea 1992). This points to a certain disconnection between the motivation and the behaviour itself because positive motivation does not produce antisocial behaviour.

The research on generating content in social media has thus produced a large amount of information on specific motives, but further studies would be well advised to examine motives as part of an individual’s life as a whole. Such an approach would offer a better understanding of the motivations for producing content in social media. To deepen the knowledge about the motivation for content generation, it would be necessary to concentrate on different kinds of platforms. Currently, social media have so many platforms, and mobile services’ popularity has risen exponentially; therefore, motivation research should target these platforms and services.

Biographical notes:

Janne Matikainen (Adjunct Professor, D.Soc.Sc.) is a researcher in the Department of Social Research at the University of Helsinki. His expertise is concentrated on the social aspects of

the Internet. His research focuses on interaction in online communication, online participation and motives for content generation in social media. In recent years, he has studied the relation between traditional and social media, especially from the audience's perspective. He has employed wide-ranging approaches, using both qualitative and quantitative methods. He has published many national and international, peer-reviewed articles and edited many books in Finnish about online communication, new media and research methods. Contact: janne.matikainen@helsinki.fi.

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Note:

¹ Interviewee number.