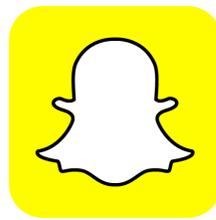Social Sites: Instagram and Snapchat

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Social media sites and apps are socio-technical systems, which are "technical systems that are designed for and shaped by people operating in social contexts" (Ritter, Baxter & Churchill, 2014, pg. 219). They provide a way to socialize with people you do not know and who are not physically close to you, and with the ones you do know, and are physically close to you. Social distance is a concept that "refers to the distance in social terms between two groups or between people" (Ritter et al., 2014, pg. 233). For example, you can have close friends, acquaintances, family, co-workers, and then there are also strangers that may or may not have something in common with you. Looking at two different social media apps, Instagram, and Snapchat, the difference in what the users' social distance is between other users is very different.

Instagram is a social media app that is media heavy, meaning its content is all photography and some video. Instagram, for the majority of users, is "open (unlike Facebook and LinkedIn where you need to be a friend or "connected" to each other)," (Zeller, 2016) which allows strangers to view other strangers' photos (although there is the option to make your account private). What is unique about Instagram and the concept of social distance is that "unless Instagram photos are published to Twitter or Facebook, they exist only in the space between phones" (Killingsworth, 2012). In 2016, "mobile and tablet devices accounted for 51.3% of Internet usage worldwide in October compared to 48.7% by desktop" (StatCounter, 2016). With mobile devices surpassing desktops for Internet connection, more people can have access to Instagram and thereby participate on the app. In 2017, Instagram had about 600 million users (Chaffey, 2017), and the year before, "80 percent of all Instagram users come from countries outside of the United States" (Parker, 2016). Since Instagram is more open than Facebook, which has the most number of users on a social network site (Chaffey, 2017), in terms of connecting with people, the app creates an opportunity for strangers across the globe to connect and become less distant.

Contrastingly, Snapchat is tailored more for people that are not as socially distant and are also not as spatially distant. Snapchat is also a mobile only app with photos and video as the primary type of content. Right as you sign up for an account, the interface asks you to find friends. Snapchat's language of finding "friends" (Hastings, 2016) instead of people, like on Instagram, creates the idea that the social media app is meant for connecting with people you know offline, and people that you are closer to. In addition, Snapchat allows users to seem less spatially distant. Spatial distance relates to how people are "distributed geographically" (Ritter et al., 2014, pg. 234). The app has geofilters, which are overlays based on location and events (Snapchat). By using geofilters, Snapchat users can see where there friends are., but they can also see who else is in the area. Furthermore, with Snapchat's Our Story feature, users can see who else is in the area. The Our Story feature "shows a crowd sourced, aggregated group of individual users' Snapchats based around an event," (Kosoff, 2015). When Snapchat users are in a certain location and see a lot of snaps in Our Story then they will be more likely to want to find out more about an event, and perhaps attend the event. As Ritter et al. explain, "if group members are close to us this encourages participation in local activities" (Ritter et al., (2014, pg. 235).

Instagram and Snapchat also differ on how users may be intrinsically motivated to use the social media apps. Instagram users may be intrinsically motivated to share their accomplishments through photos with the reassurance that they will not be viewed as conceited if, of course, they follow the unwritten rules of Instagram. One of the unwritten rules is to not "flood the feed" (Popolo, 2012), or in other words, to not post too much in one day. By following this rule, users will usually post one photo from an event, or one photo of an accomplishment instead of posting an entire album of pictures like they might on Facebook. However, photographers may be the most intrinsically motivated to use Instagram. Despite the use of filters and typically only uploading photos taken with a mobile device, photographers can post images they "wouldn't usually put in their portfolio" (Zeller, 2016). Moreover, photographers on Instagram are "also free in term of content" and there is "no need to show series of work" (Zeller, 2016). Being able to post photos without feeling like you have to spend a significant amount of time editing and deciding whether or not the photo is worthy of your portfolio, can help photographers enjoy their hobby or profession in a different way.

Snapchat users are intrinsically motivated to use the app because the content that is shared between friends is raw. The content on Snapchat is supposed to be spontaneous, and not meant to be static. Snaps have a set amount of time that a friend can view the photo or video. The longest amount of time for individual Snaps is 10 seconds long, and Snap Stories are viewable for 24 hours. The time limit provides a reason to not feel like you have to make the photo or video look perfect. The app gives users the opportunity to be free from the pressures of other social media sites. As Jenna Wortham wrote in her article, "How I Learned to love Snapchat,"

> "Snapchat isn't the place where you go to be pretty. It's the place where you go to be yourself, and that is made easy thanks to the app's inbuilt ephemerality. Away from the fave-based economies of mainstream social media, there's less pressure to be dolled up, or funny." (Wortham, 2016)

Without the pressure of added social norms, Snapchat's use can come from "a feeling of enjoyment" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, pg. 55), rather than a feeling of commitment.

However, when it comes to extrinsic motivation for Instagram and Snapchat users, the two do not differ much. Instagram has likes for photos, views for videos, and followers, and Snapchat has Story views and scores, which are a combination of the "number of Snaps you've sent and received, Stories you've posted, and other factors" (Snapchat). Likes and views act as points, or rewards, which are separable outcomes (Ryan & Deci, 2000, pg. 55).   or external motivation to continue to use the social media apps. You are extrinsically motivated to post more because the more followers you have, the more your content will be seen, and the higher the score you have, the more you will feel like you are popular among your friends.

An improvement that could be made to Instagram is having the ability to swipe through photos on a profile. As of now, you have to back out of viewing a photo before going to the next one. This makes it slower to see if you like someone's content and it can be frustrating if you cannot tell what the content is from the thumbnail. The inability to be able view the full sized photos in a smooth way on someone's profile could inhibit the development of less social distance between users. Sometimes you can tell right away if you like someone's profile, but

other times, you need to see more. When the process of seeing more isn't efficient, then users may move on without following someone with similar interests or commenting on a photo to start networking. The less people interact with each other on Instagram, the less it is going to feel like a community. The less the environment feels like a community, the more distant users are going to be towards one another. It may seem like a small flaw of Instagram but the ability to view photos fasters can have larger than intended consequences.

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