# "I always share content to be seen": Unpacking sociability affordances in youth motivations and strategies for sharing content on Facebook

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Abstract

Even though, in social media, the term "sharing" is a multifaceted construct – influenced by user motivations, expectations, and social benefits to be gained – there are few definitions that approach it around these terms. We analyze these benefits in terms of what we call sociability affordances - i.e., social network site (SNS) affordances that arise outside either the merely material or imagined affordances - which enable individuals to take social actions toward social integration and interaction. Semi-structured interviews with young Chileans from three representative social media use typologies showed that each were closely linked with the performance of sharing actions for intrinsic and extrinsic social integration and interaction gains. Coding of interviews found four main sociability affordances from sharing practices: social visibility; audience engagement; social strengthening and enduring intra-personal communication. This study finds that online sharing behaviors are carefully weighed upon to achieve either factual or imagined social gains.

Keywords: Sharing, Sociability Affordances, Facebook, Social media, Motivations.

## Introduction

A popular concept both in scholarship and everyday life, "sharing" involves a series of activities around social media, be this in reference to sharing personal resources, such as with cars or homes (John, 2016); or in the sharing of intimate daily-life moments, as occurs on Social networking sites (SNS) (Papacharizzi, 2011). This definition of sharing, however, is too broad for useful applications, meaning "too many things at once" (Lampinen, 2015). Indeed, even if we look only to sharing on SNS, the term continues to encompass a myriad of actions, motivations and gratifications. Here scholars have paid much attention to why users share personal content on Facebook and what they obtain from it (e.g., Johnson, 2008; April, Phua, Jin & Kim, 2017; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010); or to identifying the technological and material affordances of SNS which allow users to perform specific sharing actions (boyd, 2008; Valkenburg & Peter, 2007). Though several technological affordances have been identified – e.g., how visibility is amplified through social media (boyd, 2014), or how content shared on these sites persists, and is nearly impossible to erase (Peter & Valkenburg, 2013) – their technological focus ignores any particular social gains leveraged by these affordances, gains which may be simultaneously due to user perceptions, material results from sharing, and/or user imaginations. The present study seeks to build a bridge between user sharing practices and the social gains that they leverage by the mere act of sharing on social media. While we recognize that these gains are propitiated by SNSs´ technological affordances, we posit that there may be further affordances to be identified at the intersection of the material and perceptual.

To investigate this, we first obtain a view of sharing practices on Facebook, drawing upon uses and gratifications (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1973) and self-determination theories (Deci & Ryan, 1987) to determine particular sharing profiles and whether these social gains are intrinsic or extrinsic. In so doing, we also seek to determine, at a more intrinsic level, any perceptual, subjective and/or imagined component these social gains may have; or, otherwise, should they respond to the actual material outcomes of technology use. Second, because we are investigating both the material and perceptual realms, we adopt an affordance theory framework, as suited to study the dynamic relationship between users and technological artifacts through lenses "both environmental and perceptual, both conceptual and imagined" (Nagy & Neff, 2015, p. 3). Indeed, as Nagy & Neff (2015) have posited that imagined affordances are just as important as the actual use or materiality of technologies, we propose that SNS technological affordances enable what we term sociability affordances. These are not rooted only in technological affordances, but also in the user perceptions and imaginations of what they believe to obtain through the act of sharing. This research, as such, expands technological affordances as propitiating sociability affordances, toward the goal of understanding sharing as a social behavior.

In addition to identifying which sociability affordances users obtain by sharing mediated by technological affordances, another point of interest is how online sharing practices, perceptions and sociability affordances may differ across countries and cultures. In the conceptualization and application of the meaning of sharing on social media and any sociability affordances entailed, cultural differences may be at play (Zhao & John, 2020). To add to the body of knowledge about how this phenomenon varies by country and culture, we study Chile and its high Facebook adoption rate - the most widely used social network (75%) after WhatsApp (79%) since 2018 (Digital News Report, 2022). The country further boasts an internet penetration rate of 92% (Digital News Report, 2022), and Facebook users increase from 12 to 18 million in five years (2018-2022), almost the whole population in Chile[1] . Most studies on Facebook in the country are oriented to understand youth uses of the platform in relation to forms of political participation (e.g., protest, political sharing, news sharing) (Halpern et al., 2017; Scherman et al., 2015;  Scherman et al., 2022; Valenzuela et al., 2012), and the digital skills that determine sharing content on it (Correa, 2016). This study focuses specifically on mundane forms of sharing on Facebook, not specifically related to political content or news sharing, to explore how people make sense of different sociability affordances that emerge through their practices on the platform. Also, this study responds to recent calls to de-colonize communication studies (Park & Curran, 2000; Waisbord & Mellado, 2014, in Zhao, Jhon, p.2) by considering this relevant sample as representative of the Latino population. Based on data from a nationally representative survey, we initially discovered four different types of sharing practices. Afterwards, in-depth interviews with respondents were coded, by extension, into sociability affordances. Not only rooted in technology, but also in user perceptions and imaginations of what they think they obtain through the act of sharing, we find four sociability affordances: social visibility; status engagement; social strengthening; and enduring intra-personal communication. Results add to the body of knowledge centered on social media affordances by identifying the specific social gains that users obtain while making use of otherwise technological affordances (e.g., persistence, connectivity). We also bring new cultural and ontological perspectives to the intrinsic and extrinsic sociability affordances that users leverage when they choose to share personal content on social media.

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[1] Source: Internet World Stats, June 2022 (https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats15.htm#south)

**Theoretical background**

The literature provides three main theoretical approaches on social media sharing practices and meanings: first, those that center on user skills and contexts; second, on user motivations and gratifications; and third, on social and normative pressures. The sections below summarize these and discuss their advantages and shortcomings. Subsequently – and in addressing such gaps, building on previous theories regarding intentions toward media practices, contributing data on user motivations, in making sense of their practices, and the platform features that shape social interactions – we then introduce the concept of sociability affordances as a useful integrative approach to better understand such phenomena.

*Sharing as result of user skills and contexts*

Digital sharing is an overarching term describing activities related to circulating images, news, moods, links, videos, or any other type of content (John, 2016). In attempting to explain these practices, the literature has focused on e.g., user characteristics (Yeon and Oh, 2015) and the context of shared content (Valenzuela et al., 2017); the role of digital skills in using Facebook (Correa, 2016); and even on how the platform or specific type of network -open or closed- triggers and cues affect user perceptions and behaviors (Jung & Sundar, 2018; Sundar, 2008; Diaz Campo, J. et al., 2021). Previous studies taking this approach to online content sharing range from understanding digital skills to identifying psycho-social characteristics, especially on Facebook (Correa, 2016; Hargittai & Walejko, 2008; Yeon & Oh, 2015); while others have focused on the characteristics of shared content (Valenzuela et al., 2017; ) and on the role played by definitions of friendship and privacy when sharing information (boyd, 2014; Vitak et al., 2015). 'Sharing' has also been explained as a practice of communication management to facilitate engagement across diverse media practices with others (Burchell, 2017), and as a reflexive mechanism to know and care for oneself (Queen & Powers, 2015). This approach, however, takes a limited view of individual intentions and motivations when sharing.

*Sharing from individual user motivation and gratification*

A different approach emphasizes individual intentions. Shored up by neoclassical economics, this framework assumes that individuals rely on rational assessments of the possible consequences of their actions in order to act (Olson, 1971; Ostrom, 1990; Williamson, 1981). Thus, like any other behavior, certain motivations or intentions encourage individuals to digitally share or deliver information to people (Wilson, 2014). In this line, Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1987; Gagné & Deci, 2005) argues that there are intrinsic motivations, related to either the personal-hedonistic gratification produced by the behaviors themselves (e.g., the person engages in a behavior because it brings internal personal satisfaction), or the meanings for only the individual who performs them; and extrinsic motivations, related to the rational considerations individuals make about the projected results of an action (e.g., the perceived predicted external benefits for performing this behavior). In this way, needs may be satisfied either intrinsically or extrinsically.

Following this route, media consumption studies have developed the established Uses and Gratifications (U&G) theory, which focuses on how people select and use media to satisfy (or expectations of satisfying) different motivations and needs (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1973). Of the literature making use of U&G

theory in the study of social networking sites and online interpersonal communication, some approach the idea that sharing content is motivated by expected social gains. Such studies acknowledge e.g., recognition needs, cognitive needs, social needs, and entertainment needs (Leung, 2009); or needs for social connection, sharing identities, social investigation, social network surfing, and status updating (Johnson, 2008). However, the above are limited to single, self-report instruments on uses, relying on subjective perceptions. In seeking to increase the validity of these findings, this study presents a novel approach to triangulate survey data and in depth interviews.

*Sharing as a socio-normative practice*

In the pre-digital era, normative intent had to do with the influence of other community members on what was considered appropriate behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Marett & Joshi, 2009). Indeed, there are socio-normative elements related to in-group considerations behind any intention to act (Ajzen, 2011; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Marett & Joshi, 2009). and now the normative components of behavioral intent have been applied to digital sharing (Marett & Joshi, 2009; Johnson, 2014). For instance, on Twitter and Facebook, sharing has been shown to be motivated by interests of the groups the post will interact with: an "imagined audience" – or rather, the user expectation of who will see their posts after sharing – guides user strategies in creating and sharing content (Ellison et al., 2014; Marwick & boyd, 2011; Vitak et al., 2015). Indeed, in consideration of who can or cannot see it and user characteristics, sharing strategies on Facebook range from omitting certain content to creating and managing different accounts or profiles in order to communicate more effectively with different audiences (Ellison et al., 2014; Litt, 2012). Users see shared content as a representation of self, and so deploy sophisticated impression management strategies that signal in-group values (Pearce & Vitak, 2016). Moreover, recent anthropological studies suggest that Facebook communication – the exchange of information, symbols, and identities – reinforces social relationships, especially if the symbols shared have an affective component (Miller, 2014; Miller et al., 2016). Even effortless cognitive activities, such as liking or viewing pictures, function as effective means for maintaining contact, "keeping in touch" (Joinson, 2014), and companionship among groups, especially older adults (Jung & Sundar, 2018). Indeed, online communities – for which such socio-normative considerations are the main driver among participants (Papacharissi, 2011) – only exist due to the ways members share identities, e.g., display communication and interaction (Baym & Burnett, 2009; Katz et al., 2004). In this approach, sharing is an aspiration to the "utopian imaginary" (Wittel, 2011), bringing together ideologies and values that promote open, common, and collaborative communication (Jenkins, 2008), intensifying and strengthening social relationships, and stimulating users of social networks in sharing content (Wittel, 2011). User decisions about which platform to use (and which affordances to leverage) are based on their understandings of their own communication actions, patterns of interpersonal engagement, and connections (Burchell, 2017).

**Technological and imagined affordances and their relationship with sociability affordances**
The above approaches to sharing focus mostly on user characteristics or on modalities of social media use, and less so on the social gains obtained through the act of sharing. As Kennedy (2016) suggests, research into sharing on digital platforms suffers from conceptual ambiguity, requiring an exploration of user motivations, especially as regards "sharing as social intensification" in the form of strengthening social ties. We respond to this call by studying which social gains users imagine and obtain through sharing on social

media. As stated earlier, we construct upon the concept of imagined affordances (Nagy & Neff, 2015), under which particular affordances are in the environment "waiting to be recognized, especially by specific individuals," (p. 3) and are therefore not only material, but importantly shaped by what users expect and imagine to obtain through their use of technology. An example put forward by Nagy & Neff (2015) is that of users imagining that they have an objective report of their friends' activity in their Facebook news feed, rather than the reality, where news feeds are algorithmically determined. With this in mind, we distinguish between material technological affordances - which relate to the technological features of SNS platforms - and sociability affordances, which we define as both the imagined and actual social gains users obtain through sharing in social media as mediated by technological affordances.

Although many affordances have been proposed as unique to the SNS environment, we argue that at least four technological affordances shape the sociability affordances that users obtain through the act of sharing: persistence, connectivity, accessibility, and visibility. First, persistence involves that the content shared remains online, whether because it remains stored on SNS servers or because it is seen and potentially saved and reshared by other network members (boyd, 2010; Peter & Valkenburg, 2013). Second, connectivity refers to the possibility to connect and establish ties with different members through a visible list of connections to user profile pages (Acquisti & Gross, 2006; boyd & Ellison, 2008). Third, and by extension, the SNS affordance of connectivity makes the posted content easily accessible to others - being connected to others makes one's own posted content accessible to them (Peter & Valkenburg, 2013; Trepte et al., 2015). Fourth and finally, visibility implies that posted content is increasingly visible to others, since other members can see the post, react to it, and even re-share it, which increases its spread and thus visibility inside the network. Succintly, "social media technologies enable people to easily and effortlessly see information about someone else" (Treem & Leonardi, 2012).

Although the term affordance recognizes the mutual influences among technology, users, and context "without privileging any aspect as deterministic of the others" (Evans et al., 2017, p. 36), we posit that people obtain sociability affordances depending equally among their own orientations, perceptions and motivations, as on the context, capabilities and features of the technology (Li, 2013).

Applying the above, we posit that user motivations for sharing practices can better be understood by what users leverage or obtain from sharing, since – importantly – the results of these actions shape user sharing practices in the first place. An empirical exploration, then, requires identifying user sharing practices and strategies; therefore, our first research question is: Which sharing typologies may be categorized from user sharing practices on Facebook?

Should users employ different sharing practices, it follows from U&G and self-determination theories that they may seek to satisfy certain needs and obtain different gratifications, resulting in imagined and sociability affordances (i.e., the action performed leverages a perception or imagination of certain social gain). Thus, the second research question: Which social gains do users of each sharing typology imagine and perceive, constituting sociability affordances?

## Methods

From Uses and Gratifications theory (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1973), we understand that people actively use media to obtain particular gratifications; in a similar fashion, we posit there are typologies of users characterized by the social gratifications and gains they actively seek to leverage through SNS technological

affordances. To study this, we first analyzed the results of a representative national survey of social media users (Universidad Diego Portales & Feedback, 2013), which had found three typologies of usage and conceptualized sharing. Afterwards, a representative sub-sample of each typology (N = 25) was interviewed regarding their motivations and strategies behind sharing content on Facebook. Below, we first outline the Chilean context; second, we explain the selection and characterization process of user typologies; and third, we detail the qualitative interview process.

*The Chilean context and Facebook*

As stated earlier, Chile boasts an internet penetration rate of 87% in 2018 to 92% in 2022 (SUBTEL, 2018; Digital News Report, 2022), within which 18 of its 19,5 million inhabitants are Facebook users (there is an increase of 6 million users since 2018) . This is the most widely used social network (75%) after WhatsApp (79%) by general population (Digital News Report, 2022). Moreover, since 2014, almost every young in Chile (18-29) are registered on Facebook,  and 80% visit the platform on a daily basis constantly until 2019 after What's app (Universidad Diego Portales-Feedback, 2019). Given its relevance in Chile, especially for Chilean youth, we focus our study on Facebook sharing practices, motivations, and strategies in order to determine sharing typologies.

*National survey: Identifying user sharing typologies*

User sharing typologies were identified based on the results of a nationally representative survey gathered by a local data collection firm, in conjunction with one of Chile's largest universities (Universidad Diego Portales & Feedback, 2013). The survey (N = 1,000, 53 % male, 18-29 years old, sampling error +3.1% [95% CI]) sampled a representative distribution across Chile's three most populous urban centers: the Santiago metropolitan region (center, 402, 40.2%); Viña del Mar-Valparaíso (center-north, 307, 31%); and Concepción-Talcahuano (south, 291, 29%).

Questions included content creation and frequency of sharing practices. Particular items included: daily hours connected to Facebook; contacting friends or people they know; reading comments; chatting with other users; writing comments; uploading pictures; publishing links to photos or videos; uploading videos; publishing links to news articles; joining pages; giving opinions on political, public or citizenship issues; playing games; inviting people to events; buying a product or service; creating pages (Universidad Diego Portales & Feedback, 2013). Cluster analysis identified user sharing typologies under bivariate correlations of the above variables with the following: a) gender, recoded as a dummy variable (male = 0; female = 1); b) age, measured as a continuous variable; and c) education level, measured by the highest level of formal education (less than primary education = 1; graduate studies = 7). Three mutually exclu0sive types of user sharing typologies were identified based on common behavioral patterns detected (see Table 1 in results).

*In-depth interviews: Participant selection*

We recruited representative users from each of the three sharing typologies identified for in-depth interviews regarding sharing motivations and strategies. Potential participants from different sharing typologies and who had indicated their interest in follow-up contact in the initial survey were sent an additional poll, utilizing a snowball sampling method. From an initial sample of 50 individuals (age 18-29) based in Santiago, Chile,

who agreed to participate, we randomly selected 25. All participants for in-depth interviews matched the sharing typologies and were representative of the national survey across socio-demographic variables (gender and socio-economic groups). Finally, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the 25 participants (see Table 2). Participants were interviewed at home or in public places, such as cafés and restaurants.

## Results

### Sharing typologies

Cluster analysis of the 2013 national survey on Facebook user practices had yielded three main sharing typologies, termed: a) hyperposters; b) personalistic; and c) social lurkers. Hyperposters users – so called due to their high frequency of posting on Facebook – were mostly young adults (21-24 years), women, and of average socioeconomic status. The second type, personalistic, were preferentially higher on publishing personal comments and updating statuses; lower in giving opinions on political, public, or citizen issues, uploading videos, or posting links to articles or news; were 25-29 years old; and were among similarly average socioeconomic status. The third type, social lurkers, had patently low levels of social network sharing practices, of giving opinions on political, public, or citizen issues, or of posting links to articles or news; were mainly men, of low socioeconomic status, mostly (over 50%) between 25 and 29 years old; and primarily used the platform to observe their friends, rather than to share their own content. Table 1 describes the distribution of interview participants according to the three sharing typologies.

Table 1. Sharing Typologies

| Typology | Hyperposter (*n*=9) | Personalistic (*n*=10) | Social lurker (*n*=6) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Frequency** | Highest frequency sharing and posting comments or status updates on Facebook. | Often update statuses on social networks. Low frequency of opinions on political issues. | Never or almost never upload videos, nor give opinions on political, public, or citizen issues. Hardly post links to articles or news. |
| **Sex** | Mostly women | Men and Women | Mostly men |
| **Age** | 20 to 24 years | 25 to 29 years | 25 to 29 years |
| **SES\*** | Medium | Medium | Low |

**\***Socioeconomic status

### Sociability Affordances

Interviewee reflections on Facebook usage – guided to specifically address perceptions, imaginations and expectations behind their own practices of sharing personal content (boyd, 2014; Creswell, 2014) – were

recorded, coded, and analyzed following a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1969). Table 2 describes interviewee characteristics.

Table 2. Interviewee characteristics

| Participant | Sex | Age | SES* | Typology | N° friends |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Male | 20 | High | Social lurker | 545 |
| 2 | Male | 20 | High | Social lurker | 597 |
| 3 | Female | 21 | Medium | Hyperposter | 1390 |
| 4 | Female | 22 | Low | Hyperposter | 803 |
| 5 | Male | 25 | Low | Social lurker | 362 |
| 6 | Male | 20 | Low | Personalistic | 374 |
| 7 | Male | 20 | Low | Social lurker | 802 |
| 8 | Female | 24 | Medium | Hyperposter | 598 |
| 9 | Female | 19 | Low | Personalistic | 678 |
| 10 | Male | 29 | Medium | Personalistic | 483 |
| 11 | Female | 22 | Medium | Hyperposter | 1324 |
| 12 | Female | 24 | Low | Hyperposter | 576 |
| 13 | Female | 28 | Medium | Hyperposter | 400 |
| 14 | Male | 28 | Low | Hyperposter | 479 |
| 15 | Male | 29 | Low | Personalistic | 758 |
| 16 | Female | 22 | Medium | Personalistic | 958 |
| 17 | Male | 19 | Medium | Social lurker | 258 |
| 18 | Female | 19 | Medium | Personalistic | 774 |
| 19 | Female | 22 | Medium | Personalistic | 1143 |
| 20 | Female | 26 | Low | Social lurker | 1036 |
| 21 | Male | 23 | Low | Hyperposter | 815 |
| 22 | Female | 18 | Medium | Personalistic | 1089 |
| 23 | Male | 19 | Low | Personalistic | 455 |
| 24 | Male | 20 | Low | Personalistic | 103 |
| 25 | Female | 26 | Low | Hyperposter | 738 |
| **Sum/ Average** | **54% M** | **22.6** | **50% Low** | **38.4% Social lurker** | **701** |

*Socioeconomic status

Coding of interview data was developed around the type of content they share (e.g., links, pictures, memes, videos, news), their motivations and expectations in relation to sharing activities on Facebook, their self-presentation strategies, and how their sharing activities were related to particular desired outcomes stemming from these sharing practices. Analysis of these categories in relation to the motivations, strategies, and user sharing practices expressed by interviewees resulted in four main both imagined and/or perceived social gains (sociability affordances), detailed below. Table 3 shows the relationships among motivation (intrinsic/extrinsic), sharing typology, and sociability affordances.

*First social affordance: Social visibility*

The first sociability affordance, social visibility, is related to the motivation and gratification of having sought attention through SNS. Here, users leverage social visibility – having their posts seen, amplified, and spread throughout the network – through the technological affordances of visibility and connectivity. It is at the same time a motivation and a gratification, a perception that sharing content signals their presence, their existence, to their group networks. This user motivation is mainly intrinsic; it does not seek explicit reactions from others, rather, it is based on the personal satisfaction of filling a need for individual attention, a pleasure in knowing that others are aware of individual events. Since it is rooted in the perception and imagination of having sought attention, of having their presence noticed by the group – and not necessarily in the outcome of factually receiving many replies, nor in knowing for whom the post is visible because of Facebook's opaque algorithm – we understand social visibility as a sociability affordance. For Angelica (22 years old), sharing content is a way for people to "know what I do... I always [share content] with a desire to be seen". The emphasis here is on the word "desire." Similarly, Cristián (29 years old), also shares certain types of content – especially that which he finds interesting – as a way to get the instantaneous and widespread attention of his friends and acquaintances:

> "instead of getting together over the weekend with your friends and saying 'hey, check out what I found', [on social networks you can say] 'check this out, check out this thing on the Internet".

*Second social affordance: Audience engagement*
A second sociability affordance is audience engagement, which occurs when participants pursue engagement from their Facebook contacts based on the kind of content they share and the replies they expect. These stem from extrinsic motivations, actively seeking out responses and interactions from others materialized on the platform in the form of pre-existing reactions (e.g., "Like" or "Angry") or in the form of receiving comments or responses to the shared content. Paulina (24 years old) shares content with expectations of "interactions with other people".

> "I am looking for interaction, obviously, from someone … I share things with. It could be a like or a comment on whatever I'm sharing. I think that's the goal of sharing, interacting... For me, at least, that's the goal of sharing something" (Paulina, 24 years old).

Likewise, through the technological affordance of connectivity, Ignacia (19 years old) determines her presence among her cohort on Facebook, pursuing an expectation of reward when sharing content to users she is connected with:

> "I think I am pretty well-accepted on Facebook – still, when you publish something, you want someone to respond, or someone to reaffirm your opinion or be against it and tell you… so, like, it would be lame to publish something interesting and have no one say anything about it" (Ignacia, 19 years old).

Because it is primarily a means of socializing on the site, satisfied when receiving a reaction from others using the most basic technological affordances that the platform permits (and not necessarily to establish a solid bond with others), audience engagement is a sociability affordance. Receiving an external reward in the form of visible engagement from one's audience does not only bring forth the perception of interactivity; rather, users post with that imagined affordance in mind. Thus, we found that individuals share content based on the knowledge of people in their social networks, deciding what may be of interest for those who can access it. This is consistent with previous studies on imagined audiences within a given communication act (Marwick & boyd, 2011; Willson, 2014). For instance, Angelica, a 22-year-old university student, when asked why she shares political content on Facebook, said she does it "to generate reactions in others". She always provides opinions on politics and expects her friends and supporters, and especially her uncle, to comment and react on her impressions:

> "On my Facebook, I criticize [Chile's former President] Bachelet a lot because I don't like her at all. Then I hope, for example, that my uncle, a staunch Bachelet supporter, will go and say something about it. I love to argue with my uncle, so I know that if I publish something about Bachelet, he's going to publish something to, like, tear down my status, and we end up arguing".

*Third social affordance: Social strengthening*

In contrast to engagement, social strengthening – leveraged through technological affordances of connectivity and visibility – is when individuals share content in order to establish or maintain relationships. This sociability affordance is in line with the well-established concept of bonding social capital in Steinfield, Ellison & Lampe (2008), and is related to establishing or strengthening social bonds, either online or offline. Extrinsically motivated, information shared on Facebook operates as a stimulus to strengthen communication with others, with expectations for doing so outside the platform as well. This is the case of Juan (28 years old), a marketing student, who hopes that the content he shares on Facebook will be the starting point for a conversation outside of Facebook:

> "I expect comments, but it has happened to me that there are times when even though I don't get any comments [on Facebook], people make comments to me in person. So, they talk to me and we get a conversation going, outside of Facebook, so maybe that is

something much richer and much more entertaining – in fact, I even prefer that, maybe it
is much more valuable".

However, for some respondents, publications shared by participants serve as a means to connect with
friends and family beyond Facebook, though not necessarily in person. For example, through a friend posting
their "status" on Facebook, respondents state that they may call to find out if something happened to them.
This is the case of Juan Pablo (19 years old), a student of history who lives in Santiago:

"As happens, you may not talk to people, but through a couple of publications, you know
they're okay, or when they say they're sad, you can ask them 'Hey, what happened to you?'
[These status updates] really influence communication with another person, to find out
what's up with people when they publish [statuses], or they write to you suddenly, or you
write to them on their wall, and say: 'hey, I haven't heard from you."

We argue that social strengthening is a sociability affordance because – whether the social bond is
strengthened or not – it is a result of users' perceptions and imaginations: that others have seen and liked
a post, for instance, is not necessarily a proof that the relationship is more solid; however, some users
understand this to be the case. Likewise, the perception of friends not posting anything negative may bring
a sensation of ease by knowing that everything is alright; clearly, however, this well may be an imagined
affordance, subjective.

*Fourth sociability affordance: Enduring intra-personal communication*
Lastly, an intrinsic social affordance identified in the interviews was that of enduring intra-personal
communication, i.e., a user communicating with themselves at some future time. Made possible by the
technological affordance of content persistence and an essentially social act, self-communication occurs via
sharing content to express a moment's emotion. This non-verbal form of communication on Facebook
involving time, known as chronemics, is used to remember relevant life events, a way to keep a personal,
dynamic record of your activities or significant moments, primarily for yourself. Thus logging, saving, and
sharing certain moments on the platform also allows you to treasure what participants define as "good
times". As Mariana describes:

"I try to upload photos of moments that I like. I feel that if I don't upload them to Facebook,
I'm going to lose them... so like, those moments, [are always] photos with a lot of people,
with my parents, with my friends… they're important moments, or, I don't know if they're
important, but they are entertaining, I like them, I see them later and I laugh to myself".
(Mariana, 28 years old).

Both men and women consider good times to include intimate spaces, like with family or significant others;
or massive events, like a football match or a concert. From the interviews, especially with women, Facebook
operates as a sort of timeline for life events, and sharing them is one way to keep track of them. This is
how Tomás (20 years old), a student of journalism, described it:

> "[I share] special situations, like when Chile won the cup, or when my nephew was born
> and I changed my profile picture to a picture with him…a birthday party, perhaps. Like, they
> have to be happy moments – I would never put up a bad experience or anything like that"
> (Tomás, 20 years old).

That said, respondents do not publish only positive-affect content; there are also sad or complex moments. The difference between these is that the latter are more subtle or indirect, e.g., posting a song, a piece of writing, a poem, or a phrase that represents that moment, something not necessarily recognizable as negative by others. Juan Pablo (19 years old) is a young man from Valparaíso who usually channels sad moments into songs or news:

> "Sometimes, if I feel sad, I admit I will publish a certain kind of song or music – I always
> try to guide emotions through music – or sometimes, I don't know, I do this with anger or
> rage, sometimes with some short essay or some news that makes me feel anger or rage"
> (Juan Pablo, 19 years old).

We argue that enduring intra-personal communication is - through posts accumulated on one's profile - a means to reflect on and bring forth the notion of which moments in one's life are memorable, and so is a sociability affordance. It is related to self-perception; to which moments on should "treasure" or not; and likewise, to the ability to reflect on which emotional states are worth "sharing" with others. The subjective property of this sociability affordance – while propitiated through the act of sharing and the technological affordance of content persistence - affects individuals' self-perceptions and identities, and is a means of reflecting upon one's social persona, the person that we present to our networks, or the person that we attempt to project to oneself and others.

Table 3. Relationships among motivation (intrinsic/extrinsic), sharing typologies, and sociability affordances

|  | **Hyperposter** | **Personalistic** | **Social lurker** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Social visibility** | Extrinsic | Intrinsic/extrinsic | NA* |
| **Audience engagement** | Extrinsic | Extrinsic | NA* |
| **Social strengthening** | Intrinsic/extrinsic | Intrinsic/extrinsic | Intrinsic |
| **Enduring intra-personal communication** | Intrinsic | Intrinsic | NA* |

**Discussion and Conclusion**

The present study sought to bridge SNS sharing practices and the social gains leveraged thereby. We first obtained a view of users' sharing practices on Facebook and drew upon uses and gratifications (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1973) and self-determination theories (Deci & Ryan, 1987) to determine particular sharing profiles and study whether these social gains are intrinsic or extrinsic. Then, we leaned on the imagined

affordances framework (Evans, Pearce, Vitak & Streem, 2016; Nagy & Neff, 2015) to identify sociability affordances which lay at the intersection among users, practices, and the material and perceptual sides of motivations and gratifications for sharing. Although we recognize that these gains are propitiated by SNS technological affordances (e.g., content persistence and connectivity) we have shown that sociability – and perhaps other - affordances exist at the intersection of the material and perceptual.

By building upon the uses and gratifications (U&G) and self-determination theories, and by applying the affordances framework, this research finds that sharing is a multifaceted construct of imagined and perceived social gains - leveraged by technological affordances - which we have termed sociability affordances. In line with Evans, Pearce, Vitak & Streem (2016), we confirm that SNS affordances lay at the intersection of users, practices and the material features of the platform. We add by identifying sociability affordances, which are influenced by user perceptions, motivations and expectations, and - particularly - perceived intrinsic and extrinsic social gains. Analysis of 25 semi-structured interviews with Chilean youth showed patterns of social gains – social interaction or integration – stemming from the action of sharing. In this process, we interviewed subsamples of three user sharing typologies (hyperposters, personalistic, and social lurker) and identified four different sociability affordances: social visibility, audience engagement, social strengthening, and enduring intra-personal communication. In this way, sharing online became a part of the repertoire of social experiences that contemporary people live and not only a utilitarian practice of technology use in a specific platform.

Although perspectives under the U&G approach may argue that only certain features of platforms are leveraged when satisfying certain needs (Jung & Sundar, 2018), most theoretical approaches tend to omit any of user motivations, perceptions and imaginations, and platform features that shape user practices. Thus, this work further unifies the concept of affordances by investigating sharing and outcomes of social actions on the platform. We found that, in contrast with broader definitions of sharing, participants defined sharing content on Facebook as motivated not only by socializing with others and strengthening bonds (Wittel, 2011), but also as a way of signaling one's presence and communicating with oneself (Quinn & Powers, 2015). Our finding is supported by other approaches, which have shown that social media affects inner reflection, self-conceptions of users, and mediates interactions with others (Valkenburg, 2017).

We have shown how Chilean individuals make sense of their content sharing practices on the platform as a social experience, enabled by sociability affordances. This study provides qualitative insights into how modern social media platform use depends on intrinsic and extrinsic user motivations and on the imagined and sociability affordances which are leveraged through sharing. Interviewee accounts further showed that motivations for Facebook sharing actions depend on personal and social expectations, a finding which future studies could investigate in other populations.

Motivations present in users were extrinsic and intrinsic. Extrinsic, in signaling their presence in a community, receiving reactions from others; and notably, in engaging in intra-personal communication with oneself in the future by sharing personal memories. Users distinguished these social gains between "close friends" (e.g., family, offline friends) and "Facebook friends" (a wider audience of contacts). This was most manifested in the social strengthening affordance: individuals that share content for bonding and engaging with friends, to attract attention from friends and supporters, to generate reactions (mainly emotions, either positive or negative) and to update others about their lives had high expectations of "social gains". Intrinsic motivations behind sharing content – those personally gratifying or self-promoting – were also involved in sociability affordances: for example, in audience engagement, where users expected to be recognized by

others for the content they share; or in enduring intra-personal communication, where emotions expressed on the platform through songs, poems, or more intimate feelings operate as a form of self-communication and record-keeping for specific moments. The latter social affordance addresses Wittel (2011), who wondered if the "happy moments" accumulated and shared on Facebook are not always oriented towards others, or if such videos and photos rather serve as a form of user memory for those who share them. Naturally, sharing these moments is also a way to socialize or to strengthen relationships with others – for example, through videos with family members at important events (e.g., birthdays). However, it may still be a way to strengthen our individual memories.

Finally, our results suggest that the act of sharing content on Facebook is neither unconscious nor capricious. Neither dependent in the platform specific technological affordances themselves - e.g., content persistence and connectivity- that can also be leveraged in other platforms such as Instagram or TikTok.  On the contrary, sharing is the result of a content-selection process, of an acquired knowledge of what to display. This selection process relies on the type of motivation and gratification. In this sense, socio-normative aspects may be relevant in strategically defining what to publish and what users expect to obtain from it.

*Limitations*

Although this study represents a good starting point for understanding sociability affordances in content-sharing practices, our approach is not exempt from limitations. For example, this study does not analyze the effect of user mobility, which may influence motivation behind and implementations of content sharing depending on location and context; nor does it pinpoint sociability affordances derived from the use of multiple social media platforms at the same time. Future designs may incorporate these factors to better understand sociability affordances.

Furthermore, while representative survey data were used in selecting particular cases for in-depth interviews, further work remains to confirm empirical measurements of sociability affordances through user social media behavioral patterns. Using our study as a starting point, future research may seek to observe and track user behavior under each particular social gain or user sharing profile and provide more evidence of relationships among perceived sociability affordances and user motivations for social media usage and sharing practices.

Lastly, our semi-structured interviews focused on young Facebook users. Further research might study the motivations, sharing practices and social gains obtained in other segments of the population and explore whether these are also found in other cultures and countries.

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