Study into individuals' information sharing behaviour of 'happy information'

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DECLARATION

This dissertation is submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MSc of the University of Strathclyde.

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Abstract

Within Library and Information Science (LIS), research into information sharing behaviour has largely focussed on workplace and academic environments, with studies concerning leisure receiving less attention. Equally, research has concentrated largely on the cognitive and task-related elements of information behaviour, with less focus on the affective component.

This study aims to explore the range of factors motivating and impacting upon individuals' happy information sharing behaviour within a casual leisure context, focussing on behaviours that appear as particularly interesting or significant. Additionally, the research aims to investigate the affective states involved in happy information sharing.

30 participants were interviewed during the course of this research. The findings reveal that the factors influencing individuals' happy information sharing behaviour are numerous, and impact upon each other. Most individuals considered sharing happy information important to their friendships and relationships. In various contexts the act of sharing happy information was shown to enhance the sharer's happiness.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 - Overview

The following study investigates the factors motivating and impacting upon individuals' information sharing behaviour of happy information, within a casual leisure environment. 30 participants were interviewed, and the data subsequently analysed and presented in this paper.

The paper opens with an Introductory Chapter explaining the research context, clarifying definitions regarding the focus of the study, and outlining the research questions. Next follows the Literature Review focussing primarily on studies examining information sharing, information behaviour within leisure contexts, and positive affect. The Methodology Chapter details the design and implementation of the research project. Findings are subsequently presented, using tables to list the relevant factors discovered in the interviews, with further discussion focussing on interesting findings. The final chapter contains limitations and reflections on the project, recommendations for future research, and concludes the findings.

1.2 - Research context

The development of the internet since the 1990s has been accompanied by a growth in the levels of content which people experience purely for pleasure rather than for the purpose of satisfying a specific information need. The advancement of online means of communication (including email, social networks, tagging facilities etc.) combined with offline methods (such as telephone conversations and face-to-face interaction) offer individuals a greater range of ways to share information than ever before. Within Library and Information Studies (LIS), however, little research has been conducted investigating the information sharing of non-task-related information within a leisure environment. Furthermore, compared to research into the cognitive aspects of individuals' information behaviour, comparatively little study has focussed on the affective element.

Happiness and well-being are today analysed and compared both on a domestic and international level (Office for National Statistics, 2013; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2013). In recent years, the economic and social conditions of many countries have been characterised by recession and unemployment. Prescription of anti-depressants has risen on a UK-wide basis, with many areas facing long waiting lists for alternative counselling and psychological treatments (Easton, 2013; Griffith, 2013; and The Scotsman, 2013). In such a climate, many are searching for alternative ways to increase happiness. The initiative 'Poetry on

Prescription' was formed last year in response to “a queue of people asking for poetry suggestions that would help cheer people up” (CILIPUpdate, 2013) and the United Nations this year celebrated the launch of International Day of Happiness, seeking to “spread happiness to millions of people” (Action for Happiness and Cheers, 2013). Further research into understanding how happiness can be increased within the course of individuals' everyday lives is both relevant and necessary.

1.3 - Information sharing

The verb 'to share' can be applied in different contexts. Interests and feelings can be shared in that they are possessed or experienced by two or more people. Information can be shared through being given by one person and received by others. In the latter sense, the act of sharing comprises both the act of giving and the act of receiving. This research investigates only the giving aspect of sharing, and does not explore individuals' attitudes to receiving happy information shared by others. While this is an equally important aspect of information sharing behaviour, in-depth exploration of both components was not feasible within the scale of this project.

1.4 - Happy information

This study intends to explore individuals' information sharing behaviour of information that makes them happy, which will be termed throughout this paper 'happy information'. Within LIS research, the term 'information' has provoked great debate, with scope and definition of the word remaining highly ambiguous and varied in usage (Buckland, 1991, p.351; Pilerot, 2012, pp.565-566). For the purposes of this study (which does not explore the semantics or applications of the term) 'information' is treated according to Buckland's meaning of “information-as-thing”, in which:

> Knowledge, belief, and opinion are personal, subjective and conceptual. Therefore, to communicate them, they have to be expressed, described, or represented in some physical way, as a signal, text, or communication. Any such expression, description, or representation would be “information-as-thing” (Buckland, 1991, p.351).

As such, 'information' is applied as a collective term to include any medium (i.e. text, images, video, song, sounds, speech, descriptions of events etc.). The purpose of the research is to explore information sharing behaviour focussing specifically on information which makes individuals happy. To this end, the research focusses specifically on information within a 'casual leisure' environment (Stebbins, 1997), excluding information which is work-related, study-related or responding to a particular cognitive goal or information need. Acknowledging Dervin's body of Sense-Making work, in which interviewees are treated as “knowledgeable informants on their life situations” (Dervin and

Reinhard, 2007, p.53), having explained the context of the information required, it is left to participants to determine which types of information they consider make them happy.

1.5 – Research questions

The aim of this research is to explore the factors which motivate and impact upon individuals' information sharing behaviour of happy information, within a casual leisure environment. Given the lack of prior research in this area, the study aims to be exploratory and determine a range of relevant factors, focussing in more detail on interesting behaviours that appear.

The central research question addressed in this study is:

- What are the factors that motivate and impact upon individuals' sharing behaviour of happy information?

This question is investigated through the following research questions:

- How do individuals share happy information: what do they share or not share; with whom; and by which methods?
- What are the factors that motivate and impact upon individuals' decisions: to share/not share this information; to share with which people; to share by which methods?
- How does individuals' happy information sharing behaviour correspond to their affective states?

Two potential factors considered to be particularly interesting were selected for deeper exploration throughout the interviews. These are:

- Individuals' reactions to recipients' responses, including corresponding affective states and impact on future happy information sharing behaviour.
- Whether individuals feel that sharing happy information can reflect the way they are portraying themselves, and the impact of this on individuals' happy information sharing behaviour.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review provides an overview of the areas of research focus and research gaps; approaches and methodologies; and factors discussed as influential in information sharing, in the literature consulted.

2.1 - Areas of research focus and research gaps

Towards the final decade of the 20th century and into the new millennium, research within LIS concerning information seeking expanded to an interest in wider-ranging information behaviour (Saracevic, 2011, p.XXVII). Despite being recognised as a significant component of information behaviour within LIS (Fulton, 2009a, p.754), Talja reports that information sharing has rarely been treated as the focus of research in its own right (2002, p.1[1]). More recently, Pilerot (2012, p.559) observes that compared to the level of research focussed on information seeking, the activity of information sharing has received less attention. Outwith LIS research, other fields of study such as systems research and communications also contain work on information sharing. Studies on usage of social networking platforms (Gruzd, Doiron and Mai, 2011; Johnson and Yang, 2009; Nov and Ye, 2010) and mobile media technology (Ames and Naaman, 2007; Chua, Goh and Lee, 2012; Goh et al., 2009; Olsson, Soronen and Väänänen-Vainio-Mattila, 2008; Van House et al., 2005) have recognised the prominence of sharing behaviour. Van House et al. (2005, p.1854), for example, stress the importance of sharing regarding cameraphone photos, noting the degree to which participants came to take sharing facilities for granted and "complained vociferously" if unavailable.

Research on information sharing within LIS and related information fields has largely concentrated on workplace or academic environments (Bao and Bouthillier, 2007; Constant, Kiesler and Sproull, 1994; Fisher, Landry and Naumer, 2007; Hall, Widén and Paterson, 2010; Ma and Yuen, 2011; Talja, 2002). Information sharing within a non-work context has received very little attention (Savolainen, 2007, p.1). Research within LIS concerning leisure dates back to the 1980s (Fulton and Vondracek, 2009, p.612), with more recent works including Hartel et al. (2006), Ross (1999 and 2009), Burnett (2009), Chang (2009), Fulton (2009a and 2009b), and Stebbins (2009). The term 'casual leisure' is used by Stebbins (1997, p.18) to describe those leisure activities which are "immediately, intrinsically rewarding, relatively short-lived pleasurable activit[ies] requiring little or no special training to enjoy". The majority of LIS research concerning information behaviour in leisure has focussed on serious leisure (challenging and complex hobbies or amateur pursuits),

[1] Page numbers for all Talja (2002) references refer to version available via URL provided in bibliography (which differ from journal article version).

with casual leisure typically viewed as more frivolous, trivial and banal (Stebbins, 2009, pp.618-619). As observed by Burnett (2009, p.708), however, “materials perceived to be trivial or unimportant by some may be extraordinarily important and meaningful for others”. These very characteristics of casual leisure contribute to its prevalence: “Many more people participate in it than in serious leisure […and] enjoy and therefore value their casual leisure” (Stebbins, 1997, p.18). Citing Hansen and Järvelin (2005), Talja and Hansen (2006, p.116) note that collaborative information behaviours must be studied in context to correctly understand real-life practices. In order to understand the full spectrum of information sharing behaviour, therefore, it is essential that research into everyday life information sharing is not neglected from the body of information behaviour research. Furthermore, as found by Marshall and Bly (2004, p.218), information sharing in everyday activities is often non-task-related and frequently deals with serendipitously 'encountered' information (a term used by Erdelez, 1996). Similarly, Talja and Hansen (2006, p.114) observe that information sharing incorporates less 'goal oriented exchanges' than information seeking and retrieval. Stating that much of the research into information behaviour has been grounded in task-orientated 'user needs', Marshall and Bly (2004, p.226) advocate further research be conducted on a wider scope to encompass those elements of information behaviour which do not stem from a goal-seeking or cognitive information need.

Ross (1999, pp.784-785) also highlights this tendency among researchers to focus on goal-directed treatment of an articulated task or problem, additionally voicing concerns that this fosters a lack of due attention to the importance of the affective dimension (p.796). This sentiment is echoed by Fulton (2009b, pp.249-250) who advocates studies prioritising leisure and pleasure, to address the previous dominance of the cognitive perspective in research on information behaviour. Where pleasure or positive affect are encountered within studies of information behaviour, Fulton (2009b, p.247) observes that these are often treated “as a given association with or product of an activity, rather than as a primary focus of exploration”. The importance of the affective dimension with regards to individuals' information behaviour, however, has been voiced by various researchers; most prominently by Kuhlthau (2004, pp.6-7), whose Information Search Process model traces users' information seeking through six stages, identifying the feelings (affective), thoughts (cognitive) and actions (physical) associated with each stage. Rioux (2004, p.122) found that in the context of information acquiring-and-sharing in internet-based environments, users were much more aware of their emotional states than their cognitive processes. Norman (2004, p.19) also stresses the importance of emotion in everyday life, asserting that emotions are strongly linked to behaviour and critical to decision making. He further states that positive emotions and relaxed states are conducive to expansive thought processes, imagination and creativity. This corresponds with Goh et al. (2009, pp.202-203), who found that emotions have a strong impact on information sharing behaviour, with positive emotions encouraging higher levels of sharing than negative emotions. Similarly, in a study conducted by Gruzd, Doiron and Mai (2011, p.7) positive

Twitter messages were found to be more numerous and likely to be shared than negative messages. Chua, Goh and Lee (2012, p.15) also acknowledge the importance of the affective dimension, investigating both functional and affective motivational factors of mobile content sharing.

As voiced by various researchers, there is a need for further research into the study of information sharing in a non-work context (Savolainen, 2007, p.1); leisure (Hartel et al., 2006, pp.1-2); information behaviour concerning "nongoal oriented information" (Ross, 1999, pp.784-785) and positive affect in information behaviour (Fulton, 2009b, p.247).

2.2 - Approaches and methodologies

Approaches, methodologies and research techniques applied in the literature vary widely based on the focus of individual studies. Constant, Kiesler and Sproull (1994) and Raghunathan and Corfman (2006) both use controlled experiments, the former using vignette scenarios to explore individuals' attitudes to sharing with previously unhelpful co-workers within a workplace environment, and the latter to investigate the effects of social influence on the pleasure of shared experiences. Gruzd, Doiron and Mai (2011) conducted an extremely different study, tracking the posting and sharing of Twitter messages, subsequently employing sentiment analysis software to analyse the positivity or negativity of tweets and exploring this as a factor in the sharing process. Accordingly, it can be understood that the choice of potential research methods is broad and the selection of techniques dependent on the nature of the research.

Amongst the LIS studies reviewed, Stebbins (2009) defines the serious leisure perspective, and sets forth its position within LIS as an area of research; Pilerot (2012) presents a literature review of LIS studies on information sharing; while Talja and Hansen (2006) provide a review of the work on collaborative information behaviour (CIB), before proposing social practice as an appropriate theory from which to approach CIB research. Talja (2002) places emphasis on the importance of groups and social relationships to the study of information sharing, as does Haythornthwaite (1996), who discusses social network analysis as a tool for analysing information sharing by examining individuals' relationships and positions within a network, and their positioning in relation to the routes and flow of information throughout the group. Studies concerning user motivations are more common in the user-centric research behind mobile media and technology development. Olsson, Soronen and Väänänen-Vainio-Mattila (2008) use interviews, contextual scenarios and prototype evaluation of a mobile sharing tool to explore individuals' needs and behaviours concerning the sharing of life memories via digital media. Van House et al. (2005) perform interviews to explore cameraphone photo usage, as do Goh et al. (2009), in conjunction with diary analysis, in their investigation of motivational factors in mobile media sharing. Ames and Naaman

(2007) use qualitative research to investigate users' motivations for tagging media. Nov and Ye (2010) expand on this study, developing Ames and Naaman's qualitative scale and applying this to a survey which was analysed quantitatively to measure motivations on tagging levels. Both Johnson and Yang (2009) and Chua, Goh and Lee (2012) apply the Uses and Gratifications (UnG) paradigm, investigating users' perceived motives and gratifications of Twitter use and mobile content sharing. Chung and Kim (2008) also use the UnG paradigm, to analyse blogging activities of cancer patients and companions.

Ma and Yuen (2011) explore motivational factors in online knowledge sharing within the context of development in collaborative learning. Using the theory of 'need to belong', exploring affiliation motivation (motivation to form social bonds) and relationship commitment (drive to maintain these bonds), the authors asked participants to self-report on their knowledge sharing behaviour in interviews. Hall, Widén, and Paterson (2010) also investigate online sharing in an academic environment, exploring offline social influences and motivations on users' blogging behaviour, evaluating the data from a social exchange theory perspective. Wasko and Faraj (2000 and 2005) investigate information sharing behaviour in electronic communities of practice using open-ended surveys and analysis of forum posts, latterly also from a social exchange theory perspective. Burnett's (2009) study of online forum posts surrounding a controversial decision to limit access to Grateful Dead archive material, involves analysis of data from a 'worldview' theory of normative behaviour. Work such as that of Hersberger, Rioux and Cruitt (2005), who propose an analytic and conceptual framework for analysing information sharing and exchange in online communities; Talja (2002), who analyses collaborative information sharing within different academic groups, towards the retrieval of relevant documentation; and Rioux (2004), who forms a conceptual framework of information acquiring-and-sharing in internet-based environments, are valuable in adding to the body of existing LIS information behaviour theories and models.

The majority of the empirical studies on information behaviour use qualitative research techniques, however quantitative research is also found, as in Bao and Bouthillier's (2007) study which measures levels of information sharing in supply chains via surveying, using an index comprising formative indicators of information sharing, as determined by literature review. Among the qualitative research, interviewing is the most prominent research technique, as in Ross's (1999) study of 'the information encounter in the context of reading for pleasure'; Marshall and Bly's (2004) work on participants' information sharing habits related to electronic and offline 'clippings', both at home and in the workplace; Savolainen's (2007) study of environmental activists' information sharing behaviour; Fulton's (2009a and 2009b) research into information behaviour of amateur genealogists; and Chang's (2009) investigation of backpackers' information seeking behaviour from an everyday life information seeking (ELIS) perspective. Interviews are primarily used in order to gain rich pictures of participants' experiences, the data from which can expand our

understanding of information behaviour. In addition to in-depth interviews, Ederelez (1996) also uses qualitative surveying to investigate participants' recollections and perceptions of their information-encountering experiences. Similarly, Rioux (2004) uses critical incident logs as well as interviewing participants. The use of multiple research methods (triangulation) facilitates in-depth exploration and aids validity by allowing researchers to corroborate data (Rioux, 2004, pp.33-38).

2.3 – Influential factors in information sharing

Although the majority of the studies reviewed do not focus their exploration on motivations for information sharing, various factors are suggested in this context. Concepts relating to individuals' desire for strengthening relationships or social bonds appear in many of the studies (e.g. Marshall and Bly, 2004, p.224; Van House et al., 2005, p.1855; Bao and Bouthillier, 2007, pp.3-4; Ma and Yuen, 2011, p.211), with Goh et al. (2009, pp.199-200) citing creation or maintenance of social relationships as the primary motivation for mobile media information sharing. Ames and Naaman (2007, p.978) also report social motivations in online image tagging. Olsson, Soronen and Väänänen-Vainio-Mattila (2008, p.274) refer to a 'universal need' for sharing common memories and developing relationships, which bears similarity to the 'need to belong' and human desire to form and maintain relationships and attachments, expressed by Ma and Yuen (2011, p.211). Interestingly, Johnson and Yang (2009, pp.18-19) found that users' primary motivations for using Twitter were informational rather than social (however the motivation of 'meeting new people' was prevalent, and was classed in this study as an informational motivation, since a Twitter user whom you follow is an information source). Sharing is frequently reported to occur prompted by shared or known interests (Rioux, 2004, p.128) or experiences (Olsson, Soronen and Väänänen-Vainio-Mattila, 2008, p.273), however, Marshall and Bly (2004, p.223) in their study of shared 'clippings' observe that among the participants in their study, the content of the information shared is commonly of secondary importance to the act of sharing in itself, simply as a means of maintaining communication and contact with the recipient. Various studies have found that information sharing is affected by the strength of relationships, either within groups (Haythornthwaite, 1996, pp.327-328) or between individuals (Hall, Widén and Paterson, 2010, p.14[2]), with factors such as levels of friendship (Allen, 1970, cited in Rioux, 2004, p.26) or the 'socially contagious' nature of tagging (Ames and Naaman, 2007, p.978) influencing sharing.

Social norms and expectations can also influence sharing, both positively and negatively. Factors such as distrust of others (Savolainen, 2007, p.10), perceived lack of interest by others (Goh et al., 2009, p.196) and organisational rules or structures (Haythornthwaite, 1996, p.336) can constrain

[2] Page numbers for all Hall, Widén and Paterson (2010) references refer to version available via URL provided in bibliography (which differ from journal article version).

interactions by creating barriers to information sharing. Social expectations can affect the way in which individuals share information, for example by influencing the specific tags a person chooses to annotate their media (Ames and Naaman, 2007, p.979). Sharing within a community can in certain structures be considered a moral obligation (Wasko and Faraj, 2000, p.168; 2005, p.42), although the same authors report that relational capital was not found to be a strong factor in electronic communities of practice and further suggest that reciprocity may be generalized across a group, rather than obligations being assumed by specific individuals (2005, p.51). Contrary to Wasko and Faraj, Hall, Widén and Paterson (2010, p.13) and Goh et al. (2009, p.203) mention expectations of reciprocity as a strong influence on information sharing, with many study participants expressing awareness of the emotional effects of receiving or not receiving a response to information shared online. Hall, Widén and Paterson (2010, p.11) report the need for validation of quality, as does Talja, who also mentions membership within the group (2002, p.7) as being extremely important to some individuals. Fulton (2009a, pp.756-757), also cites reciprocity as a crucial element to developing communities of sharing.

Savolainen (2007, p.9) did not find reciprocity to be a primary motive for information sharing among environmental activists; attributing this to the high levels of altruistic information sharing within this community, which lowered the need for reciprocal exchange (p.11). This type of 'gift-giving' is frequently observed in information sharing behaviour (Van House et al., 2005, p.1855; Hall, Widén and Paterson, 2010, p.13) and may be linked to the experience of pleasure in the act of sharing (Rioux, 2004, p.19; Wasko and Faraj, 2005, p.53). In particular, the 'super-sharer' (Talja, 2002, p.4; Fulton, 2009a, pp.764-766) – an expansion on Erdelez's concept of the information 'super-encounterer' (Erdelez, 1996, p.417) – enjoys and is strongly motivated by the pleasure of sharing. While 'altruistic' behaviour is frequently reported in studies of information sharing, self-expression and self-promotion are also commonly mentioned as influential factors, particularly within social networking or social media sharing environments (Wasko and Faraj, 2000, p.166; Ames and Naaman, 2007, p.977; Olsson, Soronen and Väänänen-Vainio-Mattila, 2008, p.274; Chua, Goh and Lee, 2012, p.17). Nov and Ye (2010, p.129) emphasise the influence which the idea of a "social presence [...] - actual, imagined or implied," has on individuals' ways of portraying themselves in online tagging networks. Other factors mentioned include the perceived usefulness of other individuals influencing the benefits of sharing information with them (Fulton, 2009a, p.756); information content and quality (Chung and Kim, 2008, p.299; Olsson, Soronen and Väänänen-Vainio-Mattila, 2008, p.279; Chua, Goh and Lee, 2012, pp.17-18); convenience and access (Chua, Goh and Lee, 2012, pp.17-18, Fulton, 2009b, p.255); and familiarity with the environment (Hall, Widén and Paterson, 2010, p.15).

Many of the reviewed studies examine sharing within a very specific context, for example Talja's (2002) study focuses on academic groups; Fulton (2009a and 2009b) investigates amateur

genealogists; and Gruzd, Doiron and Mai (2011, p.5) emphasise that their study relates to Twitter behaviour surrounding a sporting event and cannot claim to be representative of sharing behaviour of general news. Furthermore, a large percentage of the suggested motivations relate to task-related behaviour, such as sharing in connection with information seeking (Savolainen, 2007; Fulton, 2009b) or the functional elements of image tagging, such as personal organisation for later retrieval (Ames and Naaman, 2007, p.976). Chua, Goh and Lee (2012, p.20), in separating content contribution and content retrieval, found that perceived gratification factors differed for the two, thus giving strength to the premise that people treat different types of information differently (Constant, Kiesler and Sproull, 1994, p.405) and that different aspects of information behaviour have different qualities and merit investigation in their own right. It has been stressed that the reasons for using different types of media vary (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974, cited in Chung and Kim, 2008, p.298), and that individuals' information sharing behaviour is influenced by both emotional and social factors (Goh et al., 2009, p.204); 'social or personal', and 'affective or functional' factors (Ames and Naaman, 2007, p.975; Goh et al., 2009, p.196); and is driven by a combination of 'personal/internal factors' and 'external/environmental factors' (Rioux, 2004, p.102). It will be of interest, therefore, to examine the extent to which these concepts and factors appearing in studies of information sharing in different areas are comparable to individuals' sharing behaviour within the context of non-goal-orientated 'happy information' within a casual leisure environment.

2.4 – Literature review summary

The literature review focusses on 3 areas: current research gaps within LIS; methodologies and their appropriate applications; and influential factors upon information sharing within various contexts. Within the field of LIS there is a significant research gap concerning the sharing of non-task-orientated happy information within a casual leisure environment. Research is required to investigate the factors motivating and impacting upon information sharing behaviour within this context, and individuals' corresponding affective states.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 – Methodology overview

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the factors motivating and impacting upon individuals' happy information sharing behaviour. The parameters of the study have been designed to investigate this within a specific context. Throughout the literature review, it became clear that where studies discussed positive affect in information behaviour, this was largely in relation to task-based activities, where the resultant pleasure was often associated with fulfilment of the task, rather than happiness associated with the information itself. The researcher felt that the latter merited separate investigation. In order to focus the research on non-task-orientated information behaviour, this study excludes work and study-related information, and information sought or encountered in relation to an articulated question or information need. It was felt that non-task-orientated happy information is likely to be encountered most frequently within a casual leisure environment, where individuals often engage with happy information without explicit purpose or desire for improvement, and the stresses of affective load (Nahl, 2007, p.16) are minimal. The literature review revealed few LIS studies focussing on the specific areas of information sharing, information that makes us happy, and information behaviour within a casual leisure environment. Accordingly, it was deemed appropriate to conduct exploratory research, maintaining a wide scope, rather than attempting to support any specific theory or hypothesis, or focus on any particular demographic or specific methods of communication. The research aims to explore the range of factors motivating and impacting upon individuals' happy information sharing behaviour within a casual leisure context, focussing on behaviours that appear in the interviews as particularly interesting or significant. Additionally, the research aims to investigate the affective states involved in happy information sharing.

30 participants took part in semi-structured interviews during July 2013. Interviews were conducted either face-to-face or via Skype, and were audio-recorded. The interviews were subsequently transcribed, and the data analysed using an inductive approach. Ethics approval for this project was sought and obtained.

3.2 – Literature review

The first step of the research involved a review of LIS literature related to information sharing, information behaviour within a leisure environment, and studies involving the affective element (particularly positive affect). Several user-based studies from the field of mobile and multi-media technology development were also reviewed. Due to time-constraints the literature review is by no

means exhaustive and works from fields such as, for example, psychology, mental health, self-help and emotion management have not been explored. While studies from behavioural sciences would have offered additional relevant viewpoints, the researcher had no background experience or understanding in this field and did not feel sufficiently qualified to understand, interpret or critique papers of a psychological or medical nature, nor apply these to any data obtained during the course of the research.

Initial searches were constructed surrounding keywords such as 'sharing', 'happiness', 'leisure' and 'pleasure', using the stems of these words to search on the University of Strathclyde Library OPAC; databases such as LISA (Library and Information Science Abstracts), Emerald, and JSTOR; and Google Scholar. Subsequently both backwards and forwards chaining occurred, with particular focus on frequently cited texts and authors. Studies considered by the researcher to be of primary relevance were those concerning information sharing, with studies on more general information behaviour considered relevant if focussing on positive affect or within a leisure context. The literature review was concluded upon completion of the allocated time-frame for this stage of the research, and perceived saturation occurring of chaining within the LIS literature. From the literature reviewed, the researcher recognised gaps in LIS research, gained understanding of possible research methods and their suitable application (this was further supported by literature on research methods and qualitative research), and identified potential factors motivating and impacting upon individuals' information sharing behaviour. These influenced the design of the interview questions and the data analysis.

3.3 – Participants

3.3.1 – Recruitment and sampling

Participants were recruited using notices disseminated via Facebook, the University email network and the researcher's personal email contacts (see Appendix A). Sharing of the advert was also encouraged among participants, in order to generate further interest. This snowballing process generated four volunteers, two of whom were interviewed. Facilities to offer interviews via Skype allowed participation of individuals based outwith the local area, making it easier to achieve the desired participant sample size. For practical reasons it was decided that interviewees should be aged 18 or over, both to avoid potential delays of obtaining parental consent, and because the researcher did not feel sufficiently confident in interviewing skills to attempt interviewing children. Participants were also required to be regular internet users, to permit balanced investigation of both online and offline sharing habits.

It was hoped to obtain 30 participants, as this was deemed an appropriate number to allow broad exploratory research, without minority behaviours of select individuals impacting on the findings too heavily. The desired number of 30 interviewees was reached easily, with the researcher receiving responses from 46 volunteer participants. As the study intended to investigate individuals' behaviour, and was not attempting to represent any specific demographic, non-representative sampling was used. One exception to this was the deliberate effort to maintain an equal number of male and female participants. Sampling was largely convenience-based with the researcher recruiting amongst friends and relatives, and via convenient communication channels. This convenience sampling was influenced by time-constraints of the research project and offered security to the researcher regards obtaining the desired number of participants for the study. As described by Rioux (2004, p.33), variation in backgrounds, ages and lifestyles of the participant group offers potential to enrich the data gathered. It was hoped to obtain participants who would reveal interesting behaviours, with a view to obtaining breadth and richness in the findings. To this end, purposeful sampling occurred to a degree – three volunteers known to researcher as being prolific sharers of 'happy information' were included accordingly. The remaining participants were selected from the volunteer group on a convenience-based first-come, first-served basis. Two confirmed interviewees were not interviewed due to changes in their schedules and difficulties arranging a time – these were substituted with other volunteers.

3.3.2 – Participant sample

A total of 31 participants were interviewed during this study, comprising the interviewees of 3 pilot interviews and 28 subsequent interviews. Data from the first pilot interview was not used due to subsequent changes in the methodology. Accordingly, the research utilises data from the interviews of 30 participants.

Of the 30 individuals comprising the data sample, 15 (50%) were male and 15 (50%) female.

Participants ranged in age from 18 to 63 years old as follows: 11 participants (approximately 37%) aged 25-29; 7 (approx. 23%) aged 21-24; 4 (approx. 13%) aged 30-34; 3 (10%) aged 35-39; 2 (approx. 7%) aged 18-20; 1 (approx. 3%) aged 40-44; 1 aged 45-49 and 1 aged 60-64 years old (see Chart 1).

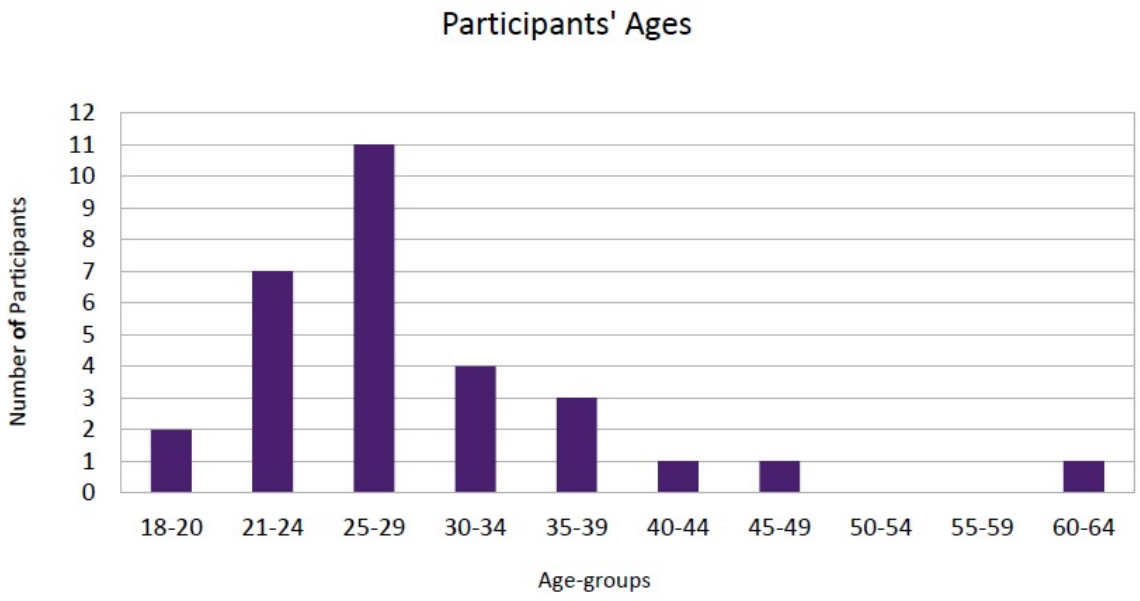

Chart 1: Participants' ages

Participants worked in a range of occupations. 12 participants (40%) were students, including a mixture of undergraduate and postgraduate students in a variety of subjects; 3 (30%) described their status as 'recent graduate'; 3 communications officers; 2 (approx. 7%) actors; 2 teachers; 2 business analysts; 1 (approx. 3%) librarian; 1 carpenter; 1 contaminated land expert; 1 retired psychologist; 1 office co-ordinator and 1 unemployed (see Chart 2).

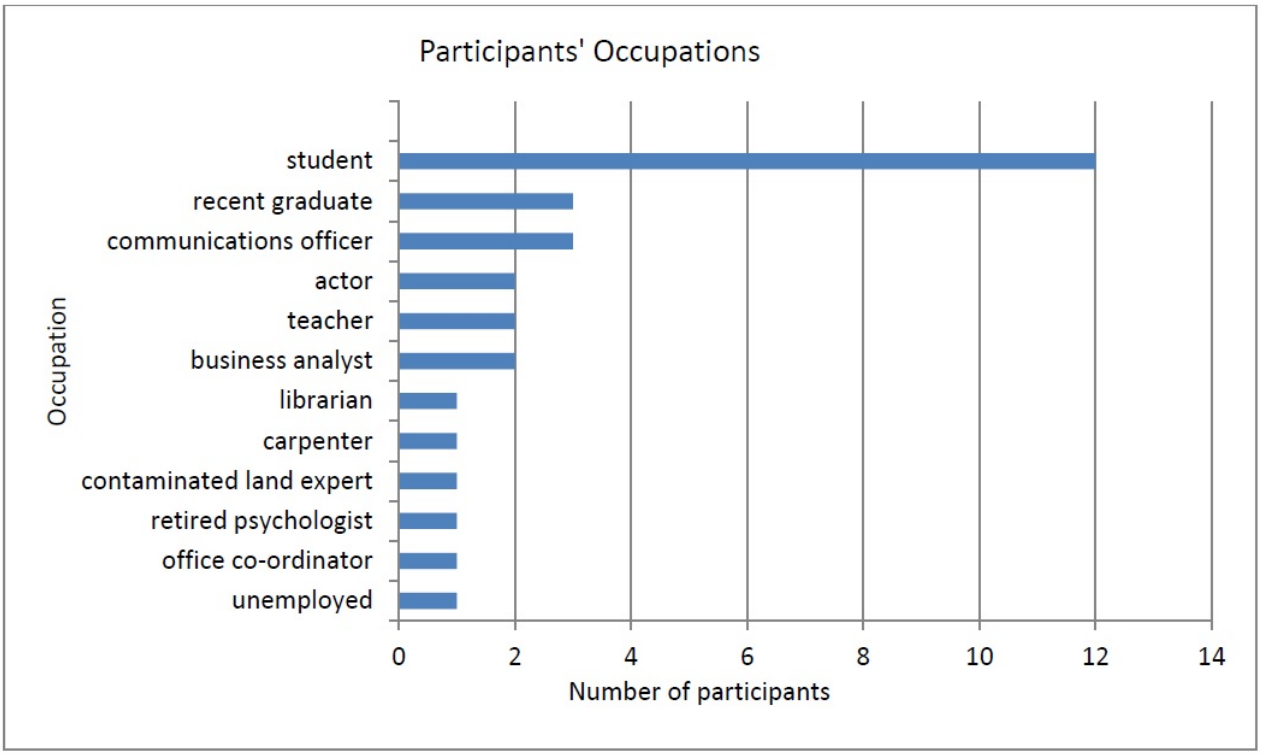

Chart 2: Participants' occupations

17 participants (approx. 57%) were from Scotland; 4 (approx. 13%) from Republic of Ireland; 2 (approx. 7%) from USA; 2 from Canada; 1 (approx. 3%) from England; 1 from Northern Ireland; 1 from Germany; 1 from Sweden; and 1 from Norway (see Chart 3).

11 participants (approx. 37%) had moved abroad and were currently living away from their families in a country other than their place of birth.

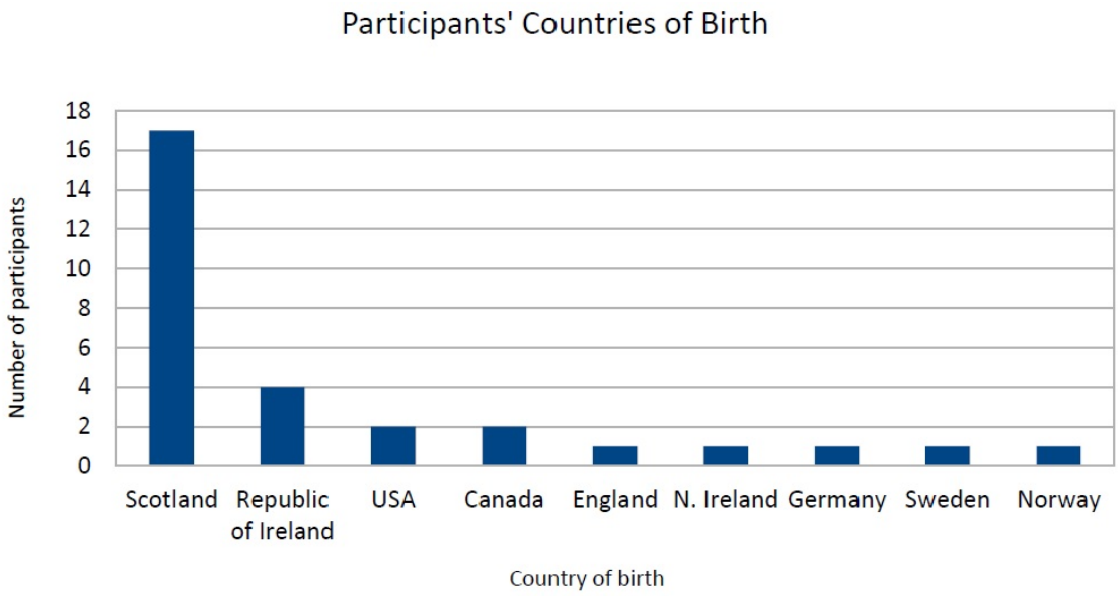

Chart 3: Participants' countries of birth

3.4 - Design of research tool

3.4.1 – Use of semi-structured interviews

As demonstrated via the literature review, the use of qualitative research methods is common among LIS studies of information behaviour. Rather than the statistical data gained from quantitative research, the emphasis on understanding the subject's perspective (Gorman and Clayton, 2005, p.3) and potential to capture 'subtle nuances' (p.6) make qualitative research techniques better suited to gain insight into human thoughts and behaviours. The purpose of this research was to investigate the factors motivating and impacting upon individuals' sharing of happy information, and their corresponding affective states. It was, therefore, necessary to apply a research tool which allowed individuals to express in detail both their emotional states and their thought processes surrounding decisions to share information. As described by Gorman and Clayton (2005, p.10), such information is "data-rich, and this richness is best teased out by the descriptive use of language".

Accordingly, interviews were selected as the most appropriate tool for gathering the rich data required for this study. The use of surveys was considered, however it was felt that a survey (for example, such as that used by Chua, Goh and Lee (2012)) would be restrictive in that suggested responses would be derived solely from the researcher's own experience and ideas suggested in the literature reviewed, and that additional factors may not be discovered. While inclusion of an 'other' category would provide the opportunity for mention of such data, it was felt that there is significant likelihood of an 'other' category being ignored in a survey environment if there are multiple alternative options. Open-ended surveying (as used by Wasko and Faraj (2000)) could have produced participant-driven responses, however it was felt that this could be achieved to a greater degree via interviewing. Semi-structured interviews were deemed the most suitable method for allowing the open-ended questions necessary to “stimulate reflection and exploration” (Davies, 2007, p.29) and allow insights to appear. Furthermore, allowing interviewees to 'self-report' (Rioux, 2004, p.6) their own behaviours was considered important in developing an accurate understanding of individuals' personal habits.

The use of critical logs was considered in addition to interviewing, with the intent of requesting participants keep a diary of their happy information sharing, noting how information was shared, and associated thoughts and feelings. This mixed-method approach would have offered corroboration and greater validity to the data (Rioux, 2004, pp.42-43; Gorman and Clayton, 2005, pp.12-13), particularly concerning the frequency of 'happy information' sharing. This approach was not adopted as there was significant doubt regarding the likelihood of obtaining a suitable number of participants with the time and motivation to adequately maintain a diary. Furthermore, the researcher felt that the three month duration of the research project did not allow sufficient time to a) establish the precise nature of the investigation at an early stage, prior to interviewees commencing the diaries, b) implement both diary keeping and interviewing stages, and c) analyse this volume of data.

Finally, it was felt that verbal communication would be a more effective medium than a written survey or questionnaire for communicating and clarifying the focus of the research with regards to definitions of happy information and the sharing context being explored in this study. While this information was initially conveyed to participants in writing, the interview scenario presented further opportunity for participants to question anything that may have been unclear, and for the researcher to be aware if a participant appeared to be misunderstanding the context, and redirect the dialogue accordingly.

3.4.2 - Data based on participant recall

It was initially planned to request participants log-in to their email/social networking sites etc. during the interview to provide examples of information shared. This occurred only in the first pilot interview, following which the methodology was changed. The researcher maintained concerns that focussing the interview around examples in this way would bias the research towards online sharing methods, and provide variations in the data, with half of the data based on evidence, and half on recall. Similarly, the potential scenario of a participant being unwilling to log-in to their accounts could again lead to variation in participants' data. During the Skype pilot interview, the researcher was wary of asking the interviewee to open other sites, for fear of weakening the Skype connection. Finally, in the case of interviewees who used many different routes of online communication, the researcher was concerned that to log-in and seek examples on each site or app would be time-consuming and lead to a stilted discussion scenario in which it would be difficult to maintain flow and engagement throughout the interview. Had the research focussed specifically on information sharing via a more limited range of mediums, this would have been more feasible, however the researcher wished to maintain an exploratory approach investigating information sharing across a full spectrum of relevant communication methods. Due to these concerns, and recognising that each of the three pilot interviewees had been able to come up with examples from recall, the decision was taken to only access such sites as a prompt if necessary, where interviewees were struggling to provide examples. To aid the research and lessen the likelihood of interviewees struggling to provide instances of happy information sharing, participants were requested prior to the interview to consider examples which could be used in discussion. It must be understood therefore that the research investigates individuals' information sharing based on recall of their behaviour.

Due to the change in methodology following the first pilot interview, this was not included in the data sample. In three of the subsequent interviews, participants voluntarily accessed social networking accounts to demonstrate examples, however in each of these instances the participant was either searching in order to better describe a specific example which s/he had remembered unaided, or mentioned examples which were not discussed during the interview and subsequently did not feature in the analysis. Accordingly the researcher felt that the consistency of the data gathered was not compromised across the sample.

3.4.3 – Design and development of interview questions

The purpose of conducting the interviews was to gather data to explore the research questions put forward in the study. The central research question addressed in this study is:

- What are the factors that motivate and impact upon individuals' sharing behaviour of happy information?

This question is investigated through the following research questions:

- How do individuals share happy information: what do they share or not share; with whom; and by which methods?
- What are the factors that motivate and impact upon individuals' decisions: to share/not share this information; to share with which people; to share by which methods?
- How does individuals' happy information sharing behaviour correspond to their affective states?

Originally, the research questions specified only exploration of the 'motivating' factors, as opposed to 'factors that motivate and impact upon individuals' happy information sharing behaviour'. Additionally, the question relating to individuals' corresponding affective states was not stated in the original research questions. As the interview questions developed, it became clear that the central focus of the research had been expanded, and the research questions were altered accordingly.

Initially when developing the interview questions, the researcher utilised personal experience and the information derived from the literature review to form a set of approximately 16 potential questions, concerning potentially influential factors on individuals' information sharing behaviour. Use of these questions would have resulted in a relatively structured interview scenario. It was hoped that throughout the interviews additional behaviours and insights would appear, contributing to a deeper understanding of how and why individuals share happy information. The researcher was conscious that in order to allow fresh insights to develop there was a need to refrain from being too leading or prescriptive with the interview questions. Accordingly, a less structured interview framework was developed, which included six key themes to be covered during each interview but allowed discussion to be led according to interviewees' specific examples of happy information sharing.

The six key themes are:

1. What influences individuals' choice of recipients?
2. What influences individuals' choice of sharing medium?
3. The concept of experiencing a '*need* to share'.
4. Expectations and importance of responses to happy information shared, including corresponding affective states and impact on future happy information sharing behaviour.
5. The concept of how sharing happy information can reflect the way individuals portray

themselves; and the use of sharing happy information to project a particular self-image.
6. How the act of sharing impacts on the sharer's happiness.

Themes 1, 2 and 6 address the fundamental research questions of the project. Themes 3-5 reflect factors which appeared in the literature review and were deemed by the researcher to be particularly interesting for further investigation. Requesting the interviewees provide examples of happy information sharing functioned dually as a means of framing the interview questions, and of generating data regarding what types of happy information individuals share.

3.5 - Data collection and analysis

3.5.1 - Research information given to participants

Prior to the interview, participants were emailed an information sheet and consent form (see Appendix B). For the convenience of participants and to ensure forms were completed and returned, the researcher printed off copies of the consent form to be signed at the interview. Skype-interviewees demonstrated consent via email. The information sheet contained a description of the nature and purpose of the research, including a brief explanatory section describing the type of information relevant to the study. This contained only an explanation that the study was concerned with information that makes individuals happy, and that this information should not be work-related, study-related, or task-based. To clarify the concept of 'task-based' information, an example was provided of task-based information which would *not* be relevant. Further than this, it was left to participating individuals to determine what they considered to be information that makes them happy. It was deemed important to "[treat] interviewees as knowledgeable informants on their life situation" (Dervin and Reinhard, 2007, p. 53) in order to explore individuals' real behaviours; rather than being too constrained or prescriptive in the discussion. Before commencing the interviews, the researcher confirmed with interviewees that they had understood the information sheet, and presented the opportunity for participants to raise any queries. Three participants requested further clarification on the type of information required, and in these instances the researcher provided a few of examples of types of happy information which would and would not be appropriate within the context of the research.

3.5.2 – Pilot interviewing

The purpose of the pilot interviews was to test the suitability of the interview questions in generating sufficiently rich and usable data; to establish the approximate length of time to be

allocated to interviews; to trial the choice of a central public library as a suitable neutral interviewing location; and to test that interviews could be conducted effectively via Skype. Three pilot interviews took place, two of which were conducted face-to-face, and one via Skype. As discussed above, the interviewing process was altered based on experience of the first pilot, which was subsequently discarded from the data sample. The interview questions remained fundamentally unchanged following the pilot interviews, and 30-45 minutes was established as a suitable length of time for the researcher to cover the key themes without interviewees losing interest in the discussion.

3.5.3 – Interviewing

Following the pilot interviews, a further 28 interviews were conducted. The interviews were carried out over a 17 day period in July 2013, with the pilot interviews having taken place the previous week. Of the 30 interviews used in the data sample, 18 (60%) were conducted face-to-face, and 12 (40%) via Skype. Of the face-to-face interviews, 7 were conducted in a neutral library setting, 4 at the interviewee's place of work, 5 at the residence of the interviewee, and 2 at the researcher's home. While a neutral setting would have been desirable in all cases, the researcher prioritised the convenience of participants in order to complete the interviewing stage as quickly as possible. 29 of the participants were well known to the researcher, and thus conducting interviews at their homes did not present a safety risk. The one participant whom the researcher did not know personally was interviewed at a neutral public library. The majority of interviews lasted approximately 30-45 minutes, with 3 interviews being significantly longer, lasting approximately 51, 53 and 69 minutes. In these cases the interviewee was either a particularly prolific sharer of happy information, or provided deeply analytical accounts of their behaviour in response to questions.

The interviews commenced with collection of basic information (age, occupation, nationality and current location) in order to gain understanding of the sample group. Next the researcher established which methods of sharing the interviewee used, running through a list of common mediums, before asking the interviewee to mention any additional methods they may use for sharing happy information. The researcher then asked interviewees to roughly estimate how frequently they shared happy information (e.g. daily, weekly, monthly, less often). Following this, interviewees were asked to describe examples of times when they had shared happy information, asking what had been shared, with whom and by which method. The examples would then be discussed, with the researcher exploring the six key themes discussed above. The six set themes ensured comparable content of data to be discussed across participants, whilst the flexibility of the semi-structured approach allowed discussion to be dictated by the examples of participants, facilitating exploration of significant or interesting behaviours as they appeared among individuals.

The six themes explored throughout the interviews are presented below, alongside the associated interview questions. The exact wording of the questions varied throughout the interviews.

1. What influences individuals' choice of recipients?

This theme was explored by asking recipients, “who did you share it with?” and, “why did you choose to share it with that person?” in response to their specific examples. Additionally, the researcher asked participants, “who are the people you share happy information with most commonly?”

2. What influences individuals' choice of sharing medium?

This was explored in relation to individuals' specific examples, with the researcher asking, “how did you share it?” and, “why did you select that means of communication?” Additionally, at the start of each interview, the researcher would ask interviewees to list the mediums they would use for sharing happy information. During the interview, the researcher would ask under what circumstances they would use any mediums which had not already been mentioned.

3. The concept of experiencing a '*need* to share'.

Participants were asked, “do you ever get the feeling where something makes you happy and you feel that you just *need* to share it with someone?”

4. Expectations and importance of responses to happy information shared, including corresponding affective states and impact on future happy information sharing behaviour.

Participants were asked, in relation to examples provided, questions such as, “was it important to you to receive a response to this information?”, “how did it make you feel that you received a positive response?”, “how would you have felt if the person hadn't responded?” and, “if the recipient didn't respond, or gave a negative response, would that affect what you subsequently shared with them in the future?” Examples were also compared, with participants being asked why a response was more important in one instance than another.

5. The concept of how sharing happy information can reflect the way individuals portray themselves; and the use of sharing happy information to project a particular self-image.

Individuals were asked, “do you feel that the happy information you're sharing, or what you're choosing to share, can reflect yourself or the image you're portraying of yourself?” Where individuals responded yes to this, they were further asked in what way this would affect or impact their happy information sharing behaviour.

6. How the act of sharing impacts on the sharer's happiness.

The researcher asked participants, "do you think that the act of sharing happy information with other people enhances your happiness?" and, "is the happiness of sharing increased differently dependent on the medium?" Questions were asked comparing individuals' examples of sharing different types of information, with different recipients, via different mediums, and in relation to different responses.

As the research involved only one tool for data collection the researcher was conscious to continually re-address points which had been made, and confirm with interviewees that their responses were being correctly interpreted, for example:

> **Researcher**: Right, OK. Em, now, you've said on Tumblr and on Facebook – and especially on Tumblr – you're more selective about what things you share with people...
>
> **Interviewee**: Yeah.
>
> **Researcher**: ...is that right, yeah?

In this way a degree of interpretative reliability was obtained (Rioux, 2004, p.42)

3.5.4 - Recording devices

Due to the relatively unstructured interview format in which the direction of conversation was significantly determined by the individual interviewees' examples and responses, the researcher needed to devote full attention to the conversation and it was felt that copious note-taking in these circumstances would be impossible and counter-productive. Instead, the decision was taken to record all interviews for subsequent transcription and analysis. The researcher originally proposed to use a dictaphone for face-to-face interviews, and Skype video-recorder download for the Skype interviews. The video-recorder download was selected due its potential as offering an enhanced visual aid for the researcher in interpreting interviewees' emotions during transcription and data analysis. Video recording was not considered for face-to-face interviews as it was felt that the presence of a video-recording device in a physical setting would be intrusive and liable to make interviewees uncomfortable, impacting on the quality of responses. Prior to the pilot interviews the researcher tested both the dictaphone and Skype video-recorder. The Skype video-recorder did not work fully, and the decision was taken only to use the audio-recording component of the software, which functioned successfully over several tests. The audio-recording component unfortunately crashed during the pilot Skype interview and the dictaphone was subsequently used to record all interviews. This produced suitable quality recordings for transcription and also resulted in greater consistency of data, as analysis was then based on transcription of audio-

recordings across the sample.

3.5.5 – Transcription and data analysis

Interviews were transcribed as quickly as possible after the interview had taken place. As interviews were scheduled at times most convenient to the interviewees (in several cases accommodating significant time differences to interview participants in North America) the distribution was imbalanced across the interview period, and it was frequently impossible to complete the transcriptions on the same day as the interview. The transcriptions were all completed within two days following completion of the final interview.

To analyse the data, the researcher originally considered applying the original 16 potential interview questions (derived from the researcher's own experience of information sharing behaviour and findings from the literature review) as a basic coding tool, and examining the transcripts in relation to these points. Since, however, the research was intended to be exploratory and encourage new findings to develop through the interviews, it was decided that attempting to organise and analyse the data in relation to pre-conceived ideas would be too restrictive. Instead, the researcher summarised each transcript noting responses to the six key questions asked, details of the examples of happy information sharing (particularly how, why and with whom the participants shared information) and responses that seemed particularly interesting or significant. 'Interesting or significant' data consisted of behaviour which was strongly consistent or widely varied across the sample, data corresponding to findings in the literature reviewed, and unexpected behaviours and factors which appeared.

The data was then collated together and organised using a bottom-up approach, sorting associated data together into the following groups which naturally emerged:

- General motivations for sharing and not sharing happy information
- Recipients and relationships
- Choice of medium
- Responses
- How individuals portray themselves through happy information sharing
- Act of sharing increasing happiness

As can be seen, the groupings which emerged frequently corresponded to the key themes addressed in the interviews. Although the data was not coded in accordance with the key themes, each question generated a certain level of associated data, which naturally came together again during the analysis stage. Two further categories emerged, which were 'general motivations for

sharing or not sharing happy information', and 'relationships'. Due to strong connections, this latter grouping was merged with 'recipients'. Within each grouping, the researcher further collated associated data together. Analysis at this lower level was inductive to a greater degree. A note was kept of which interviewees had demonstrated each point, allowing the researcher to then calculate the corresponding number of interviewees in relation to each factor. This data is presented in tables within the findings. The researcher has provided further discussion in relation to behaviours which were deemed particularly interesting or significant. All participants' names have been anonymised in the discussion. Data concerning the types of happy information shared and the frequency of sharing is also presented in the findings.

3.6 – Methodology summary

Given the lack of prior research into non-task-orientated sharing behaviour of happy information, it was deemed appropriate to conduct broad ranging exploratory research. To this end, the methodology was designed to be open-ended, facilitating the generation of new ideas. Appropriate application of research techniques was influenced by the literature reviewed. The interview questions were influenced by information derived from the literature review and the researcher's own experiences. The research uses semi-structured interviews followed by inductive analysis to investigate the range of factors motivating and impacting upon individuals' happy information sharing behaviour, and individuals' associated affective states.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

4.1 – Understanding the data

The research intended to explore the range of factors motivating and impacting upon individuals' happy information sharing behaviour, focussing on behaviours that appeared in the interviews as particularly interesting or significant. The range of factors revealed throughout the interviews has been presented in tables. The behaviours selected for further discussion were deemed by the researcher to be interesting or significant primarily where participants demonstrated strongly corresponding or widely variant behaviours; and where findings occurred which corroborated or contradicted the researcher's expectations or literature reviewed.

The research was intended to be exploratory and investigative. Accordingly, the interviews were semi-structured in order to allow new findings to develop. As such, although certain questions were asked of all 30 participants, other questions only occurred in relation to the development of specific interviews. Where a question was asked of all participants and the figure shows a representative portion of the entire sample this will be made clear. In all other cases it must be understood that the figures cannot be interpreted as such because the theme was not discussed across all participants. For example, where 5 participants mentioned 'shared sense of humour' as a reason for sharing happy information, this does not signify that 25 people would never be motivated by this factor.

Unless otherwise indicated, the figures presented in tables represent the number of participants that mentioned or demonstrated a particular factor or behaviour, either in direct response to a question or implicit in descriptions of their behaviours. The figures do not represent the importance placed on any factors by individuals, although this qualitative data may subsequently appear in discussion. Nor do figures represent how commonly a factor affected individuals. For example, the findings show that 6 people demonstrated 'seeking validation' as a reason to share happy information, and 8 people demonstrated 'to make others happy'. This does not signify that making others happy was a stronger motivation to any of these participants, nor that any individual participant more frequently felt motivated to share for the latter reason. The figures only reveal that during the course of the interviews 8 participants demonstrated or mentioned this motivation.

Where quotations from the transcripts have been presented in the findings, **R** stands for ‘researcher’ and **I** for ‘interviewee’. Responses of acknowledgement and encouragement from the researcher (e.g. ‘mmhmm’, ‘yes’, ‘ok’) have frequently been removed, and replaced with […]. All emphasis (italicised words) included within quotations occurred during the interviews.

Descriptions of the different mediums of communication have been provided in Appendix C.

4.2 – Content shared and frequency of sharing

From the examples provided by interviewees, data was gathered regarding the nature of the happy information participants shared. The findings have been categorised and presented in Chart 4. A more detailed breakdown with examples has been provided in Appendix D. Numbers represent the number of participants who provided an instance of sharing the type of content, not the frequency with which individuals shared types of content. The categories include content related to that category, e.g. the category 'books' would include recommendations and discussion of books.

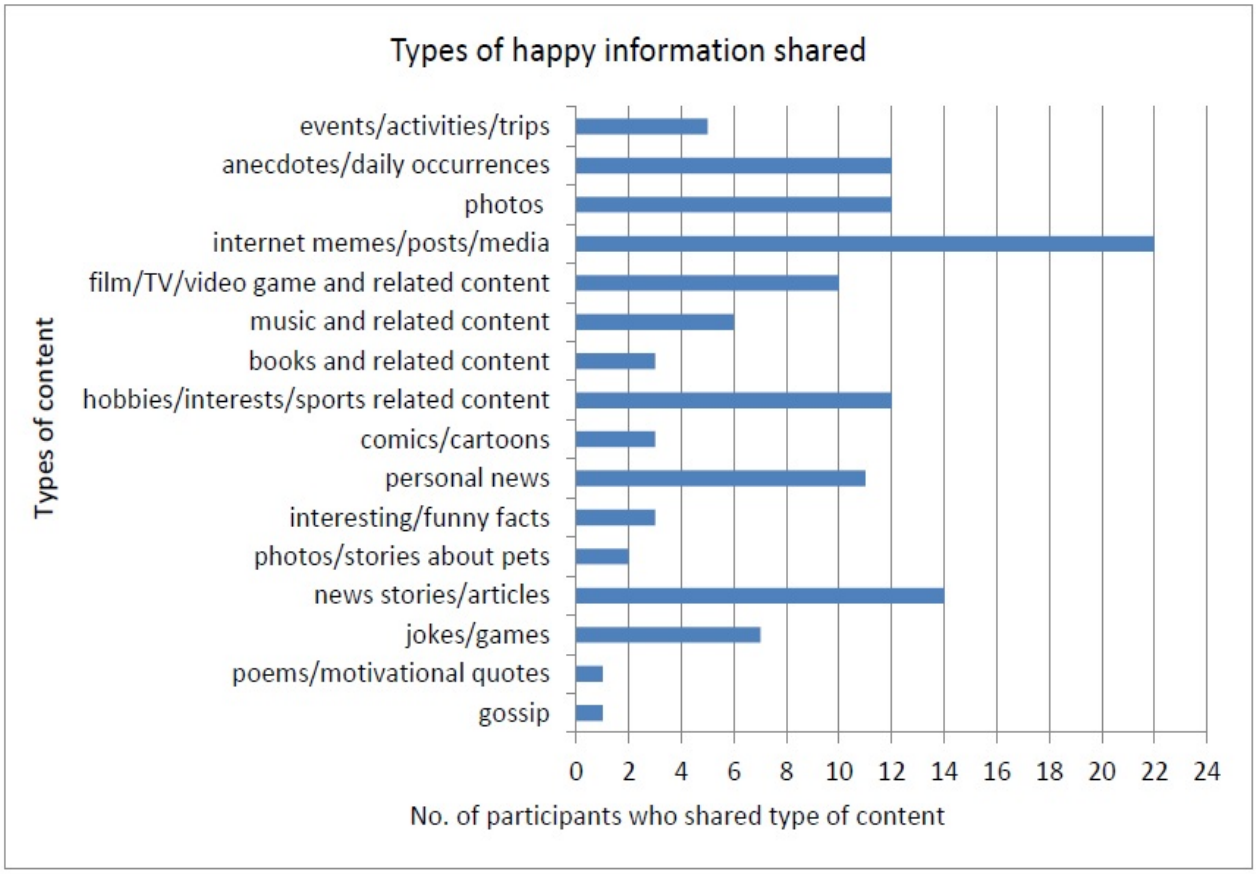

Chart 4: Types of happy information shared by participants

At the beginning of interviews participants were asked to give a rough idea of how frequently they shared happy information. Participants in the 2 pilot interviews were not asked this question. The responses are presented in Table 1.

How frequently participants share happy information	No. of participants
Infrequently	2
Monthly	1
Daily	10
Weekly	15
Weren't asked	2

Table 1: Participants' frequency of happy information sharing

4.3 - General motivations for sharing and not sharing happy information

4.3.1 – Range of general motivations for sharing/not sharing happy information

Participants were not generally asked 'why did you share this information' in relation to each of their examples; however throughout the interviews various factors were demonstrated by participants in this context. Towards the end of the interview, the researcher additionally summarised from memory the main reasons given, and asked if there were any additional reasons for which the participant would be likely to share happy information. The findings are presented in Tables 2 and 3.

General perceived interest or appreciation from recipient	30
Feeling a '*need* to share'	27
Shared interests or experience	19
Content perceived to have connection with recipient	19
Sharing occurring naturally in conversation	10
Reciprocating with information in kind / habit of sharing with a person on topic or theme	8
To make people happy or give them hope	8
Relevance to a current or previous discussion or topic	7
Seeking validation of your enjoyment in the information	6
Shared sense of humour	5
Desire to discover people's interests or opinions on a topic or item	5
Desire to generate wider interest or awareness of a topic or item	4
To create a feeling of interaction when experiencing something alone	4
Influenced or encouraged by other people to post item online	3
To provoke someone who you know will not enjoy the information (e.g. sports results)	2

Table 2: General motivations for sharing happy information

Perceived lack of interest from audience	15
Happy information too trivial to share, unless it becomes relevant in conversation	12
Inappropriate for particular audience	9
Content not sufficiently interesting / funny	8
Happy information no longer relevant / mind-set and moment of happiness have passed	7
Don't want to add to the 'noise' online – current volume of digital information	3
Influenced by others' behaviour or attitude	1

Table 3: General motivations not to share happy information

4.3.2 – Targeting information based on relevance to recipient

The motivation of all 30 participants to share had at some point been based on perceived relevance; either to a situation, or a particular recipient. Many participants described the process of determining relevance between content and person as an experience whereby information triggered an association or a memory of a particular person. This suggests that motivation for sharing often begins at a sub-conscious level. Rioux (2004, p.62) found that "there is relatively low top-of-mind awareness of the cognitive states [individuals] experience as they mentally "store" and recall what they believe are the information needs of others". This research specifically examined non-task-orientated information, thus removing the connection with an articulated information seeking need, however the findings reveal a comparable process occurring in both situations.

The degree to which individuals targeted their sharing by matching relevance of content and recipient was varied. Generally, it was considered of greater importance when sharing via direct methods, however many participants also considered it important to be targeted in conversation and with public online sharing. Table 4 presents circumstances in which participants felt less need to tailor information to the specific interests of recipients. As can be seen, the recipient, the medium used and the nature of the happy information all impact on individuals' information sharing behaviour. 17 participants claimed they were generally very targeted in their sharing in all circumstances, considering it 'pointless' to share information with people who weren't interested, or not wanting to 'bother' people with information they wouldn't appreciate. Of these 17 people, 5 could recall experiencing a *need* to share with 'somebody' (a non-specific individual), suggesting that in certain cases the desire to share happy information outweighed the need to tailor information to the recipient's interests.

If information has general widespread appeal	13
When sharing during conversation	5
When sharing amongst people with whom has close relationship	5
When extremely excited	4
With big personal news	4
When posting Facebook status updates	4
If happen to bump into someone soon after encountering happy information	4
When sharing in a group (information may not be equally relevant to the whole group)	3
When sharing on Tumblr	2

Table 4: Circumstances in which happy information sharing is less targeted

4.3.3 – Experiencing 'need to share'

29 participants were asked whether they had ever experienced a feeling of '*needing* to share' information. The findings are presented in Table 5. The vast majority of participants could recall such an occasion, generally when experiencing great excitement or happiness. It was more common for participants to experience a feeling of '*needing* to share' with a specific person. Where participants described the experience of '*needing* to share' with 'somebody', this often led to public sharing on Facebook, or sharing with the next acquaintance they happened to meet. Personality, the level of excitement concerning the happy information, and the extent to which participants preferred to target information only to those with perceived interest influenced how likely the participants would be to tell particular people when they experienced a general '*need* to share'. 3 participants mentioned having a close friend or relative who they knew would always show interest. As Joyce explained, "if I *really* want to share it and I can't think of anyone specifically that I want to share it with, I know that my mum will always, like, listen to whatever I've got to say..."

Have experienced feeling of '*need* to share'	27
Have never experienced feeling of '*need* to share'	2
Have experienced feeling of '*need* to share' with a specific person	25
Have experienced feeling of '*need* to share' with 'somebody' (i.e. just have to share with somebody, without a specific person springing to mind)	10

Table 5: Feeling of 'need to share'

4.3.4 – Multiple factors simultaneously motivating sharing

Certain participants also provided examples where multiple factors motivated their desire to share happy information. Jessica described a scenario in which she had experienced a bizarre and ridiculous encounter with a stranger in a bar:

> And so I was at the bar and I, like, he- he was a crazy person, I'm not gonna tell you the whole story 'cause I don't want you to have to transcribe it, but he was a crazy person – to the point where like, after he left I went up to the bar and I was like, 'oh my God,' like – just to the random person next to me I was like, 'was he crazy or was that just me?' [R laughs] and she goes, 'oh no, he was bat shit!...' [R laughs] '…he was having three conversations, and only one of them was with you.' So I was like, 'OK, thank you!' and so like, I talked to that person about it a little bit, and then I was- as I was leaving, I was like, 'oh my God – I can't get over what just happened!' so I texted the entire story – which was a really long story [R laughs] – to a friend of mine, em, because I *had* to tell someone else immediately, and then as soon as I got home I told [my room-mates] the story, um, so it was like I told the story multiple times because I was just so like, I can't even understand what happened! […] so in that case I specifically didn't wanna text the story to [my room-mate], because I knew it would be more entertaining in person...

Three distinct motivating factors impacted on Jessica's desire to share this story. She shared the experience with a present stranger, seeking validation of her view that the situation was out of the ordinary; felt the need specifically to share this story with her room-mates who she knew would appreciate it, and purposefully waited until she could see them to share the story with maximum effect in person; and also experienced immediate need to share the story straight away, and went to the effort of texting (Jessica rarely phones people for fear of inconveniencing them) a particularly long message to a separate friend in order to do. These different needs were satisfied by sharing with different recipients, using a combination of purposefully selected mediums for communication.

4.3.5 – General motivations for sharing and not sharing happy information: summary

The reasons for sharing and not sharing demonstrated most commonly throughout the interviews also appeared in other studies examined in the literature review. Known or mutual interests and experiences were found to be prominent motivations by Rioux (2004) and Olsson, Soronen and Väänänen-Vainio-Mattila (2008). Perceived lack of interest presenting a barrier to sharing was reported in the studies of Goh et al. (2009) and Hall, Widén and Paterson (2010). Need for validation was also demonstrated as a factor by Hall, Widén and Paterson (2010). Chung and Kim

(2008), Olsson, Soronen and Väänänen-Vainio-Mattila (2008) and Chua, Goh and Lee (2012) all mentioned individuals' consideration of information content and quality prior to sharing. This corresponds to behaviour demonstrated in this study, whereby appropriateness, relevance and quality of content (i.e. is this sufficiently funny or interesting to merit sharing) affected the likelihood of sharing. Certain studies explored pleasure in sharing, and 'super-sharers' who share more frequently due to enjoyment of the experience; however none of the studies in the literature review explored the specific concept of a '*need*' to share. The findings suggest that this is a commonly experienced feeling, which would benefit from further research.

A range of motivations for sharing and not sharing happy information have been presented in this section. The findings reveal that a subconscious association between content and recipient can in itself motivate information sharing, as can experiencing a feeling of '*needing* to share'. While the research has not attempted to investigate causality, the findings reveal that motivations for sharing happy information, the specific recipient, and the chosen means of communication are all connected in individuals' sharing behaviour.

4.4 – Recipients and relationships

4.4.1 – Recipients of happy information sharing

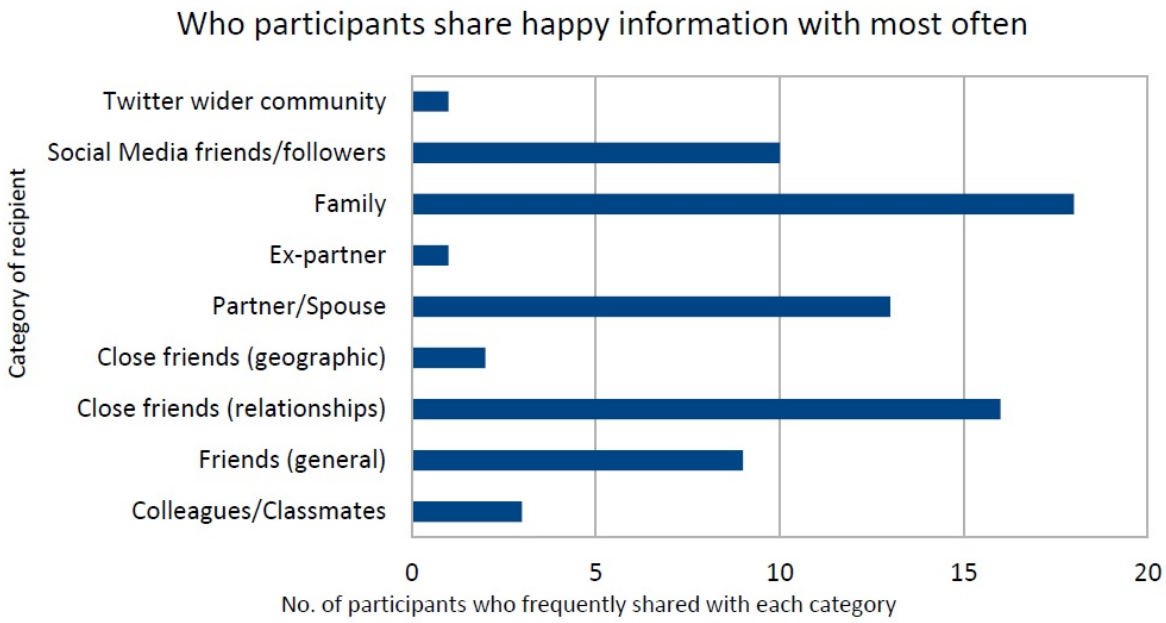

Chart 5: Participants' most common recipients of shared happy information

All participants were asked with whom they shared happy information most commonly. Responses

have been categorised and presented in Chart 5. The participants were not questioned in detail and interviewees responded with varying degrees of specificity, thus the categories of friends (general), close friends (relationships) and close friends (geographic) should not be interpreted as absolutes. The close friends (geographic) category reflects the participants who responded that the people they shared with most often were local friends they saw most frequently. The findings reveal a strong link between closeness of relationships and the frequency of happy information sharing. The introduction of social media, however, introduces an alternative perspective. 8 participants mentioned throughout interviews that they had a lot of Facebook friends whom they didn't know well. 3 of these same participants described common acts of sharing publicly on Facebook. Further research is required to determine whether strength of relationships and frequency of sharing (and interaction) have equally strong links on- and offline, and on different social media platforms.

4.4.2 – Sharing and strong relationships

27 of the 30 participants felt that sharing happy information was important for building, maintaining or strengthening relationships. Table 6 shows the reasons participants offered explaining why happy information was shared more frequently amongst people with whom they had strong relationships. 4 participants further mentioned that common ground forms the basis for all relationships. 7 participants commented on the importance of feeling that you can share happy information with your friends, with Alexander saying, “it kinda justifies that you're- why you're friends with them, or it sort of gives you- like, em, a feeling that the friends that you have are the right ones”; and John, “I- I think if- if you can't share things that make you happy with a friend, then you have to wonder whether or not you're friends”. 2 participants also pointed out that the people you feel you can share the most with are the people you subsequently become closest to. Although the research did not attempt to establish causality between strength of relationships and frequency of sharing, the findings suggest a reciprocal connection with the two factors impacting on each other.

Fewer barriers to things you feel comfortable sharing (less risk of judgement, ridicule or causing offence through misinterpretation)	14
Greater level of shared interest and common ground	8
Frequency of communication	8
Knowledge that they will be interested in you and the things that make you happy	8
The people you're closer to are more prominent in your thoughts	2

Table 6: Reasons for sharing more frequently amongst people with whom you have a stronger relationship

4.4.3 – Sharing as a means of maintaining contact

A distinction between closeness in terms of strong relationships and geographical closeness was highlighted by 8 of the 11 participants currently living abroad (plus 1 participant who had previously lived abroad). Graham commented on a difference in content between friends who were currently close geographically, with whom he shared more topical happy information, compared to friends further afield with whom happy information shared was more specifically tailored to their known interests and tastes. Mary revealed that she was unlikely to contact friends at home with small happy information, however for bigger news she said, "I will put myself in touch with my best friend, wherever she is". 5 participants said that the people they shared with most commonly were the people they saw most frequently – including local friends or colleagues. Contrastingly, one ex-patriot participant living in a different country from his partner purposefully shared with her more often, as means of maintaining regular contact. Stewart attributed their frequency of communication to a, "combination of closeness and *not* seeing each other very often". The oldest of the ex-patriot participants (aged 35-39) commented on the way that technology allowed him to share with friends back home in a way that had not previously been feasible:

> there's people in Canada that I send these- there is no face-to-face, but we share stuff all the time, like, that's the beauty of emails and internet is that, you know, you don't have to- in days gone by all you ever had was writing letters back and forth which was- I remember doing that – *hideous* – or the telephone, eh, pre-Skype when it was, you know- you paid through the nose to just talk to somebody so, em- yeah, there's close friends that I- I share stuff with in North America as well as here.

Although it was not commonly volunteered among participants as a reason *why* they would choose to share happy information, 10 participants felt that sharing happy information was a good way to keep in touch.

> **R**: ...so would you use this type of thing – sharing stuff that makes you happy – as a way of keeping in touch with them? Is that something you would consciously do?
> **I**: Um...yeah. I would- yeah, I would use it. But, maybe not- [break in Skype transmission] maybe that wouldn't be the thought process, but I suppose if something came up then it would be a good- a good way- a good reason to- to keep in touch. Or a good way to- medium for just doing that – an excuse for doing it. Rather than having to sit down and do a long-winded email, or something like that...

Simon's description reveals that although sharing happy information may not be *motivated* by a conscious effort to keep in touch, this could certainly be a resultant factor of happy information

sharing. Sharing more trivial happy information was also listed by 5 participants as a good way of re-connecting if there had been a break in contact with the person. More 'trivial' happy information sent in a 'saw this and thought of you' manner was described as 'easy-ended', a 'soft-contact' and an 'ice-breaker'.

4.4.4 – Importance of sharing trivial happy information in relationships

Many of the examples of happy information sharing involved 'trivial' content. Erica described the type of media she posted on Tumblr as, “it's just wank really – the stuff I put on Tumblr – but it's fun”. Asserting that the content was trivial and of little importance, she proceeded to describe the positive emotions generated when able to share these items with a like-minded individual:

> I think it's- sometimes it can be quite sort of difficult to connect a lot, all the time, and when you do have that moment of connection then it sort- it- it- it enforces that it's- it- it- it is a good thing to put effort into relationships, and it is a good thing to have conversations and you're not alone, and eh, yeah- yeah, human connection basically, yeah.

Another participant described a yearly 'Oscars Competition' with her dad, which was something they enjoyed together and looked forward to, also sharing related content throughout the year. Lisa considered such 'silly' shared activities significant in strengthening their relationship. To Jennifer, the ability to share happy information of this nature was vital:

> **I:** And, actually, so important I think, that sometimes, like, if I have been, like say out on a date with somebody, and I'm making all these, like, references to quotes and things, and they don't- they don't understand, I'd be like, 'They don't get me! They don't understand me!' you know...
> **R:** OK.
> **I:** ...and that would- that would really turn me off, like.
> **R:** OK. So, being able to share things that make you happy like that, d'you think then that that's very important for relationships and friendships?
> **I:** I do think so, yeah, I do.

From this can be seen that to certain individuals 'trivial' happy information can not only provide that common ground underpinning relationships, but can also be fundamentally important to a close relationship. As expected, sharing bigger happy information was also mentioned as important within relationships. 6 participants felt strongly that for big happy information (e.g. major life events such as engagements, weddings, babies), close friends and family 'deserved' to be told first and by a 'more personal' medium such as in person or over the phone. 3 participants further expressed the opinion that this was important to prevent people's feelings getting hurt, and considered

sharing big happy information in this way a significant means of demonstrating those people's importance in your life.

4.4.5 – Recipients and relationships: summary

Many of the studies referenced in the literature review reported instances of sharing in connection with maintenance and strengthening of social bonds. The studies of Haythornthwaite (1996) and Hall, Widén and Paterson (2010) revealed sharing to occur more frequently where strong relationships were present. These findings are consistent with the behaviours demonstrated by the interviewees; however frequent contact (rather than strength of relationship) was reported by some participants to encourage sharing to a greater degree. In addition, group sharing via social media features simultaneous sharing across strong and weak ties. It would be interesting to further research the sharing (including posts, messages, 'likes' and comments) between weak ties present on social networking sites to investigate the levels of contact individuals have with their online 'friends'.

Sharing happy information was found to be common in friendships and relationships, and frequently considered by individuals to be important to these. Examples occurred where this was true both of 'big' happy information and 'trivial' happy information.

4.5 - Choice of Medium

4.5.1 – Mediums used for sharing happy information

At the beginning of each interview participants were asked which means of communication they would use for sharing happy information. The researcher would run through a list of common mediums and then enquire if there were any other methods the interviewee would use for sharing happy information. The data is presented in Chart 6.

A level of inconsistency exists across the sample, as in the first 7 interviews the researcher asked participants which mediums they would use for sharing in general, and for the remaining 23 interviews the researcher specifically asked which mediums were used for sharing happy information. Where it became clear during interviews that a medium mentioned by a participant was not used for sharing happy information (e.g. emails only used for work purposes, never for sharing happy information) this data was removed from the figures.

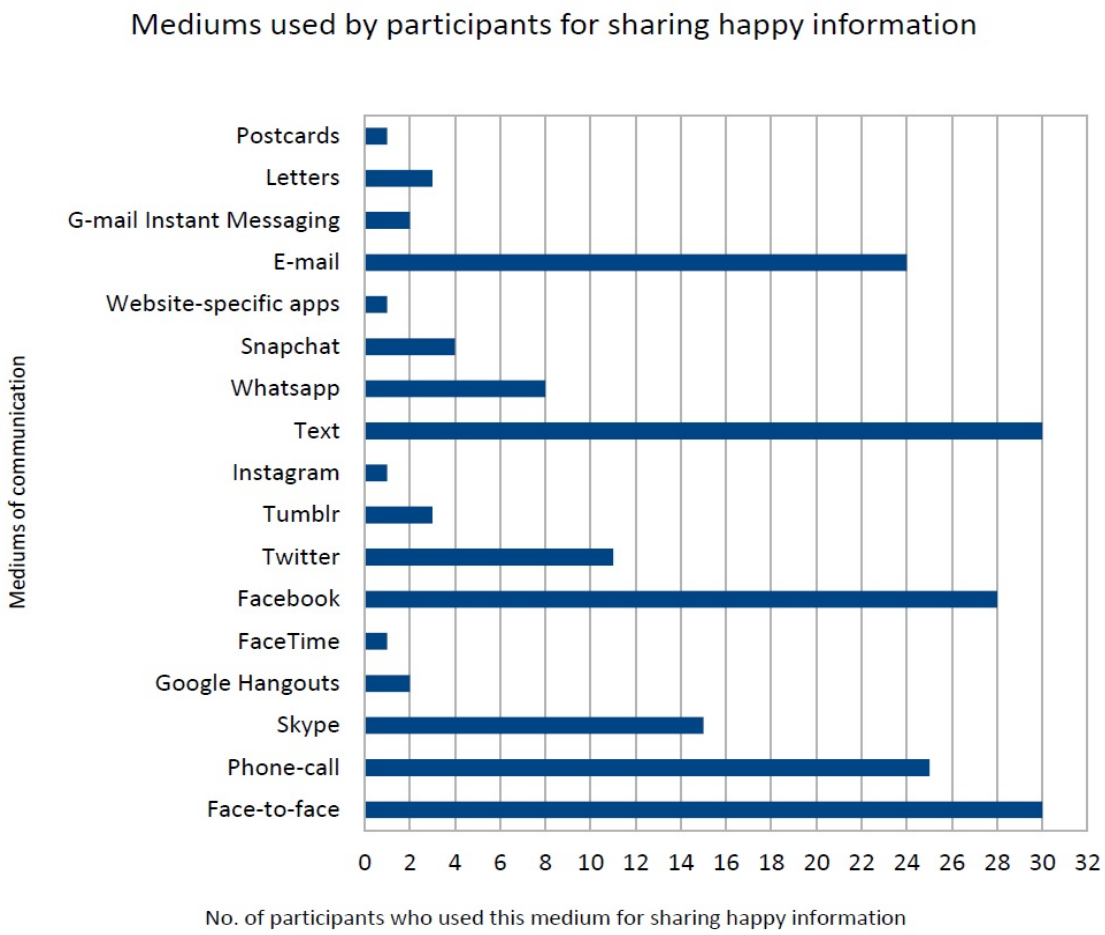

Chart 6: Mediums used by participants for sharing happy information

4.5.2 – Factors affecting choice of medium

In relation to each of their examples, participants were asked why they chose to share by that specific medium. Later in the interview the researcher would summarise from memory the reasons provided so far and ask if there were any additional factors that would affect the interviewee's choice of medium.

Using medium that will allow sharer to reach intended recipient	30
Using medium best suited to the content i.e. will allow recipient to experience information in same way sharer has, or will have the most impact	22
Convenience / ease / practicality	21
Sharing in person or via phone due to need for physical interaction, emotional element or in-depth discussion.	18
Mediums available to recipient / sharer's perception of how regularly they may access a medium	17
Immediacy	17
Privacy / not wanting to share something publicly	15
Medium that seems most 'socially appropriate' for the content	15
Personal preference of medium	15
Desire to reach widest possible audience	13
Reluctance to inconvenience people	11
Frustration or unfamiliarity with a medium / old technology (barriers to using certain mediums)	11
Habit (of communicating with a person in a certain way)	10
Cost	10
Perception of recipient's availability	8
Geography: location and time difference	7
Recipient's preference of medium	7
Importance of sharing big news with close friends and family in person or over phone	6
Continuation of on-going topic - reciprocating via same medium	5

Table 7: Factors affecting participants' choice of medium

Across all participants, in every example described whereby happy information was directed at specific people, the primary criteria affecting choice of medium was that it could convey the information to the intended recipient. As Joyce commented, she would, "determine who I would then share it with. And that then determines what medium I share it through as well". As can be seen from the table numerous other factors also affect the choice of medium.

4.5.3 – Convenience

As anticipated, convenience was a prominent factor, with examples such as the ease of Facebook and email for sharing media content, and the close proximity of mobile phones commonly mentioned. 7 participants mentioned that they would only use Skype for a fuller conversation or catch-up, and would not use it as a means of contacting a person specifically to share happy information. (This question was not asked in all interviews, so the figure is not representative in

relation to the 15 Skype-users). Interestingly, however, the one participant who used FaceTime, describing it as, "similar to Skype, em, but it's built into the iPad," commented on using the two mediums differently:

> **R:** ...so, is that – you would use that for the same kinda purposes as Skype? Like...
> **I:** Uh-huh.
> **R:** ...would you ever – so, with Skype you're saying you wouldn't ever really Skype someone to share something small – would you ever FaceTime someone to...
> **I:** Actually, we do Fa- it's – it's different than Skype in the sense that, mainly – not so much instigated by me, but instigated from my mum's point of view she'll Facetime me to tell me something small […] 'cause she knows I'm on my iPad a lot and - I don't always see it, but it'll- it'll pop up immediately […] em, but she would always use that.

Lisa subsequently explains that to share happy information with her mum she would be more likely to phone than use FaceTime, primarily through habit (a consistent factor in her choice of medium throughout the interview). From Lisa's mum's perspective, FaceTime was a convenient method because of Lisa's general availability via this platform. The design of FaceTime (being 'built into the iPad' into which Lisa is constantly logged-in and available for alerts) makes it a more convenient platform than Skype and resultantly more frequently used by these individuals.

4.5.4 – Individuals using platforms differently to suit own requirements

Another interesting finding was the degree to which participants used social media platforms differently to suit their own purposes. Andrew expressed this comment succinctly - "I think Twitter's interesting because people- you can use it in different ways". 3 of the 11 Twitter users explained that they used Twitter primarily as an incoming information feed, rather than for tweeting. For Jonathan, the primary enjoyment of Twitter was reading entertaining tweets, and resultantly he rarely tweeted because he felt too much 'pressure' to successfully contribute, thinking, "well, I don't have anything funny- funny or witty to say". While Andrew primarily used Twitter for receiving information, he did re-tweet an article by a particular journalist he enjoyed weekly. His motivation for doing so was a desire to reciprocate information sharing among the Twitter community:

> I always find it a good way of- for me of finding information is that other people, em, will tweet something tha- and I'm go- oh- well if- if they think that's interesting I'll- I'll probably go to it and usually you- you do find it quite interesting, so you just try and do the same back.

Michelle, however, followed interesting science facts on Twitter, which she would never re-tweet, but would store and bring up in relevant conversation. Michelle also mentioned that, "I had

Facebook before I had Twitter, so I guess I feel that I've already got a platform for sharing". This sentiment was echoed by 2 other participants who had 'tried' Twitter initially, but had stopped using it as they didn't feel it offered anything they didn't already have through Facebook. (These participants were not counted as Twitter users in the findings.) 2 participants also commented that their usage of Twitter was restricted because they didn't really understand the platform or how to use it. Among the more prolific users, Twitter offered either a source of casual entertainment and humour, a means of maintaining an online profile, or an effective way of interacting in on-going dialogue. Joyce commented:

> that's one of the reasons that I post less on Facebook, is I don't really want to have such a, kind of...defined...online profile. And I think Facebook's kinda like that, it's kind of like, more about how you see yourself. Whereas Twitter is trying to involve yourself in a kind of on-going conversation.

Contrastingly, 3 prolific Tweeters felt that they received significantly less interaction on Twitter than Facebook, either because the brevity of the medium rendered it more superficial, or because their network of contacts was larger on Facebook. Usage of Facebook also varied, with 4 interviewees commenting that they used Facebook more frequently as an extension of their phone or address-book – a means of directly contacting people – than for sharing happy information widely. Each of these participants described "the way *I* use Facebook" [emphasis inserted] revealing an awareness that their use of this medium was different to the behaviours of others they had observed. Anthony further commented that he was, "not using [Facebook] in the manner in which it was probably intended". Comparing her behaviour to others', Sandra reflected:

> I think my personality shuns the kind of exhibitionism that something like Facebook can allow […] em, if I post that generally to everyone, I feel like it's a kind of a statement almost. So, while I'll do it occasionally, I'll- I wouldn't do it regularly.

When sharing with specific individuals, Sandra would also share more commonly via Facebook private messages than publicly on recipients' walls, even if the content of the happy information did not require privacy. Comparison of these examples demonstrates the importance of designing platforms which individuals can tailor according to their individual preferences and requirements.

4.5.5 – Sharing in person

A common feature mentioned of face-to-face communication (and to a lesser degree Skype and phone-calls) was the richer quality of verbal communication compared to electronic messaging. 20 participants commented that the former mediums offered an enhanced emotional experience, while 7 participants mentioned that a significant disadvantage of electronic communications was the

inability to convey nuanced tone and emotion, leaving communication more open to ambiguity and misunderstanding. Although many participants felt that verbal mediums offered a more emotional experience, this did not automatically mean that sharing information in person would result in a happier experience. 5 participants described occasions where they had shared happy information both in person and by another medium, and reported equal levels of happiness. When asked if he thought sharing the 'banter' with a group in person rather than via email would have been a happier experience, Alexander responded:

> Em, no- I think- I think it would just enhance it the same. Em, because it would jus- It'd b- I suppose it would just be like a- like a conversation between- a face-to-face conversation between a bunch of people, except for that you're not face-to-face. So, I would say it would have the same effect to enhance it – the same...

For other participants, such as Mary, sharing in person always offered an enhanced experience - “you can't really substitute the- the human interaction. It is very difficult to share a laugh when you can't hear the other person laughing”. The findings reveal that the nature of the content and individual personalities both impact on whether sharing in person offers a happier experience.

Exploring to what extent the enhanced emotional potential of sharing in person would be an influential factor on participants' choice of medium, 27 people were asked whether they would be likely to wait until they saw someone in person to share happy information. The results are presented in Table 8. The data is complicated by the fact that for various participants, distance completely prevented them communicating with close friends and family in person, and thus phone or Skype became enforced substitutes for sharing face-to-face. These mediums could not, however, be treated as interchangeable because of the differing impacts of immediacy – a phone-call allows a person to share immediately, whereas choosing to wait prevents immediacy. The following table presents *only* data related to waiting to see people in person, however data concerning the sharing of 'big news' has been removed, as the researcher considered this to be affected too strongly by enforced substitution of face-to-face, Skype and phone-calls to include alongside the other data in this section.

Would commonly wait until sees person to share happy information	12
Would be extremely unlikely to wait until sees person to share happy information	7
May wait to share happy information, but only if going to see person in very near future	8
Incentives to wait	
Enhanced emotional experience	8
Sharing more complex information requires in-depth discussion	7
Saving up information so have things to discuss when see person	5
General preference for face-to-face communication	4
Not sufficiently important to share immediately (which would require recipient take time out of their day to process)	4
Easier to wait than go to the effort of messaging	2
Seems more socially appropriate to wait, rather than making deliberate contact with person	2
Habit of sharing in person with certain people	1
Recipient has no means of receiving information other than communicating in person	1
*Desire to share big news in person **	
Reasons not to wait	
Desire for immediacy - to share and receive response as soon as possible	14
Information too trivial to merit waiting until see the person	12
Danger of forgetting information	6
Practicality / convenience	3
Initial excitement will wear off over time / won't be in same mind-set to enjoy if wait	3
Accustomed to sharing everything instantly due to smartphone technology	2

Table 8: Factors affecting whether individuals would wait to share happy information in person

**See above – figures concerning sharing 'big news' have been removed.*

5 participants mentioned instances of having purposefully saved up information to provide topics of conversation in person, with 2 participants specifically mentioning a dislike of 'wasting' potential conversation by sharing it via electronic mediums. These two examples are interesting to compare. Both interviewees had an interest in acting – Jonathan a professional actor, and Nicholas heavily involved in amateur dramatics – and both highlighted the impact of telling a story, and audience reaction. Jonathan said:

> there have been times where I've thought it will be more- I would enjoy this time - say, with my girlfriend – I would enjoy this- I would enjoy the evening telling her these things now, as opposed to reiterating them in the text […] when the punchline's gone, the this [clicks fingers] is gone, the that's [clicks fingers] gone, you know – the- she knows what happened...

and Nicholas:

> em, it's almost something that annoys me about Facebook that I have sometimes already shared something that becomes quite- it would have been an interesting conversation with a group of actual people [laughs] and I've already kind of wasted it by putting it on Facebook […] it's like, people already know about something, that you could have surprised them with, and made them happy, and *seen* the reaction – and you've already put it up on Facebook, and they kind of- their reaction is the second-hand, I already know about it, 'oh yeah...' - it's not the kind of 'Wah!' you might have got...

Although both participants expressed the same views, the degree to which this feeling impacted on them varied, with Jonathan being extremely unlikely to share something electronically that would benefit from discussion or personal interaction, whereas Nicholas, despite a preference for face-to-face communication, confessed that he 'wasn't very good' at waiting to see people until sharing things. Nicholas also explained that his job involved a lot of social media use on topics that were of little personal interest to him. Accordingly, he compensated for this by using his own social media platforms as a way of communicating the things that he would otherwise share, had he free rein - "So it's almost...practice for when I actually manage to find a job where I can share things that I find interesting [laughs]". Jonathan, on the other hand, would frequently wait to see people before sharing happy information. This was strongly influenced by a hyper-awareness of others' availability and not wanting to inconvenience them if they were busy. Whereas 8 other participants mentioned reluctance to phone people for fear of bothering them, preferring instead to send a text which the recipient could read in their own time, Jonathan explained that he would often wait until seeing the person, rather than text:

> **I:** we'll take that group of friends for example - most of them who I was having that discussion with – if I was to text them they could well be at work, or doing something, or busy. So for them to suddenly pick up the phone, 'right, oh what's this about?', take a few seconds out of their day saying 'what's this about?' and then just get a- a- a joke, banter – you know, like, 'tuh, mm – right, not got the time for that....' […] Em, that- suddenly it feels as if my own stupidity is inconveniencing their day […] Em, so I would never l- that- take the Les Mis example, I'd never text anyone that because why not just wait till everyone's in the room – if it's still funny enough, or relevant enough it will- you know, it's not worth wasting people's time over reading a text.
>
> **R:** Right.
>
> **I:** Some people probably do, but....nah...

These examples demonstrate the influence of different personalities upon sharing behaviour, and highlight that varying factors impact on individuals to different degrees. Additionally, Nicholas's

comments reveal the overlap between leisure and work, suggesting that these impact on each other and cannot be separated entirely.

4.5.6 – Suitability of different mediums to different content

Electronic mediums allow sharing of original image / video content (cannot describe media sufficiently)	10
Big news better shared in person (or via phone / Skype substitute)	10
Social activities / experiences / celebration best shared in person	6
Stories better enhanced by sharing in person	4
More appropriate to share small or trivial content by an informal means such as text or Facebook, rather than phone or email	4

Table 9: Suitability of mediums for conveying certain content

As shown in Table 7 choice of medium was also affected by the perceived suitability of certain communications to particular content. Data surrounding this theme is presented in more detail in Table 9. Additionally, many participants expressed examples of being affected by perceptions of what seemed most socially appropriate. 3 participants gave examples of having shared happy information on a particular social media platform because this coincided with the type of content regularly shared by other users. Joyce additionally mentioned that as a new Twitter user she was purposefully copying the behaviours she observed on this platform: "Twitter's quite new for me and I'm trying to like, follow the behaviours that I see on there". Similarly, the content shared by Snapchat users was consistent with their knowledge of other users' behaviours. Joyce described Snapchatting as follows:

> It's mostly- mostly, predominantly people making faces, seems to be the trend on Snapchat […] my sister […] sends me ones of her making a funny face, and then you feel like you should make a funnier face to send back, and it's like an escalating thing.

The descriptions of 2 participants suggest that the existence and use of Snapchat as an app seems to hinge on mirroring trending behaviours and the practice of reciprocating in kind.

4.5.7 – Impact of 'social norms' on choice of medium

4 participants commented that for more trivial happy information they would use text or Facebook, because this seemed like the most suitable method; whereas phone-calls or emails seemed more

purposeful and direct, accordingly implying greater importance. Graham explained that for trivial happy information he would, “send it more than likely by Facebook because you don't- it's not cluttering up somebody's email”. In addition to not wanting to irritate people with such behaviour, participants also revealed awareness of social norms, voicing opinions that recipients would think it 'odd' to receive an email or a phone-call for a piece of information consisting of only several lines worth of content. Furthermore, 12 participants described occasions where information was deemed too trivial to directly contact a person and they would either wait until communicating with the person anyway, or would only mention it at all if it happened to become relevant in conversation or interaction:

> **I:** Yeah- like, especially guys at work – there'll be something I know that they'd appreciate and I'm not gonna see those guys until Friday – sometimes we often get together on a Friday after work – the guys I work with – so I would- definitely wouldn't be immediately on the phone to say, 'hey – guess what I just saw', I'd be like, no, I'll see them on Friday and tell them then...
> **R:** OK. So, is that because the content of that thing is going to work better telling them face-to-face, or because it would just be – not inappropriate, but, a bit weird for you to be phoning them at all?
> **I:** Uh, maybe a bit weird, em...yeah- maybe, part of that- partly that, but also i- i- some things are- you can't – you're not gonna do it justice over the phone, or it'd be in- a weird thing to be bringing up on the phone. In- if you're talking anyway, if you- if you're having a drink, if you're having a chat, then it's something you can then bring up […] it's- dunno, it seems better that way, or it seems more appropriate to be talking about it that way rather than maybe- maybe it's just it would be weird to make the effort to make the phone call, to say something like that […] or- if you're just chatting then, sure, yeah.

From these examples it can be seen that decisions are affected by the significance of the information; choosing the means that will allow the information to be conveyed with maximum impact; and also by participants' perception of via what means it is 'socially appropriate' or 'normal' to share certain content.

Perceptions of what was deemed 'normal' were also apparent in Tim's comments that whereas it would be normal to gather together to watch a film, it would be extremely unnatural to purposefully gather people together to crowd round a screen and share something small such as an online video clip or gif. Furthermore, Tim felt that while human interaction would increase the happiness of watching a comedy film, the happiness of experiencing something like a video clip would not be similarly enhanced by sharing this in person. In this instance Tim felt that the convenience of being able to enjoy the information in the comfort of your own space was more important. Contrastingly,

Brendan said that he would often purposefully wait to share music with a certain group of friends in person:

> **I:** Like, I'm more likely to wait until I see, like, a bunch of my friends that share the same musical taste as me; I'm more likely to wait and just play the music […] like in their presence, than I am, likely just to link them to something.
> **R:** OK. Why would that be?
> **I:** Em...I don't know, I think it's probably just the way it always ends up happening in terms of us hanging out […] Like, whenever that happens we usually have music on, so […] it's just- it becomes one of those things where we're like, 'aw, have you guys listened to this?', so dududu [mimes putting music on]; play [...] Eh, there's no real advantage to sharing it with them in person, I think it's just habit.

Brendan explained that the primary influence here was habit, as opposed to any specific desire to experience the music in person with his friends. It is significant that in this situation the dynamic of the group dictates that, despite the ease with which music can now be shared easily and instantly online, waiting to share this type of happy information in person is 'normal'. Comparison of these examples suggests that not only do 'social norms' affect how happy information is shared, but also that these 'norms' may vary between different groups.

4.5.8 – Choice of medium: summary

As anticipated, the most commonly cited factors affecting choice of medium related to convenience and access. These were also revealed to be significant in the studies of Olsson, Soronen and Väänänen-Vainio-Mattila (2008) and Fulton (2009a and b). Variation in usage of different social media platforms was interesting, and reveals that individuals' desire to tailor platforms to their own needs occurs in leisure contexts as well as work-based scenarios. The capacity of more personal and interactive mediums (in person, Skype, phone) to enhance the emotional experience also impacted many participants' information sharing. (Due to the nature of the research this theme was purposefully explored by the researcher, which will have contributed to the high number of participants commenting on this factor.) The requirement to match content with the most suitable communication method was expected to be significant. The presence of 'social norms' and the 'contagious' element of escalating Snapchat sharing have connections with the findings of Ames and Naaman (2007). It was interesting that the impact of 'social norms' affected not only the content shared within certain audiences, but also the *medium* by which happy information was shared.

4.6 - Responses

4.6.1 – Factors impacting upon importance of response, emotional experience, and future happy information sharing behaviour

Throughout the interviews, participants were questioned regarding how important it was that they received a response to their examples of shared happy information; the emotional effects of positive/negative/no response; and why responses were more important in some instances than others. Table 10 presents the opinions offered by interviewees related to factors influencing the importance of responses, resultant emotions, and impact on future sharing behaviours.

The general impression created across the interviews was that individuals enjoyed receiving positive responses, however the importance attached to a response (possibly best gauged through the level of disappointment were there a negative or lack of response) varied significantly dependent on specific circumstances. The aim of this question was not to generate quantifiable measures of importance, but to explore the factors which impacted on the sharer's desire for responses, and positive responses, to happy information shared.

Emotional impact	
Positive responses are 'nice'[3] / enhance happiness	30
Positive response via Facebook doesn't enhance happiness at all	1
Lack of or negative response would be emotionally disappointing (feel ignored / insulted)	9
Negative response has more negative emotional impact in person than over an electronic medium	7
Negative response has less negative emotional impact in person	4
Validation	
Positive response is important for validating why you shared with that person - that they appreciated it and your effort was worth it	15
Positive response validates your own happiness of the information	9
Validation not important	3
Factors relating to recipient	
Emotional impact of receiving response or not varies dependent on your expectation of a response / if you can understand why the person may not respond	12
Positive responses are more important from people you're closer to	12
Positive responses are less important from people you're closer to	5
Importance placed on recipient's response may depend on their knowledge of subject	2
Factors relating to content and motivation for sharing	
Positive responses are more important the greater excitement / investment the sharer has in the content	9
Importance of response depends on motivation for sharing happy information	9
Response less important to more trivial information	7
Would desire a greater degree of interaction with more complex information	6
Factors relating to medium used	
More important to receive responses to direct communications than public online sharing	14
Response to public Facebook or Twitter posts not important	6
Conditioned to want to receive 'likes' on Facebook	2
Responses to public Facebook / Twitter posts equally important - don't want to feel ignored	1
Responses to posts in major Twitter hashtag discussions not important – can still feel part of the discussion without receiving response	1
Responses less important if you use platform less frequently	3
Response important with electronic mediums to let you know the person has received the information	3
Impact on future sharing behaviour	
No response or negative response likely to affect what you share with person in future	15
Lack of response to social media posts would not affect future sharing	4
Negative responses are healthy, constituting further opinions and encouraging interaction	3
Only an extreme negative response would affect future sharing with that person	2
People who do respond are the people you share more frequently with – becomes habit	2

Table 10: Factors impacting upon importance of response, emotional experience, and future happy information sharing behaviour

[3] Participants frequently described receiving positive comments or responses as 'nice'. Accordingly, the same word has been used in the findings.

4.6.2 – Impact of motivation for sharing

Comparison of different examples suggested that the importance placed on responses was likely to be affected by the individual's motivation for sharing the happy information. Rita provided an example in which she had shared good news via Facebook because it was the easiest way to contact multiple family members who were expecting this information. When questioned as to the importance of a response she replied, “It wasn't really what I was looking for. Em, it wasn't my purpose of putting the message up...” Similarly, Jessica explained that very occasionally when extremely excited about sports results she would post a Facebook status update such as “BOOM!” Such posts were impulsive releases of excitement rather than a desire to convey any informative content, and she did not consider these to necessitate a response. Jessica provided another example, whereby she would communicate with friends via film or TV quotes. In this case responses were required - “so you're like, it doesn't *help* if I send you this line, and you don't send me back like, a different line. Like, you have to like, share this.” This also occurred where participants shared happy information with an interest to learn others' views or opinions. Jennifer advised that she loved musicals and often posted video-clips on her Facebook wall:

> **I**: Em, so I'm always curious to see what other people make of it.
> **R**: OK. So in those instances are you looking for responses, out of interest?
> **I:** Yeah, definitely. Definitely.
> **R**: Right, OK. Em, and if you posted something like that and you got no responses off it, would you be disappointed at all? Or...
> **I**: Eh, I probably would, but then I would probably strike up a conversation about somebody in particular about it, I would say.

The findings reveal that where happy information was shared with the goal of engaging the recipient to participate a response was considered more important.

4.6.3 – Impact of wider context

Various participants commented that responses were more important when they were extremely excited or personally invested in the information, for example when sharing happy news, or content which an individual was personally involved with in some way. Responses to more trivial or 'internet-generated' content were frequently considered less important. Two examples from one interviewee, however, highlight the complexity of factors at play. Mike described an occasion where he had shared, via both private emails and public Facebook and Twitter posts, a photo of

James McFadden, who had recently re-signed for Motherwell F.C. The photo was of McFadden when he had first signed for Motherwell, and the interviewee considered that since this was a 'unique' piece of content which he had sourced, rather than just a re-tweeted trending picture, this merited comment and response. Additionally, he expected a greater degree of interaction from the people he had emailed, in part because they were close friends, and in part because the act of emailing the item signified greater intent and attached further importance to the deliberate act of sharing with these people. Mike also provided an example of sharing a graphic related to the Supreme Court in America having struck down the Defense of Marriage Act. The graphic was created by a digital strategy agency with whom he had professional links. Mike advised that receiving responses was less important regarding the latter piece of content because he felt no particular ownership of this information – he is not American, not actively involved in LGBT campaigning, and was sharing content created by another party. However, to have received a negative response to this information would have had a significantly greater impact:

> **R:** And if you'd received negative comments on something like that…
> **I:** Yeah.
> **R:** ...would that have bothered you?
> **I:** Yes.
> **R:** OK. Why is it- why would that be?
> **I:** Em, because if people were not happy that something like that had happened, then I wouldn't really consider them friends.

A negative response to the McFadden photo, on the other hand, Mike advised would probably have been considered as footballing rivalry, and not have had a significant emotional impact. From this can be seen both the multitude of factors impacting on individuals' emotions surrounding responses to happy information shared, and the fact that information is not shared within a vacuum, but carries significance of the larger context. Similarly, John's comments revealed that the importance he placed on receiving a response was dependent on prior knowledge and subsequent expectations of the recipient's behaviour:

> If I'd posted something on my brother's wall and he hadn't responded, it wouldn't bother me; but if, like- if I'd posted something on your wall, and it was like something about- something adorable and panda-shaped, and you hadn't come back with something - I'd think you were probably not well, or dying or something.

This related to what a lack of response may signify within a wider context, rather than a direct reaction to the sharing experience. Again, however, this example is significant in revealing that the wider context impacts directly on the sharer's emotional experience surrounding the act of sharing happy information.

4.6.4 – Impact of prior expectations

Prior expectations were commonly mentioned as an influential factor. 6 participants mentioned that they expected responses less via Twitter, either because their contacts were less active on this medium, because they felt the brevity of the medium tended to generate less interaction generally, or, as Andrew said, "because there's so much of it you just burn through it and- and I accept that when I'm taking part on Twitter, I'm just one of those […] screeds that people- rhyming through, you know". 3 participants gave examples of instances where their expectations of a strong positive response had been let down, resulting in significant emotional disappointment. Jonathan described this scenario:

> I mean, there was one not too long ago, where I said to my f- you know, me and a- c- a few friends were having a discussion, and I said 'right, c- recast [laughs] re-cast Les Mis with the cast of Toy Story. W- with the characters of Toy Story'. Now, I think this is more- this sounded more funny at the time, 'cause I was sitting around a load of actors, and then I was *confident* enough to post this one on Facebook thinking, this is going to get loads- this is g- this is brilliant, this is gonna get a huge thread, this is gonna turn into a brilliant big conversation.....and it got like, 3 comments...[both laugh]...and a 'like'. And, eh, and even the person that told me to put it on- like, said put it on- suggested to put it onto Facebook was saying 'huh, I thought you'd get more interest than that' and then laughed at me! [R laughs] I was like, yeah- I- *this* – *this* is the reason – this is the reason I don't sort of put my neck out...

Later in the interview, Jonathan describes this experience as, "it was awful!" For Jonathan – who would not normally share happy information publicly online due to a perceived lack of interest – the confidence he'd had in the success of this idea, and the risk he had taken with such uncharacteristic behaviour, created circumstances in which the subsequent lack of response ("it died on its arse") had a significant negative emotional effect. Jonathan was being somewhat facetious and exaggerating for effect while re-telling this story, and did not consider this type of situation as important in the greater scheme of things. Nevertheless, the experience will impact on his future information sharing behaviour, showing that even situations involving more 'trivial' happy information sharing have significance.

4.6.5 – Impact of medium of communication and strength of relationship

Jonathan subsequently comments (as will be discussed later) that the lack of enthusiasm among recipients would have had less emotional effect had this occurred while sharing his idea in person,

where he would have felt better able to defend himself and laugh off criticism. This sentiment was echoed by 3 other participants. Similarly, John commented that during conversation the reaction to specific items of happy information shared is less significant than the dynamic of the overall discussion. On the other hand, 7 participants felt that lack of or negative response in a face-to-face environment was more emotionally disappointing, with 6 participants further commenting that when sharing via electronic mediums, if there was no response you could give the recipient the benefit of the doubt that they hadn't yet received the information. This polarity of opinion also occurred regarding the effect of the closeness of your relationship with the recipient upon the importance of the response. 12 participants felt that a positive response was more important from a close friend, whose opinions are more valued, whereas 5 participants responded that positive responses mattered less from close friends either because the relationship was strong enough that you didn't require their validation to the same extent or, as Stewart said, "you'd be more forgiving because [...] I suppose there's sort of- there's credit there". Such divided opinion suggests that, in addition to the variety of factors influencing the importance individuals place on responses to happy information, personality again plays a significant role.

4.6.6 – Responses: summary

The importance of reciprocity upon information behaviour was highlighted in various studies, including Goh et al. (2009), Hall, Widén and Paterson (2010) and Fulton (2009a). Contrastingly, Savolainen (2007) found that reciprocity was not prominent within the (altruistic) community he studied. This research explored the importance of responses, rather than the importance of reciprocity to information sharing. While these are distinct concepts – for example, an individual performing 'gift-giving' sharing may not expect reciprocal information sharing, but may still desire acknowledgement from the recipient – they may also overlap. Various participants responded that lack of response from recipients would negatively impact on their future sharing behaviour with that person; however, in many cases interviewees did not consider a response to be particularly important. The interviews also contained examples of the conclusion by Wasko and Faraj (2005) that in group sharing expectations of response could be shared across the group rather than responsibility falling on a particular individual. Desire for validation, and the positive or negative emotions surrounding receiving positive/negative/no responses (as reported by Hall, Widén and Paterson (2010) and Talja (2002)), were also found to be present among participants. It should be noted that Hall, Widén and Paterson (2010) and Talja's (2002) studies examined *communities* of sharing, as opposed to the individual behaviours investigated in this research.

Since the interviews focussed on individual examples of happy information sharing, these were being examined in isolation, outwith the wider context of individuals' sharing with the particular

recipients discussed. As such a full picture of reciprocal sharing between the participants and their ties was not developed. It would be interesting to explore this theme further, and investigate to what degree desire for responses and reciprocity are linked to personality and the dynamic of particular friendship groups. The most prominent finding on this theme was the multitude of factors and the degree of variation with which these affected the importance of receiving responses, emotional experiences, and individuals' future happy information sharing behaviour.

4.7 - How individuals portray themselves through happy information sharing

4.7.1 – Factors affecting individuals' portrayal of themselves through happy information sharing

All participants were asked “do you feel that what you're sharing can reflect your identity or the way that you're portraying yourself to other people?” and questioned as to what extent this impacted on their happy information sharing behaviour. The responses are summarised in Table 11.

Feels that happy information sharing does reflect portrayal of self, and this influences own happy information sharing behaviour	26
Doesn't consider how happy information sharing reflects portrayal of self, and this doesn't affect own happy information sharing behaviour	4
Considers how happy information sharing will reflect on other people more-so than considers how will reflect on self	3
Reasons for censoring sharing	
Risk of being judged by others affects happy information shared	11
Don't want to be 'that person who...’	9
Ensures that content shared is appropriate for the company present	9
Monitors what shares publicly (via any medium) due to professional considerations	3
Portraying different personas online	
Wouldn't put rude or risqué content publicly on Facebook	5
Attempts to portray a particular persona on certain online platforms	4
Feels that online persona is a more 'idealised' version of self	2
More positive via online platforms	3
Mediums via which participants are more or less censored	
Monitors self less when sharing with close friends	13
Monitors self less when sharing in person	6
Monitors self more when sharing in person	2
Monitors self less when sharing on Tumblr	3
Monitors self less when sharing on Twitter	2

Table 11: Factors affecting individuals' portrayal of themselves via happy information sharing

The participants who responded that consideration of how they were portraying themselves did not affect their happy information sharing either explained that they were generally impulsive, acting without thinking, or were not concerned about other people's opinions. The majority of participants felt the happy information they shared did reflect the way they were portraying themselves, and that this did affect their sharing behaviour. As Simon replied:

> I would be- in the same- in the same way as I would say the things you say to people reflect – well, obviously – reflect on yourself, reflect on the way people perceive you, the- the impression they get of you – absolutely in the same way. If you're sending something to someone that's a r- that's gonna be a reflection on, well, of- of, a reflection of what you like, and it couldn't- I don't see how it co- could not affect how somebody perceived you.

Participants described presenting themselves differently in different company, with 'appropriateness' for the audience being a common consideration.

4.7.2 – Creating personas online

Some participants purposely used their personal social media platforms for interacting and networking within their professional field, which subsequently affected the way they wished to appear on that platform. As Erica explained, “that's the sort of stuff that I like to share with others because then I'm portraying that I'm- I am interested in libraries; [puts on 'educated' voice] I *know* about these things”. James commented on not wishing to undermine his opinions being taken seriously, by associating himself with twee content:

> if I want to enter into serious discussions with people on Twitter about something to do with, eh, like say digitization or information literacy, or just, you know, a new band's album coming out, then I feel that, like, having eh, you know, eh, a- a- a video of pug puppies on my timeline sort of devalues that a bit.

Other participants mentioned that although they weren't deliberately attempting to present any specific persona or side of themselves via social media, they felt that these platforms did to an extent represent an 'idealised' version of oneself, revealing the aspects of your personality you particularly wanted to highlight. For certain participants (including the 2 teachers) concern not to jeopardize their professional appearance influenced their sharing habits even more strongly. Mike (a Communications Officer for a political party) described being cautious not to put himself in a position whereby information shared would reflect badly on himself, particularly where his intent could be “misconstrued by people who would seek to misconstrue”. These participants felt that they monitored their sharing equally on social media and offline in wider company. Another

participant stated that he deliberately didn't add many colleagues to his Facebook friends so that he did not have to censor himself in this way online. Contrastingly, Jennifer (an actress), responded that while she was very aware of casting directors or agents possibly seeing her Facebook page, and deliberately used it for self-advertising, she did not feel this impacted on her sharing of happy information. It is worth mentioning here that Jennifer did not at any time mention an example of sharing controversial or risqué content, and thus it is possible that this variation to a degree reflects interpretations of 'happy information' as well as individuals' habits. It was significant that although the research specifically focussed on sharing happy information *outwith* a work context, it was clear that the degree to which individuals could separate their professional and personal spheres varied greatly.

4.7.3 – Audience affecting the way individuals portray themselves

Various examples occurred of individuals monitoring their sharing based on potential judgement from other people. Participants described monitoring risqué or rude content among certain audiences; not wanting to share 'boring' or 'not funny' things "because I don't want to be associated with not funny things"; not always sharing good news, as that could be portrayed as boasting; and being very aware of spelling and accuracy when sharing messages, due to not wanting to appear ignorant. Jessica also consciously censored the type of content she shared:

> 'cause I don't wanna brand myself as Super-duper-geek […] I'm comfortable with Super-geek [R laughs], but the 'duper' is problematic. [R laughs] So, I like, limit that. Like, I don't think I post any of Supernatural even though I find them hilarious...

For Sarah and Brendan, Tumblr offered a platform filled with 'like-minded people' via which they could share a greater volume of information on certain topics without risk of irritating or being judged by other people. As Sarah explained:

> Because Tumblr is more of a place where pe- there's like-minded people. So like, I g- I'm like, in contact with the blogs where people have the same interests as me, specifically like, if it's like Doctor Who or s- like, a certain TV programme, or certain film, then I'd re-blog something from that, and I know that they would find it funny as well […] or they would relate to it, or understand. But if you bring some of that to Facebook, sometimes it can be quite...well, I find it kind of annoying when people, like, constantly have statuses and are doing things- things that you don't really get […] that much – if it's like constant, so Tumblr's a place where you can talk constantly about that stuff.

All 3 Tumblr users commented that they monitored sharing least via this platform due to being in the presence of solely like-minded people, with Erica further commenting that she was less

censored due to her anonymity on this site. For many participants, self-censorship occurred the least amongst people they were closer to because there was deemed to be less risk of judgement or unintentionally causing offence. Sarah's comments above also reveal an equivalent sentiment to, 'not wanting to be *that* person who...' This sentiment was most commonly expressed in relation to people who frequently 'bombarded' their acquaintances with happy information without considering perceived interest; with 2 participants additionally criticising people who constantly updated Facebook with everything they were doing, commenting that this was 'sad' and that those peopled had to 'get a life'. Participants described such habits as annoying, and did not want to a) bother other people with such actions and b) be open to criticism from others by demonstrating these behaviours.

4.7.4 – Medium affecting way individuals portray themselves

In the above examples, the factors influencing the way individuals monitor their happy information sharing relates to the way they wish to present themselves to a particular audience. As Mike explained, "it would all come down to who I was engaging with – it wouldn't really depend on the nature of the communication […] So if I was talking to a very very close friend, I would happily espouse the same views through an email than I would […] through face-to-face chat, and vice-versa". For other participants, however, the medium also had an impact. Monica was conscious of not updating her social media too frequently, "because then you seem like you've not got a life […] and you're just a bit sad". 6 participants reported that they were far less censored offline, generally due to natural impulsiveness. Jonathan and Jessica also described being more confident sharing certain topics in person, because they felt more comfortable justifying or explaining themselves face-to-face than they would via an electronic medium. Jonathan explained:

> I can judge things there in the room- that- i- it- there in the room at that moment in time, and I can back myself up, or defend myself in any way- I mean, I feel- i- I feel the need to in that moment. If someone was to say for example....that, you know, if someone was to suddenly say 'why the hell would I ever do that? That's shit,' eh- or, 'this is a crap game,' I could happily just sort of, like, knock myself- like, sort of just say, 'really? I was thinking about this for 20 minutes! This kept me entertained for absolutely ages'. Em, but it's because I'm there in the moment and able to sort of have that, you know, defend myself with that sort of banter […] as opposed to, when something is at the interpretation of other people […] online.

Accordingly, for these participants the happy information they shared publicly on Facebook was restricted to content that reflected aspects of their personality they were 100% comfortable

discussing. An additional disadvantage of electronic mediums mentioned by 3 participants was that information could more easily be ambiguous and misconstrued. Contrastingly, certain interviewees mentioned that they would usually be more censored offline because the people they most commonly encountered in person throughout the day (e.g. colleagues) were unlikely to have shared interest in their happy information. 2 participants mentioned that they were often less considered when posting on Twitter, because it could *feel* more private as tweets just filtered down and disappeared among the reams of information.

Jessica explained that she monitored herself on Facebook because she was aware that, “the like, snapshot you get from social media is very different from the actual impression you have of someone in person”. She gave the following description of a friend:

> all of her posts on Facebook are straight up, like, 'vaccinations are terrible – they will kill you; don't do this...' it's- she- she is like...she's a little nutty [R laughs] um, and you know that in person – like, you're aware that she's a little nutty, but she's a little nutty and like, hilarious and very nice, and so, like, I enjoy being friends with her. On Facebook you don't get the other sides of that, like, you don't get the like, shading involved in that – you just get the nuttiness...

Accordingly, Jessica was conscious that sharing certain interests or emotions over Facebook could potentially be seen as odd or irritating in a way that wouldn't occur if balanced with a fuller perspective of the person revealed through conversation. Graham echoed these sentiments, adding this 'snapshot' was even less rounded with Twitter. Although the way Graham monitored himself was primarily dependent on the company, he felt that the medium was also significant. He described sharing in person as a more dynamic process in which your understanding of the audience and what was appropriate or 'safe' to share could develop and change as the conversation progressed, whereas this could not occur through sharing via social media posts. Monica's descriptions of Snapchat reveal that both the recipients and the medium affected which photos of herself she would be comfortable sharing. Initially she commented that, “the fact [the photo] only lasts for a couple of seconds is incentive to not really care about what it is […] so, it's different to what I would post to Facebook”. She subsequently revealed that there was the facility on certain phones to save Snapchat photos as a screenshot. While this did not prevent her sharing embarrassing photos, this was because she exclusively Snapchatted with close friends:

> I've never actually stopped myself […] from sending a particularly disgusting photo, just 'cause I knew there was the potential for it to be saved. Mainly, because I have a small amount of faith in my friends that they're not that horrible to me. […] But, I think it probably would stop some people maybe? I think I've heard chat about it being a deterrent.

The 'trend' for sharing funny self-photos via Snapchat, the standard practice of Snapchat photos

deleting after a few seconds, and Monica's trust in her friends all contributed to her feeling willing to share embarrassing photos of herself in this manner.

4.7.5 – Opposing factors impacting on way individuals portray themselves

A final example given by one participant was interesting in that it revealed an instance of complex and opposing factors in action. Pamela has a severe back disability, and commented that she deliberately tried to maintain a positive persona on Facebook because she didn't want people to feel sorry for her, and also because she had many family members on Facebook, from whom she tended to hide the extent of her pain so as not to cause them worry. Pamela additionally described one relative – with whom her only significant contact was via Facebook – who questioned the reality of her disability and made 'nippy' loaded comments, "if it's that I've been anywhere or done anything that he thinks- that doesn't correspond to someone with a bad spine..." Depending on Pamela's mood she could sometimes shrug this off, but other times she refrained from sharing things on Facebook that may trigger such comments. Although Pamela did not want to be defined by her disability and often focussed her sharing on highlighting the experiences she could enjoy, such sharing could at times be restricted if it could lead to her disability being called into doubt.

4.7.6 - How individuals portray themselves through happy information sharing: summary

Wasko and Faraj (2000); Ames and Naaman (2007); Olsson, Soronen and Väänänen-Vainio-Mattila, (2008); Hall, Widén and Paterson (2010) and Chua, Goh and Lee (2012) all discussed individual self-promotion or portrayal of a particular self-image, and found these to be particularly prominent within online environments. The findings revealed instances of individuals creating a particular self-image via social networking platforms; however it is also true that users of the social network site Tumblr considered this a platform where they could 'be themselves' – sometimes more-so than offline.

The findings confirmed that individuals frequently consider sharing of happy information to impact on the way they portray themselves, and perceive themselves to be appearing to others. As anticipated, present company and strength of relationships had a significant impact. It was interesting that once again the medium via which happy information was being shared also impacted on the elements of themselves that participants were willing to share.

4.8 - Act of sharing increasing happiness

4.8.1 – Ways in which sharing happy information increases happiness

While the research specifically examined the sharing of happy information, many of the themes explored correspond to information sharing behaviour in general (e.g. importance of response, choice of medium used). The final theme was more specifically related to happy information, investigating whether the act of sharing happy information increases the individual's happiness. 25 participants were asked, "do you feel that the act of sharing happy information increases your happiness?" Either in response to this question, or in relation to an example provided during the interview, all 30 participants described an instance of their happiness being enhanced by the act of sharing the happy information. Except for the asterisked point, the figures below represent combined numbers of answers given in response to this specific question and comments mentioned throughout the interview.

Pleasure in observing others' happiness / making others happy	10
Sharing introduces a social element which is pleasurable	7
Want to share / no benefit in keeping happy information to yourself	6
Sharing allows you to re-live / re-experience the happiness of the situation	6
Dependent on the type of happy information – for some content sharing does not enhance the happiness	6
Sharing exposes individual to new perspectives and fresh ideas which enhance the experience	5
Pleasure in discovering serendipitously that unexpected people share your tastes	3
Pleasure in introducing something to a person, which they enjoyed but didn't originally expect to enjoy	2
Whether act of sharing increases happiness depends on recipient's response	*2**

Table 12: Ways in which sharing happy information increases sharer's happiness

**As seen previously, the positivity or negativity of responses impacted on individuals' happiness, with all 30 participants describing instances where positive responses enhanced their happiness, and a further 9 participants relating negative or no response to emotional disappointment. In response to the above question of whether the act of sharing increased happiness, only 2 participants specifically mentioned that it depended on the response received. One participant made an interesting observation that while a positive response would enhance his excitement and*

elation, a negative response may decrease his happiness at that moment (particularly if this resulted in debate), but would not decrease his own pleasure of the happy information itself.

4.8.2 – Individual personality vs. human trait

In response to this question, where participants mentioned an urge to share there was an interesting mixture of references to individual personalities, and a human need to share. Tina's explanation of, "I like to share, and I always have done […] that's just the way I've always been," attributed the pleasure in sharing to aspects of her own personality. Sandra's comment, "I think we're- we're naturally sociable people, and keeping [happy information] to yourself is kind of, pointless almost," and Mary's thoughts that, "I think it's a very human trait in us that we- we want to share with- with others – it's the whole, shared happiness is double happiness..." attributed the need to share to human nature. Interestingly, Simon's reflections seemed to combine the two. He commented, "this is probably a very personal thing," before continuing, "if I come across something and I think oh that's great, or that's funny, or that's happy, then it's- there's something missing if you're not- don't have someone else to discuss that with, or share it with I suppose. It's probably the whole reason you do [share]". Although initially Simon acknowledged it was likely to be an individual personality trait, the phrase 'it's probably the whole reason you do' implied a feeling that this motivation was, if not a universal human trait, then at least more common than relating specifically to himself.

4.8.3 – Sharing widely vs. restricting sharing to select group

Various people commented on the nature of the content affecting whether or not it would benefit from being shared more widely, with several participants commenting that more personal or reflective happy information did not necessarily become happier through sharing. Examples given included watching a sunset, or photos which had significance only to the sharer. With 25 participants the question was raised of whether certain happy information was best kept within a select group, whereby sharing it more widely would detract from the happiness. 9 participants provided examples of instances where sharing happy information solely with a close friend or family member, or a person with whom an experience had been shared, enhanced the happiness of the experience. Variation of intensity occurred within these examples. To certain people, having 'our thing' was an important aspect of their relationship with that person, whereas other people explained that while they enjoyed the exclusivity, they wouldn't go to the extent of excluding people. 9 participants felt that it was not important to restrict information to a small group, with 5 participants further mentioning that sharing happy information with other people did not undermine

the act of sharing with the original person, and 4 participants expressing sentiments of 'the more the merrier', explaining that sharing more widely enhanced the happiness by providing additional people you could interact with regarding that information. 5 participants, however, felt that 'sharing widely' did not necessarily enhance the happiness, and it depended on the further parties' motivation for wishing to be included, and what they could add to the experience. 11 participants commented that (where another party expressed interest) they would only restrict wider sharing when it was impossible or required too much effort to provide the background knowledge necessary to appreciate the happy information. 2 participants were particularly conscious of the desire not to exclude others, one through dislike of being on the receiving end of such treatment, and another because he disliked a tendency towards 'protectiveness' of content within fan-culture. Both of these participants described instances of deliberately attempting to share minority or niche interests more widely in order to generate further interest, which would hopefully support the production of their comic or show, and also establish other people with whom relevant happy information could be shared and enjoyed.

4.8.4 – Ownership and protectiveness over happy information

The concept of 'protectiveness' or ownership of content was exhibited on several occasions throughout the interviews. The sample included 2 flatmates, both of whom discussed the same example of shared happy information (a YouTube video of goats screaming like humans) during the interviews. The following conversation occurred with Michelle:

> **R:** ...and there's no-one else you share the goat things with – that's just Rita?
> **I:** No-one else finds it as funny! [laughs] I've tried – I've tried!

Michelle proceeded to reveal, “I think it's nice that we have those things [that we share just between us],” however, her behaviour suggests that this happy information was something she would also have enjoyed to share more widely. Rita expressed a slightly different emotional reaction to the instances where they shared this with other people:

> **R:** OK. And how did it make you feel that their response wasn't as strong as yours and Michelle's – did that matter?
> **I:** No, em, I didn't expect them to kinda jump on board and be like, 'oh this is great!' and join in with it as well. I think, if they'd done that I probably would have had the opposite reaction, I probably would have felt a bit like 'aw, this is our thing!' like, we'd told you about it only because we'd screamed at you, we haven't, [both laugh] we haven't told you so that you can scream at other people too.

While the concept of 'our thing' was in this case linked to a special relationship between two people,

Tina demonstrated this on a wider scale. Discussing her reasons for sharing things directly with people rather than posting them on her own Facebook wall, Tina commented:

> **I:** ...there has been times when I've gone 'I'm not sharing- I'm not putting it up on my timeline' because somebody else'll go into it and find it, and then they'll- but I've got a- a...
> **R:** And then they'll what?
> **I:** Well, then they'll use it and they'll share it, and I'll think [R laughs] 'I don't want you to share it'...

Although Tina described herself as a very sharing person, to whom the act of sharing gave great enjoyment, she also at times felt a desire to restrict that enjoyment to her own circle of friends, without allowing the happiness to spread more widely. Another participant, Tim, felt that the greatest advantage of the internet was allowing information to be shared more easily and widely, and that, "it's good to be part of that". While Tim didn't mind information being re-shared, he wanted to be credited when this happened. Describing a video-game trailer he had shared on his own page, Tim commented:

> **I:** ...em- there's one or two people that stole it. Just like, I was like, 'pfff – that's pretty mean' like you should- Facebook...
> **R:** What- and, reposted it?
> **I:** Yeah, without- without any kudos. [R laughs] That's a bit- they should- they should press the share button, have a little- 'cause like, a- I- stupid as it is, it's- it's all about internet kudos. Like that's- that's half the reason people post stuff on- like, on Facebook.

Facebook has the facility to 're-share' content, which allows you to re-post content on your own or a friend's wall, but states 'X person shared a link via X person', thus acknowledging the source. If a person simply copies and pastes a link, this message will not appear. Tim felt that having sourced this content initially, for others to be re-posting this without crediting him robbed him of the respect or 'internet kudos' he was due, should other people enjoy this item. One other participant made a related comment that his estimation of people increased if they posted something he deemed 'cool', and reasoned that a desire for others to view him in this light probably motivated his own sharing on a sub-conscious level. It can be seen from these examples that feelings of ownership or protectiveness over happy information can cause barriers to sharing.

4.8.5 – Act of sharing increasing happiness: summary

The experience of pleasure in the act of sharing was reported by Rioux (2004) and Wasko and Faraj (2005). Additionally, the concept of 'super-sharers' present in the studies of Talja (2002) and Fulton (2009a) was related to specific individuals who took particular pleasure in the act of sharing.

The findings revealed all participants have experienced pleasure in the act of sharing. There was variation among participants as to whether they attributed this to their own individual personality or a universal human trait. Research involving comparison of personality types could explore this further. The pleasure in making others happy demonstrated by some participants is reflective of the 'gift-giving' behaviour reported by Van House et al. (2005) and Hall, Widén and Paterson (2010).

It was interesting to find that barriers to sharing such as protectiveness and restricting sharing within a small group also occurred within the context of sharing happy information. Given the different behaviours demonstrated by connected individuals, it would be interesting to analyse the flow of happy information around groups using social network analysis, particularly in internet environments.

CHAPTER 5: LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 - Limitations

The research was intended to be broad in scope, investigating the range of factors motivating individuals' sharing of happy information within the given context. Various factors were consistently mentioned by participants across the interviews, and it can be assumed that these commonly impact on sharing behaviour of happy information. Equally, many participants made comments which were mentioned by few or no other interviewees, with the 30th interviewee making comments which had not been voiced by any of the previous participants. Had more participants been interviewed, the researcher assumes that further factors would have been mentioned. Accordingly, while the researcher is confident that the most common motivating factors have appeared in the findings, it is acknowledged that the findings do not comprise a comprehensive list of the factors motivating individuals' sharing of happy information.

Various factors were revealed through discussion surrounding individuals' examples (such as feelings of ownership over happy information, or sharing with a direct intention to discover other people's opinions) which were not raised across the entire sample, and thus other participants' opinions regarding the relevance of these factors are unknown. Had the research been on a larger scale, a mixed-method approach could have been adopted, involving additional surveying of participants. The use of surveying (involving ordering of factors on a scale of importance, or applying a likert scale to each factor) could have generated comparable data across the sample regarding, for example, the frequency with which individuals use different means of communication for happy information sharing; and the comparative degree to which individuals feel specific factors impact on their happy information sharing behaviour (if at all). This would have been too ambitious within the scale and time-constraints of this study

The research investigates sharing behaviour within a very specific context – the sharing of 'non-task-orientated happy information within a casual leisure environment'. While many of the factors revealed in this research are similar to those mentioned in other studies exploring information sharing in work or study-based environments, these findings cannot be presumed to apply to different contexts. Furthermore, this research investigated factors influencing the behaviour of *individuals*, and the findings cannot be interpreted as representative of the happy information sharing behaviour of groups or communities of sharing. Additionally, this study looked only at the giving aspect of individuals' information sharing, and does not explore factors impacting on behaviours related to receiving happy information, and the resultant emotional effects.

At the beginning of the interviews, the researcher asked participants how frequently they shared happy information (e.g. daily, weekly, less often). Although it was acknowledged that this would be difficult for participants to quantify, it was deemed important towards understanding the participant sample. Several participants mentioned after the interview that they shared more happy information than they had previously realised. In hindsight, it would have been more appropriate to ask participants how often they shared happy information at the end of the interview. At this point, interviewees would have spent more time thinking about their behaviour, and had greater clarity regarding the types of happy information relevant to the study. To an extent, the researcher took it for granted in the earlier interviews that once the context of the interviews had been established initially, it was self-evident that all questions regarding individuals' sharing habits related to their sharing of happy information. Subsequently, the researcher became more aware of reiterating the phrase 'happy information' continually throughout the interview, to prevent interviewees responding in relation to more general information sharing behaviour. It is possible that in the earlier interviews, the data has been slightly affected by interviewees describing more general information sharing habits.

5.2 – Additional reflections on the research project

The researcher was satisfied that the use of semi-structured interviews was appropriate and facilitated the discovery of findings which would not have been generated using a more structured interview tool consisting solely of the potential questions derived from the literature review and the researcher's own experience. Additionally, one pilot interviewee advised following the interview that it had been a more relaxed and comfortable dynamic than a structured interview she had previously experienced. This supported the researcher's initial feelings that the less structured interview format contributed to a more conversational environment in which interviewees would be more likely to volunteer richer qualitative data. Overall, the researcher felt that this goal was achieved. Only 2 participants demonstrated embarrassment throughout the interviews, while describing significant happiness in relation to examples they deemed silly or trivial. Both interviewees, however, felt sufficiently comfortable to volunteer and subsequently discuss these examples without reluctance. 5 participants commented that the interview had passed more quickly than anticipated, with some making additional comments such as, “that wasn't bad” or, “that was painless”. 3 further participants commented that they had enjoyed their interview, describing it as a fun and/or very interesting experience.

The looser structure of the interviews did cause challenges, particularly in view of the researcher's complete inexperience as an interviewer. Although the researcher printed the 6 key questions for reference during the interview, occasionally questions were forgotten. This can be seen where the

findings state, for example, '27 participants were asked...' Similarly, although the researcher noted down, at the beginning of each interview, the means of communication used by each participant, in 3 cases lesser used methods were overlooked for follow-up discussion. These oversights occasionally reflected the researcher experiencing pressure, either because time was running short, or where the interviewee was not forthcoming and the researcher was aware of struggling to generate discussion. More frequently, however, these lapses occurred as the researcher was required to continuously multitask: simultaneously listen to what interviewees were saying, ascertain what would be asked next, and make mental notes if wishing to follow-up on certain points. In this respect, the interviews were more difficult to conduct than would have been the case with a more structured format. However, these occurrences were relatively few, and overall the researcher was pleased with the quality of the interviews.

As is common with qualitative research, the findings are subject to a degree of interpretation by the researcher. 3 interviewees mentioned either during or following the interview that they had not previously considered the topics discussed, or the reasons behind their behaviours and choices in this area. It is reasonable to acknowledge that this may also have been the case for other participants, and that participants may have been developing their trains of thought throughout the duration of the interview. Where the researcher realised during the interviews that participants had contradicted themselves, this would be queried. For example:

> **I:** ...that if- if s- if you c- it's almost like e-eh...a confirmation that what you think is cool is cool. [laughs]
> **R:** OK. And, b- before you said that [validation] was less important to you now that you're older...?
> **I:** It is, it is, it is- it's not important, but it's nice to have.

In other cases, however, inconsistencies were not discovered until analysis of the data. In these instances, the researcher would interpret which response was felt to be most representative of the individual's behaviour based on the impression gained throughout the interview. Additionally, throughout discussion related to individuals' reactions to responses, there was some overlap in certain participants' comments where they mentioned the importance of 'a response' and 'a positive response' in specific circumstances. Again, a degree of interpretation occurred, whereby if the researcher considered, during analysis of the data, the interviewee to be treating 'a response' and 'a positive response' as synonymous in the situation then these were not separated in the findings.

5.3 – Recommendations for future research

As discussed, the reviewed literature revealed no studies examining the specific topic of research investigated in this project. This research was accordingly exploratory in nature, and the findings prompt further questions which could be investigated with future research:

- This research presented a range of factors motivating and impacting upon happy information sharing behaviour, however it did not attempt to demonstrate the importance of different factors, nor the frequency of their occurrence in relation to individuals' happy information sharing behaviour. This is an extremely important topic for future research, which, as discussed, could be investigated using a mixed-method approach.

- This research revealed a range of factors motivating and impacting upon individuals' happy information sharing behaviour within a casual leisure context. The significance of these factors could be further investigated within different contexts and environments.

- While the research did not seek to demonstrate trends within any particular group or demographic, several findings suggested that behaviours differ among different groups. Participants in certain professions were heavily influenced by the potential risks of sharing certain content publicly. 3 participants mentioned during interviews that desire for validation and fear of judgement from other people impacted less on their behaviour than it had done when they were younger. Future research comparing the behaviours of specific groups (e.g. different age ranges, professions, hobbies) could investigate whether these vary between different demographics. It would also be interesting to investigate the impact of motivating factors in relation to different personality types.

- The findings suggested that the strength of relationships impacts on sharing behaviour and emotional impact. This could be further investigated both in online and offline communities. Happy information sharing was also at times seen to be affected by feelings of protectiveness and ownership over information. Both of these areas could be further investigated within groups using social network analysis. Additionally, protective behaviour towards happy information could be investigated in relation to Chatman's 'small worlds' theory (Chatman, 1996).

- One participant reported that she now lived in an isolated situation with reduced regular human contact, and fewer strong relationships than in the past. This individual considered sharing of happy information particularly important for her psychological and emotional well-being in her current circumstances. The research did not explore instances of sharing happy information with strangers or the possibility of building friendships through happy information

sharing, however case studies and experiments in this area could investigate the potential of sharing happy information (on- and offline) in forming human connections and increasing happiness for isolated individuals.

- The findings of this research reveal that in many situations happiness can be increased by the act of sharing happy information; however this was not always necessarily the case. Further research is required to better understand how and in what circumstances happiness can be enhanced through the sharing of happy information.

- As demonstrated by Chua, Goh and Lee (2012), the acts of giving and receiving constitute different behaviours. This research focussed only on the giving aspect of happy information sharing; however individuals' behaviour regarding receiving happy information shared by others also requires investigation.

5.4 - Conclusion

The goal of this research was to investigate the factors motivating and impacting upon individuals' sharing of non-task-orientated happy information. Additionally, the research aimed to investigate the affective states involved in individuals' happy information sharing. These were investigated within the context of a casual leisure environment. The areas of investigation involved the factors impacting on why individuals choose to share such information, with whom and via which methods. The research examined in greater depth individuals' behaviour related to responses to information shared; the impact of how individuals wished to portray themselves upon their happy information sharing behaviour; and the relationship between individuals' happy information sharing and their emotions.

The research uncovered a range of factors motivating and impacting on individuals' happy information sharing behaviour, which are presented in the findings. Overall, the most prominent finding is that the different aspects of happy information sharing behaviour (why, how and with whom individuals share) are all interlinked, impacting on each other. Additionally, the findings revealed that most individuals do consider sharing happy information important to their friendships and relationships; that most individuals do consider their happy information sharing behaviour to affect and be affected by the way in which they wish to portray themselves; and that in many cases the act of sharing happy information invokes or increases happiness. The primary contribution of these findings to LIS research on information behaviour is the establishment of the list of factors motivating individuals' information sharing behaviour of non-task-orientated happy information within a casual leisure environment.

One final observation is that many interviewees positioned different types of happy information onto a scale of importance, with silly or trivial happy information such as jokes or internet memes at one end of the scale, and big happy information such as weddings, babies or (hypothetically) world peace at the other. The smallest conceivable examples of happy information among participants were those things which momentarily put a smile on your face, and were then forgotten. In the researcher's view, this confirms that if the *smallest* imaginable happy information creates sufficient emotional impact to generate a smile, then this can be considered a powerful source, worthy of further research.

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Appendix A: Recruitment advert for volunteers

The following advert was posted on the researcher's personal Facebook profile, and on the Facebook pages of two groups of which the researcher is a member. The same advert was distributed amongst the researcher's classmates via the university email, and amongst friends and family using the researcher's personal email. The adverts circulated via email encouraged re-sharing of the advert, but excluded the phrase 'feel free to repost this message', which was relevant only to Facebook sharing.

SEEKING VOLUNTEERS FOR STUDY INTO SHARING HAPPY INFORMATION

Hi all. I'm conducting a study for my Masters, researching individuals' sharing behaviour of information that makes them happy. Participants must be 18 or over and be regular internet users. The study will involve a 30-45 minute interview in July, either in person or via Skype - so people based outwith Glasgow can also take part. If you are interested in participating please contact me (Fiona Tinto) either via reply or private message.

Please feel free to repost this message and share with anyone you know who may be interested in participating.

Thanks!
Fiona

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form.

*The researcher's contact details and teaching staff's names and contact details have been removed. These were included in the information sheet distributed to participants.

Study into individuals' information sharing behaviour of 'happy information'
Fiona Tinto, University of Strathclyde

Researcher: Fiona Tinto
University: University of Strathclyde
Department: Department of Computer and Information Sciences

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Title of Investigation	Study into individuals' information sharing behaviour of 'happy information'
Duration of investigation	June 2013 - September 2013
Researcher	Fiona Tinto
	Student at University of Strathclyde, department of Computer and Information Sciences
Researcher's email	**researcher@researchersemail.co.uk**
Researcher's tel.	Researcher's phone no
Supervisor	John Doe I
Supervisor's email	johndoeI@johndoe.co.uk

Summary of Investigation

The purpose of this research is to investigate the motivating factors behind people's information sharing behaviour of information that makes them happy.

The study will investigate this type of information only within a leisure context. The study will **not** investigate information encountered within a work or study context, nor information which is useful in that it responds to a specific known task or problem.

> E.g. finding an advert for a nice hotel, which makes you happy because you have been looking for somewhere to stay on holiday – the study would **not** cover this because the information has been encountered in relation to a specific task.

What the study will involve

Participants will be expected to take part in one interview, which will be conducted either face-to-face or via Skype. Interviews will be audio-recorded. Participants will be asked questions relating to their information sharing habits and also permitted – if willing and happy to do so – to log-in to email, social

networking sites, etc. and provide examples of their internet-based information sharing. Manual notes will also be taken during the interviews.

The interviews will take place in July. Face-to-face interviews will take place in a location, agreed by researcher and participant, with internet access. Prior to the interview, participants will be asked to think of examples of 'happy information' which they have shared, which can be discussed in the interview.

All aspects of the research are entirely voluntary and participants are under no obligation to answer any questions with which they feel uncomfortable. Participants can choose to withdraw or have their data withdrawn from the research at any time without having to provide a reason for doing so. All data will be treated confidentially. All names will be changed and personally identifiable information removed in the final dissertation.

Participants will be requested to sign a consent form; or in the case of participants taking part in Skype interviews, reply to an email saying 'I consent'. This indicates that the participant is aware of what their participation involves, and that any questions concerning the investigation have been satisfactorily answered.

Data storage and security

The recorded interviews will be transcribed and quotes will be used in the final report. Data will be stored on password protected computers and, where the file format permits, files will be encrypted and password protected. To protect confidentiality, all names will be removed or changed in the transcripts and final report, and personally identifiable information removed. All files will be saved with anonymous file names. All hard-copy data will be stored in a locked folder. All data will be destroyed within a week of receiving the project results (September).

Ethics approval

Ethics approval has been obtained for this research project. If participants have any queries or concerns concerning the ethics of this study, they should contact the researcher. Should participants wish to raise any **ethical** queries or concerns with a party other than the researcher, they should contact Prof. John Doe II at the University of Strathclyde: johndoeII@johndoe.co.uk

IF PARTICIPANTS HAVE ANY QUERIES REGARDING THE PROJECT, PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO CONTACT ME, EITHER VIA EMAIL (researcher@researchersemail.co.uk) OR VIA PHONE (phone no).

Fiona Tinto

Study into individuals' information sharing behaviour of 'happy information'.

Researcher: Fiona Tinto
University: University of Strathclyde
Department: Department of Computer and Information Sciences

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

– I confirm that I have read the information sheet and understand what participation in this study involves, and that the researcher has answered any queries I may have.

– I understand that all aspects of the study are voluntary and that I am free to withdraw myself or my data from the research at any time without having to provide a reason for doing so.

– I understand that all information will remain confidential and no personally identifiable information made publicly available.

– I consent to interviews being audio-recorded.

– I consent to participating in this study.

I confirm that I have read and agree to the above and am willing to participate in the above project.

Name of participant (please print name): .....

Participants signature: ……

Date:

Appendix C: Descriptions of mobile and web communication mediums used by participants.

Facebook: A free online social networking site. Facebook users create an online profile and can connect with other users by adding them as 'friends'. The site allows public and private sharing of messages, photos, links, media content, Instant Message chat etc. Facebook is widely used internationally.

Twitter: A free online social networking and 'microblogging' service. Users can post 'tweets' - messages of up to 140 characters. Other media content can also be shared. Posts can be grouped together and made accessible to wider audiences using hashtags (#). Twitter is an extremely popular site.

Tumblr: A micro-blogging service. Users can post text and multimedia content in short blog posts. (Blog updates are longer than those allowed on Twitter.) Blogs can be made private or public, and again feature use of hashtags. The concept of sharing with 'like-minded' people is prevalent on Tumblr.

Snapchat: A smartphone application allowing users to send photos or videos (these can be annotated with a short message) to other users. The messages delete permanently after the time-limit (1 to 10 seconds) selected by the sharer.

WhatsApp: A smartphone messaging service, which uses users' internet data allowance. This has cost-saving benefits, particularly for international and picture messaging. Text and multimedia messages can be shared with group members simultaneously.

Instagram: A photo and video sharing site. Media can be uploaded to the site and edited with a range of filters. Content can be shared via other social networking sites, and shared with wider audiences using hashtags.

Skype: A free internet video-calling and instant messaging service. Calls may also be made to landline and mobile phones, which incurs a charge to the user's account.

Facetime: A video-calling product developed by Apple, which can be used on devices such as iPhones, iPads, and Mac computers with compatible software and operating system.

Google Hangouts: A free internet video-calling service from Google, enabling individual and group video-chats.

Appendix D: Examples of types of happy information presented in Chart 4.

To simplify Chart 4, similar types of content were grouped together. A further breakdown is provided here containing examples of the happy information mentioned by participants, which has been grouped into each category. A breakdown has not been provided for the following categories, as these seemed self-explanatory: Interesting/funny facts, Photos/stories about pets, Poems/motivational quotes, Gossip, Photos.

Events/activities/trips:

- Stories and descriptions of holidays/trips, celebrations, 'checking in' on Facebook if out somewhere or doing something

Anecdotes/daily occurrences:

- Stories of things has seen during day (e.g. person wearing funny clothes, cool graffiti, 2 punnets of strawberries for a pound)

Internet memes/posts/media

- YouTube videos, Lolcatz, memes, email forwards, other people's tweets and posts

Film/TV/video game and related content

- Films/programmes/games, trailers, news and information, quotes, fan-content

Music and related content

- Music, music videos, news and information about bands

Books and related content

- Books, information about books and authors, info about festivals

Hobbies/interests/sports related content

- Arts and crafts blogs, conversations and info about Japanese Gardens, messaging while watching sports matches (e.g. did you hear that hilarious thing the commentator just said?), video clips of goals, sports news and publicity media, war-gaming, role-playing games

Comics/cartoons

- Comic publications and related news, online cartoon strips

Personal news

- Big personal news (i.e. weddings, babies, engagements) and less important personal news (e.g. funny stories of things that have happened to self)

News stories/articles

- Online articles, content and media related to news and headlines, conversation about news

Jokes/games

- Jokes, 're-cast Les Mis with Toy Story game'