Social Media Personality Types

A view from Social Interaction Design
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Part I
Introduction to the Concepts

Overview

- This presentation belongs to social interaction design, and offers a design approach to user experiences and resulting social practices on social media.

- It is an outline and intended to serve as a springboard for further discussion and research.

- It comes from principles and personality insights and not from data.

- Social interaction design regards the user as an individual with interests and motives that play out in communication, interaction, and relationships.

  - Individuals exhibit psychological consistency and behaviors that can be described and observed online.

  - Individual behavior manifests personality that can be characterized and observed online.

Benefits of this approach

- An understanding of user psychology.

- An appreciation of the user's behavior as an expression of motives.

- A deep perspective on mediated social interactions, communication, actions, and behaviors.

- Lays the groundwork:

    - for an understanding of what the user does and why.

    - for a view of users in particular, not just users in general.

    - for a social analytics and a new set of user and social metrics.

    - for designing for diverse user experience and psychologically-based interests.

    - for targeting the user and not page, search, or words.

Why personality types?

- We want to know who the user is, how their experiences differ, and how to describe them.

- The diversity of social media applications available attracts different kinds of users, engaging them in different kinds of activities and practices.

- The medium provides opportunities to engage users directly and through the activities in which they are engaged.

- Personality types subdivide audiences into groups according to what they do and why they do it — not what they mean, how much they earn, or how they consume.

- With personality types we can migrate from page-based, contextual, and search-based advertising to user-targeted advertising.

- Personality types help us to know who the user is, how to reach him/her, and how s/he influences others.

A word on users and use cases

- Conventional UX and IxD approaches identify users and use cases separately.

- Personality types explain both a use case and user experience at the same time.

- The use of social media is personal — it becomes an established habit of use.

- Use cases for social media are thus user-centric: defined in terms of user interests, activities, relationships, interactions, and communication.

- Personality types allow us to graduate from the generic user description to types of users.

- An understanding of user motives will help us to describe user experience and behavior.

- Any view of user experience on social media must be grounded in user psychology.

- It must grasp user communication and interaction in terms of mediated social action, not interaction with software.

Users are people

- Social media users have personalities that come out in how they relate to and use social media. Users are people. People have:

  - perceptions and inclinations.

  - understanding and interests.

  - habits and expectations.

  - motivations and intentions.

  - anticipation of the behavior and interests of others.

  - self-motivated actions and a private or social interest in their outcomes.

  - communication that varies in its honesty, sincerity, seriousness, presentation, and objective.

  - relationships varying in their meaning, purpose, organization, and nature.

  - a sense of being in time, of being together and with others.

Part II
Social Interaction Design

The SxD perspective

- User to user interaction, not user to software interaction.

- Medium transforms normal social encounters.

- The user has an understanding of what s/he is doing.

- The user's activities are motivated and intended, but best explained by psychologically motivated behavior not rational action.

- The social field of social media is not a direct analog to the real world, but is characterized by the transformation of experience by the medium:

  - Social interaction is subjected to disruptions, disintermediation, fragmenting, deferrals, substitutions, artifacts, interruptions.

  - There is ambiguity in action and response, as well as user intentions and identities.

Personality: communication

- Personalities vary in their communication styles and inclinations. These are of particular importance to social media.

- User personalities manifest:

  - in speaking, telling, narrating, recommending, asking, answering, commenting, and in type of interest drawn to self.

  - in listening, observing, empathizing, understanding, and in type of interest shown in others.

  - in performing, recording, posting, writing, and contributing communicative acts, and in way of expressing interests.

  - in mediating, sharing, forwarding and sending, linking, and in taking an interest in relationships.

Personality: interaction

- Personalities vary in their interaction styles. These are of particular importance to the interactive aspects of social media.

- User personality types manifest:

  - in looking, seeing, watching, viewing, seeing oneself being seen, and in the type of social interest shown in being socially present.

  - in giving, taking, borrowing, exchanging, transacting, and in the type of interest taken in symbolic or real exchange interactions and their relationships.

  - in isolating, joining, collaborating, competing, comparing, pursuing, and in the type of interest taken in the dynamics of social status and rank.

  - in projecting, extending, attracting, enforcing, countering, and in the type of interest taken in the social economy of attention.

Grouping the types

- The following is an over-simplified view of personality types suggested for use in the design and application of social media.

- Types are organized around the poles of the Self, the Other, and Relationships — which can be used as a simple way of grouping the social variations of personality:

  - those types centered on the Self: self-presentation, self-centered talk, self-image, and extensions of the self such as possessions, signs, etc.

  - those types centered on the Other: other-oriented sense of self, other-oriented talk, the other's apparent interests in the self, and projections of the self onto others such as attention, recognition, desire, etc.

  - those types centered on Relationships: relational-oriented sense of self, relational (especially triangles) talk, the relationship's state, maintenance, obligations and other implications for the self.

- For the sake of brevity, this is also a reduced set of personality types.

Part III
Social Media User Types

The personality types

- Status seeker

- Critic

- Socializer

- Em-cee

- Lurker

- Buddy

- Creator

- Pundit

- Rebel

- Officiator

- Harmonizer

Status-seeker: personality

- Sense of self is built on what he or she has, owns, and has attached to him or herself — both material and symbolic.

- Identifies through status and status signs and values — and is sensitive to their social significance and to their effect in attracting interest.

- May enjoy accumulating symbolic tokens (including online merit badges, smilies, gifts, etc) as status symbols and signs of success and popularity.

- May or may not compete with others (friends, strangers, or general audience) for social rank, but is motivated by status he or she does.

- Believes that visible accomplishments make a good impression and are socially recognized and validated.

- Relationships can be understood in terms of exchange, trade, collecting, and taking possession of things and signs.

- Helps to invest online signs that can be counted and measured with social value; is important to rivalries, economies, and exchange cultures online.

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Status-seeker: interests & behavior

- Rank is relative; Status is social; Position can be counted.

  - Pursues ways of supplementing his or her online stats.

  - Checks own stats as well as leaderboards.

  - Compares own stats to those of others.

  - Accumulates friends, symbolic tokens, and other social status symbols.

- Is important to making the social count online.

- May tend to avoid the deep and involved chats and conversations that matter more to relational types.

- Examples:

  - Yelp elite

  - "Celebrities members on Twitter, any online community, etc

Critic: personality

- A writer and author, interested in the substance and meaning of content online and not as socially or performance-oriented as the pundit, for whom an audience is a necessary feature of delivering content.

- May feel that audience approval is a measure of his/her understanding, intelligence, accuracy, and insight — not popularity, attractiveness, performance, or even originality.

- Can have a valuable grasp of the multiple perspectives on a topic, the relevant arguments, opinions, and positions of others, and may be interested in making genre, category, and taxonomic distinctions.

- Believes in the information value of online media — may prefer rational and good argument over time-wasting social media opportunities.

- May frequently edit and update content as much to eliminate inaccuracies as to keep it current — believes in the factual version of truth.

- Contributes to the connections and associations of things online, and has value for long tail commerce.

Critic: interests & behavior

- Sees value in correcting mistakes, factual errors, mis-statements, etc.

- Sticks to the topic and is interested in topical conversations (eg blogs).

- Is important to the belief that social media can produce better knowledge.

- Is an important contributor, blogger, poster, commenter.

- Sustains the idea that social media use the right process.

- Tends to avoid online socializing for its own sake — and may have fewer personal relations than professional friendships online.

- Takes a committed interest in permanent topical online discussions or publications.

- Examples:

  - Wikipedia.com, Imdb.com, Yelp.com

  - Some social bookmarking and list-making

Socializer: personality

- Goes online for information about friends, events, and social news.

- Derives a sense of well-being from online interactions, and believes in online community.

- Keeps track of what his/her friends are up to, and goes online to "stay in the loop".

- Tends to participate in online social pastimes rather than pursuing personal projects .

- A member of the audience likely to pay attention when invited and notified, and not likely to miss being online when busy.

- Knows what people are up to, and how to find out if not.

- May participate "as if" she or he feels like an integrated and key member of an online community, but is sometimes playing along.

Socializer: interests & behavior

- Makes new friend contacts.

- Creates friendly contributions and content -- testimonials, notes, comments, etc.

- Participates in social games and interactions.

- Is important to sustaining the "pleasure" of social networking, and is an engine of social interaction.

- Is important to emerging social conventions, rituals, ceremonies, and pastimes — as well as their codes of conduct, etiquette, and subversions.

- Inclined to the social implications of ratings, votes, and signs — and to investing them with a surplus of meaning.

Em-cee: personality

- Like the pundit, plays a role in providing news and attracting audiences, but is often more socially inclined, and often uses his/her personality and performance to get attention.

- Is a performer at heart, and makes an impression as well as engages the audience by means of wit, personality, and character.

- Can be more interested in capturing an audience than in content itself — and may tactically attract interest in ways considered as strategic or disingenuous by purists.

- Is attentive and responsive to the audience's feedback and reception.

- Is less interested in being genuine and authentic than in social validation.

- Can keep an audience interested through anecdotes and asides not often used by the serious newsmaker.

- Is sensitive to what interests the audience because keeping and holding an audience is of personal importance.

Em-cee: interests & behavior

- Participates in platforms that gather audiences.

- Is significant for his or her role in moderating online communities, groups, discussions.

- Often makes others feel recognized and appreciated, and acknowledges communication.

- Attracts audiences and helps to create a social center of activity on applications or sites that facilitate them.

- Pays attention to attention.

- Likely to have an interest in tools that retool broadcasting online for their appeal as media: podcasting, RSS, blogs, video, twitter, etc.

Lurker: personality

- Is self-effacing in his/her presence online, may seem shy and be sensitive to what and how people talk online.

- Is drawn to spending time online in part by the lure of the medium and the private or personal possibilities presented by others, abstractly or in reality.

- Emotional sensibilities may govern his/her presentation style and sense of self.

- Doesn't draw too much attention to self but may participate and log in consistently, creating site visits, traffic, and page views by browsing.

- Is often an observant participant, and may serve as a resource to those who spend time online.

- May subscribe to others and follow them online.

Lurker: interests & behavior

- Generates a large number of page views.

- Characterizes some of the user experience of the passive or non-participating user.

- May subscribe to people and content — and is thus a user of the non-social social media tools.

- Is more likely a user of low-impact and low-participation tools.

- Is possibly more likely to have initial social media experiences on marginal sites — where community is not managed by early adopters.

- Is more likely to be naive about social media interactions — and represents an important market and growth opportunity.

- His or her concerns about privacy, security, safety, authenticity, and so on represent issues to be addressed by social media systems, and which may describe the mainstream potential for social media.

Buddy: personality

- Has a strong sense of friendship and values companionship.

- In addition to spending time with friends online, and in online activities, may have ideas of loyalty, best friends, inner trust circles and the expectations that accompany them.

- Is usually aware of what friends think of him/her, takes notice of the presence or absence of friends online, and will do what friends do.

- Is familiar with the language and rituals of his or her friends, including ways of talking, insider jokes, and so on.

- Events seen through the lens of friendship and may derive recognition and reassurance of good friends, or suffer from betrayals real or misperceived.

- Motivated more by relationships with those he or she knows; is genuine and tends not to do things for strategic reasons.

- Relationships are the content of communication, and online activities are a vehicle for sustaining relationships.

Buddy: interests & behavior

- Validates the social utility promised by large social networking sites: that real friends use them.

- Tends to use social media for real event and activity coordination and interaction.

- Is a reason that many new users join social media — his or her friends are there.

- Is valuable to the uses of friend networks in promotional, commercial, and other uses.

- Styles of friendship differ, but those who flirt, play, tease, and joke with friends online create important, if gestural, communication and content.

- Networking among friends draws intense interest from industries marginal to social media — but which see its potential as a threat to their own ability to make and market messages.

Creator: personality

- Creates, builds, makes, publishes.

- Relates to the online world as a place in which she or he has a strong presence, using it to distribute his or her (personal) creative works and efforts.

- Getting attention and receiving recognition may or may not be required for this user's ongoing participation.

- Probably sees his/her online self as a real and valid extension of his/her real self: the medium is neither gimmick nor waste of time.

- Provides the content that others share, pass around, rate, vote, and comment on.

- Has talent with the stuff of culture and can create or mash up meanings to produce something new.

Creator: interests & behavior

- Joins collaborative creative efforts that require belief and commitment from members.

- Is important for their content contributions to social media.

- Might prefer to pursue creative pastimes in public, or socially, rather than privately.

- Is behind the success of user-generated content sites and services.

- Is of significant value in re-contextualizing and interpreting culture.

- To some degree, benefits from users who enjoy finding and sharing online content gems — they bring this user recognition.

- Often an early adopter of authoring and editing tools and applications.

- Might pay attention to his or her own popularity — but if so, take it as signs of genuine interest (not as social byproducts).

Pundit: personality

- Considers him or herself an industry leader or pundit, and routinely offers the latest news, opinions, and observations.

- Is personally interested in playing the part of news anchor and industry commentator even if not deeply interested in making news him or herself.

- May believe that he or she has a reputation, an audience or following, and may regularly talk to his or her audience in order to maintain it.

- Can be a regular and consistent participant in online news and publishing, driving subscriptions as well as capturing the attention of audiences.

- Is valuable for his or her role in distributing content and in creating and defining topics, as well as by serving as a channel for news.

- May evaluate experts and their contributions for their insight or expertise.

Pundit: interests & behavior

- Is critical to making the web the fastest source of news and commentary.

- Is self-motivated and makes the effort to sustain the web's role as publishing platform.

- Keeps news fresh and dynamic by making announcements.

- Helps to validate the claims of net journalists and blogosphere to legitimacy, authenticity in media and reporting.

- Likely has a focus — the Net, industry, social, product, news, cause, etc — and helps to advance it.

- Helps to build thematic and topical spaces online.

- Pushes and gets behind news — and sees his or her role as a newsmaker.

- Is more likely to be sensitive to reputations, credibility, and position than less serious users.

Rebel: personality

- A frequent heckler given to subverting the social situation at hand.

- May tend to disrupt online chats and discussions for the sake of attention.

- Uses social games and applications to undermine those who take it seriously, to disrupt the activity, to push an agenda, or game the system.

- Might focus on content, a group, or its individual members.

- May only become a heckler when faced with authority (when provoked or challenged), or may simply want attention from an audience, regardless of what it's about.

- May just heckle occasionally and when annoyed, or might identify him/herself with being in the opposition.

- Might feel superior to others and enjoy showing off or winning, even when doing so requires playing along cynically or disingenuously.

Rebel: interests & behavior

- Often shows leadership in new technology developments.

- Important to the development of non-commercial social media applications.

- As a fixture of the "hacker" culture, contributes to mashups.

- His or her independence is an indirect source of transactions that drive online marketplaces.

- Heckler subversives — interested in spoiling the fun of others — damage the medium's reputation.

- A heckler subversive is often drawn to popular sites and applications.

- May contribute positively to the open web, while undermining organizations seeking commercial benefit.

Officiator: personality

- Views situations and interactions by means of rules, conventions, characters, positions, or roles, and knows how a situation should go.

- Can wear a public face and use the behavioral codes and rules of a social activity in order to exercise authority without having to do it personally.

- Believes in the social value of convention, normative rules, obligations, and expectations and may pro-actively embody and play the role for the sake of the system, game, or situation.

- Often believes in collaboration and cooperation, and may presume that cooperation is a universally shared belief for the reason that his or her notion of society requires that it applies equally and to all.

- Can be sensitive to, suspicious and distrustful of people s/he believes are insincere, inaccessible, and private.

- Understands relationships on the basis of their abstract organization and meaning and may develop relationships according to their description rather than by personal and gut feel.

Officiator: interests & behavior

- Is important to social games and gaming applications, particularly those that involve roles and game rules.

- Is often the online game organizer and moderator.

- Is less concerned with the personal repercussions (e.g. on their friendships) of playing a moderating or officiating role.

- Likely to take an interest in the ritual, ceremony, and "trappings" of social games: tokens, points, leaderboards, ranking, game events, etc.

- Can help to keep players in line, on task, and involved.

- Sustains the reality of online games, and helps to make them relevant to those for whom participation may seem a distraction or poor use of their time.

Harmonizer: personality

- Appreciates group membership and a sense of belonging, but unlike the em-cee — this personality is motivated by the group's relationships and not its value as an audience.

- Generally has a sense of where others stand in relation to him or herself.

- Gives good attention to others, is socially sensitive and responsive, and may triangulate or mediate group interactions.

- Pays attention the debts and obligations among members of a group (who is affected by whom) and is mindful of how group members are doing.

- Senses acknowledgment by others, or lack thereof, and may tend to project or read into situations; is likely to be motivated to rescue relationships.

- Is less interested in anonymous publicity or attention from strangers than reception by familiar friends and colleagues.

- May do things to make others happy, including tasks and organizing efforts that serve a group's integrity and activity.

Harmonizer: interests & behavior

- Is important for their sensitivity to group participation and engagement, and for his or her efforts to keep activity going.

- Is likely to know what's going on with friends and colleagues, and contributes content that is both personal and social.

- Helps to make groups tangible, often giving them identities.

- Uses group communication tools and applications, including private social networks and group-oriented social applications.

- Has a sense of belonging, and of membership, in social media use.

- Checks in with friends and colleagues when they fade or drift away from group online activity.

- Will circulate tokens, gifts, files, and so on.

Part IV
What's next?

The design challenge

- How can we benefit from an appreciation of different user psychologies?

- Can we anticipate how they think, feel, and act well enough to serve tailored and targeted experiences?

- Can we target individuals instead of pages, and measure behavior instead of eyeballs?

- Can commercial campaigns be crafted to reach friends of friends and trusted circles through those members most effective and influential?

- Can the campaigns address users whose personality is most suitable?

- Can commercial messaging speak in the language of consumers, and through consumers?

Value to social analytics

- Social analytics will represent a move from page-based web traffic analysis to the tracking of user activities on social media applications and sites.

- User types are required to frame analysis and to settle on metrics for reporting purposes.

- Psychologically motivated user behaviors are the most powerful and insightful typology of audience members.

- Metrics for tracking and analysis of user acts, activities, and patterns of use should be based on real uses and real people.

- Social analytics should tell stories and provide views of users that correspond to user experiences.

- User engagement will be greatly enhanced if it is founded on accurate descriptions of what differentiates the appeal of social media to its users.

A solution proposed

- We can know more about users in general and even users in particular — if data can validate claims presented here.

- The solution:

  - would be user-specific.

  - would reach users on their own terms and according to their interests and personality.

  - would be able to measure and track user behavior and activity.

  - would have a much higher value than impressions.

  - would have more effective viral follow-through.

  - would communicate with authenticity.

  - would borrow on social relationships for distribution.

  - would appeal on the basis of existing user interests.