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**Motivations for sharing information in social media: A comparative analysis of WeChat,
Sina Weibo, and Douyin**

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Motivations for Sharing Information in Social Media: A Comparative Analysis of WeChat, Sina Weibo, and Douyin

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this study is to explore motivations for sharing information in social media in China with a comparative analysis of WeChat, Sina Weibo and Douyin. Six motivations are tested in this study with demographic and background characteristics of media users. All of these influential factors are tested under SPSS to find whether the relationships are statistically significant. It comes out that social media users are greed to be motivated by enjoyment, learning, personal gain, altruism, reputation, and reciprocity for sharing information. Gender, age, education level and frequency of sharing information have a significant and complex relationship with six motivations. These results provide detailed guidance for media providers about how to attract more Chinese active users to guarantee the success of social media. In addition, the study provides a framework to do comparison and test information behaviors of social media users in China.

Keywords: *China, social media, sharing information, motivations, demographic and background information*

I. INTRODUCTION

Motivation is one of the crucial factors that affect people's active participation, which will highly influence the success or failure of social media (Oh & Syn, 2015). Therefore, there have been numerous researches conducted to analyze the relationship between motivations and social media. In the past five years, exploratory factor analysis has been conducted to test the motivations of using social media (Menayes, 2015). Motivations of viewers engage in the live-streaming multimedia has been tested with an eight-factor socio-motivational model (Bruce et al. 2018). Social media's influence on consumer's purchasing intentions also has been examined (Kizgin et al. 2018).

Motivations of people seeking information on social media also have been examined. In a clinical study, what factors influence patients to seek medical and health information on social media have been analyzed (Li and Wang, 2018). What factors motivate college students to search for traveling information by social network sites have been tested with the effect of other users' interactions (Kim et al. 2013). A web-based survey aimed at high school students use social networking sites proposed that academic information seeking is under the requirement of students, and informational motivations have been examined (Aillerie and Mcnicol, 2016).

In addition, in information science, motivations of sharing information such as posting critiques/answers, sharing images/videos/links, and exchanging personal experiences/thoughts have been tested (Oh and Syn, 2015). In business, a model has been developed to explain employee's knowledge sharing behaviors with a self-determination theory, also an empirical quantitative study has been conducted to investigate which motivations influence employees' knowledge sharing in a working environment in Danish companies (Wang and Hou, 2014; Nielsen and Razmerita, 2014). Research also has been conducted to analyze salient motivations that determine users' purposes to share sponsored advertisements on social media (Cherniece and Emma, 2018). Factors related to planned and unplanned behaviors that affect people sharing political content on social media also have been examined (Mohammad et al. 2018).

A few of studies also have been done in China. There has been a research universally studied why people share misinformation on social media in China (Chen, 2016). Status seeking, socializing, attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control also has been found to have an influence on WeChat users to share information (Chen et al. 2018). However, studies related to this criterion in China are quite limited, and there is no enough researches for specific popular social media.

As social media develops quickly, all users participate and contribute by their own volition. Without active participants, social media could not thrive so rapidly. How to attract active users will influence social media's survival and competition with other types of platforms. According to the report in Statista, the number of global social media users is estimated to increase from 0.97 billion in 2001 to 3.09 billion in 2021, and China accounts for the largest number of network users, which is expected to have 799.6 millions of users in 2023. Besides, social media advertising revenue in China is expected to increase from 3.16 billion yuan in 2001 to 125.96 billion yuan in 2021, and

the penetration rate of social media in China is 71% in 2018 (statista.com, 2019)¹. Therefore, it is vital and meaningful to study what factors can motivate Chinese users to participate in social media actively.

In addition, as different types of media have different usages, motivations for users engaging in various types of media may differ from each other (Oh and Syn, 2015). To compare motivation factors across different types of Chinese social media can provide clear guidance for social media developers about what to consider to develop a popular media. There has been research conducted to analyze the motivations for sharing information and compare motivations among Facebook, Twitter, Delicious, YouTube, and Flickr (Oh and Syn, 2015). Nevertheless, these types of social media cannot be used regularly in China, which has the largest number of users compared with other countries. In addition, there have been few studies focusing on this criterion in China. Therefore, this study is designed to focus on comparisons of motivations of individuals who share information on various types of social media in China.

This research selects three types of social media platforms: WeChat, Sina Weibo, and Douyin considering the number of impressions per post and the unique content they create. In this research, four research questions are proposed and examined: What motivates Chinese social media users to share information with anonymous others? To what extent are the motivations of social media interrelated with one another? In what way are the motivations influenced by social media users' demographics and experiences of the Internet and social media use? To what extent are the motivations different across WeChat, Sina Weibo, and Douyin? The first three questions are designed to comprehend the universal motivations of sharing information on social media. The last question is to examine whether motivations differ from various types of social media. In this paper, an overall comparison across social media is reported with analyses.

This study is based on a prior study of Oh and Syn (2015), which has developed a model of 10 motivation factors for sharing information and made a comparison among Facebook, Twitter, Delicious, YouTube, and Flickr. However, different from their study objects, this study uses 6 models to test whether they have a positive influence on the users who actively participating and sharing information in WeChat, Sina Weibo, and Douyin in China. This study covers a comprehensive assessment of motivations, which contains a social background and personal desires in the framework.

Questionnaire was used in this study to gather opinions from social media users. Data was put into SPSS and was analyzed using series of tools in it. Results in this study indicate that social media users are motivated by enjoyment, learning, personal gain, altruism, reputation, and reciprocity to share information in social media. These motivations show different influential levels across types of social media. In addition, demographic information such as gender, age, and education level have different degrees of influence on motivation factors. Motivations also have a relationship with the frequency of users sharing information on social media.

This study contributes to the literature in several ways. This study is the first one

¹ **Statista.com**: one of the most successful statistics database in the world, it is a German online database which reports survey results in charts and tables.

to do the comparison of these motivation factors across WeChat, Sina Weibo and Douyin in China. With the findings of this study, a theory of how to attract more active social media users in China can be provided. This research has proved that the theoretical framework of motivation developed and tested (Oh and Syn, 2015) can be used in future studies in China.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. In the next section, social media selected is introduced and relevant literature is reviewed. In Section 3, the research methodologies used are interpreted. In Section 4, the main results are pointed out with tables and figures. In Section 5, discussions are made to explain the results more detailed. In Section 6, the conclusion is drawn to show the main points of this study.

II. BACKGROUND AND FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT

Brief Introduction of Three Selected Social Media:

WeChat: a multi-functional mobile application launched by Tencent in China in 2011. It is the most popular social media in China (Chen et al. 2018).

Sina Weibo: is the most popular microblog in China, which combines functions like Facebook, but also contains videos and games. However, users in Sina Weibo contact more with strangers and follow celebrities rather than acquaintances (Zhang and Pentina, 2012).

Douyin: is a platform to create and share music video launched in 2017 in China. It is also popular in foreign countries and known as TikTok. In 2018, TikTok had gained 500 million active worldwide users worldwide (Zhou, 2019).

With the rank of “most popular social networks worldwide before July 2019” pronounced in Statista², WeChat is ranked to be the number five, and it is also the most popular Chinese social media. Sina Weibo is the tenth, and Douyin is the thirteenth most popular worldwide social media.

Literature Review

Definition and Theories of Motivation

Causing particular tasks or learning performances, motivations act like desire and energy (Oh and Syn, 2015). Motivations have a long history in all cultures and psychologically describe the mechanism individuals and groups take specific behaviors and persist with it. The study of motivations has penetrated into every aspect of humans (McInerney, 2019). Defined by Ryan and Deci in 2000, motivation represents “energy, direction, and persistence” which cause intention (P. 69). People who actively take an activity is judged to be motivated while a person who is less inspired or has less impetus is considered to be unmotivated (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Briefly present self-determination theory, Ryan and Deci (2000) judge social contextual conditions related to competence, autonomy, and relatedness are intrinsic motivation while those related to self-determined are considered to be extrinsic.

According to Oh and Syn (2015), to understand and study the motivations, there

² **Statista.com**: one of the most successful statistics database in the world, it is a German online database which reports survey results in charts and tables.

are three well adopted and fundamental theories in research: a). Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943); b). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations (Ryan and Deci, 2000); c). Herzberg's two factor theory (Herzberg, 1950s).

Maslow's theory indicates that people are motivated to meet or maintain five basic needs: 1). Physiological needs: the starting point and the basic need to survive. 2). Safety needs: feel safe and secure. 3) Love needs: love, affection and belongingness needs. 4). Esteem needs: stable and firmly based evaluation, self-respect, self-esteem, and esteem of others. 5). Need for self-actualization: actualize one's potential (Maslow, 1943). And Maslow proposes that these five needs are related to each other. However, there exists some critiques pointed by other researchers that Maslow's hierarchy of needs overemphasizes on the individual self, rather than taking the culture and learning into consideration (Trigg, 2004).

Different from Maslow's theory, the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations and Herzberg's two factor theory focus beyond individual to social content. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), motivations are divided into two criteria: intrinsic (internal) and extrinsic (external) motivation. Intrinsically motivated behaviors are self-determined, which are under the needs of competence and autonomy, while extrinsically motivated behaviors are aiming at separable outcome. For example, comparing to intrinsic motivations, extrinsic not pursue instrumental value but the enjoyment of the activity itself (Ryan and Deci, 2000).

Herzberg (1950s) developed the theory into a certain working environment and found two factors will influence people's motivation and satisfaction: motivation and hygiene. Motivation factors such as the challenging work that are related to intrinsic conditions will lead to positive satisfaction such as achievement and personal growth (Hackman and Oldham, 1976). Hygiene factors such as company policies are the external and environmental conditions which have opposite effect compared with motivation factors (Herzberg, 1968).

Social Theory of Understanding Motivations for Information Sharing

According to Oh and Syn (2015), Social exchange theory (Emerson, 1976) of human behavior related to social contexts is reviewed and adopted to understand the motivations of sharing information

Social exchange theory contains diversity and grows a lot in the past years. It was first pointed out by Homans in *Social Behavior as Exchange* in 1958, which focuses on the psychology of instrumental behavior. Thibaut and Kelley strengthened the general exchange approach similar to Homans's in 1959 in *The Social Psychology of Groups*. Blau's work *Exchange and Power* (1964a) assured a future for the exchange approach, which emphasized that social exchange was a two-sided, mutual process. (Emerson, 1976). Based on these theories, Constant et al. (1994) reported in a technical context about the investigation of information sharing attitudes. It is proposed that results of the significant relationship between working experience and positive attitude of sharing support for the prediction that self-interest against sharing, and reciprocity is a factor influence information sharing in an organization (Constant et al. 1944). In the traditional theory of Blau (1964), reciprocity is a one-to-one relationship. When

expanded to one-to-many in a social environment, there is a phenomenon called generalized reciprocity (Ekeh, 1974), which also has been examined to have a relationship with knowledge sharing (Oh and Syn, 2015).

Motivations Related to Social Media

There have been numerous researches conducted to test what factors influence users actively participating in social media. For university students, the study shows that entertainment, personal utility, and convenience have positive relationships with users who have long experience with social media while seeking information is negatively related, and altruism shows no relationship (Menayes, 2014). For users of Twitch live-stream, study indicates that emotional connectedness (i.e., social interaction) strongly explains users' engagement; Entertainment, information seeking, and social interaction will influence the time they spend; Social interaction and a sense of community will motivate subscriptions and donations (Bruce et al. 2018). There has been research conducted to compare the differences of social media usage between the US and South Korea, which indicates that the motivation factors are similar under these two different cultures (Kim et al. 2011).

In addition, there are numbers of studies have done research on the motivation of media users seeking or sharing information on social networks. For searching information in social media, according to Nahl (2001), motivation will influence people to start or terminate seeking information. Based on how users are cognitively or effectively stimulated by the process and results of their research, motivation can fluctuate (Oh and Syn, 2015). Then for sharing in social networks, Oh and Syn proposed in 2015 that Enjoyment, Self-efficacy, Learning, Personal gain, Altruism, Empathy, Community interest, Social engagement, Reputation, and Reciprocity positively interrelated with each other and all of them are influential to some extent. In addition, there has been a research studied why people share misinformation on social media, it is examined that personalities matter most for this behavior (Chen, 2016).

Then considering specific social media platforms in China, research has been conducted to test the motivation of using Sina Weibo, which indicates the differences between women and men users, and despite the informational and social motivations, users of Sina Weibo also motivated by professional development, emotional needs, reciprocity, willingness to enhance social status, express themselves, and interactions with site and other users (Zhang and Pentina, 2012). One research has examined the influence of entertainment, sociality, information, and trust on WeChat users' attitudes (Chen et al. 2018). Researches also shared their findings of motivations of using Douyin in conferences, which proposed some unique motivations such as "fashion" and practical needs (Lu and Lu, 2019).

Previous research focuses on motivations of single social medium, although there is a research study and compare motivations across various types of social media (Oh and Syn, 2015), the medium chose are not typically used in China, and there have been few studies conducted to understand whether the motivation factors affect and differ from medium in China. Therefore, this study attempts to test and compare motivation factors for sharing information across different types of social media in Chana,

especially WeChat, Sina Weibo, and Douyin for the following reasons: (a) each is widely used in China and has different usages and forms and (b) there are relatively new contexts for investigating motivations of information sharing, compared to Facebook, Twitter, Delicious, YouTube, and Flickr that have already been examined in previous studies.

Selected Motivation for Sharing Information in Social Media

Based on literature reviews and three basic theories, 6 motivation factors have been chosen. Individual aspects of sharing information motivations are emphasized by Maslow's theory of needs, rewards either internal or external are under explanation of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Personal and social factors are separated under Herzberg's two-factor theory. Social exchange has been proposed as well (Oh and Syn, 2015). Definitions of these 6 factors are listed here:

Enjoyment: It has been broadly accepted that enjoyment is a satisfying reaction to entertainment media (Tamborini et al. 2010). Enjoyment has been defined to be the satisfaction of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which is proved to have a logical relationship (Deci and Ryan, 2000). Users engage in social media to kill time and entertain themselves has been positively examined (Menayes, 2015). Users share information in social media under the interest of social exchange in social relationships (Constant et al. 1994).

Learning: In knowledge sharing, behavior itself is a tool rather than the ultimate goal for "learning" (Yuan and Liu, 2015). Through information exchange, social media users may want to learn from others and want to follow newly updated information they used to have an interest in (Oh and Syn, 2015). It has been tested that there exists a positive relationship between learning and sharing information (Lou et al. 2013).

Personal gain: According to Emerson (1976), social media users commercially expect to have a tangible benefit from sharing information, and personal gain is just one kind of benefit. Deci and Ryan (2000) consider this to be an external reward, which means users may use social media to merchandize information related to business (Oh and Syn, 2015). In Munar and Jacobsen's study (2014), self-motivation is related to sharing information, and personal gain is the result of this motivation.

Altruism: People with altruism tend to help others without requiring any return (Yuan and Lin, 2015). It has been widely tested to be the motivation factor of information sharing in social media, and it is proved to be related to interest (Kuznetsov, 2006; Hsu and Lin, 2008; Rafaeli et al. 2005; Kankanhalli et al. 2005; Xu and Li, 2015). For the activity of sharing gathered information to others, altruism is found to be the most effective motivation factor (Oh 2012).

Reputation: Reputation is defined as a collective judgment of an individual's

personalities from the community (Emler and Hopkins, 1990). Emler (1990) pointed out that people gain a higher reputation with favorable social exchange relations. It is proved to have a relationship with an individual's performance (Hochwarter et al. 2007).

Reciprocity: Reciprocity is categorized as external control that motivates people to reciprocate others (Kankanhalli et al. 2005; Xu and Li, 2015; Zhao and Zhu, 2014). Individual who has received a shared knowledge will do preparation to future requests, and reciprocity has been proved to have a positive relationship with information sharing behaviors (Chiu et al. 2006; Xu and Li, 2015).

III. RESEARCH METHOD

Sample

Different groups of people were chosen for each of WeChat, Sina Weibo, and Douyin, and participants need to be those who had shared information publicly on these social media. The participation conditions are as follows:

- *WeChat*: Users who post photos, add comments, share links on WeChat moments, and even on WeChat official accounts.
- *Sina Weibo*: Users who share photos, videos, and comments on super topics and even got followers.
- *Douyin*: Users who create Tik Tok videos.

In order to guarantee the authenticity of participants, they were asked to provide the user ID, but their identities were not being tracked as the data were analyzed anonymously. Each participant was paid 0.69 RMB upon survey completion.

Survey Questionnaires

Three versions of online surveys, created by Wenjuanxing, which is a professional online questionnaire design, evaluation, and voting platform in China (wjx.cn)³. The questionnaires were designed to test the 6 motivation factors: enjoyment, learning, personal gain, altruism, reputation, and reciprocity. Three statements related to each motivation factor were added in the surveys. Participants were asked to rate questions with a 7-point Likert scale (1-7, strongly disagree to strongly agree respectively). As each media has different functions, demographic and background information also were collected, and the questions were customized to fit each situation.

IV. RESULTS

This research got a total of 807 valid participants in the three different surveys of the motivation of sharing information in WeChat (n=419), Sina Weibo (n=219), and Douyin (n=169). According to Gorsuch (1983), the volume of the sample size should be at least five times the questions with a minimum standard of 100. Each questionnaire has 23 questions, therefore, all the number collected satisfied the minimum requirement.

It is worthwhile to mention that within the first three hours after the questionnaire was distributed, surveys for WeChat had got 300 participants, Sina Weibo got 130,

³ Wjx.com: Official website of Wenjuanxing.

while Douyin only got 80 participants. This phenomenon may show the different levels of sharing information in these three applications to some extent.

This paper reports sharing information motivations of social media users with their background information. In addition, how the 6 motivations influence sharing behaviors are compared across the three types of social media.

Internal Consistency of the Statements Used

Cronbach's alpha (α) was used to measure the internal consistency of the statements used for the motivational factors of each social media. Based on the rules set for evaluating α coefficients (Georgy and Mallery, 2003), all of the α values (showed in the Table 1) of the motivational factors in these three surveys are acceptable ($>.70$).

TABLE 1

Cronbach's alpha (α) Coefficients of Survey Statements Each Motivations and Social Media			
Motivations	Douyin	Weibo	WeChat
Enjoyment	.817	.820	.959
Learning	.866	.841	.965
Personal Gain	.819	.769	.927
Altruism	.814	.760	.969
Reputation	.838	.853	.963
Reciprocity	.865	.805	.963

Demographic and Background Information of Participants

The demographic information of all participants (N=877) are listed in Table 2, and the total number of 877 has deducted the missing data.

Table 2 shows that the number of female participants is more than male (58% Female), and nearly half of them are 18-29 years old (n=392, 48.6%), followed by 30-39 (n=191, 23.7%). There even were a small number of participants aged 60 or older. Most of the participants have higher education, and about 72.3% went to college or have higher education.

This research distributed the frequency of sharing information on the Internet from hourly to monthly, or even less often. The greatest number of participants responds that they share information every day (n=268, 33.2%) while the number of participants who seldom post information is the least (n=85, 10.5%).

TABLE 2

Demographic and Background Information of Participants				
Categories	Variables	Scales	n	%
Demographic	Gender	Male	335	41.5
		Female	472	58.5
		Total	807	100.0

TABLE 2 (continued)

Categories	Variables	Scales	n	%
	Age	<18	38	4.7
		18-29	392	48.6
		30-39	191	23.7
		40-49	141	17.5
		50-59	38	4.7
		60 or older	7	0.9
		Total	807	100.0
	Education	Junior high school or below	51	6.3
		Senior middle school	172	21.3
		Bachelor's degree or college	545	67.5
		Master or above	39	4.8
		Total	807	100.0
	Social media use	Frequency of sharing information in certain social media	Hourly	108
Daily			268	33.2
Weekly			238	29.5
Monthly			108	13.4
Less often			85	10.5
Total			807	100.0

General Distribution and Correlation of Motivations of All Participants

The general distribution of the mean rating of motivations on a 7-point Likert scale (1-7, strongly disagree to strongly agree) is represented in Table 3 and Figure 1. The mean ratings for motivations are all over 5 with an average of 5.45, showing general agreement that suggested motivations have an influence on sharing information in social media.

Altruism is the most influential factor and enjoyment is the second. These are followed by reciprocity, learning, and personal gain. Although the values have not much differences, reputation is the least influential factor.

TABLE 3

Motivations	Mean Ratings for Motivation		
	n	M	SD
Altruism	807	5.62	1.32
Enjoyment	807	5.61	1.38
Reciprocity	807	5.56	1.36
Learning	807	5.45	1.44
Personal Gain	807	5.24	1.53
Reputation	807	5.22	1.53

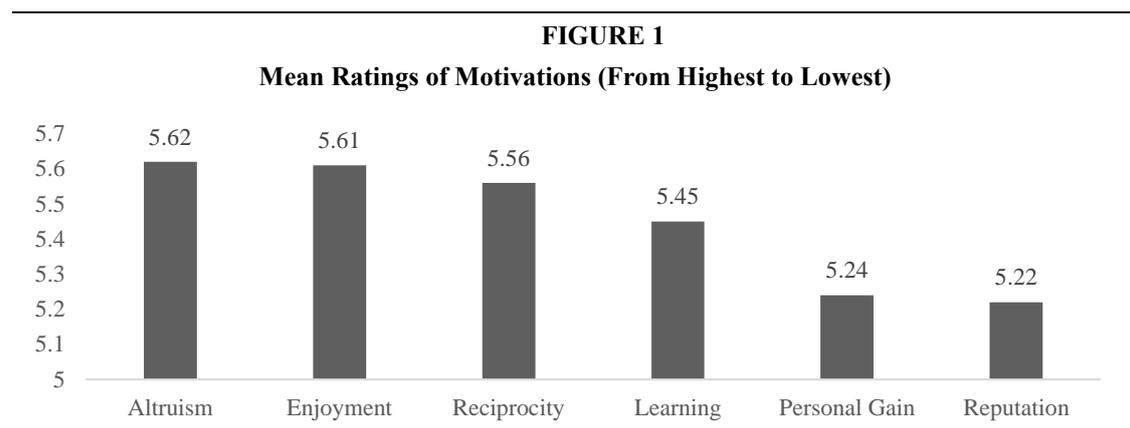


Table 4 shows that all of the six motivations are positively correlated with one another and the correlations are statistically significant. All of the motivation factors are strongly correlated ($r > .5$) with each other, which means that if users motivated by enjoyment, they would also be highly motivated by the other five motivation factors.

TABLE 4
Pearson's correlations (r) Among the Six Motivations

Motivations	E	L	P	A	Rep	Rec
Enjoyment (E)	1.000					
Learning (L)	.766**	1.000				
Personal Gain (P)	.682**	.740**	1.000			
Altruism (A)	.759**	.764**	.685**	1.000		
Reputation (Rep)	.704**	.763**	.795**	.725**	1.000	
Reciprocity (Rec)	.738**	.755**	.733**	.816**	.807**	1.000

Note. **Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

Motivations with Demographics and Background Information

Demographics. Other than enjoyment, male users give statistically significant higher mean rankings of learning, personal gain, altruism, reputation, and reciprocity than female users (Table 5).

TABLE 5
Motivation by gender (Male n=335, Female n=472).

Motivations	Male		Female		Chi	df	sig
	M	SD	M	SD			
Enjoyment	5.85	1.26	5.44	1.44	32.774	18	.018
Learning	5.79	1.30	5.21	1.48	49.486	18	.000*
Personal Gain	5.57	1.44	5.00	1.55	41.166	18	.001*
Altruism	5.89	1.16	5.44	1.4	46.924	18	.000*
Reputation	5.66	1.29	4.91	1.61	63.652	18	.000*
Reciprocity	5.83	1.19	5.36	1.44	48.962	18	.000*

Note. *Statistically significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

All of the six motivation factors show different levels of motivation among different age groups. The relationships between motivations and age were observed through the performance of a series of linear regressions. The relationships are statistically significant in all of the six motivation factors (Enjoyment: Adjusted $R^2 = .014$, $p < .01$; Learning: Adjusted $R^2 = -.001$, $p < .01$; Personal Gain: Adjusted $R^2 = -.001$, $p < .01$; Altruism: Adjusted $R^2 = .006$, $p < .01$; Reputation: Adjusted $R^2 = -.001$, $p < .01$; Reciprocity: Adjusted $R^2 = .004$, $p < .01$). According to age, as shown in Table 2 (<18, 18-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, ≥ 60), a one-way analysis variance (ANOVA) test shows that there is a statistically significant relationship between the groups. Table 6 shows the results of Tukey HSD post-hoc tests, which indicates complex differences among age groups. Social media users under 18 years old are less motivated by all six motivation factors than all other age groups. Besides the users below 18 years old. For learning, there are also significant differences between the age group of 18-29 with 30-39, 40-49, and above 60. For personal gain, there is only a statistically significant difference between the 18-29 and 30-39 age group. Altruism is different from 18-29 with 30-39 and 40-49. Reputation is different from 18-29 with 30-39 and users more than 60 years old. No other groups show statistically significant differences.

TABLE 6

Dependent Variable	Mean Differences for Age (J-I)						
	I	J	<18	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59
Enjoyment	18-29		-1.36*				
	30-39		-1.56*	-.20			
	40-49		-1.57*	-.21	-.01		
	50-59		-1.37*	-.01	.19	.20	
	≥ 60		-2.50*	-1.13	-.94	-.93	-1.13
Learning	18-29		-1.01*				
	30-39		-1.62*	-.61*			
	40-49		-1.62*	-.61*	.00		
	50-59		-1.33*	-.32	.29	.29	
	≥ 60		-2.66*	-1.64*	-1.03	-1.03	1.32
Personal Gain	18-29		-1.15*				
	30-39		-1.92*	-.77*			
	40-49		-1.56*	-.40	.36		
	50-59		-1.29*	-.13	.63	.27	
	≥ 60		-2.32*	-1.17	-.40	-.76	-1.03
Altruism	18-29		-1.06*				
	30-39		-1.41*	-.35*			
	40-49		-1.55*	-.49*	-.14		
	50-59		-1.12*	-.06	.29	.43	
	≥ 60		-2.23*	-1.18	-.82	-.69	1.11

TABLE 6 (continued)

Dependent Variable	I	J	<18	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59
Reputation	18-29		-1.12*				
	30-39		-1.75*	-.63*			
	40-49		-1.50*	-.37	.26		
	50-59		-1.14*	-.02	.61	.35	
	≥60		-2.75*	-1.62*	-.99	-1.25	-1.61
Reciprocity	18-29		-1.30*				
	30-39		-1.56*	-.27			
	40-49		-1.53*	-.23	.03		
	50-59		-1.20*	.09	.36	.33	
	≥60		-2.60*	-1.30	-1.04	-1.07	-1.40

Note. *Statistically significant at the .05 level.

Spearman rank order test was performed to test the relationship between the motivation factors and level of education (the division has shown in Table 2). Table 7 shows the results that there is no statistically significant difference for enjoyment and altruism with education level. The higher the levels of education level, the less social media users are encouraged to share information by learning ($\rho = -1.00, p < .01$), personal gain ($\rho = -.082, p < .05$), reputation ($\rho = -.106, p < .01$), and reciprocity ($\rho = -.082, p < .05$). The influential levels of learning and reputation are more significant than personal gain and reciprocity.

Table 7
Correlation- Spearman's rho

			Education	Enjoyment
Spearman's rho	Education	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.033
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.353
		N	807	807
Spearman's rho	Education	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.100**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.004
		N	807	807
Spearman's rho	Education	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.082*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.020
		N	807	807
Spearman's rho	Education	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.060
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.087
		N	807	807

Table 7 (continued)

			Education	Reputation
Spearman's rho	Education	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.106**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.002
		N	807	807
			Education	Reciprocity
Spearman's rho	Education	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.050
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.154
		N	807	807

Note: *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**..Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Frequency of sharing information. A one-way ANOVA test was performed to test the relationship between motivations and the frequency of sharing information in social media (division is shown in Table.2). There are statistically significant differences for enjoyment ($F = 5.272, p < .05$), learning ($F = 12.982, p = .00$), personal gain ($F = 18.780, p = .00$), and reputation ($F = 24.542, p = .00$). However, no statistically significant differences between the frequency of sharing information with altruism ($p = .91$) and reciprocity ($p = .28$). Table 8 shows the results of a detailed comparison got from Turkey HSD post-hoc test. Those who post information less often are less likely to be motivated by enjoyment, learning, personal gain, altruism, reputation, and reciprocity than those who post daily and weekly. Those who sharing information hourly are less motivated by enjoyment, learning, altruism, and reciprocity than those who post daily and weekly. However, users sharing information hourly are more likely to be motivated by learning, personal gain and reputation than those who less often share information in social media.

TABLE 8

Dependent Variable	Mean Differences for Frequency (J-I)					
	I	J	Hourly(H)	D	W	M
Enjoyment	Daily(D)		-.61*			
	Weekly(W)		-.55*	.06		
	Monthly(M)		-.48	.13	.08	
	Less often(L)		.43	1.03*	.98*	.90*
Learning	Daily(D)		-.59*			
	Weekly(W)		-.52*	.07		
	Monthly(M)		-.39	.20	.13	
	Less often(L)		.71*	1.30*	1.23*	1.10*
Personal Gain	Daily(D)		-.44			
	Weekly(W)		-.36	.08		
	Monthly(M)		-.12	.32	.24	
	Less often(L)		.87*	1.31*	1.23*	.99*

TABLE 8 (continued)

Dependent Variable	I	J	Hourly(H)	D	W	M
Altruism	Daily(D)		-.69*			
	Weekly(W)		-.77*	-.08		
	Monthly(M)		-.69*	.00	.08	
	Less often(L)		-.02	.68*	.76*	.68*
Reputation	Daily(D)		-.45			
	Weekly(W)		-.42	.03		
	Monthly(M)		-.15	.30	.27	
	Less often(L)		1.06*	1.51*	1.49*	1.21*
Reciprocity	Daily(D)		-.64*			
	Weekly(W)		-.68*	-.04		
	Monthly(M)		-.57*	.07	.11	
	Less often(L)		.20	.84*	.88*	.77*

Note: *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Distribution of Motivations across Different Social Media

Figure 2 shows the mean ratings of six motivation factors across Sina Weibo, WeChat, and Douyin. The average mean ratings in WeChat is the highest (M = 5.55), followed by Sina Weibo (M = 5.35), and Douyin (M = 5.32). Table 9 shows detailed information about the mean ratings of motivation factors for each social media with a significant test.

The ranking of motivations for each social media was compared to observe the differences. Overall, ranking orders for six motivations in WeChat and Douyin is same. Although ratings in Sina Weibo show some differences, enjoyment, reciprocity, and altruism are the top three motivations. Both WeChat and Douyin users are more likely to be motivated by altruism. Enjoyment are ranked as the top one motivation for Weibo users.

FIGURE 2.

Mean Ratings of Motivations across Social Media

FIGURE 2 – a) Mean Ratings for Sina Weibo Users

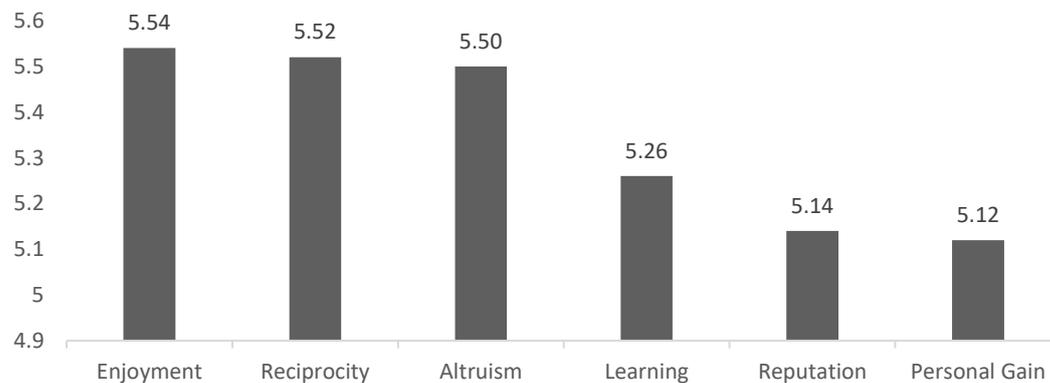


FIGURE 2 – b) Mean Ratings for WeChat Users

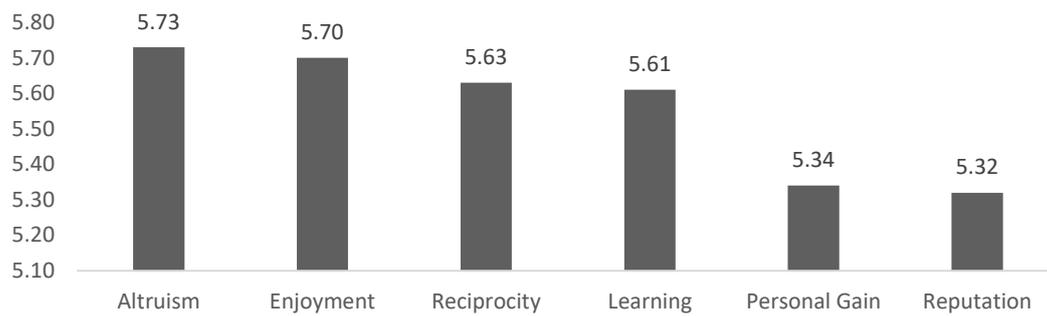


FIGURE 2 – c) Mean Ratings for Douyin Users

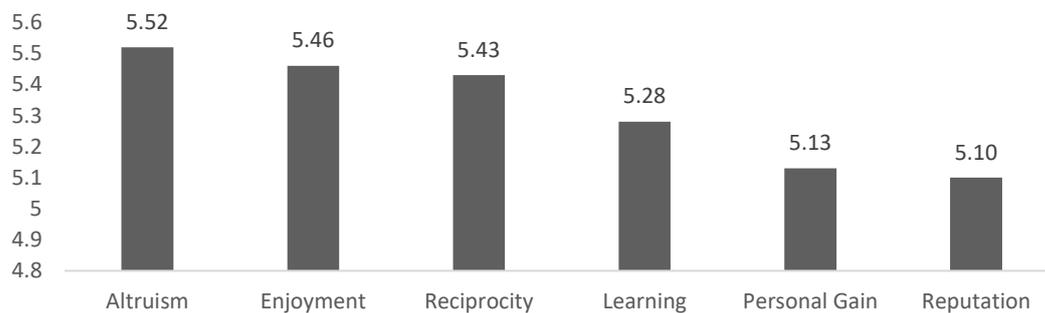


TABLE 9

Motivation across Social Media

Motivations	Douyin		Weibo		WeChat		F	Sig
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Enjoyment	5.46	1.11	5.54	1.04	5.70	1.62	2.209	.110
Learning	5.28	1.27	5.26	1.21	5.61	1.58	5.997	.003**
Personal Gain	5.13	1.33	5.12	1.22	5.34	1.73	2.121	.121
Altruism	5.52	1.11	5.50	1.01	5.73	1.53	2.855	.058
Reputation	5.10	1.21	5.14	1.29	5.32	1.75	1.724	.179
Reciprocity	5.43	1.14	5.52	1.03	5.63	1.57	1.449	.235

Note. **Statistically significant at the .01 level.

Table 10 shows the result got from the performance of the one-way ANOVA test, which was applied to evaluate whether there were statistically significant differences in the mean ratings of motivations across three selected social media. It shows that there is a statistically significant difference across social media in learning. No other statistically significant difference for other motivation factors.

TABLE 10**Motivations across social media**

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Enjoyment	Between Groups	8.44	2	4.221	2.209	.110
	Within Groups	1535.97	804	1.910		
	Total	1544.41	806			
Learning	Between Groups	24.415	2	12.208	5.997	.003*
	Within Groups	1636.62	804	2.036		
	Total	1661.03	806			
Personal Gain	Between Groups	9.898	2	4.949	2.121	.121
	Within Groups	1875.53	804	2.333		
	Total	1885.43	806			
Altruism	Between Groups	9.976	2	4.988	2.855	.058
	Within Groups	1404.48	804	1.747		
	Total	1414.45	806			
Reputation	Between Groups	8.072	2	4.036	1.724	.179
	Within Groups	1881.74	804	2.340		
	Total	1889.81	806			
Reciprocity	Between Groups	5.369	2	2.684	1.449	.235
	Within Groups	1489.15	804	1.852		
	Total	1494.52	806			

Note. *Statistically significant at the .05 level.

Turkey HSD post-hoc test was applied to show more detailed differences in the motivation level of learning across social media (Table 11). The result shows that there is no statistically significant difference between Douyin and Sina Weibo, but WeChat users are significantly less influenced by learning than Douyin and Sina Weibo users.

TABLE 11**Mean differences across social media (J-I)**

Dependent Variable	I	J	Douyin	Weibo
Learning	Weibo		.02	
	WeChat		-.34*	-.36*

Note. *Statistically significant at the .05 level

V. DISCUSSION**Reliability and Validity of this Study**

This study investigated the motivation factors of Chinese users sharing information in specific social media. The result of Cronbach's alpha (α) indicates that all six motivations selected are acceptable (Table 1).

Findings about the correlations among six motivation factors show that all of the factors are positively interrelated with one another (Table 4). Social media users who would like to share information may not be simply motivated by individual factors but

have mixed considerations motivated by multiple factors. Reputation gets the lowest rank of mean ratings among six motivations, however, it is tightly interrelated with the other five motivations, especially with reciprocity ($r = .816$). Social media users are probably less likely to be motivated by reciprocity, however, users motivated by any one of the other five motivation factors consider reciprocity to some extent when sharing information in social media, and users who are motivated by reciprocity consider highly with reputation. Altruism is ranked to be the top one motivation, which shows the willingness of users helping others without any return. Altruism is strongly correlated with the other five motivations ($r > .5$), and users motivated altruism consider the least of personal gain ($r = .685$).

General Distribution of Motivations of All Participants

Results explanation: Results show that all six motivations proposed in this study influence users sharing intention to some extent (Table 3 and Figure 1). In detail, altruism and enjoyment are the top two most influential motivations across the three tested social media.

Compare with other studies: This result shows differences with previous research conducted in the U.S. that learning and social engagement are the top two motivations (Oh and Syn, 2015). This probably because the different types of social media tested as they would have different functions, however, still shows the Chinese social media users' different motivations for sharing behaviors. This study results agree that social media users who would like to share information are highly motivated by the willingness to share the knowledge they have to help others and request no return. Therefore, it agrees with previous research that altruism is really vital in the social media environment and encouraged users' behaviors of sharing information (Ma and Chan, 2014). The result shows that most social media users are highly enjoyed by sharing something in specific social media. This shows a difference with previous research proposed that people share knowledge that had no relationship with enjoyment in Facebook (Kwahk and Park, 2016).

Motivations with Demographics and Background Information

Using comparisons with other studies to explain results with demographic characteristics: Influential levels of motivation factors for sharing information in social media also vary from demographic and background information. Oh and Syn (2015) suggested that female users are more highly motivated than male users. However, this study shows that male users are more likely to be motivated by learning, personal gain, altruism, reputation and reciprocity than female users in China (Table 5). The age influence is similar to Oh and Syn's study (2015) that the influential degree of motivations probably is higher for younger media users (Table 6). However, this study also shows a strange phenomenon that, comparing with users younger than 18 years old, differences in the 50-59 age group are smaller than 30-39 and 40-49. This may because the number of respondents below 18 and 50-59 is limited (Table 2) and causes some bias. Education level also plays an important role in information sharing with motivations selected. Different from Oh and Syn's study (2015), results in this study

show not a simple linear regression relationship between education levels with motivation factors (Table 7). The results show that senior middle school students are more highly motivated by six motivation factors, followed by users who got a master's degree or above, who got a bachelor's degree, and then the junior high school or below. That may be because the respondents were currently in junior high school, they won't have enough experience with social media limited by time and study than others. If the respondents were workers but only with a degree of junior high school, they may lack of knowledge to learn how to use these three high technology social media. Therefore, the motivations are lowest for people to choose the degree of junior. Then for other groups, the higher the degree, the busier they are, then the lesser time they spent in social media, therefore, the motivations also decrease since they are even less likely to use social media.

Using comparisons with other studies to explain results with frequency of sharing information: For the relationship between sharing frequency and motivations, Oh and Syn's study (2015) showed a simple conclusion that people sharing information less often would be more likely to be motivated by learning, reputation, and reciprocity. In this study, it is similar that people who share information less are more likely to be motivated by learning, altruism, and reputation than those who share hourly (Table 8). However, this study shows contract results to Oh and Syn's study (2015) that they are less likely to be motivated by all six motivations than daily, weekly and monthly users. In this study, users who share information hourly also are less likely to be motivated by six motivations than daily and weekly users. That may be because respondents in this study who share information less often or hourly were likely to be motivated by other factors that had not been tested in this study. Otherwise, the results show differences in motivations for Chinese users sharing behavior compared with Oh and Syn's study (2015).

Distribution of Motivations across Different Social Media

Results explanation: Results show that there are not many significant differences of motivations across WeChat, Sina Weibo, and Douyin. Altruism, enjoyment, and reciprocity are marked as top three influential motivations in all these three media (Figure 2). WeChat is a private social media and the content posted in WeChat moment only can be seen by selected friends. Because of the friend relationships in WeChat, users are more likely to share something motivated by its helpfulness to their friends (Oh and Syn, 2015). Therefore, altruism is ranked as the top one in WeChat. For Douyin users, many of them would share videos to teach about some practical skills or recommend useful items to others, therefore, they are also likely to be motivated more by altruism (Lu and Lu, 2019). Enjoyment is more important for Sina Weibo than WeChat and Douyin users. It may be because that the purpose for most people to use Sina Weibo is to follow any information about celebrities (Ding et al. 2013), they also share their own thought and repost their idols' posts when they feel delighted. The significant difference occur in learning (Table 11). Sina Weibo and Douyin users are more likely to be motivated by learning than WeChat users, which may be because the contents in Sina Weibo and Douyin are more fashion and creative than WeChat (Lu and Lu, 2019).

Compare with other studies: Comparing with the previous study with other types of media, part of the findings are similar. Facebook has a similar friendship relationship with WeChat, so both Facebook and WeChat users are more highly motivated by altruism (Oh and Syn, 2015). Sina Weibo has similar functions of being followed or following with Twitter, reputation was found to be more highly ranked for Twitter users (Oh and Syn, 2015) however, reputation didn't get a higher rank for Sina Weibo users, which may be because to be exposed and followed by others in Sina Weibo is quite harder, and users focus more on following celebrities rather than be followed (Ding et al. 2013). It is harder for Sina Weibo users to be seen and have a high reputation among strangers, therefore, they consider less reputation compared with other motivation factors. In general, different with Oh and Syn's study (2015), this study did not show too much differences for users' motivations of sharing information across types of social media. It may be because this survey is done in China, and the media chosen are different from what they had tested.

Practical Contribution of this Study

Findings from this study indicate a variety of ways existed to develop proper strategies to encourage users to be more actively engaged in sharing information in specific social media. In the current age of the Internet, social media has been widely used in our daily life to be a way of communication and interaction with others (Oh and Syn, 2015). As pointed out earlier in this paper, China accounts for the largest number of network users, it is essential to explore Chinese social media users. Findings in this study indicate that sharing behaviors of Chinese social media users are likely to be motivated by enjoyment, learning, personal gain, altruism, reputation, and reciprocity. Similar to the results pointed by Oh and Syn (2015), reputation in this study got the lowest rank for motivations, therefore, reputation management may not need to be emphasized too much in Chinese social media user's activities. However, designers may need to consider more about altruism and enjoyment for developing and managing social media for Chinese users.

It is also worthwhile to mention that motivations for social media users may differ across types of media. Although this study shows a few differences, it is still worthwhile to mention that there is a statistically significant differences for WeChat compared with Sina Weibo and Douyin users in learning (Table 11). Understanding these differences can help media developers to figure out ways to attract more active users, or help foreign media developers to learn whether they should do some changes to the media before introducing it into China to get more active Chinese users, which will directly influence the success of a social media.

The relationships between motivations and demographic or background information also provide more detailed instructions about how to facilitate social media more effectively. For example, if the target users are separated from gender, there may be no need to consider the impact of enjoyment, because there is no statistically significant differences in enjoyment between male and female users. All six motivation factors should be considered when needs to consider the age of social media users. Especially for users under 18 years old, they are more likely to be motivated by all six

motivations than other groups of users. There may be no need to consider enjoyment and reciprocity when targeting social media users under other age groups, because there shows no statistically significant differences. Learning, personal gain and reputation may need to be put into more considerations when it comes to questions about how to attract and encourage users to share information more frequently.

Theoretical Contributions

Comparing with previous studies related to social media in China, although there is one study tested mediating effect analysis added the effect of autonomy support, perceived usefulness, and relatedness support on motivation factors, it only tested QQ with three motivation factors (Yuan and Liu, 2017). There is also one paper indicates the mediating effect of “Big Five personality traits” on motivations of sharing information, but it has no specific type of social media and no comparison (Luo, 2018). Although this study does not test any mediating effect with model frameworks, three specific social media was selected to do the comparison, and the study also tests more detailed relationships for motivations of sharing behaviors with several demographic and background information of social media users. In addition, as mentioned before in this paper, related tests of sharing behaviors in social media was seldom being conducted in China, and there have been few comparative studies. Therefore, this study provides a more comprehensive and comparative theory about sharing behaviors for Chinese social media users with their demographic and background information (Halebian and Finkelst, 1999).

Limitations

There are a few limitations exist in this study. First, the number of valid respondents for each three survives is quite different (WeChat: 419, Sina Weibo: 219, Douyin: 169). These differences may cause bias when doing a comparison of motivations across types of media. Second, this study only selected three social media in China, although these selected social media are the most popular with different functions and information formats, the findings may not be generalizable to all kinds of Chinese social media (Oh and Syn, 2015). Third, although the promotion functions of Wenjuanxing was used to generalize more respondents all over the country, it is still difficult to guarantee that members of the population of social media users are selected randomly because the volume of Chinese users is too extensive and widely distributed. Fourth, this study only tested six motivation factors, other mediating effects have not been considered in this study.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study learned Chinses social media users’ motivations related to behaviors of sharing information in social media. The results indicate that there could be various types of motivations for social media users to share information actively, and the motivations would vary from types of media that serve different functions and information purposes. Motivations probably are influenced by demographic and background characteristics of social media users as well. In addition, results show a lot

of differences with previous comparative study conducted by Oh and Syn (2015) to test motivations across Facebook, Twitter, Delicious, YouTube, and Flickr. This illustrates that motivation is one of the vital factors that need to be considered when analyzing and understanding human information behaviors (Oh and Syn, 2015). This study could promote future research in sharing information in China with a more variety of social media platforms as the theoretical framework of motivation is developed and tested. In addition, the mediating effect mentioned in other studies (Yuan and Liu, 2017; Luo, 2018) can be also added to do the comparison in future studies. Also, as the differences shown in the results this study got with Oh and Syn's study (2015), future research can be conducted to do the comparison between the U.S. and China in a more detailed and functional way to explore background reasons for the differences. In addition, wider regions can be included in the study since the land of China is so widely and social media users spread extensively. Considering these aspects, a series of follow-up studies will be conducted continuously to revise and update the current study and framework of motivations. In addition, future studies also can adopt this framework and extend it with motivations for social media users seeking information or other information behaviors in China.

APPENDIX

Questionnaire (WeChat as an example)

1. Have you shared information in WeChat moment? (Including but not limited to text/photo/video)
2. Please provide your ID: ()
3. What's your gender
 - a) Male
 - b) Female
4. What's your age
 - a) <18
 - b) 18-29
 - c) 30-39
 - d) 40-49
 - e) 50-59
 - f) ≥ 60
5. What's your highest degree
 - a) Junior high school or below
 - b) Senior middle school or technical secondary school
 - c) Undergraduate or college
 - d) Master or above
6. Average frequency of posting information
 - a) Hourly
 - b) Daily
 - c) Weekly
 - d) Monthly
 - e) Less often

7. Enjoyment							
Because sharing entertains me	1 strongly disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7strongly agree
Because I enjoy sharing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Because sharing can bring me a lot of fun	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Learning							
Sharing can maintain my current understanding of certain topics	1 strongly disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7strongly agree
Sharing can exercise my current knowledge	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Sharing can promote my ability to solve problems	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Personal Gain							
I will intentionally share information related to my business	1 strongly disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7strongly agree
Can be a channel to sell products	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Can be a channel to advertise services	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Altruism							
Sharing my knowledge can help others	1 strongly disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7strongly agree
My sharing can bring happiness to others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It's a pleasure to share with others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. Reputation							
Sharing information can improve my status in a certain field	1 strongly disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7strongly agree
Sharing makes me more professional	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Sharing specific information can make others support me more	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Reciprocity							
When I share my knowledge, I believe that I will get an idea for giving an idea	1 strongly disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7strongly agree
I expect someone to respond when I am in need	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
When I contribute knowledge, I expect to get back when I need it	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

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