



THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SHARING:
WHY DO PEOPLE SHARE ONLINE?

CIG

The New York Times | [nytimes.com](https://www.nytimes.com)

CUSTOMER INSIGHT GROUP



The Psychology of Sharing: What Is This Study About?

A first-of-its-kind inquiry

into the motivations behind why we share

Understanding the motivational

forces behind the act of sharing will help marketers

get their content shared



Why do consumers share content online?

What motivates consumers to share content?

Are there distinct personalities with different motivations?

How can understanding why people share help advertisers?



Overview

1

Methodology

2

Motivations
for Sharing

3

Online Sharing
Personas

4

Key Guidelines
for Getting
Shared

5

Consumer
Categories





1

Ethnographies

- In-person interviews in New York, Chicago and San Francisco

2

Immersion/Deprivation

- One-week sharing panel

We worked with Latitude Research to conduct a three-phase study to understand why people share content online

3

Quantitative Survey

- Survey of 2,500 medium/heavy online sharers
- Conducted segmentation to identify main types of sharers





SHARING CONTENT IS NOT NEW



“

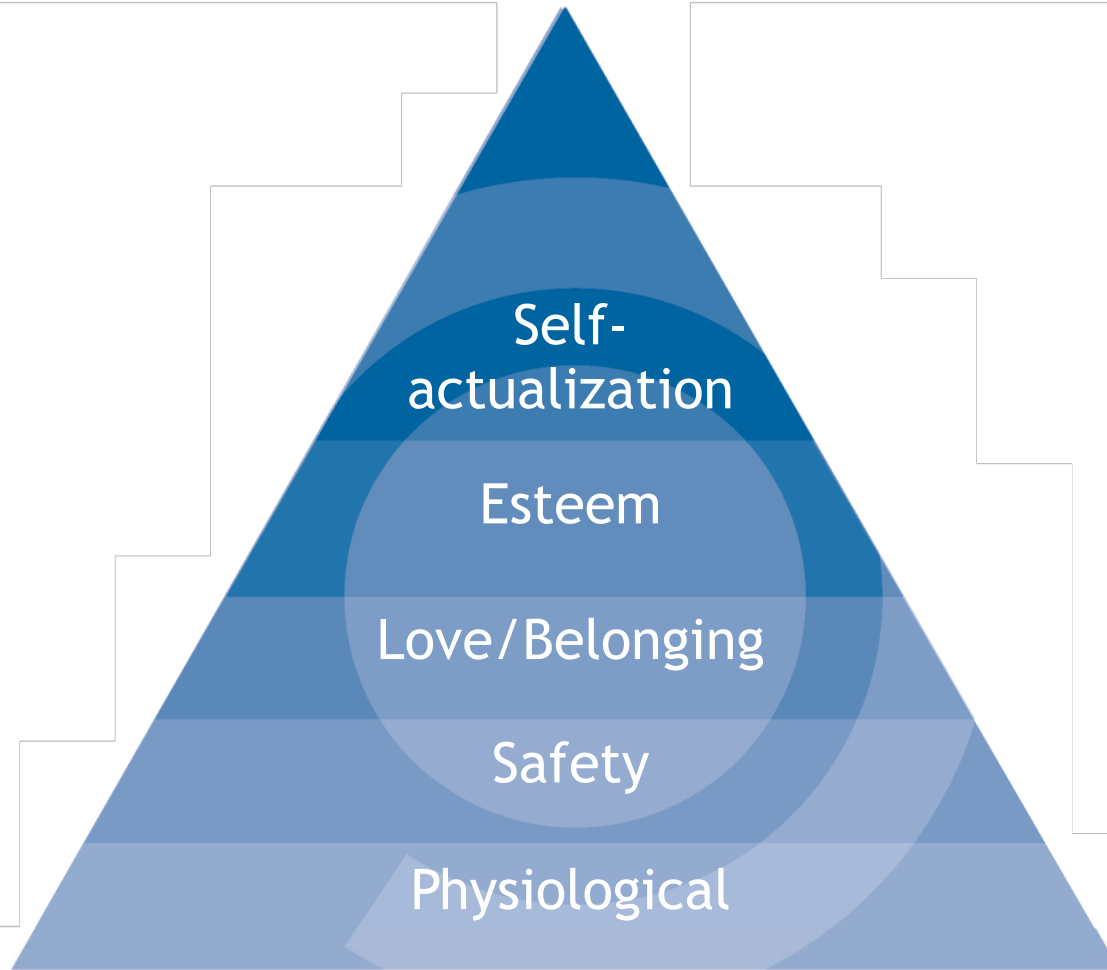
In the past, people shared at lunch with their girlfriends when they saw someone with something cool. We still share things when it's relevant... we just share more and online.

- Ethnography participant, female

”



Sharing is not new, it's human nature





What's changed?

We now live in the Information Age

We share
MORE
content

From
MORE
sources

With
MORE
people

MORE
often

MORE
quickly

“

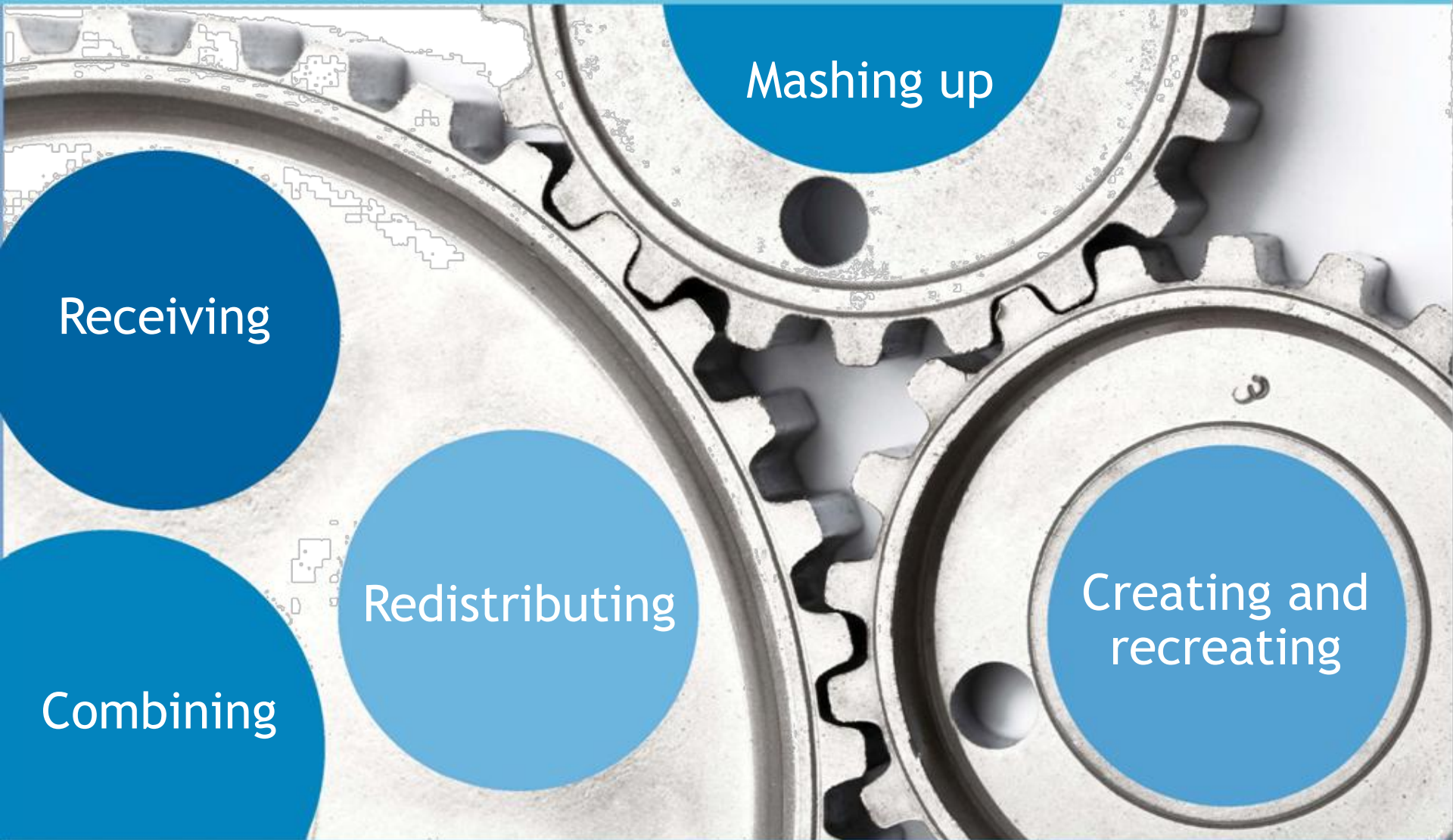
I have a hard time imagining how much more to-the-minute information can become. With twitter, instant FB updates, e-mail updates, what would have been considered fast even five years ago is obsolete.

- Deprivation participant, female

”



From Broadcasters to Sharecasters



Sharing acts as “information management”

73%

say they process information more deeply, thoroughly and thoughtfully when they share it

85%

say reading other people’s responses helps them understand and process information and events

“

Sharing information helps me do my job. I remember products and information sources better when I share them and am more likely to use them.

- Deprivation participant, male

”


MOTIVATIONS FOR SHARING




To bring valuable and entertaining content to others



49%
say sharing allows
them to inform
others of products
they care about and
potentially change
opinions or
encourage action



94%
carefully consider
how the
information they
share will be useful
to the recipient



“
[I share] to enrich the
lives of those around
me.

- Immersion
participant, female

”

To define ourselves to others

68%

share to give people a better sense of who they are and what they care about

“

I try to share only information that will reinforce the image I'd like to present: thoughtful, reasoned, kind, interested and passionate about certain things.

- Deprivation participant, male

”



To grow and nourish our relationships

73%

share information because it helps them connect with others who share their interests

78%

share information online because it lets them stay connected to people they may not otherwise stay in touch with

“

I miss the companionship and conversations on Facebook. I feel like I'm probably missing out on some things without the connection.

- Deprivation participant, male


”

“

I enjoy getting comments that I sent great information and that my friends will forward it to their friends because it's so helpful. It makes me feel valuable.

Ethnography participant, female

”



69%
share
information
because it allows
them to feel more
involved in the world

To get the word out about causes or brands

“

I forwarded an article about Proposition B to Everyone in my union. I wanted them to learn about the issue and rally against it.

- Ethnography participant, male

”

84%

share because it is a way to support causes or issues they care about



Sharing is all about relationships

1

To bring
valuable and
entertaining
content to
others

2

To define
ourselves to
others

3

To grow and
nourish our
relationships

4

Self-fulfillment

5

To get the word
out about causes
or brands



6 PERSONAS OF SHARERS





Six personas of online sharers

1

Altruists

3

Hipsters

5

Connectors

2

Careerists

4

Boomerangs

6

Selectives

SEGMENTS ARE
DEFINED BY:

- Emotional motivations
- Desired presentation of self
- Role of sharing in life
- Value of being first to share




KEY GUIDELINES FOR GETTING CONTENT SHARED





Key factors to influence sharing




Appeal to consumers' motivation to connect with each other – not just with your brand



1



Key factors to influence sharing



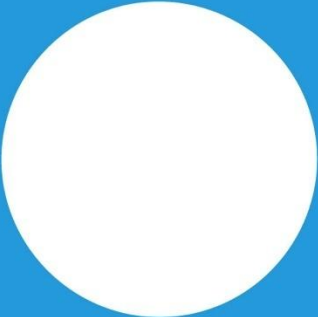
Trust is the
cost of entry for
getting shared



2



Key factors to influence sharing




Keep it simple...
and it will get
shared... and it
won't get muddled



3



Key factors to influence sharing



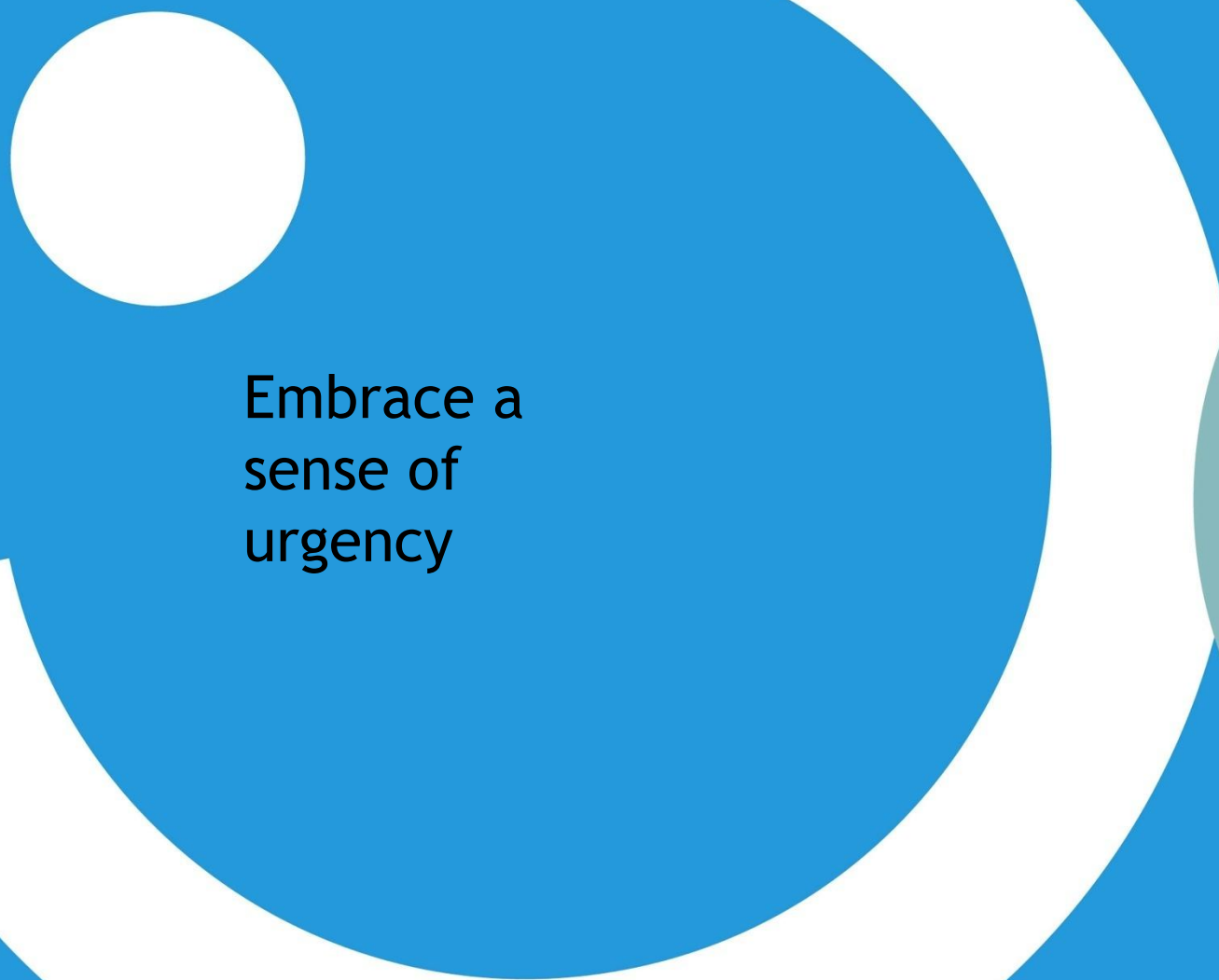
Appeal to their
sense of humor



4



Key factors to influence sharing



Embrace a
sense of
urgency



5

Key factors to influence sharing

Getting your content shared is just the beginning

6

Get shared

Get shared again

Listen

Get credit for responding

Respond



Key factors to influence sharing



E-mail is still #1



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CATEGORY SEGMENTATION





For more information on this study and how it impacts your brand, please contact Brian Brett:
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