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## Usage of video sharing websites: Drivers and barriers



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### ABSTRACT

Using a technology acceptance model (TAM) and uses and gratification theory (U&G) as primary theories, this exploratory study investigates what factors promote or hinder the use of video sharing websites. Theoretically, this study attempts to examine the integration of TAM and U&G with other perceptions of video sharing sites and consumer characteristics. Practically, the investigation provides video sharing websites with insights into the appeal of their sites to audiences. In addition, this study may help offline video media counter the threats from the drastic growth of video sharing websites. The findings conclude that those males who use the Internet for emotional pleasure and excitement, perceive video sharing websites to have greater usefulness, ease of use, substitutability, and content variety are more frequently using video sharing websites. With respect to service evaluation factors, content variety appears to mitigate the negative effects of content quality, loading speed, screen size, display resolution, and audio quality on video sharing websites.

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### 1. Introduction

Thanks to the increasing penetration of broadband Internet connections, more and more people are watching videos via the Web. According to [ComScore \(2011\)](#), 81.9% of US Internet users watched online videos in April 2011. According to a survey conducted in 2010, approximately 40% of American households with broadband Internet access use the Internet to watch television programs and movies ([Parks Associates, 2010](#)). While the Web is increasingly utilized to watch television programs or movies created by media companies, it is also becoming a useful platform for amateurs to share the videos they produce with other Internet users.

Video sharing websites are a driving force behind this rise of the Web as an alternative platform for viewing video content. [ComScore Media Metrix \(2006\)](#) pointed out the gaining popularity of video sharing websites as one of the marked changes in its monthly analysis of US consumer activities in 2006. The most popular US video sharing website, YouTube, was ranked third with respect to website traffic in the United States, following Google and Facebook, as of June 2011 ([Quantcast, 2011a](#)). Other video sharing websites, such as Vevo, Dailymotion, allow people to upload and watch videos through streaming technologies; these sites are also growing ([ComScore, 2011](#)).

Advertisers respond quickly to the exponential growth of video sharing websites. The top 25 companies that spent the most on advertising over the last five years also significantly cut their spending in traditional media, according to Advertising Age and TNS Media Intelligence ([Story, 2007](#)). Instead, advertisers increasingly invest their money in commercials online. Nike is just one of the representative examples that describes the shift of ad trends. Nowadays, Nike shows many of their ads only on the Internet. In 2005, Nike posted an ad that stars the Brazilian soccer player Ronaldinho online instead of on TV. The company said that more than 17 million viewers watched the ad on YouTube ([Story, 2007](#)).

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While advertisers embrace video sharing websites, other media firms such as television networks and film studios are substantially concerned about the violation of copyrights on video sharing websites. In March 2007, Viacom sued YouTube and its parent company, Google, for more than \$1 billion, saying the companies are infringing on Viacom's copyrights because almost 160,000 unauthorized video clips are available for viewing on YouTube. Several media firms including CBS Corp., Dailymotion, Fox Entertainment Group, Microsoft Corp., MySpace, NBC Universal, Veoh Networks Inc., Viacom Inc. and The Walt Disney Co. emphasize the importance of protecting copyrights. They argue that filtering technologies that recognize content under copyright protection should be effective (Dauman, 2007). In response, YouTube eventually launched video identification technology that filters videos under copyright protections when one uploads videos (Auchard, 2007), and a video verification program that helps copyright holders locate and remove video content that meets the copyright infringement criteria (YouTube, 2011).

Despite the notable growth and impact of video sharing websites on the media landscape, there is no research on the reasons behind the growing popularity of video sharing websites. Using a technology acceptance model (TAM) as well as uses and gratification (U&G) theory as primary theories, this study investigates what factors promote people to use video sharing websites and hinder the visits of video sharing websites. Theoretically, the present study attempts to examine the integration of TAM and U&G with other perceptions of video sharing sites and consumer characteristics. Practically, the investigation provides video sharing websites with insights into the appeal of their sites to audiences. In addition, this study may help offline video media counter the threats from the drastic growth of video sharing websites.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Definition of video sharing websites

Even though audiences and news are buzzing about video sharing websites, none of the research defines what video sharing websites are. The term "video sharing websites" is occasionally interchangeably used with other terms such as "user-generated content sites" or "webcasters." It appears that what each of these terms refers to is actually different.

Focusing on the creators of content, the boundary of user-generated content (UGC) sites is narrower than that of video sharing websites in that UGC sites refer to only the sites offering content produced by individual users. *PC Magazine* refers to user-generated content as "wikis and blogs in which content is created by the general public rather than paid professionals" (*PC Magazine*, 2007). The term "user-generated content (UGC) sites" is avoided in this study because the focus of this study is not limited to content produced only by amateurs. Apparently, video sharing websites are primary outlets for amateurs to share their videos with the general public. However, user-generated content is not the only available content on video sharing websites. Numerous videos originally created by media firms are also available on video sharing websites. In addition, the focus of this study centers on videos rather than content, which is a broader category than videos, including texts, videos, static photos, and so forth.

Meanwhile, webcasting is defined as "the delivery of audio and video content to large groups either locally or globally distributed over the Internet" (Boettcher and Nardick, 2001, p. 52). Webcasters primarily use streaming technologies as do video sharing websites (Boettcher and Nardick, 2001), so under this definition, it seems very possible for amateurs to webcast nowadays. However, Overton (2006) pointed out that corporations and larger businesses are the main producers of webcasts in discussing webcasting in general. Lin (2004), in her study of webcasting adoption, implicitly defines webcasting as streaming of sports, news, and selected programs by broadcast and cable television networks. Given the different meanings of the terms, video sharing websites over UGC sites and webcasters are used consistently in this research.

In this study, video sharing websites are defined as venues where people are able to both watch and upload videos for free. Content available on video sharing websites is classified into two categories: (1) videos created by individual Internet users (i.e., amateurs) and (2) videos originally produced by media firms but uploaded by individuals Internet users or media firms such as advertisers or media marketers. The technology involved with viewing is confined to streaming technologies.

### 2.2. Perceived usefulness and ease of use

TAM is a prevalent theory that is employed to explain the intention to use a particular technology (Gefen et al., 2003). Derived from the theory of reasoned action (TRA), TAM suggests that acceptance and rejection of information communication technologies are explained by users' beliefs and attitudes (Yang, 2005). TAM posits that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of a particular information technology are the central drivers in the attitudes toward and intentions to adopt it (Davis, 1989; Davis et al., 1989). Perceived usefulness is defined as "the degree to which an individual believes that using a particular system would enhance his/her job performance" (p. 320). Perceived ease of use refers to "the degree to which an individual believes that using a particular system would be free of physical and mental efforts (Davis, 1989, p. 323).

While TRA focuses on explaining behavioral intention in general from a social psychology perspective, TAM centers specifically on predicting behavioral intention to use and the actual use of an information technology from information systems and management perspectives. TRA posits that attitude and subjective norm affect intention. Subjective norm refers to an individual's belief that she or he should perform a certain behavior because other people important to the individual expect the behavior (Fishbein and Aizen, 1975). Adapting the generic behavior model to the specific domain of technology

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