



White Paper

Harris Interactive Social Web Ladder



Introduction

Not all social web participants are alike. The segmentation of online participants is an essential emerging need in helping to understand how people differ in their social web participation. Harris Interactive has enhanced existing social web segmentations to improve decision-making and ensure better, more relevant targeting. We start with a description of Forrester's Social Technographics Ladder of Participation. This segmentation has the following structure:

Forrester Categories	Forrester Descriptions
Creators	Publish web page Publish or maintain a blog Upload video to sites like YouTube
Conversationalists	Those who regularly post to sites like Facebook and Twitter
Critics	Comment on blogs Post ratings and reviews
Collectors	Use RSS Tag webpages
Joiners	Use social networking sites
Spectators	Read blogs Watch peer-generated videos Listen to podcasts
Inactives	None of the above activities

Forrester's social technographics ladder has a few inherent weaknesses:

- The segmentation categories are not mutually exclusive behaviors, so no discrete classification of individual interaction is possible. It is "soft" in terms of self-reporting behavior – there are no hard metrics to assign someone to a category.
- There is no hierarchy to the above behaviors (you don't have to be a *Collector* before you become a *Creator*), so ascension up the ladder of influence is not likely.
- It doesn't map to known academic research in that there is not a tie between *Creator* and *Influencer*. Past research shows that individual contributors who are passionate about a topic and connected to their networks through social media influence those networks up to 8 times more than those who are not connected to their networks through social media.
- It *does not* account for many current social web applications (such as virtual worlds and gaming like *Second Life* or *World of Warcraft*, email services like *Gmail*, and instant messengers like *Skype*). Instead it focuses primarily on blogs and social networking sites. We know from internal Harris Interactive research that this is not where the majority of social web behavior is taking place.

Harris Interactive Social Web Ladder

We have an established and tested set of behaviors that map to mutually exclusive categories supported by both secondary research and an analog of self-reported influenced/influencer behavior. The social web we consider is where people are “interlinked and interacting with each other in a conversational and participatory manner via the internet.”

Our ladder of Social Web behavior has the following properties:

1. Has mutually exclusive categories.
2. Has a hierarchy of the behavior where people typically move from lower categories to higher ones, stopping where they feel most comfortable.
3. Maps consistently to known academic research where possible.
4. Can be identified from self-reported behavior and is verifiable by behavioral analysis.

Categories	Rules of Participation
Influencers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has an account on a social web application. • Has logged into the account within the past 30 days or plans to log into the account in the next 30 days. • May have joined groups or become a “fan” (or other similar behavior) within the past 30 days. • May have gained new friends or followers or enlarged his or her network within the past 30 days. • Has a network size that is greater than average for his age, gender, race, education and income. • Within a ratio of number of initiating posts to number of comments (or re-tweets), the influencer has posted equal or more number of initiating posts to number of comments, “likes” or other reactionary behaviors. • Over 80% of posts the influencer makes in the past 30 days have at least 2 or more corresponding comments by others within the influencer network. • At least one conversation of duration greater than 2 weeks.
Conversationalists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has an account on a social web application. • Has logged into the account within the past 30 days or plans to log into the account in the next 30 days. • May have joined groups or become a “fan” (or other similar behavior) within the past 30 days. • May have gained new friends or followers or enlarged his or her network within the past 30 days. • Has a network size that is greater than average for his age, gender, race, education and income. • Within a ratio of number of initiating posts to number of comments (or re-tweets), the conversationalists has posted equal or more number of initiating posts to number of comments, “likes” or other reactionary behaviors. Within this majority setting, an index may be applied to the polarity of the conversationalist behavior, calculated based on the ratio of comments to posts.
Commentors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has an account on a social web application. • Has logged into the account within the past 30 days or plans to log into the account in the next 30 days. • May have joined groups or become a “fan” (or other similar behavior) within the past 30 days. • May have gained new friends or followers or enlarged his or her network. • Within a ratio of number of initiating posts to number of comments (or re-tweets), the commenter has posted more comments or likes or other reactionary behaviors than posts. Within this majority setting, an index may be applied to the polarity of the commenter behavior, calculated based on the ratio of comments to posts.
Lurkers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has an account on a social web application. • Has logged into the account within the past 30 days or plans to log into the account in the next 30 days. • Has not posted a status within the past 30 days. • Has not commented or otherwise interacted to create “activity” within the social web application within the past 30 days. • Has not joined any groups or become a “fan” (or other similar behavior) within the past 30 days. • May have gained new friends or followers or enlarged his or her network, but have not interacted with that community within the past 60 days.
Joiners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has an account on a social web application but does not use the application with any regularity (has not logged onto a social web application within the past 30 days and does not plan to in the next 30 days).
Inactives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not participate within social web applications, although may use internet.
Internet Non-Users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not use the internet.

Other Considerations

These segments may overlap with different rungs of the ladder and are in addition to the social web ladder.

Emotional Communicator

This is a *Commenter*, *Conversationalist*, or *Influencer* that has the following characteristics:

- Subject-specific, Glass-Half Full or Empty: Their comments or posts may classify within a polarity index of “negative” or “positive” when discussing a specific subject, topic, theme or brand. This polarity index is a measure of the intensity of the individual’s sentiment when discussing a specific subject, topic, theme or brand.
- Always Glass-Half Full or Empty: Their comments or posts may classify within a polarity index of “negative” or “positive” on a majority of posts or comments, independent of subject, topic, theme or brand.
- Emotionality on commenting or posting: This emotionality may be focused on commenting only, posting only, or both behaviors.

Group Participator

This is a *Joiner*, *Lurker*, *Commenter*, *Conversationalist*, or *Influencer* that regularly joins groups, “likes,” or “thumbs up” fan, celebrity or business/corporate web pages/sites.

Always On

This is a *Lurker*, *Commenter*, *Conversationalist*, or *Influencer* who participates in some interactive way (group joining, friending, liking, commenting, re-tweeting, following, or posting) at least 5 out of 7 days in the past week.

Glossary

Social Web application =

- All major and minor blogs such as Blogger and WordPress
- Social networks such as LinkedIn, Facebook and MySpace
- Microblogs such as Twitter and Plurk
- Boards, forums and review sites such as BoardReader
- Video site commentary such as Flickr, Vimeo and YouTube
- Media blogs or commenting pages
- Wikis such as Wikipedia and Yelp
- Groups such as Yahoo Groups
- Instant Messaging Platforms
- Virtual Online Worlds (Second Life, There, World of Warcraft)

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