

For Immediate Release: May 25, 2016
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Will You Share That Cat Video? Depends Whether You Found or Received It

Will you post that cat video on Facebook? Tweet the article you just read about Donald Trump? According to a new study in the [Journal of Consumer Research](#), you're more likely to share content—stories, news, information—if you found it yourself rather than if you'd received it from a friend.



“Word-of-mouth sharing is part of everyday life, but information can be acquired in different ways. Sometimes we find it ourselves (via a news website or magazine), and other times we receive it from others (via email or conversation). We wanted to explore how different content acquisition methods influence subsequent sharing, and if so, how?” write authors Zoey Chen (University of Miami) and Jonah Berger (University of Pennsylvania).

Across six studies, when people *found* content such as a news article themselves, they were more likely to share it, regardless of its “quality” (whether or not it was interesting or well written) whereas when they *received* content, they were more selective about what they shared and much more discriminating about level of quality.

The authors theorize that people associate found content with themselves, their judgment and, ultimately, their ego (“*my article*”), and feel an elevated sense of certainty and trust for what they found interesting. Thus, they're more likely to share it. In contrast, receivers are more critical and sensitive to content quality and less apt to share.

“In addition to providing insight into the psychological drivers of content sharing, our findings have significant implications for anyone interested in harnessing word-of-mouth marketing. If your aim is to foster information sharing via long chains (one person sharing with another sharing with another) until it ‘goes viral,’ then efforts to craft higher quality content are well worth the investment,” the authors conclude.

Zoey Chen and Jonah Berger. “[How Content Acquisition Affects Word of Mouth.](#)” *Journal of Consumer Research*: June 2016. DOI: [10.1093/jcr/ucw001](#).



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