

Self-tracking alone or with others: effects on happiness and exercise effort

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Abstract

Obesity is a global problem, and physical activity is key for its prevention. Many people struggle with motivation to exercise. A common strategy to increase how much one exercises and stay motivated is using self-tracking technologies (STTs; e.g., Fitbit). Many STTs include social features, which allow users to join virtual communities of like-minded others. Yet, little is known about the effects these communities have on users' experience and behaviour. This paper investigates the effect of STT community membership on happiness and exercise effort, as well as the moderating effect of self-esteem. We find that STT community membership increases happiness but decreases effort. In turn, effort increases happiness. Self-esteem positively moderates the effect of STT community membership on effort, untangling this tension. We further observe that STT community membership delays user dropout. Our findings have important implications for STT service providers and consumer wellbeing.

Subject Areas: *Consumer Behaviour, Consumer Services*

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