

Wardrobe Malfunctions and the Measurement of Internet Behaviour

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Social cognition

Keywords: Internet Behaviour, Search Volume Index, Non-reactive Measurement, Wardrobe Malfunction

The wardrobe malfunction — an unanticipated exposure of bodily parts in the public — has become a prevailing issue in concerts, shows and other celebrity events that is reliably reported by the media. The internet as the fastest source for celebrity gossip allows measuring the impact of such wardrobe malfunctions on the public interest in a celebrity. This measurement in turn allows conclusions about intention, motivation, and internet behaviour of a wide variety of internet users. The present study exemplifies the use of an innovative non-reactive measure of active interest — the Search Volume Index — to assess the impact of a variety of internet-related phenomena, including wardrobe malfunctions. Results indicate that interest in a celebrity increases immediately after such an event and stays at a high level for about three weeks (the wardrobe plateau). This special form of celebrity gossip thus meets a constant interest of a substantial proportion of internet users.

[Published in: *Psychology* 2011, 2(3), 265-267].

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