

“Hide, stay still and listen carefully”: Birdwatchers’ information seeking and sharing on YouTube



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1. Introduction

- Birdwatching or birding is a popular hobby and a form of serious leisure and citizen science. From a research perspective, it is a multidisciplinary topic.
- Birdwatching is an information-rich context, and the volume of published information (e.g. books, websites, magazines, and podcasts) on this hobby is monumental.
- This study aims to find out how birdwatchers seek and share hobby-related information on the Web and to what extent publicly available multimedia resources on YouTube can satisfy their information needs.

2. What is Serious Leisure?

- Serious leisure is a sociological term coined by Robert Stebbins in 1982. It includes hobbies, amateurism and voluntary activities which are adequately substantial and sufficiently challenging. It brings numerous benefits such as joy, a sense of achievement and self-actualisation.
- Serious leisure activities typically need some skills that the participants develop during a long period of time.
- They are engaged in various types of collecting, making, performing, observing or learning activities.

References

- Bryan, H. (1977). Leisure value systems and recreational specialisation: The case of trout fishermen, *Journal of Leisure Research*, 9: 174–187.
- Madden, A., Ruthven, I., and McMenemy, D. (2013). A classification scheme for content analyses of YouTube video comments, *Journal of Documentation*, 69(5): 693-714.
- Stebbins, R. (1982). Serious leisure: A conceptual statement, *Pacific Sociological Review*, 25: 251-272.

3. Research Design

- **Theoretical framework:** Serious Leisure Perspective (SLP)
- **Data collection tool:** User-generated content (UGC)
- **Platform:** YouTube
- **Target group:** Birdwatchers
- **The sample:** A purposeful sample that includes 1988 comments from ten popular birdwatching videos
- **Data mapping tool:** Classification scheme developed for YouTube video comments suggested by Madden *et al.* (2013)

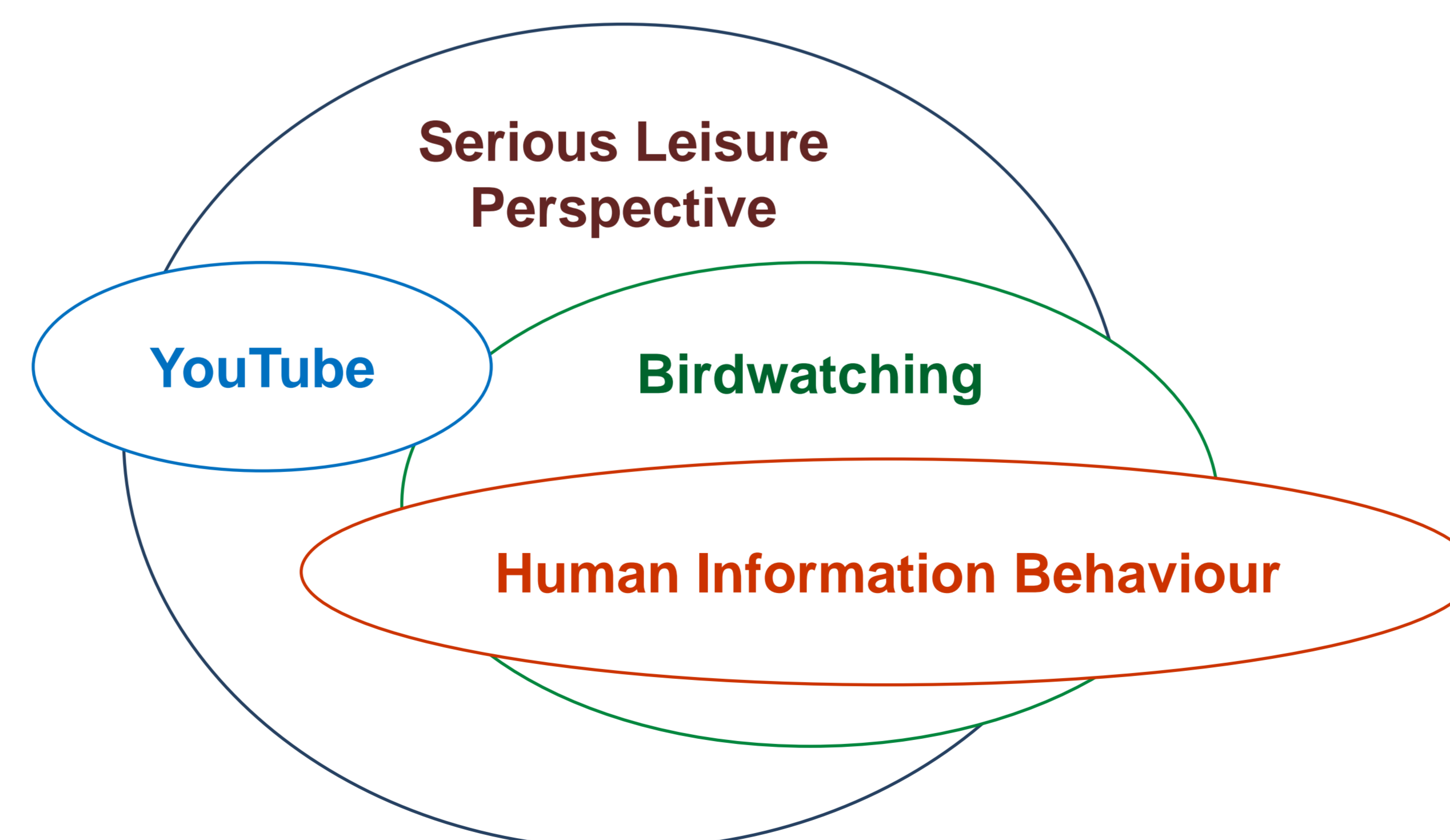


Figure 1. Mapping this research into a bigger picture

4. Literature Review

- Birdwatching has all the six criteria of serious leisure.
- In addition to Stebbins’ theory of serious leisure, some scholars have used Bryan’s theory of recreation specialisation to study birdwatching as a hobby.
- According to the recreation specialisation theory, participants can be considered on a scale ranging from casual to committed participants. There are typical participation styles in terms of affective attachment, commitment, frequency of participation, level of skill, and equipment preferences and expenditures.
- Both theories attempt to explain the complex nature of hobbies. Each theory has its focal point and terminology.

5. Early Findings

- The scheme provides an effective tool to organise the comments into ten categories: information, advice, impression, opinion, responses, expression of personal feelings, general conversations, site processes, video content description, and non-response comments.
- Birdwatchers have a wide array of information needs. The clues to find and identify birds, such as the best time to watch them, birds’ behaviour, the habitual time of their activities and how to record their songs, are a few examples among a long list of information needs.
- YouTube videos are helpful as a starting point for anyone interested in this hobby. However, it does not provide enough information for successful engagement in this hobby. It can deliver a good platform for learning basic skills and networking.