Online Beauty & Online Licenses

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This is an exposition of an empirical study in which I seek to create a mapping the relationship between online regulatory schemes and the quality of online creative outputs. My aim is to illuminate this complex relationship by comparing different regulatory frameworks and distinct quality measures of outputs, and demonstrating that there is no monotonicity between these measures and either one of the scales as opted into by choice of regulatory framework – namely, the commerciality terms scale and the downstream manipulation terms scale.

Specifically, the study explores the connection between self-sorting into a regulatory schema and measures of quality of creative outputs contributed under the selected schema, in one creative enterprise within a single venue - Yahoo!'s Flickr and its photograph-based interactions. The two possible takes on the regulatory schema are achieved by the agents' adoption of a license, which is a tweak of the regulatory environment, primarily comprised of intellectual property, venue-specific technical constraints and quasi-legal guidelines.

The quality of the outputs is measured by accounting for two categories of appreciation; one of which is a parameterization of aesthetic quality of the online work, the other a parameterization of the active interest the work generates. The analysis of the relationship is based on a tripartite framework, including an online survey where randomly selected respondents are asked to evaluate the different quality measures of randomly selected Flickr works; an artificial intelligence program that has been trained to reproduce experts' opinions on photographs, or a super user to account for the quality of the same works; and an analysis of the photo and user metadata from Flickr's repository, drawn by using Flickr's API and by the coding of the interactions around photographs on the website. By replicating this study in other creative contexts, the ultimate aim is to draw inferences with respect to an optimal design of online regulatory frameworks from the perspective of output quality, to the benefit of direct actors, intermediaries and policy makers.