



## Interactive Art and Persuasive Technology: The Case Study of the Formamat



The Formamat - a vending machine that returns candy in exchange for the deletion of the user's digital data - invites people to experience the joy of deletion and encourages them to think about the value and (in)dispensability of their digital files.

### Approaching the Formamat [exhibition setting]

Vending machine as a well known device and symbol, filled with chocolate candy attracts initial interest of visitors

Design is kept simple and playful

The first screen explains the function of the machine and simple steps of use

### Inserting the USB

People are invited to plug-in a USB memory stick or memory card

Most of the visitors had some sort of mobile storage devices. For those without, a "try-out" memory stick was provided. However, using one's own data enhances the experience  
Question of data safety was raised by very few people

### Files Displayed

All files stored on the memory device are listed

They can be sorted by age and size

The user can browse through the files using the touchscreen

### Decision Process

Contrasting the file with certain amount of chocolate gives a point of reference to make an easier decision

Users actively compared their personal attachment to the file and the return of candy proposed

Temptation to receive the most candy creates a game character

### Value Calculation

Each file returns different amount of candy (1 to 4) depending on the file's size, age, type and how many files in total the user has (lesser files, higher value)

A community aspect is included, as the thresholds of what is being considered e.g. a big file or an old file changes according to what other users have deleted so far. E.g., if many users delete jpeg files, they loose value

Curiosity is raised

### Selecting a File

Selecting a file opens a preview window. The user is shown all the information about the file. In case of an image file the image is displayed. It is explained how much candy this particular file is worth and why

Explanations are kept simple and fun

Users can choose either to delete the selected file or return to all listed files

### Deleting the File

Using chocolate as a reward creates a tension between people's wish to get chocolate and the unwillingness to give up their data

Some people do not believe the file is being deleted "for real" as it feels too much like a game

### Receiving the Candy

As the file is being deleted, the candy fall into the tray. The immediate feedback surprises users and causes positive reactions

Usually users would first pick their candy and only then return to the screen

The experience of "enjoy deletion" seems to be delivered

### Continue Or Walk Away

Very often users continued the deletion process after deleting the first file

The majority of the users agreed that most of the time they do have a lot of information that could be deleted

While eating the chocolate users often engage in discussion about the project itself and the question of deleting information

### Conclusions

Although the Formamat was created primarily as an interactive art installation, it **employs a variety of techniques for persuasive system content and functionality**, confirming that it can be considered as an application of persuasive technology. However, **the creation process and the use differ** from conventional persuasive technologies. The result of interaction is depending on the user's free interpretation, whereas persuasive technology applications normally try to ensure that a certain ("right") message is delivered. In an exhibition context, the use is usually non-recurring, thus the persuasive effect cannot be incremental and behavioral changes are consequently difficult to measure.