Research note

Online sharing behavior on social networking sites: Examining narcissism and gender effects

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ABSTRACT

With the rapid emergence of social networking sites, the marketing landscape has changed dramatically. Consumers' sharing behaviors on social networking sites (SNSs) can be guided by both self and social related motives. This study suggested that narcissism is an important psychological factor that impacts sharing behavioral intentions. To provide deeper insights into the SNS phenomenon in the foodservice industry, the current study proposed a conceptual framework to capture customers' narcissistic personality traits and online SNS activities. The findings of this study can enhance the restaurant social media marketing literature by filling a gap in the research that has previously been ignored. Such findings provide managerial implications for designing more effective social media marketing campaigns that strategically encourage customers to share their consumption experiences.

1. Introduction

Social networking sites, hereafter referred to as SNSs, provide a self-promoting platform where consumers can actively generate and share information and potentially influence other consumers (Heinonen, 2011). Today's marketers recognize that consumers are actively involved with SNSs, which has led to substantial changes to traditional marketing paradigms (Stewart and Pavlou, 2002). Many restaurant consumers now turn to SNSs to search for information, share their restaurant experiences, and review products and services online. Accordingly, foodservice companies should rigorously investigate which determinants lead consumers to interact and share on SNSs.

For example, personality differences are known to play an important role in motivating SNS usage, as well as the specific ways in which users create and maintain online identities (e.g., Vazire et al., 2008). Among many potential personality traits, this study paid attention to narcissism because it can be linked to prominent aspects of self-presentation on SNSs, such as frequency of updates and the amount of self-promoting content displayed. Hence, the primary purpose of the present study was to investigate the relationship between narcissism and motivations for sharing dining experiences on SNSs.

The current study proposed a conceptual model to explain how narcissistic personality traits influence sharing restaurant experiences on SNSs based on differing motivations. A conceptual framework was created with uses and gratification theory as the theoretical foundation.

Further, the concept of narcissism and motivations for sharing restaurant-related knowledge on SNSs were also incorporated. The framework for this study is depicted in Fig. 1. More specifically, this study aimed: (1) to explore online sharing behavior associated with narcissism, specifically the impact of narcissism on motivations for sharing restaurant experiences on SNSs; (2) to address the motivational drivers of self-presentation and social benefits in relation to online sharing behaviors on SNSs; and (3) to examine gender differences in narcissism via online sharing motivations because men and women vary considerably in terms of how they behave due to differences in goal orientation.

2. Literature review

2.1. The significance of narcissism and social media in the restaurant context

SNSs are known as a key communication channel for advertisements and promotions in the restaurant industry (Kim et al., 2015a,b). SNSs allow restaurant customers to generate content, participate in review discussions, and share their knowledge and feelings about a restaurant experience with other consumers (Kim et al., 2015a,b). The National Restaurant Association (2016) reported that 60% of diners rely on consumer-generated content before making a dining decision. In this regard, encouraging customers to post on a restaurant's SNS can lead to

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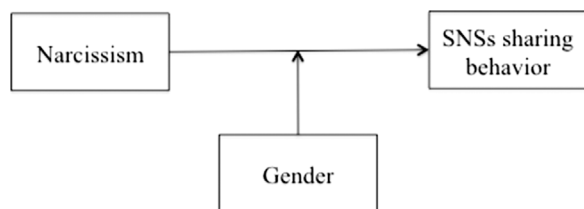E-mail addresses: dkim5@memphis.edu (D. Kim), jang12@purdue.edu (S.S. Jang).

Fig. 1. Proposed conceptual framework.

a successful social media marketing mix.

Despite the importance of customer participation in SNS marketing in the restaurant industry, the deeper understanding of psychological needs underlying SNSs sharing motivations still remains unknown to practitioners and scholars. For example, the act of taking pictures of food and sharing restaurant experiences via SNSs can be conceptualized in terms of two types of motivation: (a) self-presentation (Schau and Gilly, 2003) and (b) social benefits (Ellison, 2007). From a personality perspective, what people post on SNSs can be conceptualized as a reflection of an individual's personality (McCain et al., 2016). We expect that people with narcissistic personalities may be likely to engage SNSs for both self-promotion and social benefits. For example, sharing pictures of a restaurant experience could be a way to elicit immediate positive feedback, which drives social interactions and reinforces a narcissist's exaggerated self-image. Therefore, in terms of marketing it is essential to understand how encourage restaurant customers to engage in SNS activities based on their psychological needs and motivations. Understanding how narcissism influences sharing restaurant-related information on SNSs may offer new social media marketing avenues for restaurant businesses.

2.2. Narcissism and SNSs sharing motivations

Narcissism is a psychological characteristic that involves an exaggerated sense of self (Carson et al., 1988). Narcissists believe that they are special and unique and seek special admiration from others (Vazire et al., 2008). Narcissists rely on SNSs to create and maintain a positive self-view because these platforms provide a perfect venue for narcissists to aggrandize their self-image and receive attention or admiration from a large number of people (Ellison et al., 2007). Accordingly, SNSs allow narcissists to seek both social benefits and self-promoting benefits.

Further, past studies have suggested that the effects of narcissism on SNS sharing motivations differ across gender. For example, Haferkamp et al. (2012) found that men and women differ in their self-presentations on SNSs. Women tend to be more likely to use SNSs to compare themselves with others and search for information, while men are more likely to look at other people's profiles to find friends. Sorokowski et al. (2015) investigated differences in narcissism levels between men and women in regards to posting selfies on SNSs. Additionally, Muscanell and Guadagno (2012) looked at gender differences in social networking using the Big Five Personality Scale.

Overall, the key research objective of this study was to examine the relationship between narcissism and two different motivations for sharing dining experiences on SNSs: self-presentation and social benefits. Given that narcissists are encouraged to self-disclose on SNSs, sharing restaurant experiences on SNSs is motivated by specific goals: self-presentation and social benefits. Accordingly, the following hypotheses were tested:

H1. *People with higher levels of narcissism are more likely to be motivated to share their dining experiences on SNSs based on goals related to self-presentation than those with lower levels of narcissism*

H2. *The effect of narcissism on self-presentation related motivations for sharing dining experiences on SNSs differs according to gender.*

H3. *People with higher levels of narcissism are more likely to be motivated to share their dining experiences on SNSs based on goals related to social benefits than those with lower levels of narcissism.*

H4. *The effect of narcissism on social-benefit related motivations for sharing dining experiences on SNSs differs according to gender.*

H5. *People with higher levels of narcissism are more likely to be motivated to share their dining experiences on SNSs than those with lower levels of narcissism.*

H6. *The effect of narcissism on sharing frequency on SNSs differs according to gender.*

3. Methodology

The project focused on a sample of general restaurant consumers. An online marketing company (Amazon mTurk) in the US was used for data collection. A web-based survey was constructed and distributed to randomly selected US panel members who have SNS accounts. To fulfill its purpose, this study specified the sample as individual restaurant customers who (1) have dined out at a restaurant within the past two weeks and (2) use at least one social networking site. The researchers developed a self-administered questionnaire. The survey was divided into six phases: (1) screening question, (2) SNS usage patterns, (3) narcissistic personality traits, (4) motivations for using SNSs, (5) actual SNS usage, and (6) demographics.

This study was designed to examine the effects of narcissism and gender on online sharing behaviors on SNSs (a. self-presentation and b. social benefits). A 2 (Narcissism: High vs. Low) X 2 (Gender: Woman vs. Man) between-subjects design was conducted to determine the effects of gender. Thus, 2×2 ANOVA tests were conducted. In this study, narcissism was measured using five items from the Narcissism Personality Inventory (NPI) (Raskin and Hall, 1979) that rate the extent to which individuals overestimate themselves in terms of positive but unrealistic self-concept. Examples of the measurement items include "I am an extraordinary person" and "I think I am a special person" measured on a 7-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). A higher score indicates a greater level of narcissism. Before conducting ANOVA analyses, a median split was conducted to classify the sample into high and low narcissism groups. Participants with a narcissism score above the median (*median* = 4.66) were classified as the high narcissism group (*n* = 333), while those with a narcissism score below the median were classified as the low narcissism group (*n* = 286).

4. Results

4.1. Sample profile

Descriptive information for the sample shows that 45.4% (n = 281) of the respondents were male and 54.6% (n = 338) were female. The mean age was 31 years; the majority of respondents were between 25 and 34 years of age. A total of 41% of respondents (n = 255) were single, while 27.6% (n = 191) were married with children. In terms of education level, 38.0% (n = 235) had a four-year college degree. Concerning ethnicity, approximately 78.2% (n = 484) were Caucasian, 7% (n = 46) were Asian, and 7% (n = 41) were African American.

4.2. Effects of narcissism and gender on self-presentation motivation (H1 and H2)

The self-presentation scale proved to be internally consistent (Cronbach's alpha = 0.91). The main effect of narcissism was statistically significant on self-presentation motivation (F (1, 619) = 177.305; $p < .001$). *H1* predicted that SNS users who are highly narcissistic are more likely to engage with SNSs due to self-enhancement motivations.