



Full Length Article

Self-construal and Facebook activities: Exploring differences in social interaction orientation



Chingching Chang

Department of Advertising, National Chengchi University, 64, Sect. 2, Zhi-nan Road, Taipei 11605, Taiwan, ROC

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 4 March 2014

Revised 30 May 2015

Accepted 30 June 2015

Available online 7 July 2015

Keywords:

Facebook

Interdependent self-construal

Independent-self-construal

Self-construal

Social network sites

ABSTRACT

Two studies explore the relationship between interdependent and independent self-construal and activities on Facebook. Study 1 proposes a model that depicts the process by which interdependent self-construal relates to different interaction orientations, responsiveness, and self-disclosure, which further explain different patterns of Facebook activities. A survey study offers support for the proposed model. Study 2 extends Study 1 by arguing that people with an interdependent self-construal differ in their social goals, whether passive (i.e., to belong) or active (i.e., to be popular). An extended model depicts the roles of these two social goals in explaining different social orientations, which are associated with varied patterns of Facebook activities. A second survey confirms the extended model.

© 2015 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

The way people define themselves, or their self-construal, affects how they interact with others (Cross & Madson, 1997; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The diverse features of social networking sites (SNSs) allow people to interact by presenting themselves, disclosing information, responding to others' posts or photos, and chatting. Yet little research has explored whether and how people's self-construal affects how they interact with others on SNSs, such as Facebook (FB)—where 1 billion users have generated more than 1.13 trillion likes, established 140.3 billion friend connections, and uploaded 219 billion photos (Stern, 2012). This article seeks to fill the void by examining this relationship and its possible underlying mechanisms.

Prior research reveals why people use FB or SNSs (Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009) and considers the influence of individual characteristics on attitudes toward FB or FB adoption (Gangadharbatla, 2008; Stefanone, Lackaff, & Rosen, 2011; Wilson, Fornasier, & White, 2010), but insufficient evidence addresses why individual differences might lead to different activities. A few studies that consider self-construal mainly focus on how people with different self-construals present their profile information on SNSs (e.g., DeAndrea, Shaw, & Levine, 2010), rather than how and why they engage in different interaction patterns, which is the focus of this investigation.

The relationship between self-construals and interaction orientation can provide a good foundation for understanding people's uses of and activities on SNSs, such as FB, which facilitates a great variety of interactions. In this sense, FB represents an effective domain for testing the relationship between self-construals and activities on SNSs. People differ in the degree to which they view themselves as connected to others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991); such distinct self-views serve important functions for their social interaction orientation, in which context responsiveness and self-disclosure are two fundamental elements (Reis & Patrick, 1996; Reis & Shaver, 1988). Accordingly, Study 1 proposes and tests an integrated model that depicts the possible processes by which different self-construals, interdependent and independent, relate to these two interaction orientations, which in turn explain FB activities that are in line with these orientations (i.e., revealing thoughts or feelings and responding to others' posts or photos).

Social interactions are motivated by social goals (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Two common social goals are to be well-liked or popular and to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Jarvinen & Nicholls, 1996). Unlike being popular, belonging is a fundamental, pervasive social goal (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Study 2 further discerns that people with high interdependent self-construals, who consider social interaction crucial to their self-construal, may have either a passive social goal, such as to belong, or an active social goal, such as to be popular. Different social goals explain social interaction orientations. Specifically, a passive social goal should be associated with an orientation toward responsiveness, not self-disclosure. This orientation toward responsiveness then

E-mail addresses: shenc@nccu.edu.tw, shenccchang@yahoo.com.tw, chingching.chang@gmail.com

relates to more passive FB activities, such as responding to others' posts and comments. In contrast, an active social goal should be associated with orientations toward both responsiveness and self-disclosure, encouraging FB activities that pertain to both responding and revealing one's own thoughts and feelings.

This article attempts to fill two gaps in extant literature. First, unlike prior research that focuses the relationship between individual differences and FB uses, this study probes psychological processes by demonstrating the possible roles of social goals and interaction orientations in the process. Second, in contrast with extant research that examines FB use frequency, this study categorizes FB activities according to their social functions and presents a theoretical framework, situated within social interaction literature, to explain the relationship between self-construals and different patterns of FB activities.

2. Theory

2.1. Social network sites research

Explaining why people use FB or SNSs remains an important topic for academic research. People might use FB to keep in touch with friends or classmates (Chen & Marcus, 2012) or to communicate with peers (Barker, 2009); they use the FB Groups module to fulfill their socializing needs (Park et al., 2009). When exploring what motivates people to use SNS or FB, prior research notes the substantial influence of individual characteristics too. For example, extraverted and narcissistic people spend more time on FB (Mehdizadeh, 2010; Wilson et al., 2010). Studies of the influence of self-views or self-esteem on SNS usage reveal that users who find self-worth in family support and religion spend less time on SNS (Stefanone et al., 2011), whereas those with higher self-esteem and life satisfaction use FB to a greater degree (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). Overall, individual characteristics emerge as important predictors for FB behaviors; what is missing is an underlying mechanism to explain the relationships between individual differences and patterns of FB behaviors. This article therefore focuses on an individual difference, self-construal, and explores how it affects FB behaviors and the underlying psychological processes.

2.2. Self-construal

People develop a general understanding of themselves and vary in their beliefs about their relationships with others (Cross & Madson, 1997; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). For example, they might have an independent or interdependent view of the self (Fiske, Kitayama, Markus, & Nisbett, 1998; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Those with an independent self-construal (I-SC) conceive of themselves as self-contained entities, with specific internal attributes, traits, values, preference, and abilities. They are motivated to be independent and autonomous, and they work to remain true to their internal attributes and stick by their principles. They make their own choices based on their own preferences and internal orientations, regardless of how situations vary or how others see them. This view suggests that the self is detached from the context and separate from others or the social context.

In contrast, people with an interdependent self-construal (R-SC) see themselves as bonded to close others; their behaviors tend to be guided by their perceptions about the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others in the relationship. This view emphasizes that "the person is inherently and fundamentally connected to others, stressing empathy, reciprocity, belongingness, kinship, hierarchy, loyalty, respect, politeness, and social obligations" (Fiske et al., 1998, p. 922). People with an R-SC are thus mutually interdependent with

others, which motivates them to value social relationships, participate in social interactions, and conform with social norms. In other words, they define themselves by their social relationships.

The two types of self-construal help explain cultural differences (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), but considerable variations also arise within the same cultures (Cross & Gore, 2004; Cross & Madson, 1997). Debate continues about whether I-SC and R-SC are reciprocal, as two poles of the same construct (Triandis et al., 1986), or independent constructs (Hackman, Ellis, Johnson, & Staley, 1997; Singelis, 1994). Some research shows no significant relationship between them (Singelis, 1994), whereas other studies demonstrate positive (Bresnahan et al., 2005) or negative (Gudykunst et al., 1996) relationships. Noting this contradiction, the current study examines I-SC and R-SC both as two separate constructs and as one bipolar construct.

2.3. Self-construal and social network sites research

Some studies test the relationship between self-construal and SNS behaviors. For example, in exploring self-construal as a cultural difference factor, DeAndrea et al. (2010) examine the amount of self-expression in the "about me" section on FB but find none of their predicted differences among ethnically identified self-construal groups. It appears that individual variations in self-construals are as important as cultural variations. According to Chen and Mitchell (2010), both R-SC and I-SC correlate positively with trust on SNS, though Lee, Kim, and Kim (2012) indicate that consumers whose R-SC, rather than I-SC, has been primed are more likely to post on and feel affiliated with FB brand communities. Kim, Kim, and Nam (2012) distinguish social motives (e.g., maintaining relationships) from non-social motives (e.g., seeking entertainment) for using FB and find that people with R-SC, but not I-SC, prioritize social motives. This review suggests that self-construal constitutes an important individual variable that affects FB behaviors. However, no studies have tested how or why self-construal might lead to different patterns of social interaction on FB. This study seeks to fill that gap.

2.4. Self-construal and social relationships

Self-construal affects the degree to which people value social relationships (Cross, Bacon, & Morris, 2000; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The notion that people with an R-SC are motivated to maintain a sense of connectedness, whereas people with an I-SC seek a sense of autonomy, suggests that the former are more eager to maintain relationships. Prior research also affirms that people with an R-SC tend to incorporate close relationships into their self-concepts, whereas those with an I-SC do not (Cross et al., 2000).

Cross et al. (2000) further argue that people in general have motives for self-promotion, but their divergent self-construal determines what constitutes this promotion. People with an R-SC may derive self-enhancement and self-esteem from maintaining close relationships with others, such that they are motivated to devote more efforts to maintaining their relationships. Cross and Madson (1997) reason that relationship failures or conflicts should dampen self-esteem among people with high R-SC; maintaining social relationships instead should constitute an important route to improving well-being and gaining self-enhancement. In contrast, according to Cross and Gore's (2004; see also Cross & Madson, 1997) theorization, people who prioritize independence (i.e., high I-SC) may worry that emphasizing relationships will constrain their autonomy or threaten their freedom, whereas being self-sufficient and detached offers them more self-esteem and self-enhancement. In general, this literature review suggests that people with an R-SC have strong motives to develop relationships

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/350086>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/350086>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)