



Full length article

Understanding participation on video sharing communities: The role of self-construal and community interactivity



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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 19 December 2015

Received in revised form

22 March 2016

Accepted 26 March 2016

Keywords:

Video sharing communities

Self-construal

Interactivity

User participation

Perceived customer value

ABSTRACT

A community's development and sustainability rely heavily on user participation. Facing fierce competition among video websites, many companies have been consciously elevating user participation through the practice of video sharing communities. However, few studies have discussed this phenomenon. The purpose of this paper is to examine the effectiveness of self-construal and community interactivity in promoting user participation on video sharing communities. Based on Triadic reciprocal determinism, a framework was developed to explain the mechanism of user participation behaviors on video sharing communities. Users from a video sharing community in China were invited to accomplish an online survey, and 184 valid responses returned. Structural equation modeling with SmartPLS 3.0 was adopted to evaluate the research model. The empirical results show that self-construal (independent-construal and interdependent construal) and community interactivity (active control and reciprocal communication) are positively associated with user participation. In turn, user participation significantly increases perceived customer value. In addition, self-construal positively moderates the relationship between community interactivity and user participation. The present study is among the first attempts to empirically consider the effect of self-construal and community interactivity within a video sharing community context in a comprehensive and systematic way.

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1. Introduction

During the last decade, a new consumption lifestyle has been shaped among young generations. Instead of sitting in front of a television, surfing online video websites has become a more preferred option (Herold, 2008; Hu, 2014). Besides the more convenient video watching experience, these people also attribute this trend to a variety of social and self-express opportunities available online (Barboza, 2010; Wang, Ma, & Li, 2015). Relying on the enormous market potentials, hundreds of video websites have been founded since 2005 in China. However, only around 10 large-scale websites, which accounted for the major part of video website market, remained by the end of 2012 (Hu, 2014). The fierce competition calls for an urgent transformation of traditional video websites in order to survive and succeed (Zhang, Al-Sukaini, & Albazooni, 2015). To cater to emerged demands, some companies have started to encourage user participation through incorporating interactive elements into traditional video websites (Kim, Jeong,

Yang, & Song, 2014; Shen, Lin, & Chandler, 2014; Yan, Sang, & Xu, 2015). In this way, a novel phenomenon of video sharing communities has arisen.

As a special type of content community, a video sharing community is a place where users are encouraged to upload video contents and carry out interpersonal interactions through various interactive technologies offered by platforms (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In mainland China, Bilibili is a representative case who has been evolving from a video website to a video sharing community. On one hand, Bilibili offers different innovative interaction ways to meet the needs for interpersonal connection and belongingness. Early in its start-up period, the innovative barrage comment and instant message have been introduced to facilitate users' two-way communications. Besides, active member participation has been achieved through miscellaneous activities. On the other hand, Bilibili provides opportunities for individuals to express themselves. The membership differentiation systems in terms of level, badge, and ranking lists have been applied. Members are allowed to build personal spaces and leave a message and comment in almost any places. In addition, the newly enabled live telecast section has made future efforts in supporting users' direct self-disclosure. All

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these initiatives have soon made Bilibili a community adored by young generations in China.

Bilibili is not a special case. In recently years, world-famous video sharing platforms, e.g. YouTube, DailyMotion, are consciously elevating interactive experiences on their video websites (Saxena, Sharan, & Fahmy, 2008). The reason is that, guiding members in persistent participation brings out precious value for both users and companies. It has been widely approved that a community's development and sustainability rely heavily on user participation (Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Herrmann, 2005; Lin, Fan, & Chau, 2014; Nambisan & Baron, 2009). In addition, extensive user participation has been regarded as the premise to realize the great commercial potentials (Shang, Chen, & Liao, 2006; Zhou, 2011). As for Bilibili, business activities such as viral video advertisement, virtual goods business, and online purchasing are available due to frequent user participation. Given the significance of user participation, it is necessary to know what the rationale is behind massive user participation on video sharing communities.

Extant literature show ever increasing attention paid to user participation on social media domain (Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Pearo, 2004; Lin et al., 2014; Sofia Martins & Patrício, 2013). However, most of studies intend to explain participation based on either personal motivation or external environment influence perspectives in a separated way. Comprehensive and systematic approach, which considers individual and environment factors in a combination, remains sparse. In addition, the majority of studies are based on the contexts of social networking sites or virtual brand communities (Gummesson & Mele, 2010; Luo, Zhang, & Liu, 2015; Nambisan & Baron, 2009; Yi & Gong, 2013). However, on video sharing communities, the special participation forms of video watching and commenting, video producing and sharing are quite distinct from common virtual communities. Whether previous conclusions can be directly applied in the current context still needs to be further examined.

Extant literature doesn't provide clear answers to the current condition. Based on the view of Triadic reciprocal determinism, human behaviors are products of individual and environmental elements (Bandura, 1978). Meanwhile, we are also informed from the case of Bilibili that it is the satisfaction of distinct individual motivations, and the strong sense of interactivity that consequently lead to involved user participation. However, seldom empirical research has verified this rationale. Therefore, we develop a research model that applies self-construal theory and community interactivity to demonstrate what effectively promote user participation on video sharing communities. In addition, Triadic reciprocal determinism indicates that individual and environment factors will influence behaviors in complicated interaction ways (Bandura, 1978, 1986). Hence, the further exploring of the interaction effect of self-construal and community interactivity will be consciously considered.

2. Literature review

2.1. Theoretical background: Triadic reciprocal determinism

Introduced by Bandura (1978), Triadic reciprocal determinism creatively incorporates the factor of personal features into the explanation of individual cognition. In contrast of classic behaviorism theorists, Bandura's theoretical framework puts forward that human behavior is not just the mechanical response of external incentives, whereas subject, behavior, and environment form a triangle relationship structure, in which two of the above entities influence each other in a reciprocal and dynamic way (Bandura, 1986, 2001; Bandura & Jourden, 1991). The adoption of Triadic reciprocal determinism as the fundamental theory is

appropriate for present study for several reasons. First, it can serve as an overarching framework to explore why people engage in video sharing communities, namely the antecedents and mechanism of users' participation activities. Thus, this research logic leads us to consider the determinant roles of self-construal and community interactivity. Second, Triadic reciprocal determinism proposes that psychological cognition is the outcome of the triangle interaction of environment, subject, and activity (Bandura, 1986). Thus, it can inform us with a better understanding how customer value is created. Third, it emphasizes the complicate and dynamic way of reciprocal influence, which offers us the theoretical foundation to examine the interaction effect of self-construal and community interactivity.

2.2. Self-construal

Personal psychological factors involving how an individual construct himself/herself in relation with the masses may influence social interaction in a subliminal way (Cross, Hardin, & Gercek-Swing, 2010). Self-construal concept is defined as the extent to which an individual regards oneself as distinct from, or in relation to others, which leads to various manifestations in thoughts, feelings and action responses (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Singelis, 1994). Introduced and conceptualized by Markus and Kitayama (1991), the terms "independent" and "interdependent" are conceptualized to describe the major components that constitute the self-construal.

People with an independent-construal conceive themselves as self-contained entities, autonomous and independent persons, who emphasize their own wholeness, uniqueness, internal abilities, and original thoughts (Hopp, Barker, & Schmitz Weiss, 2015; Kwon & Mattila, 2015; Lee & Workman, 2015; Singelis, 1994). They also show stronger preference in expressing one's unique needs, rights, and capacities (Wang et al., 2015). The chance to increase their self-esteem through self-expression, and consequent external praise and approval is highly valued as well (Lee & Workman, 2015). In contrast, people with predominant interdependent-construal regard their cognitions, emotions, and behavior intentions deliberately in association with identified groups and external society (Singelis, 1994; Wang, Yang, & Wang, 2014). Thus, the relationships with their surroundings, public impressions, sense of belonging, and obligation toward identified groups are viewed as their disciplines of their actions (Chang, 2015; Hopp et al., 2015). Therefore, the expected notions of being accepted and fitting in with relevant others, lead them to engage in more socially appropriate ways to maintain harmonious relationships (Lee & Workman, 2015; Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

Given the strong association with behavior intention, self-construal has been applied to explain behavior intentions such as helping (Yong Seo & Scammon, 2014), knowledge sharing (Liu & Rau, 2014), self-presentation motivation (Long & Zhang, 2014), self-disclosure and communication orientation (Chang, 2015), and continuous intention (Wang et al. 2015). Furthermore, Hong and Chang (2015) have provided evidence for differentiated reasoning process and diverse option selection results between independent inclined and interdependent inclined people. Thus, self-construal differences may also result in distinct individual perceptions on the same external environment. Based on this point, we further infer the moderating role of self-construal in the relation of environment stimuli and behavior intention. Several prior researches have gone along with this rationale. Yang, Wang, and Mourali (2015) have empirically examined the differences between independent and interdependent in unauthorized music downloading and sharing intentions regarding to peer influence. Kwon and Mattila (2015) have verified the moderating effect of self-

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