

A Systematic Review on Self-Construal and Social Network Sites

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ABSTRACT

The present research was conducted to systematically review existing research that examined the relationships of the aspects of self-construal and social network sites (SNS) usages. A total of 12 research articles met the inclusion criteria for the present review. The reviewed research articles mainly supported the significant relationship of the interdependent self-construal and SNS-related outcomes. The present review highlighted that the reviewed relationships differed. Some findings supported the direct effect of self-construal on SNS-related outcomes, whereas some supported the indirect effects of intervening variables on these relationships. The reviewed findings supported the influence of self-construal on cognition, emotion, and motivation. Implications of the present systematic review were discussed in the manuscript.

KEYWORDS

Independent Self-Construal, Interdependent Self-Construal, PRISMA-P, Social Network Sites, Systematic Review

INTRODUCTION

Social network sites (SNS) that function to connect people (e.g. Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007) have been tightly integrated into users' daily life. Although these online platforms were initially designed to connect people, SNS have served a range of purposes that include instant distribution of newspaper content (e.g. Ju, Jeong, & Chyi, 2014) and brand advertising (Dehghani & Tumer, 2015). This supports the multifaceted usage of SNS that stemmed from users' exploitation of the features available on these online platforms. Consistent with the intended purposes of SNS to regulate and to maintain connectedness with other users (Boyd & Ellison, 2007), research has supported that the degree of individuality and collectiveness is instrumental in shaping the use of SNS. For instance, the endorsement of individuality and connectedness was linked to the types of connection established through SNS (Chu & Choi, 2010; Choi, Kim, Sung, & Sohn, 2010; Ji et al., 2010; Na, Kosinki, & Stillwell, 2015). Subsequent progression revealed that the assertion of individualism and collectivism affected the underlying attitude and acceptability of SNS (Cho & Park, 2013). Consequently, this endorsement influenced the enacted communication style (Cho & Park, 2013; Park, Jun, & Lee, 2015; Qiu, Lin, Leung, 2013) and self-expression strategies on SNS (Chu & Choi, 2010; DeAndrea, Shaw, & Levine, 2010), motivations (Kim, Sohn, & Choi, 2011; Shin, 2010) and the corresponding levels of engagement on SNS (Chu & Choi, 2011; Jackson & Wang, 2013; Park et al., 2015; Vasalou, Joinson, & Courvoisier, 2010). In this stream of research, endorsement of these self-aspects is known as self-construal (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Collectively, research findings have supported the significance of self-construal in facilitating SNS usages. Given the importance of self-construal in determining

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usages of online platforms, the present research aims to systematically review existing research articles that examined the relationships of the aspects of self-construal and SNS related outcomes.

Self-construal is one of the prominent concepts in psychology (Matsumoto, 1999). It refers to the extent to which the self is defined independently of others or interdependently with others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The independent aspect of self is known as the independent self-construal, where the self is represented as distinct from others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Singelis, 1994). The interdependent aspect of self is known as the interdependent self-construal, where the self is represented as tightly connected to others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; see also Singelis, 1994). Although these aspects were deemed as mutually exclusive, it was indicated that individuals possess both aspects of self-construal, and the expression of these aspects is dependent on situational context (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, see also Singelis, 1994, Triandis, 1989). The expression of these self-aspects is often consistent with Hofstede's (1980, 2001) cultural dimension of Individualism-Collectivism. The expression of the independent self-construal is more common in individualistic cultures, whereas the expression of the interdependent self-construal is more common in collectivistic cultures (Gudykunst et al., 1996; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Singelis, 1994). Self-construal was theorized as individual-level of culture-based differences in perception, motivation and behaviour (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Hence, despite the overlap, the theoretical distinction remained where the cultural dimension of Individualism-Collectivism describes the national cultures, while the aspects of self-construal reflects on individuals' endorsement of individuality and collectiveness (Cross, Hardin, & Gercek-Swing, 2011; Levine et al., 2003).

In the vast literature, self-construal has been used to account for differences in human communication, such as the endorsement of communication strategies (Kim, Shin, & Cai, 1998) and conflict styles (Oetzel, 1998). Empirical research extends the influence of self-construal on human-technology interaction, where the aspects of self-construal dictate the gratifications sought online. To illustrate, individuals with assertion of collectiveness or interdependence reported higher gaming satisfaction with avatar-based video games that promote interactivity (Park & Jin, 2009). When purchasing online products, individuals with high interdependent self-construal are less critical toward reviews written by previous customers (Sia et al., 2009). Additionally, individuals with high interdependent self-construal are less likely to purchase products online due to the absence of human interaction (Frost, Goode, & Hart, 2010). Research also supports that self-construal is conducive of technology acceptance (e.g. Choi & Totten, 2012) and usages (e.g. Hu, Zhang, & Luo, 2016). Thus, researchers have recommended to design online contents such as website design (Kim, Coyle, & Gould, 2009) and corporate pages on SNS (Tsai & Men, 2012) based on these predispositions.

In essence, self-construal is an influential psychological variable that influence human-technology interaction. The purpose of the present research is to systematically review existing research articles that examined the relationships of self-construal and SNS usages. Specifically, the present review will focus on (1) the quantification of self-construal and SNS related outcomes, and (2) the relationship of self-construal and SNS related outcomes. Recommendations from the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis Protocols (PRISMA-P; Shamseer et al., 2015) are used as guidelines for the present systematic review.

METHOD

Information Sources and Search Strategy

To identify research articles for the present review, a search was conducted with Academic Search Complete, Communication and Mass Media Complete, Scopus, ScienceDirect Freedom Collection, ProQuest databases. Reference lists of included research articles were scanned for additional relevant research articles.

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