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# Benign Envy, Social Media, and Culture

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# **Benign Envy, Social Media, and Culture**

*Completed Research Paper*

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## **Abstract**

*Researchers have very limited understanding of how continuous usage intention of social media (SM) are associated with online benign envy and individual-level culture. This paper addresses this gap and provides a theoretical framework to illustrate how manifestations of national cultural values at the individual level of analysis may influence SM use behaviors through online envy. We argue that espoused individualism/collectivism and espoused uncertainty avoidance are important antecedents for eliciting benign envy, while the espoused power distance and espoused masculinity/femininity dimensions are salient moderators for the consequences resulting from online benign envy. Empirical results from a sample of 387 SM users supported the majority of the hypotheses, suggesting that espoused national culture interplaying with online benign envy are important factors for continuance use intention of SM. Finally, theoretical contributions and practical implications are provided.*

**Keywords:** Benign envy, social media, espoused national culture, usage intension

# **Benign Envy, Social Media, and Culture**

## *Completed Research Paper*

### **Introduction**

Twitter, Facebook, and other social media (SM) have become more and more popular, encouraging users to express their thoughts, opinions, and random details of their lives. Take Twitter for example, it has a large group of users and the number has been growing exponentially. As it is reported, 23% of online adults are currently using Twitter, indicating a statistically significant increase compared with the 18% who did so in August of 2013 (Duggan et al. 2015 ). According to extant SM studies, users tend to idealize themselves by editing and posting their most attractive pictures; they exhibit themselves with more positive information compared with their “real life” (Manago et al. 2008; Qiu et al. 2012; Siibak 2009). In other words, people enjoy showing their happiness online especially when they accomplish challenging tasks, go to interesting places, buy something luxurious, etc. They believe that by doing so they can improve others’ impressions of them. Without any exaggeration, SM is largely about achieving a positive self-presentation.

As users, we are excessively and vulnerably exposed to what others present and how they idealize themselves. Unavoidably, we will instinctively compare ourselves with others, and many times, it turns out that, we are in an inferior position. As one study suggests, envy is prevalent in the SM environment since users are prone to compare themselves to others who enjoy a higher social position (Jordan et al. 2011). Research has extensively focused on the negative effects of envy, which is known as malicious envy. It has concluded that SM malicious envy could lead to dissatisfaction with life and depression (Krasnova et al. 2013; Tandoc et al. 2015). However, the positive side of envy hasn’t attracted as much attention although it could be an enhancer of IS usage (Wu and Srite 2014).

Envy, universally exists in human society and is culturally dependent (Schoeck 1969; Smith et al. 1999). However, there are no extant studies investigating the cultural effects on envy in IS. To address this gap, we consider individual-level national culture (regarded as espoused national culture), to explore the effects of envy on SM usage. The research question is:

**Does online envy influence the continuance use intention of social media, and if so, how could different espoused national cultural values affect this relationship?**

In the following sections, we first review prior work on which our theoretical foundation is grounded, including envy-related literature and culture studies. The next section details a research model with hypothesis justification. Then, a research methodology is described along with process of empirical data collection. After that, analyses of results are provided. In the last section, we conclude with limitations, future directions, implications, and contributions.

### **Literature Review – Envy and Culture**

#### ***Envy***

To better understand envy, we first review envy definitions from a variety of literatures. Envy can be a process, which occurs when a person lacks another's superior quality, achievement, or possession. The envier either desires this unattained characteristic or wishes that the other would lack it, especially when this shortcoming exists in a self-relevant domain (Parrott and Smith 1993; Salovey and Rodin 1984). Envy also can be a feeling, as stated in Smith and Kim’s study (2007), envy is an unpleasant and painful blend of feelings characterized as inferiority, hostility, and resentment. It is caused by an upward comparison with others who possess something greater (Smith and Kim 2007). In conclusion, envy is a social scientific term, and it can be comprehended as a pattern of thoughts, emotions, and behaviors that result from comparison with superior others.

However, envy is not a simple construct. Depending on specific contexts, envy can be divided into malicious envy and benign envy (Schoeck 1969). Malicious envy involves unsavory thoughts (D’Arms 2009) and aims at holding back the superior other. When experiencing malicious envy, people are more likely to harbor

depressed emotions, even worse, they might exhibit hostile behaviors. In contrast, benign envy refers to the constructive reaction of a person who realizes his inferiority in comparison to another person, and the original person develops a desire to eliminate this discrepancy by improving his own position (Graf 2010).

Upward social comparison is a prerequisite of general envy. Festinger (1954), states that in real life, temporary situations are a mixture of ability and opinion evaluation. There exists a natural driving force within human beings to evaluate themselves by comparing themselves with other people (Festinger 1954; Taylor and Lobel 1989). These social comparisons can be upward or downward. An upward comparison represents a positive outcome (advantage or superiority) for the person, while a downward comparison represents a negative outcome (disadvantage or inferiority) (Taylor and Lobel 1989).

Malicious envy and benign envy may not be equally influential for IT usage. A few studies have excessively investigated the negative impacts of malicious envy on users. They conclude that malicious envy could lead to dissatisfaction with life and depression (Krasnova et al. 2013; Tandoc et al. 2015). However, the way benign envy impacts SM usage is still an unanswered question because of the lack of work in the IT literature on benign envy. Therefore, in the current study, we focus on benign envy and believe that benign envy is more salient in the SM context: benign-envy users are often optimistic, and they are prone to speaking highly of and sincerely expressing admiration of others.

It is generally concluded that upward social comparison is a driver of envy (Festinger 1954; Salovey and Rodin 1984; Smith et al. 1999; Suls et al. 2002). Therefore, upward social comparison is conceptualized as an important antecedent of benign envy.

When talking about the consequences of benign envy, it inspires people to improve their own position positively (van de Ven et al. 2009). From another viewpoint, since envy related perceptions are moral, benign envy encourages people to conduct more moral and proactive behaviors (Polman and Ruttan 2012). In the current study, we conceptualize that benign enviers would be more likely to enjoy online activity and enhance themselves. As a result, they would be more likely to continue to use SM. Detailed justification will be provided in the subsequent sections.

Additionally, we also need to take cultural effects into consideration since envy is contextually and culturally dependent (Schoeck 1969). It is possible that envy is more likely to be initiated in a certain environment among a specific group of people. We will discuss related culture literature in the next section.

### ***Cultural Influences on Personal Perceptions***

Information technologies (IT) are often closely intertwined with culture (Leidner and Kayworth 2006). In the field of IS, researchers have put a great effort into studying culture from different levels (Leidner and Kayworth 2006). They often take Hofstede's five dimensions of culture (power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, and long term/short term orientation) into consideration to determine how IS usage varies across cultural groups (Hofstede 2011; Hofstede and Hofstede 2005; Srite and Karahanna 2006).

The core assumption of culture is that it reflects cognitive structures and interpretive schemes which people use to learn from situations, make sense of ongoing events, activities, relationships, and thereby form actions (Reichers and Schneider 1990; Sackmann 1992; Van Maanen and Stephen). In other words, culture represents humanity's value systems, and it identifies what is important for people. In summary, because there is a tight linkage between cultural values and people's subsequent actions and behaviors, cultural values can be regarded as a set of social norms that define the rules for social interactions through which people communicate and interact.

Individual-level measurement of espoused national culture values were adapted from extant research (Dorfman and Howell 1988; Karahanna et al. 2002) based on Hofstede's five culture dimensions (Hofstede and Hofstede 2005). Srite and Karahanna (2006) have theoretically and empirically tested the moderating effects of espoused national culture values on IS usage. These studies provide us both theoretical and methodological support.

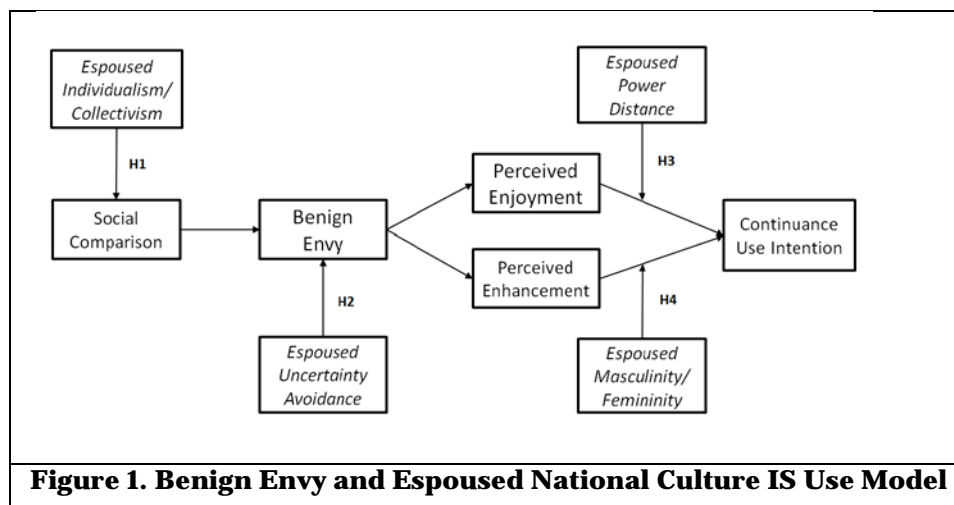
In the current study, we consider that espoused national cultural values could be closely related to online benign envy. For example, envy is argued to result from inequalities (Schoeck 1969). One of the Hofstede's

five dimensions of national culture values is power distance. People in high power distance cultures are more tolerant of inequity (Dorfman and Howell 1988). It is possible that envy varies among people who are different in power distance values. Another culture dimension, masculinity/femininity, might also influence envy because peoples' interested domains are distinct. According to Hofstede (1998), people who espouse higher masculine values are more achievement-oriented, and they might be more likely to envy others who have achieved accomplishments in careers. In line with this reasoning, we argue that national culture values could exert an impact on envy. More detailed justification for each culture dimension are provided in the hypotheses section.

Being consistent with extant studies (Karahanna et al. 2002; Srite and Karahanna 2006), we propose that individual espoused national culture values serve as important antecedents (and/or moderators) of cognitive beliefs and behaviors of SM. Four of Hofstede's five espoused national culture dimensions have been taken into consideration, including individualism/collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, and masculinity/femininity. These four are defined in the paragraphs that follow the research model. The short/long term dimension (Hofstede's fifth dimension) is excluded in the current study because it targets Asian values specifically, which is not of specific interest in the current work.

## Research Model

The research model which is presented in Figure 1, integrates espoused national cultural values into a benign envy SM use model. The logic is: when people see other's positive information on SM, they may exhibit a form of upward social comparison between others and themselves. As a result, benign envy would be the result. Benign envy positively influences people's perceptions, including perceived enjoyment and perceived enhancement, which in turn increases continuance use intention. Four espoused national culture values are incorporated into this model. Hypotheses are grouped by culture dimensions. Additionally, noting that the other relationships within Figure 1 (focusing on upward social comparison, benign envy, perceived enjoyment, perceived enhancement, and continuance use intention) were already discussed in the literature review and will be tested in the analysis section, they are not argued as formal hypotheses due to space considerations.



### Individualism/Collectivism

Individualism/collectivism was suggested as a way to differentiate people who are oriented more towards self-interest for their own goals versus those who are oriented to focus more on the social system with others (Earley 1989; Parsons and Shills 1951). An individualist would consider his personal interest to be more important than the interests of a referent group and would perceive the achievement of his personal goals to be of primary importance (Earley 1989). On the other hand, a collectivist would greatly value the interests of others and would look out for the overall well-being of the group (Wagner and Moch 1986).

In line with the previous reasoning, people high on individualism, are less influenced by a pervasive attentiveness to the relevant others in their social context (Festinger 1954). Their emotions and actions are less likely to be motivated and shaped by the consideration for others. On the contrary, the fundamental view of a collectivist (high on collectivism) involves a dependent value on a connectedness with others. To a large extent, the behaviors of dependent people are organized by what they perceive to be the thoughts, feelings, and actions of referent others in relationships (Markus and Kitayama 1991).

Researchers suggest that a certain group of individuals may be more inclined to be engaged in comparisons with others, because for those people, comparison is a main method to evaluate themselves (Gibbons and Buunk 1999). Social comparison is a type of social behavior, which requires people to be involved in self-to-other interactions. Individuals high in social comparison orientation usually hold higher levels of accessibility and awareness related to themselves (Stapel and Tesser 2001). Collectivists are more likely to be motivated to fit in with their online context and are more likely to connect with online peers, while individualists might prefer to remain separate from others. Since individualism/collectivism is a bi-polar construct, we hypothesize:

**H1.** Individuals who espouse a higher level of collectivism will be more likely to exhibit an upward social comparison, while individuals who espouse a higher level of individualism will be less likely to exhibit an upward social comparison.

### ***Uncertainty Avoidance***

A higher tolerance for casualness is expected to be related to lower uncertainty avoidance cultures because these people believe that there should be as few rules as possible whereas individuals in higher uncertainty avoidance cultures favor conservatism, law, and order (Hofstede 1984). Cultural research also suggests that traditions are important for high uncertainty avoidance people since traditional cultures are more predictable and more stable while cultures open to change are less predictable (Kilbourne et al. 2005). It was stated that people who espouse stronger uncertainty avoidance values usually possess a higher degree of stress and anxiety when facing uncertain situations; as a result, they usually try to minimize the uncertainty by enacting strict laws and rules, as well as safety and security methods (Hofstede and Hofstede 2005).

In high uncertainty avoidance cultures, people believe that conflict and competition are “dangerous” and they would exhibit a lower willingness to take risks if the situation is out of their control. In other words, individuals who espouse a higher level of uncertainty avoidance are more oriented to prevent self-harm when confronted with problems and challenges. Uncertainty avoidance values impact IT behaviors. Some findings suggest that high uncertainty avoidance orientation has a positive influence on open source software (OSS) adoption--OSS often is of a higher reliability and superior security. These advantages could reduce individuals' uncertainty concern (Qu et al. 2011).

In the current context, we posit that individuals who espouse higher levels of uncertainty avoidance values are more likely to benignly envy others since tradition plays an important role among these users. And, people with strong uncertainty avoidance are seeking for self-protection and are more likely to hold positive opinions, such as self-motivation and self-improvement. These uplifting perceptions are regarded as being key indicators of benign envy (van de Ven et al. 2009). They are more inclined to sincerely congratulate others on their success. Thus, we hypothesize:

**H2.** Individuals who espouse a higher level of uncertainty avoidance values will be more likely to experience benign envy, while individuals who espouse a lower level of uncertainty avoidance values will be less likely to experience benign envy.

### ***Espoused Power Distance***

Power distance refers to the extent to which members of organizations expect and accept that power is distributed unequally (Hofstede and Hofstede 2005). We posit that individuals with higher espoused power distance values would accept that superior others should enjoy more privileges while individuals with lower espoused power distance values would be more likely to doubt and question their superiors' opinions.

In the SM context, to some extent, power is presented by others' positive postings, such as obtaining luxury goods, traveling to exotic places, etc. Wu and Srite (Wu and Srite 2014) developed an online envy study and found that, in part, perceived enjoyment could be derived from benign envy and consequently improve IS usage.

This study posits that espoused power distance values would exert an influence on the relationship between perceived enjoyment and intended behaviors. Individuals who espouse a higher power distance value would respect others and believe that the others' advantages are beyond their own grasp. As a result of their tolerance in accepting inequalities in power, they are less likely to feel the unfairness and be miserable about the situation. Instead, they would continually keep in touch with others and use SM. Further, since people with higher power distance values regard their social code as important, the social context would regulate their behavior. As a result, they would express their sincere congratulations and best wishes to others through SM. Thus, we hypothesize:

**H3.** The relationship between perceived enjoyment and continuance use intention is moderated by the espoused national culture value of power distance such that the relationship is stronger for individuals with higher espoused power distance values and weaker for individuals with lower espoused power distance values.

### ***Masculinity/Femininity***

The term "masculinity/femininity" refers to the cultural tendency and categorization of groups, instead of biological sex as male or female. Masculinity/femininity is a measure of psychological gender, describing whether a society or an individual espouses masculine values versus feminine values (Hofstede 1984; Srite and Karahanna 2006). Masculine values place an emphasis on work goals, assertiveness, and material success, while feminine values focus on quality of life goals, nurturing, and modesty (Hofstede 1998).

Much of the extant IS research has examined the role of gender, but there has been less focus on masculinity/femininity values in IT acceptance (Venkatesh and Davis 2000; Venkatesh et al. 2004; Venkatesh et al. 2000; Venkatesh et al. 2003). Gender differentiates the individual adoption and sustained usage of technology: the perception of usefulness is more influential for males' technology decision; the perceived ease of use and subjective norm are more important for females (Venkatesh and Morris 2000). However, many arguments relating to gender were, to some extent, based on masculine and feminine values, indicating that technology acceptance intentions are not equally influenced by masculine-typed and feminine-typed individuals (Srite and Karahanna 2006; Venkatesh et al. 2004). Srite and Karahanna (2006) suggested that espoused masculinity/femininity values could moderate the relationship between perceived usefulness and IS use intentions. Specifically, they stated that the relationship would be stronger for individuals with higher espoused masculine cultural values, because perceived usefulness would improve one's job performance and reinforce one's career goals.

In the current context, we consider that perceived enhancement is closely related to achievement and assertiveness of personal goals (Hofstede 1998). In a similar vein, we posit that perceived enhancement would be more salient for individuals who espouse masculine rather than feminine values. Therefore, we hypothesize:

**H4.** The relationship between perceived enhancement and SM continuance use intention is moderated by the espoused national culture value of masculinity/femininity such that the relationship is stronger for individuals with higher espoused masculine culture values and weaker for individuals with higher espoused feminine culture values.

### **Experiment Design**

In order to test the proposed model, a multi-media presentation and online survey were designed using a web-based survey instrument (Powered by Qualtrics). This instrument allows researchers to distribute questionnaires, collect data, and produce reports. The survey is comprised of two sections of questions and one multi-media presentation.

In the first section of the survey, the questions were designed to gather peoples' demographic and espoused national culture values. Then the subjects were asked to watch a multi-media presentation. We designed and created this presentation with envy-eliciting pictures and texts abstracted from Twitter and Facebook. The purpose was to recall participants' own SM envy experiences. The postings were about online users' positive life experiences, such as obtaining luxury goods, travelling to beautiful places, achieving and accomplishing life goals, and so on. The subjects were asked to recall their personal online experiences. After that, they were asked to finish the second part of the survey in order to obtain their responses regarding online benign envy. Some screenshots from the presentation are shown in Appendix. The participants were undergraduate students in a large mid-western University and they received extra credit in their information technology management course.

### ***Structural Equation Model Analysis***

A total of 428 students participated in this activity. 41 data points were discarded either due to failure to complete the full survey or because of missing data, resulting in 387 usable observations. The sample consisted of 221 males (57.1%) and 166 females (42.9%). The largest proportion (88.6%) of subjects were under 24 years old. In terms of educational background, a substantive proportion (65.5%) of them were freshman or sophomore students.

To assess reliability, composite reliabilities were calculated. Some items were excluded because acceptable thresholds were not reached. As shown in Table 1, all final factor loadings were above 0.7. For each construct, the factor loadings on their own items were significantly higher than to other constructs. The composite reliabilities (ICR) ranged between 0.8343 and 0.9874, while the AVEs were well above the cut-off level of 0.50 (Between 0.7005 and 0.9632). These results suggest that the constructs exhibited adequate reliability, and convergent and discriminant validity.

### ***Study Results***

We used PLS to test the research model. The significance of the paths was determined using the T-statistic calculated with the bootstrapping technique (Table 2). Being consistent with prior research (Wu and Srite 2014), benign envy was tested to be positively associated with perceived enjoyment and perceived enhancement, and ultimately improving use intention. In terms of espoused national cultural values, as hypothesized, espoused individualism/collectivism values significantly influenced the upward social comparison and espoused uncertainty avoidance values were significantly related to benign envy. This provides support for hypotheses 1 and 2. As hypothesis 4 suggested, espoused masculinity/femininity moderated the relationship between perceived enhancement and behavioral intentions. The relationship was stronger for individuals who espoused higher levels of masculine values. Contrary to our expectations, espoused power distance did not moderate the relationship between perceived enjoyment and behavioral intentions. Hypothesis 3 was not significant.



<b>Table 1. Study Factor Loadings</b>			
<b>Construct</b>	<b>Item Loading</b>	<b>AVE</b>	<b>ICR</b>
Espoused Individualism/Collectivism	0.9265	0.8406	0.9134
	0.9070		
Espoused Uncertainty Avoidance	0.8080	0.7160	0.8343
	0.8828		
Espoused Power Distance	0.7131	0.7063	0.8772
	0.7344		
	0.8401		
	0.8847		
Espoused Masculinity/ Femininity	0.8042	0.7502	0.8998
	0.9029		
	0.8879		
Social Comparison	0.8558	0.7328	0.9610
	0.7894		
	0.8570		
	0.8774		
	0.8605		
	0.8210		
	0.8786		
0.8471			
Benign Envy	0.7879	0.7005	0.9211
	0.8445		
	0.8533		
	0.8820		
	0.8141		
Perceived Enjoyment	0.9143	0.7840	0.9477
	0.8862		
	0.9091		
	0.8239		
	0.8906		
Perceived Enhancement	0.7756	0.7621	0.9410
	0.8582		
	0.8998		
	0.9247		
	0.8986		
Use Intention	0.9820	0.9632	0.9874
	0.9880		
	0.9742		

**Table 1. Study Factor Loadings**

<b>Table 2. Study Results</b>				
<b>Dependent Variable</b>	<b>Independent Variable(s)</b>	<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>β</b>	<b>Hypothesis</b>
Use Intention		0.468		
	Perceived Enjoyment		0.619***	
	Perceived Enhancement		-0.269	
	Power Distance*		0.06	H3 (not supported)
	Masculinity/Femininity* Perceived Enhancement		0.158*	H4 (marginally supported)
Perceived Enjoyment		0.199		
	Benign Envy		0.447***	
Perceived Enhancement		0.269		
	Benign Envy		0.518***	
Benign Envy		0.106		
	Social Comparison		0.255***	
	Uncertainty Avoidance		0.167***	H2 (supported)
Social Comparison		0.029		
	Individualism/ Collectivism		0.169***	H1 (supported)
Significance - ***at 0.005, ** at 0.05, * at 0.10				

**Table 2. Study Results**

## Discussion

In the current study, we proposed a benign envy and IT usage model, which was integrated with four espoused national cultural values. We conceptualized several main constructs and then theoretically justified the relationships between them. Finally, we collected data and examined the research model. The findings provide strong support for the proposed hypotheses and explained significant variance in the variables.

As expected, when people experience benign envy while using SM, they are more likely to continue to use them. Moreover, different espoused national cultures work as independent and moderating variables along with the envy procedures. People who hold different levels of culture behave distinctly--people who espouse a greater level of collectivism will be more likely to exhibit upward social comparisons; people who espouse higher levels of uncertainty avoidance will be more likely to experience benign envy; and the relationship between perceived enhancement and use intention is stronger for individuals with higher levels of espoused masculinity. Although espoused power distance values were not significantly moderating the relationship between perceived enjoyment and intended behavior in the current context (general SM), there is still a possibility that they could be an influencer in other specific SM environments. For example, Twitter is more information-seeking driven; Facebook is more friend-socializing driven; and LinkedIn is specifically

professionalization oriented. People's opinions and behaviors might be different across various SM contexts.

To assess the explanatory power of the espoused national cultural values, we compared the explained variance of our model (model 1) to the model without 4 espoused national culture values (model 2). Model 1 had more explanatory power than model 2 (model 1: 47%; model 2: 39%). The inclusion of espoused uncertainty avoidance increased the R square of benign envy from 8 % (model 2) to 11 % (model 1). In summary, the integration of the espoused culture values significantly improves the explanatory power of envy model.

## **Limitations and Future Directions**

Prior to discussing the implications, we acknowledge the limitations of this study as well as its potential for future research. First, in the current study, we only included four of Hofstede's five cultural dimensions. We excluded the short/long term dimension because it is focused on Asian values, which are not of particular interest in the current study. However, SM are also very popular in Asia. In the future work, we would like to incorporate and test the fifth dimension and collect data from Asian users. Comparing the results with the current study could provide more depth and lead to some interesting implications.

Second, in the current study, we consider that cultural dimensions could be greatly related to envy, however, situational factors and personality could also be relevant to envy. People who are in a better mood compared to people in a lower mood, might be different when viewing others' information on social media, therefore, the intensity of envy could vary. These interesting findings could provide a more realistic picture.

Third, since very limited literature could be found in the IS area, we built our theoretical foundation based on social psychology and other fields. Some of the literature is outdated. A more extensive literature review with both depth and width is required for better understanding of the phenomena.

Fourth, we consider only the positive impact of benign envy and include perceived enjoyment and perceived enhancement as the resulting perceptions. However, when recognizing self-inferiority, even benign envy could arouse painful feelings (van de Ven et al. 2009). The negative potential of benign envy could be taken into consideration as well in future research.

Fifth, we concluded an empirical study not focusing on a particular SM platform, but on the general SM environment. However, hypothesis 3 was not supported. We believe that various environments and conditions could be salient. In order to determine how the different SM contexts impact online envy, future research could examine and compare the proposed model in multiple SM contexts (such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and so on).

## **Conclusion**

### ***Implications for Research***

To date, researchers have a very limited understanding of how continuous usage intention of SM is associated with online envy, as well as individual-level cultural values. Our findings provide several valuable research implications.

First, previous literature mainly focused on the malicious aspects of envy. In a Facebook envy study (Krasnova et al. 2013), researchers concluded that online (malicious) envy has a negative impact on life satisfaction. However, fewer prior studies touch on the positive aspects. In the current work, the proposed model delineates the development of online benign envy. We posit that envy can be something beneficial for IS usage.

Second, given that envy is contextually dependent, our research provides a theoretical framework to illustrate how espoused national cultures influence SM usage through online envy. In detail, espoused individual-level culture values are incorporated into the research model. We specify that the espoused individualism/collectivism and espoused uncertainty avoidance dimensions are salient antecedents of

benign envy, while the espoused power distance and espoused masculinity/femininity dimensions are important factors that moderate the consequences of envy.

Finally, the method is innovative. We intentionally abstracted envy-intriguing information from real SM to make a multi-media presentation. By doing so, participants were primed to focus on the envy related messages and to recall their own envy experiences. In summary, our study provides a valuable support for future research.

### ***Implications for Practice***

The findings also provide several empirical contributions and managerial implications for IS practitioners. First, the results suggest that online benign envy has a potential to positively influence SM usage. When people learn about others' positive information on a SM site, they experience benign envy, and their intention towards continuance usage could be improved. In this way, benign envy, works as an SM enhancer, which leads to favorable consequences. Without an empirical study to examine this process, it might be very difficult for IS managers to understand or take advantage of online envy to improve IS usage.

One way to take advantage of online benign envy might be that IS designers may want to propose certain website features to enhance benign envy. In terms of arousing benign envy, some manipulations might be helpful when they encourage people to conduct upward social comparisons with others. For example, if envy-intriguing pictures on users' personal webpages were highlighted, people could be attracted to this kind of information and experience benign envy. In terms of the consequent effects resulting from benign envy, self-enhancing applications could help users to emphasize their online images, and improve their usage. For example, picture editing and text rephrasing widgets, could add depth and richness to the plain information.

Moreover, the current study examined four espoused national culture dimensions. Our findings suggested that two of them serve as envy antecedents (espoused individualism/collectivism values and espoused uncertainty avoidance values) and one of the other two (espoused masculinity/femininity values) moderated the resulting perceptions on SM continuance use intentions. When designing or implementing a SM, the influential power of espoused cultural values should be considered as important. For example, for individuals who are high in espoused masculinity values, improving their perceived enhancement would be more effective way to encourage SM usage. This suggests that various interventions can be undertaken to enhance usage.

The purpose of the current study was to illustrate how espoused national culture dimensions impact SM usage through online benign envy. The research model was theoretically and empirically justified. As a result, this study provides valuable theoretical contributions and practical implications.

## Appendix

### Screenshots of multi-media presentation:

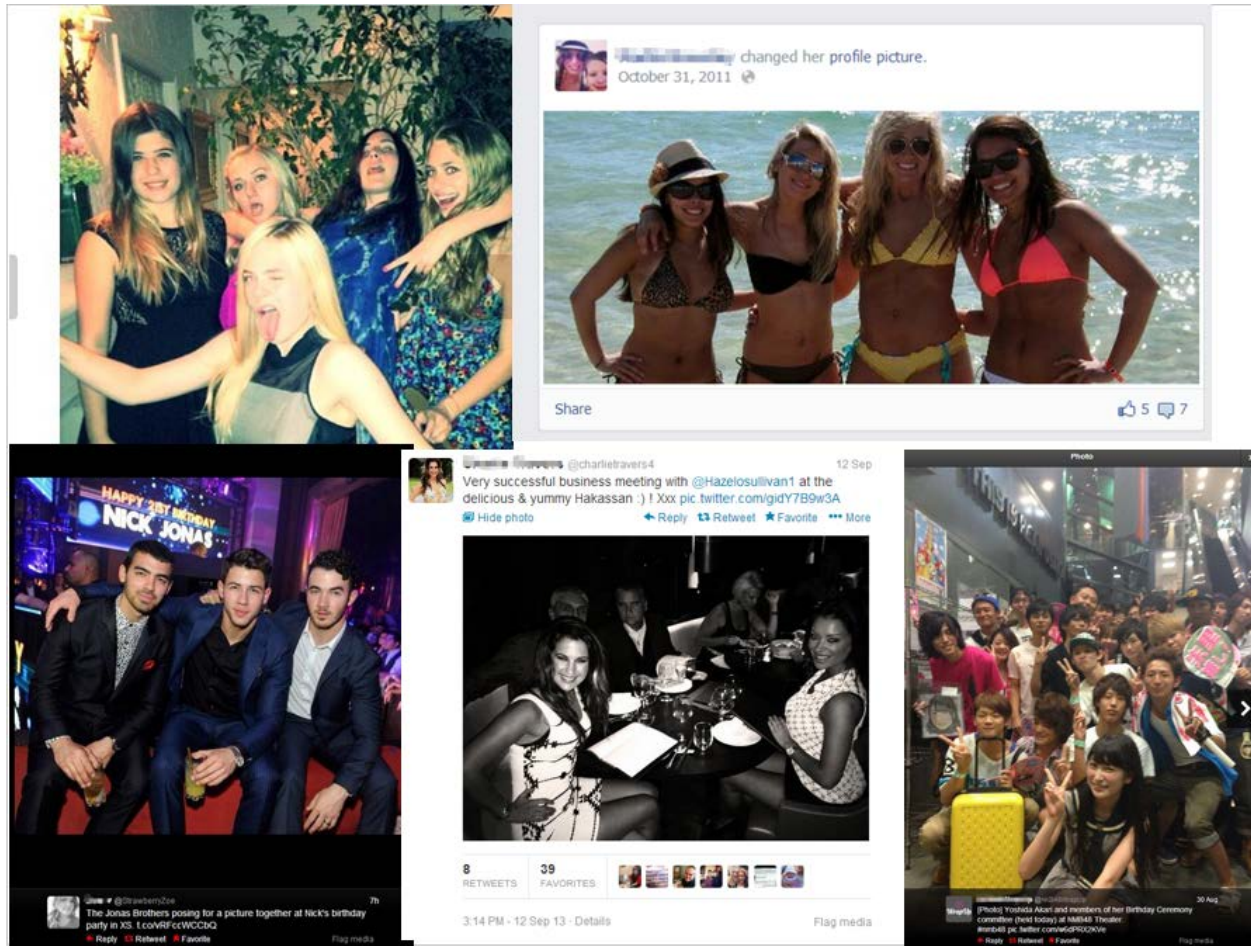


Figure A. 1 Examples of How People Share Their Happiness on SM



Figure A. 2 Postings of How People Announce Their Success and Accomplishment on SM

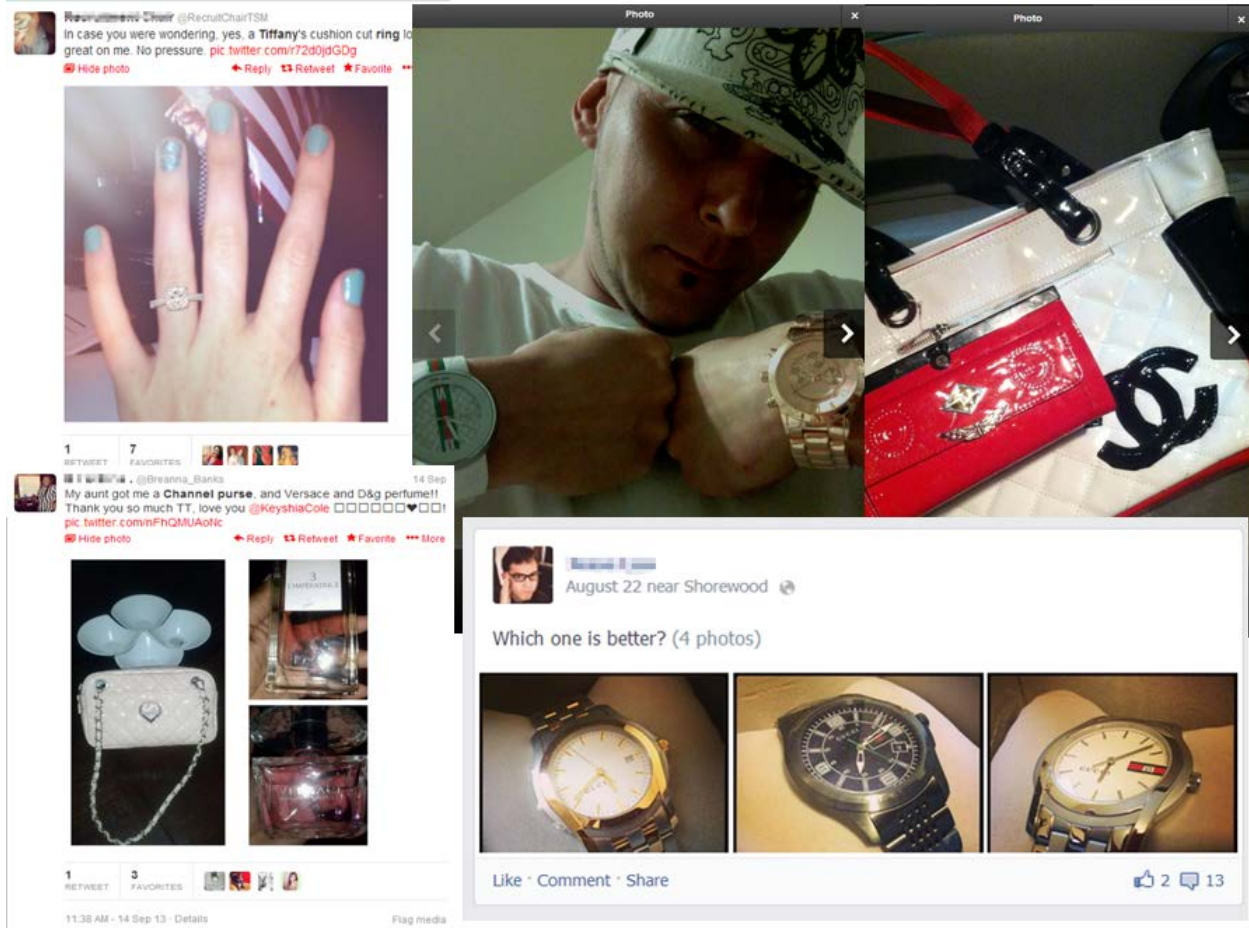


Figure A. 3 Postings of How People Show Their Luxury Products

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