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## HEDONIC VALUES AND UTILITARIAN VALUES AS PREDICTORS OF SOCIAL MEDIA PARTICIPATION

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### ABSTRACT

This research proposes a model to investigate the behavior of posting articles and the continued use of social media via Babin's value perspective. The antecedents of values are web quality and users' emotions. The model was tested with PLS-Graph software based on its structural equation modeling approach. Data was gained from 310 users. The results revealed that antecedents have a strong impact on user values, which in turn influences users' intention to post articles and continue to use social media. Several implications for research and practice have been derived from these findings.

Keywords: Hedonic Value, Utilitarian Value, Continued Use Intention, Intention to Post.

### 1. Introduction

The emergence of social media (e.g. blogs, forums, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube) represents the new wave of web-based services [14]. Social Media is "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content" [22]. According to the Pew Research Center, in 2009, 46% of American adults and 65% of American teenagers have used social media [26]. Nielsen [32] reported that social network and blogging sites now account for almost 10% of all Internet time, and two-thirds of the world's Internet population visit social networks or blog sites.

Social media is more interactive, customized, and social as these sites allow Internet users to contribute content by posting articles, participating in discussions or sharing pictures or videos. Consumers are no longer passive receivers of marketing messages; instead, they are using social media to voice their opinions [35]. Moreover, consumers seek products, services, and company information on social media sites created by experienced consumers, as these can be more credible than the information provided by marketers [9]. The benefit of social media for companies is a low-cost service which reaches large audiences [8]; for customers it provides instant access to a large number of different opinions and authors. As such, social media potentially provide a low-cost form of communications to aid marketing managers in strongly connecting their companies with customers.

Social media is a very powerful marketing tool; however, marketing managers may lack an understanding of what social media is. They may regularly ignore or mismanage opportunities and be reluctant to allocate

resources to engage social media effectively [23]. Moreover, several studies have focused mainly on the factors driving users to share information (e.g. [39]) and factors behind users' continued use of social media (e.g. [25]). These areas of inquiry are important and worthy of exploration; however, a significant question has been ignored: Could a comprehensive model explain the behavior of individuals in posting articles and their continued use of social media? A comprehensive model could help marketing managers better promote their brand and presence on social media. This study sets out to examine values [5] in order to propose a model that may provide a more comprehensive understanding of why users post articles and continue to use social media. From this perspective, values are seen as an important antecedent for investigating user behavior on social media sites [20].

This study adopts Babin et al.'s [5] value perspective to explore users post and their continued use of social media sites. Babin et al. [5] claimed that consumers acquire two types of values while shopping, namely hedonic values and utilitarian values. Babin has applied hedonic and utilitarian values in explaining users' shopping behavior in the retail area (e.g. [3]; [7]; [6]). The results of this research indicated that users receive both hedonic and utilitarian values from shopping, which in turn enhances their behavior. Moreover, Wang et al. [37] adopted a value perspective to investigate consumers' purchase intentions when accessing online stores. The results were also similar to the findings of Babin's study. According to Babin et al.'s [5] study, values are the user's evaluation of interactive experience. This study aimed to use the value perspective to investigate the behavior of individuals using interactive social media, in order to gain a better understanding of its theoretical and practical implications.

### 2. Conceptual Framework and Research Hypotheses

The objective of this study was to propose a value perspective model to explain how antecedents, such as web quality, pleasure and arousal influence users' values. In turn, this will predict user behavior, including the intention of users to post articles and to continue using social media. The model is shown as Figure 1.

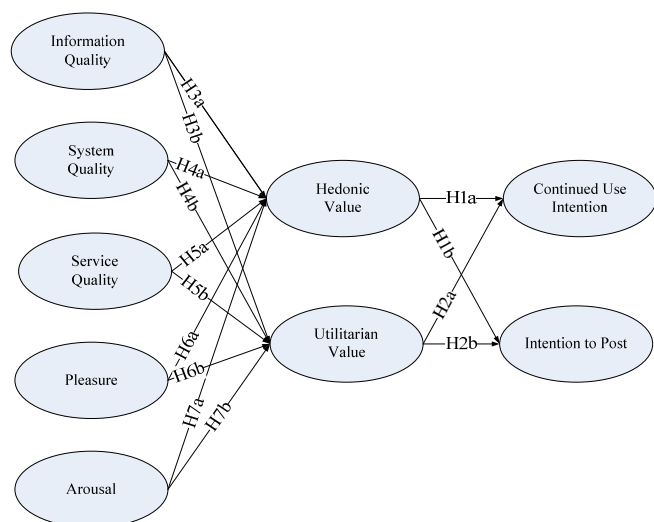


Figure 1. Research Model

## 2.1 Hedonic values and Utilitarian values

Traditional research usually explains consumers' purchasing or usage behavior as maximizing utilitarian value. However, a number of recent researchers have argued that value is more complex and does not only involve utilitarian values [18]. The functionalist perspective only emphasizes the product's function and ignores the emotions involved in making a purchase or using a product. Consequently, Hirschman & Holbrook [18] proposed the concept of hedonic consumption. They proposed that aside from pursuing the maximum utilitarian value, consumers purchase in order to satisfy their hedonic needs; the hedonists expect to gain pleasure from purchasing or using services [19].

Most researchers also divide customer values into two different categories: utilitarian and hedonic values (e.g. [18]; [5]). Utilitarian value is defined as the value that a customer receives from the functionality of the product purchased [5]. Hedonic value is defined as the value that a customer receives in terms of the subjective experience of fun and playfulness [18]; [5]). These two customer values provide an evaluation of a customer's interactive experience and highlight important outcome variables in the consumption process [5]. In addition, these values will influence consumers' decision-making regarding their future purchases.

Babin et al. [5] also pointed out that utilitarian and hedonic values are not mutually exclusive; consumers may not only receive hedonic values in shopping but they can also satisfy their specific purposes ([18]; [5]). Value is derived from users' evaluation of the interactive experience with an object or event or with the media or activity [11]. In other words, value is not only created and perceived by consumers as a result of the shopping process, but is also perceived in their use of social media. Moreover, some researchers have suggested that using web services may actually increase the values gained by users (e.g. [20]). Thus, it is reasonable to assume that continued use of social media and an intention to post future articles could be valuable outcomes of the use of social media by consumers.

According to Childers et al. [10], customers gain hedonic value when browsing the web; they may be

motivated to increase the amount of time they spend on a visit to a Web site and be encouraged to make repeat visits. Babin et al. [7] pointed out that customer values, both utilitarian and hedonic values, shape important consumption outcomes that ultimately determine marketing success. Mathwick et al. [30] found that Internet-based experiential value perceptions are positively associated with patronage intentions. Wang et al. [37] discussed consumers' willingness to make purchases from retail web sites and determined that when consumers have the flow experience, they will gain both hedonic and utilitarian values, which will lead to further intentions to patronize the site (flow is the mental state of operation in which a person in an activity is fully immersed in a feeling of energized focus, full involvement, and success in the process of an activity). Investigations by Jones [21] determined that when consumers get hedonic and utilitarian values from shopping, they might become loyal to a particular store. Similarly, Jin et al. [20] found that users like to participate in social media because they gain hedonic and utilitarian values in so doing. Therefore, we propose the following hypotheses:

H1a: Hedonic value has a positive influence on intention for continued use.

H1b: Hedonic value has a positive influence on intention to post.

H2a: Utilitarian value has a positive influence on intention for continued use.

H2b: Utilitarian value has a positive influence on intention to post.

## 2.2 Website quality

Previous research has shown that website quality is a critical and significant factor affecting the use of web services. For instance, Lin [28] showed that website quality is the key contributor to the use of social media sites. According to the Delone and McLean's IS success model [12], website quality has three major dimensions: system quality measures the functionality of the website, information quality measures the content of the website and service quality measures the overall support by the website. On social media sites, especially blogs, system quality means that blogs can satisfy the functionality of users' browsing and posting; information quality means that blogs can provide the content that users need; and service quality means that the blog platform can satisfy users' requests.

This study compares system quality, information quality, and service quality to website quality as the external variables for investigating the use of social media sites. Babin et al. [7] pointed out that high service quality might lead to higher hedonic and utilitarian value in the service domain. Moreover, Kim and Han [24] showed that the perceptions of quality significantly influence user values, which in turn may affect user behavior in adopting mobile services. Shamdasani et al. [33] showed that values may be an antecedent to a user's willingness to continue using web services and as an outcome of perception of quality. The related hypotheses are as follows:

H3a: Information quality has positive influence on hedonic value

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H3b: Information quality has positive influence on utilitarian value

H4a: System quality has positive influence on hedonic value

H4b: System quality has positive influence on utilitarian value

H5a: Service quality has positive influence on hedonic value

H5b: Service quality has positive influence on utilitarian value

### 2.3 Pleasure and arousal

The web environment is an important factor in facilitating web services because most consumers evaluate the web environment before performing web services [34]. Previous studies have suggested that emotions evoked by environmental characteristics are fundamental in explaining consumer-environment interactions [36]. Babain and Attaway [3] also showed that increased positive effects lead to acquisition of higher hedonic and utilitarian values, which in turn influence user behavior.

Mehrabian & Russell [31] proposed an environmental psychology concept, which suggested that people will experience certain emotions as the result of environment stimuli such as color, temperature, smell or sound. The researcher also suggests that a person's emotional state while receiving an environmental stimulus might be expressed in terms of three basic dimensions. Pleasure is a positive emotional state of feeling: happy, pleased, satisfied, contented, hopeful and relaxed. Arousal is a positive emotional reception in response to personal awareness, motility and alertness. Dominance is a positive emotional response when a person acquires domination or power: he or she may be in-control, influenced, important, autonomous and dominant.

Babin et al. [5] adjusted the P-A-D (Pleasure-Arousal-Dominance) dimensions proposed by Mehrabian & Russell [31] to investigate the emotional responses exhibited by consumers in shopping scenarios. The finding was that pleasure and arousal will enhance consumers' acquisition of hedonic and utilitarian values. Similarly, Babin and Daren [4] applied P-A-D dimensions to investigate the relationship between customers' emotions and consumers' evaluations of the shopping experience (hedonic and utilitarian values). The results showed that both pleasure and arousal relate positively to the acquisition of hedonic and utilitarian values, but dominance has no influence on hedonic and utilitarian values. Moreover, Wang et al. [37] showed that pleasure and arousal are significant contributors to hedonic and utilitarian values when customers using on-line stores. The related hypotheses are as follows,

H6a: Pleasure has positive influence on hedonic value.

H6b: Pleasure has positive influence on utilitarian value.

H7a: Arousal has positive influence on hedonic value.

H7b: Arousal has positive influence on utilitarian value.

## 3. Research Methods

### 3.1. Questionnaire Development

Below, the questionnaire used for assessing user behavior of social media is described. The measures of our framework were adapted from the validated measures of prior studies from the literature to suit the context of our study. The respondents assessed all items via a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 7 = "strongly agree." The measures are listed in full in Appendix A and the descriptive statistics of the individual scales are shown in Table 1.

Web quality includes: information quality, system quality and service quality, which were measured with four items respectively adapted from Ahn et al. [1] and Lin [28]. Pleasure and arousal addressed the notion that users' experience emotion when using blogs. The abovementioned three items were adapted from Babin and Darden [4]. Customer values were divided into hedonic and utilitarian values to predict the behavioral intentions of using blog. Hedonic and utilitarian values were measured with four items, respectively and adapted from Babin et al. [6]. To assess the consequences of blog use, intentions for continued use and intention to post, each contained three items. The goal of continued use intention was to address that users want to continuously use blogs in the future. The items were adapted from Lin [28] and Li et al. [27]. Intention to post assessed what people release on blogs in the form of ideas or articles. The items were adapted from Wu and Tsang [38].

### 3.2 Sample and Data Collection

Blogs on the EC website, FashionGuide, allow all members to access and share information in a variety of posts or arguments about a particular topic to do with cosmetics. The blog service on the EC website introduces substantial and pervasive changes to communications among companies, bloggers and individuals. Social media presents an enormous challenge for companies. For example, the company can not passively wait for customers' comments; instead, customers want companies to actively engage, listen and respond appropriately.

This study explores the influence of continued use intention and intention to post on users' behavior. To test the model and address the above hypotheses, this study conducted an online survey on a cosmetic EC website with blog services. We posted a message on the websites asking respondents to complete an online questionnaire. A total of 323 surveys were received, but 13 surveys containing incomplete data were eliminated. The remaining 310 questionnaires represent a useable response rate of 96%.

Table 1. Sample profile.

Item	Demographics	Percentage
Gender	Male	13.5
	Female	86.5
Age	From 18 to 25 years old	51.9
	From 26 to 35 years old	42.6
	Above 36 years old	5.5
Education	High school degree and below	6.8
	College/University	77.4
	Master's degree and	15.8

	above	
Occupation	Student	34.8
	Service and Financial industry	21.6
	Public service	5.8
	Information technology industry	5.5
	Manufacturing industry	7.4
	Other	24.8
Experience of using blogs	Under 6 month	21.6
	6 month-1 year	15.5
	1-3 years	34.5
	Above 3 years	28.4
Frequency of using blogs (per week)	Under 1 time	14.2
	1-2 times	22.3
	3-6 times	26.5
	Above 7 times	37.1

#### 4. Data Analysis and Results

Partial Least Squares (PLS) Graph Version 3.00 Build 1130 was used to conduct measurement validation and model testing. In the following, the models were tested with a two-stage structural equation model by Anderson and Gerbing [2] and Hair et al. [17]. First, the measurement model was used to assess the item reliability, construct reliability and two types of validity: convergent and discriminant validity. Secondly, a structural equation model

analysis was used to test the research hypotheses empirically.

##### 4.1 Measurement Model

Item reliability, construct reliability and the two types of validity (i.e., convergent and discriminant validity) were taken into consideration in assessing the quality of the measurement model. As suggested by Hair et al. [17], an item loading greater than 0.5 can be considered acceptable. As shown in Appendix A, all of the item loadings exceed the minimum required value. In order to evaluate the construct reliability, we assessed the composite reliabilities (CR) of each of all constructs. The composite reliability values ranged from 0.88 to 0.96, which exceeded the 0.7 reliability criteria (shown as Table 2). We assessed the convergent validity by examining the average variance extracted (AVE), since each construct had an AVE of at least 0.5 [16]. The average variances extracted (AVE) from all nine constructs ranged from at least 0.65 to at most 0.88, all exceeding the critical value. Finally, we verified the discriminant validity by examining the value of the square root of the AVE to determine whether or not it was consistently greater than the off-diagonal correlations [16]. The results presented in Table 2 demonstrate satisfactory discriminant validity, which means that all of the constructs differ from each other. Overall, all multi-item constructs demonstrate high internal consistency and convergent and discriminant validity.

Table 2. Reliability and Validity

	Item	CR	AVE	IQ	SQ	SerQ	Pleasure	Arousal	HV	UV	CUI	IP	
	IQ	4	0.88	0.65	<b>0.81</b>								
	SQ	4	0.89	0.67	0.62	<b>0.82</b>							
	SerQ	4	0.94	0.81	0.69	0.62	<b>0.90</b>						
	Pleasure	3	0.95	0.87	0.63	0.68	0.64	<b>0.93</b>					
	Arousal	3	0.94	0.83	0.50	0.44	0.50	0.61	<b>0.91</b>				
	HV	4	0.91	0.72	0.53	0.55	0.52	0.68	0.55	<b>0.85</b>			
	UV	4	0.90	0.80	0.67	0.65	0.65	0.67	0.56	0.61	<b>0.89</b>		
	CUI	3	0.92	0.78	0.63	0.62	0.57	0.68	0.52	0.72	0.64	<b>0.88</b>	
	IP	3	0.96	0.88	0.43	0.42	0.43	0.45	0.38	0.52	0.43	0.61	<b>0.94</b>

Note. <sup>a</sup>Diagonal elements in the "correlation of constructs" matrix are the square root of the average variance extracted. CR is "Composite Reliability"; AVE is "Average Variance Extracted"; IQ is "Information Quality"; SQ is "System Quality"; SerQ is "Service Quality"; HV is "Hedonic Value"; UV is "Utilitarian Value"; CUI is "Continued Use Intention"; IP is "Intention to Post".

##### 4.2 Structural Model

The structural model is mainly used for testing the hypothesized relationships. We tested the research model with a bootstrapping procedure to acquire the path estimates and t-value, which were used to test the hypotheses. The results of the structural model test are shown in Table 3.

The results partially support Hypothesis Sets 1 and 2. The results show that hypotheses were supported and indicate that hedonic values have a strong and significant impact on user behavior, which can lead to greater intention for a user's continued use of the social media and posting of ideas. The effects of the information, system and system

quality on hedonic values were not supported, but these factors were significant in the perception of utilitarian value. Finally, as predicted by Hypothesis Sets 6 and 7, the effect of pleasure and arousal influenced users' hedonic and utilitarian values.

The R2 values of the endogenous constructs can be explained with the explanatory power of the proposed model. The explained variance is 58% for continued use intention, 29% for intention to share ideas, 51% for hedonic value and 61% for utilitarian value. All of the R2 values exceed the minimum criteria of 0.10 [15].

Table 3. Tests of Hypothesized Relationships

Structural Path		Standardized Coefficient	t-value	Hypothesis	
Hedonic Value	→	Continued Use Intention	0.52*	11.00	H1a (supported)
Hedonic Value	→	Intention to Post	0.41*	7.81	H1b (supported)
Utilitarian Value	→	Continued Use Intention	0.32*	6.87	H2a (supported)
Utilitarian Value	→	Intention to Post	0.17*	2.58	H2b (supported)
Information Quality	→	Hedonic Value	0.07	1.19	H3a (non-supported)
Information Quality	→	Utilitarian Value	0.23*	3.88	H3b (supported)
System Quality	→	Hedonic Value	0.12	1.72	H4a (non-supported)
System Quality	→	Utilitarian Value	0.22*	3.49	H4b (supported)
Service Quality	→	Hedonic Value	0.03	0.36	H5a (non-supported)
Service Quality	→	Utilitarian Value	0.17*	3.06	H5b (supported)
Pleasure	→	Hedonic Value	0.43*	6.25	H6a (supported)
Pleasure	→	Utilitarian Value	0.17*	2.93	H6b (supported)
Arousal	→	Hedonic Value	0.19*	3.36	H7a (supported)
Arousal	→	Utilitarian Value	0.17*	2.98	H7b (supported)

Note. \* $p < 0.05$ ;  $R^2$  of Hedonic Value = 0.51;  $R^2$  of Utilitarian Value = 0.61;  $R^2$  of Continued Use Intention = 0.58;  $R^2$  of Intention to Post = 0.29.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this study was to adopt a value perspective in order to investigate user behavior related to posting articles and continued use of social media. Specifically, this study adopted website quality, pleasure and arousal as external variables; the results indicate that these external variables could influence users' values in using social media (hedonic value and utilitarian value).

### 5.1 Theoretical Contributions

The findings of this study have important theoretical implications for social media use. First, this study applied Babin's value perspective to explain two important behaviors of social media: continued use intention and intention to post articles. The results showed that hedonic value and utilitarian value are significant predictors of behavioral intention to share content and to continue using social media. The results are similar to the results of previous research (e.g., [37]; [5]; [3]). In addition, the explanatory power of endogenous constructs in a research model is high; therefore, Babin's shopping value not only applies to purchase behavior, but also to the behaviors of browsing, posting and general use of social media. Returning to the original research question, this study can definitively state that there are positive correlations between user values and participation in the use of social media.

Second, information quality, system quality and service quality are shown to be significant influences on utilitarian value but do not appear to significantly influence acquisition of hedonic value. Therefore, enhancing web quality was an important factor in terms of utilitarian value, but not hedonic value. Whereas the goal of using social media is to exchange information, or solve specific problems [13], hedonic value is gained when using a social media site for fun, fantasy or relaxing [13]. This study showed that the provider of a social media site should offer good system and service support to increase user value and participation in the social media site.

Third, pleasure and arousal are significant influences in increasing both the utilitarian value and hedonic value of a social media site. Results also show that pleasure and

arousal have a greater influence on the acquisition of hedonic value than they do on utilitarian value. This result is similar to previous research findings which showed that users not only focus on the process, but also on achieving a task when using web services [37]; as a result, pleasure and arousal have more influence on hedonic value.

### 5.2 Contributions to Management Practice

The goal of this study was to use the results achieved to explain how marketing managers might use social media to promote their companies and improve business/ consumer relationships. To attract user participation in social media, marketing managers need to focus their attention on satisfying users' hedonic and utilitarian values. They should also choose a stable and user-friendly platform on which to release their product or service information. In addition, famous bloggers might be employed to post high-quality information about a company's product or service. The information provided in the social media must be complete, current or customized to the social users of the site. Finally, marketing managers should carefully plan and design social media because it can evoke high levels of pleasure and arousal in users and is apt to increase user values.

### 5.3. Research limitations and future development

Limitations to this study include the fact that we examined only one social media site. This study would not be able to generalize these findings in reference to other kinds of social media. Future research could explore the use of other forms of social media. Second, respondents may have misreported behavioral information, as we used self-reported rather than direct measures of social media use. To address the concern, future research should approach social media use via multiple methodologies. Collecting longitudinal data over a series of years should be considered as a necessary step. Finally, there are different factors influencing user values and behavior. Users may have privacy concerns while using social media [29] and may fear that their personal profile could be delivered randomly over the Internet. As a result, in the future, researchers could investigate the effect of perceived privacy risks and the

effect of privacy concerns on a user's behavior.

#### 5.4. Conclusion

Social media is a unique phenomenon in that a user's identity is explicit, and social relationships are built upon computer-mediated interactions. This study adopted the value perspective proposed by Babin et al. [5] to verify that users would receive participative value from using social media. The participative value means that members acquire hedonic and utilitarian value by using social media sites. Our findings suggest that user values derived from their past experiences and interactions with social media may exert lasting participation behavior. The results also indicate that hedonic and utilitarian values can impact the intention of an individual to post and continue using social media sites. Moreover, research indicates the key mediating role of user values in creating user posting articles and their continued use of social media. Although, the information, system and service quality are not significant influences on attaining hedonic value, these factors still have an impact on a user's utilitarian values. As a result, a user's goal in using media sites is to get specific expected results. Finally, user emotions gained from using social media are a significant influence on the acquisition of both hedonic and utilitarian values. The results show that 'enhanced user emotions' is one of the important antecedents for creating a successful social media site. The results are potentially useful to both marketing managers and researchers.

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#### Appendix A. Measurement Variables

Variables	Measurement	Loading
Information Quality (CR=0.88 ; AVE=0.65)		
	Blogs provide correct information.	0.86**
	Blogs provide complete information.	0.77**
	Blogs provide newest information.	0.70**
	Blogs have fruitful content and provide all the information I need.	0.87**
System Quality (CR=0.89 ; AVE=0.67)		
	The blog platform has a quick response function.	0.78**
	The blog platform can satisfy my request.	0.84**
	When I want to browse blogs, it works.	0.81**
	The function of the blog platform is easy to use and browse conveniently.	0.84**
Service Quality (CR=0.94 ; AVE=0.81)		
	The blog platform has quick service.	0.86**
	The blog platform is willing to support users.	0.91**
	The blog platform emphasizes my need.	0.90**
	The blog platform is equipped with professional and functional images.	0.91**
Pleasure (CR=0.95 ; AVE=0.87)		
	When I browse blogs, I feel happy.	0.95**

When I browse blogs, I feel relaxed.	0.91**
When I browse blogs, I am satisfied.	0.93**
Arousal (CR=0.94 ; AVE=0.83)	
When I browse blogs, I am aroused.	0.94**
When I browse blogs, I am excited.	0.91**
When I browse blogs, it can stimulate me.	0.88**
Hedonic Value (CR=0.91 ; AVE=0.72)	
I think it's interesting to browse blogs.	0.84**
Browsing blogs is more joyful than other things I do.	0.87**
I am immersed in exciting issues.	0.88**
When I browse blogs, I can forget the annoying things	0.78**
Utilitarian Value (CR=0.90 ; AVE=0.70)	
During browsing blogs, I finished doing the things I wanted to.	0.77**
I was satisfied because I didn't need to go other websites to get information.	0.88**
I think that the information and service provided by blogs is professional.	0.81**
Getting information from blogs is simple.	0.88**
Intention to continue (CR=0.92 ; AVE=0.78)	
I plan to browse blogs in the future.	0.88**
I want to browse blogs continuously.	0.87**
I want to extend my time browsing blogs.	0.86**
Intention to post (CR=0.96 ; AVE=0.88)	
I'm willing to frequently share the ideas and experience on my blog.	0.95**
I'm willing to release articles on my blog.	0.95**
I'm willing to share ideas when the users of website ask for my help and opinions.	0.91**

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