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Helping Beginning Vloggers to Overcome Cold Start: the Perspective of Identity Construction

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ABSTRACT

Beginning vloggers' low enthusiasm for Vlog creation has garnered little consideration, even though a social media platform can highly improve user stickiness and user activity by engaging users to generate content. This paper investigates the effects of extrinsic and intrinsic motivations on Vlog creative behavior mediated by cognition and emotion based on social cognitive theory and self-discrepancy theory. The analysis of 342 questionnaire surveys shows that intrinsic motivation (social interaction and social cues presentation) positively affects identity construction and positive emotions. In contrast, extrinsic motivation (community incentives and social norms) only positively affects identity construction and does not significantly influence positive emotions. Identity construction and positive emotions further significantly affect the creative behavior of beginning vloggers. The results reveal the process of Vlog creative behavior and have important practical implications for enhancing the platform performance.

Keywords: Vlog, beginning vloggers, creative behavior, identity construction.

INTRODUCTION

The popularity of user-generated content has hugely changed the market structure from being ruled by traditional media to empowering consumers to be an influencer (Al-Debei et al., 2013; Ye et al., 2021). Among great forms of UGC, Vlog（Video Blog）attracts more and more consumers to watch and engage due to its rich content creation space. A survey conducted by Iimedia (2021) reported that the user of Vlogs in China has grown to 368 million by 2020 and is expected to reach 488 million in 2021. Internet industry leaders also notice this promising market prospect and invest in the short video segment. Some short video platforms, such as TikTok, have soon become globally popular.

Though the rapid growth of social media platforms provides effective channels for Vloggers to locate a position and engage, video creation still has a long-tail effect. Only a tiny subset of viewers converts to creators. Among those creators, only a few people can keep on (Sun et al., 2014). The famous '90-9-1' principle states that 90% of participants only view Vlogs, 9% of participants may try to post some videos, only 1% of the participants actively upload new content. Therefore, 99% of users in the Vlog community belong to beginning vloggers (Garfield, 2020), and how to motivate users to create has become an issue of concern.

Previous studies mainly focused on the users' motivations to view Vlogs (Kang & Cho, 2020) and influencer marketing (Coates et al., 2020; Lewis, 2020) and indicated user self-presentation, expression management, and gaining recognition from others encouraged users to create Vlogs. However, there remains a gap in the motivation of beginning Vloggers' creative behaviors in academics. Actually, understanding antecedents of creative user behavior are conducive for beginning vloggers to generate content, further improving the popularity and stickiness of short video platforms (Munnukka et al., 2019), and practitioners have already run many marketing campaigns and offered generous material rewards to call for high-quality Vlogs, but external stimuli and internal motives are rarely taken into account in creative user behavior simultaneously.

To fill the gap, we combine both extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation of beginning Vloggers into our model. Besides, previous studies illustrated that cognition and affection mediated the relationship between stimuli and user behaviors (Hollebeek et al., 2014). That is, the user behavior is affected by subjective and objective judgment. Therefore, based on self-discrepancy theory and social cognitive theory, the research questions are as follows: 1) What extrinsic and intrinsic motivations drive users to convert to Vloggers and insist on creating? 2) From cognition and affection, what is the mechanism behind this behavior?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Vlog's creative behavior

Vlog, short for the video blog, is a new type of users' self-publishing content. Unlike traditional video content, Vlogs offer viewers insight into Vloggers' private life and add specific intrinsic characteristics by clipping. Typically, the content length is shortened by two orders of magnitude, and so is the production time. Successful Vloggers can often be identified as expertise, intimate, and authentic (Hudders et al., 2021). They are skilled in the complete process of video production and creating meaningful parasocial relationships with viewers (Ye et al., 2021). Some are even endorsed by professional agencies. Research on YouTube influencer marketing has flourished in the past few years (Kim & Kim, 2021). However, a huge body of Vloggers is common consumers facing a cold start in the early stage of video creation. Undergoing a cold start in the Vlog community context can be referred to as a state of lack of motivation for creation at the beginning stage. Helping beginning vloggers to overcome cold start becomes essential for platforms.

Self-discrepancy theory and Identity construction

The self-discrepancy theory was originally proposed by Higgins, indicating different types of discrepancies between self-state representations are related to emotional vulnerabilities. According to self-discrepancy theory, self-state representation consists of three domains: actual self; ideal self; should make self. The actual self is the identity that an individual actually possesses, representing the individual's self-concept, ideal self reflects hopes and desires to possess, and should self refers to duties, responsibilities, or obligations to possess. Discrepancies between the actual/own self-state and ideal self-states are called self-difference, signify the absence of positive outcomes, which is associated with dejection-related emotions (Higgins, 1987).

In the real world, achieving consensus between actual self-representation and ideal self-representation is difficult, especially when the standpoint of ideal self-presentation is on others. Fearing below the expectation of people around will lead to negative emotions such as disappointment, dissatisfaction, and sadness (Higgins, 1989). However, it's time and energy-consuming to meet the expectation of people around in all aspects of real life. Besides, as influencer culture becomes dominant, comparing one's life with the influencer's life often results in an unfavorable social comparison, indicating that the influencer's life is perceived as superior, resulting in envy (Chae, 2018). Only a limited number of people can live a luxurious life in real-world like influencers. The virtual world provides an opportunity for common users to remodel identity and ease the conflict between self-representation discrepancies (Huang et al., 2019). Users can grow feelings of high esteem and perceive higher social value in social communities by reconstructing a virtual identity.

Unlike other traditional online communities such as Weibo, short video platforms need participants to consume more time and energy to shoot and edit videos. The cost to view and create a video weakens the bond between friends and makes it difficult to become a tool to involve continuous interaction with friends. Thus, strangers who watch Vlogs to entertain themselves become key audiences. Vloggers can easily hide stereotypes in real life and reconstruct ideal identities.

Social cognitive theory and motivation to contribute UGC

Social cognitive theory, first proposed by Bandura (Bandura et al., 1989), consists of three dimensions: environment, individual, and behavior. It illustrates that human functioning is rooted in social systems and holds the view that individual behavior is partially shaped and controlled by the social environment (i.e., social system) and individual's cognition (such as expectations, beliefs). In other words, individual creates social systems to organize, guide, and regulate human activities, and motivation has been a prominent feature of social cognitive theory. Therefore, the social cognitive theory is one of the most effective theories to explain individual behavior, emphasizing behavioral, extrinsic, and intrinsic influences' reciprocal interactions on motivation in the social learning process (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020).

According to social cognitive theory, the factors that motivate users' creative behavior can be considered as the environment faced by users. Previous studies about motivation to contribute to UGC can be divided into two categories: extrinsic and intrinsic. For extrinsic motivations, Chen et al. (2010) found that comparing with peers can significantly increase contribution to an online community. Some explicit incentives, such as monetary incentives and normative pleas, will both have drawbacks in the long term (Garnefeld et al., 2012; Liu et al., 2016). Though receiving monetary incentives, Garnefeld et al. (2020) showed that reviewers would insist on writing negative reviews to resist marketers' influence. Combining explicit incentives and social norms proves to yield the greatest overall benefits to creative behaviors (Burtch et al., 2018). For intrinsic motivations, Previous studies on intrinsic motivations mainly focused on altruistic needs (Reimer & Benkenstein, 2016; Yang, 2017), self-enhancement (Taylor et al., 2012), self-affirmation (Alexandrov et al., 2013), hedonic needs (Yoo & Gretzel, 2011).

Vlogs, compared with other types of UGC, present more private information about creators. Social cues embedded in Vlogs can be an important antecedent of identity construction resulting in creative behaviors which may be insignificant in other contexts. The para-social relation is usually used to explain part of the persuasive appeal of influencer marketing (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Instead of obligation or responsibility, fantasy and imagination stimulate fans to remain involved in the para-social relation with idols. Previous studies often start from the perspective of fans to study para-social relations (Daniel Jr et al., 2018). However, the para-social relation needs from creators are much less researched. It's hard for beginning Vloggers to make a profit from generating the content. To some extent, interaction with viewers and building para-social relations can largely encourage Vloggers to insist on.

MODEL DEVELOPMENT AND HYPOTHESES

As Figure 1 presents, the formation of Vlog creative behavior proceeds in three stages. First, extrinsic factors (community incentives and social norms) and intrinsic factors (social cues presentation and social interaction) simultaneously result in changes in the users' cognition (identity construction) and emotion (positive emotion). Cognition and emotion further lead to changes in behavior (intention to create Vlog). According to social cognitive theory, constructs in the first stage can be considered as a specific environment faced by users. Two mediators in the second stage represent individual reactions when facing the environment. Vlog creative behaviors are the final result of the interaction between environment and individual.
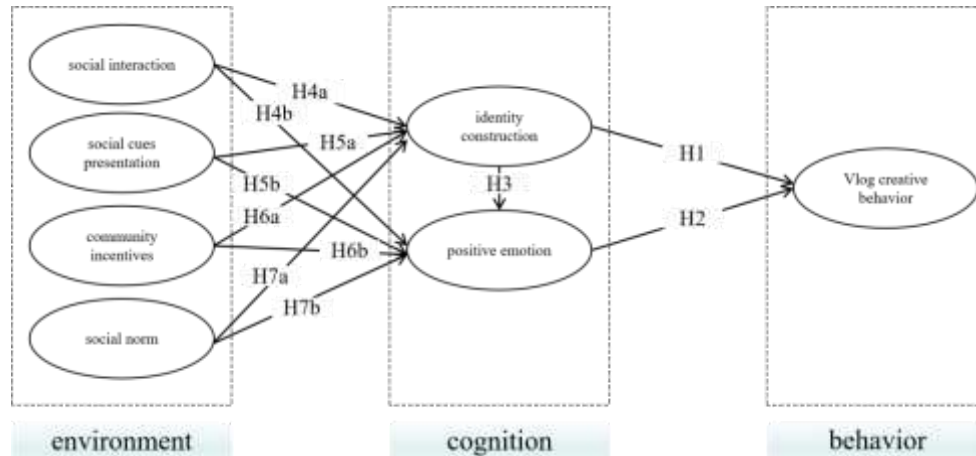

Figure 1: The research model.

Identity construction and Vlog creative behavior

Identity construction is a process involving dynamic subjective and objective evaluation. Only when subjective positioning from self and perceived objective positioning from others reach a consistency can one construct identity (Zhao et al., 2008). In the real world, achieving consensus between actual self-representation and ideal self-representation is difficult, especially when the standpoint of ideal self-presentation is on others. The virtual world provides an opportunity for common users to remodel identity and ease the conflict between self-representation discrepancies (Huang et al., 2019). Through the later editing, users can show the life picture they are willing to perform in a short video and effectively form an ideal self-presentation without too much cost. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: Identity construction is positively related to Vlog creative behavior.

Positive emotion and Vlog creative behavior

According to self-discrepancy theory, the discrepancy between actual and ideal or should self-presentation will lead to different negative emotions. Barnett et al. (2017) indicated that the discrepancy between actual and ideal self-presentation could be an efficient predictor for individual emotion. As mentioned above, the narrowing gap between actual self-presentation and ideal self-presentation can promote cognitive consistency, relieving negative emotions. In addition, as an emotional state, positive emotions can influence behavioral intentions of engaging (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Wang et al. (2017) indicated that positive emotion promotes users' urge to share information on microblogs. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2: Positive emotion is positively related to Vlog creative behavior.

H3: Identity construction is positively related to positive emotion.

Social interaction and intrinsic cognition

One of the essential features of social networking sites is that users spread information through social interaction. Social interaction brings a communication bond in the virtual community, representing more potential replies and compliments, thereby enhancing intrinsic self-esteem and self-identity (Cheng & Guo, 2015). Vlog creators present their information in videos and express themselves to gain interactive communication with other users. Social interaction through Vlogs is mainly carried out through various functions such as comments, likes, following, and bullet screens. Through these interaction indicators, creators can have a deeper understanding of themselves and constantly seek recognition of others in Vlog creation to enhance their reputation and status in social networks. Finally, to complete identity construction. At the same time, the interactive forms in the Vlog community are gradually diversified, enabling creators to obtain spiritual satisfaction and material satisfaction (Wang et al., 2017). Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H4a: Social interaction is positively related to identity construction.

H4b: Social interaction is positively related to positive emotion.

Social cues and intrinsic cognition

Social cues include demographic information (e.g., age) or intrinsic characteristics (e.g., appearance). Social platforms allow users to provide basic intrinsic information on the homepage. Such information may be inauthentic because of fewer social cues with brief texts and pictures. Conversely, a Vlog involves multiple social cues, fully disclosing the vlogger's appearance, characteristics, and environment, with a certain authenticity and diversity. Hong et al. (2020) found that the presentation of the social cue in selfies increases users' self-expression and impression management. Therefore, the presentation of high social cues plays a positive role in the construction of creator identity. Besides, social cues presentation can be used to predict interpersonal relationships and social support. UGC with more social cues can encourage more interaction, thereby promoting happiness (Luo & Hancock, 2020). Accordingly, the richness and authenticity of information cues increase the possibility of others' identity and self-identity, and self-disclosure directly affects positive emotion. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H5a: The social cues presentation is positively related to identity construction.

H5b: The social cues presentation is positively related to positive emotion.

Community incentives and intrinsic cognition

External incentives are also crucial for creative behavior. At present, Vlog creation not only meet the needs of social interaction but also allows authors to obtain financial benefits. The incentives provided by the platform for vloggers include material rewards (e.g., cash) and virtual rewards (e.g., badges, titles, and specific titles). Virtual rewards that represent the platform's recognition of users can be displayed to others, helping to enhance intrinsic social identity (McMillan & Hwang, 2002). Therefore, community incentives can enhance users' sense of honor and self-esteem, providing opportunities for identity construction.

The rewards of the virtual community can also increase the sense of pleasure and self-efficacy, which in turn affects the degree of knowledge sharing of virtual community members (Goes et al., 2016). For Vloggers, it takes more energy and time to shoot and post-process. Material rewards can stimulate the vlogger's positive emotions, affecting the creator's community engagement. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H6a: Community incentives are positively related to identity construction.

H6b: Community incentives are positively related to positive emotion.

Social norm and intrinsic cognition

Social norms refer to the prevalence of behavior in a relevant population, which are conducive to the establishment of their own identity image. For example, Burtch et al. (2018) investigated that social norms had a positive effect on the production of online reviews. Chen et al. (2010) found that comparing with peers can significantly increase contribution to an online community. In the creative atmosphere, users of a platform will perceive that it is a common trend to create and share Vlog. Especially when seeing people who influence them are sharing and creating Vlogs, individuals tend to imitate their behaviors to increase the likelihood of recognition and maintain their own identity.

Besides identity construction, social norms are closely linked to emotion and mood. Zhang et al. (2017) indicated that social norms positively affected users' sense of pleasure and made them believe that other members of the community were also willing to abide by norms and share knowledge. Huang et al. (2013) proposed that social norms may affect the behavioral intention by changing the individual's emotions towards the knowledge-sharing behavior. Actually, when feeling that peers are creating Vlogs, users can enhance positive emotions such as pleasure. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H7a: Social norms are positively related to identity construction.

H7b: Social norms are positively related to positive emotion.

METHODOLOGY

Data collection

The data were collected from students studying in a public university in Southwest China from October 2020 to November 2020. All latent variables were measured by using 7-point Likert scales (1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree). Vlog creation was measured with four items developed by Farooq et al. (2014). Identity construction was measured with six items from Rosenberg et al. (1989) and Rosenthal et al. (1981). Positive emotion was assessed using four items adapted from Beatty and Ferrell (1998). the extrinsic motivation was measured using two dimensions: community incentive and social norm. Each dimension of extrinsic motivation was evaluated using five items developed by Morhart et al. (2009) and Al-Debei et al. (2013). intrinsic motivation was measured using two dimensions: social cues presentation and social interaction. Social norm was measured with five items drawn from Fishbein and Ajzen (1977) and Al-Debei et al. (2013). Social cues presentation was evaluated using five items developed by Morhart et al. (2009). A screening item (e.g., How many Vlogs have you published?) was used to ensure whether participants are beginning Vloggers. Using this screening item, respondents who had published Vlogs less than ten participated in the survey. Finally, the questionnaire is designed into two sections: the first section collects the demographic profile of respondents. The second section collected the participants' responses to our research variables.

Exam Star, a platform providing functions equivalent to Amazon Mechanical Turk, was used as the platform software for a survey. The online survey returned a total of 428 responses indicating that they were beginning Vloggers. However, upon further inspection, a total of 86 responses were removed due to conflicting or missing responses. Demographic results indicated that there were 147 males (43%) who responded to the survey. Slightly more than half (53.5%) of respondents were born between 1995-2002. The majority (60.2%) of respondents had at least some college education.

Data analysis
Confirmatory factor analysis(CFA)
In this study, we conduct confirmation factor analysis to assess the validity and reliability of the measurement items. As shown in Table 1, Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha (CA) for all observed variables both exceeded 0.80, indicating ideal reliability. The average variance extracted (AVE) by each latent variable was above the 0.50 threshold (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In short, convergent validity was achieved. Discriminant validity was checked by calculating the squared correlation between variables. The results revealed that the correlation coefficients between the variables were less than 0.60, and the square roots of the AVE of each variable are larger than the correlation coefficients with other variables. Hence, discriminant validity was also achieved. Besides, the factor loading of each item on the corresponding latent variable was higher than that on other latent variables, also indicating that it had good discriminant validity.

Table 1: Confirmation factor analysis.

	IC	CI	SN	PE	SCP	VCB	SI	CA	CR	AVE
SI1	0.123	0.169	0.042	0.192	0.152	0.080	**0.764**			
SI2	0.126	0.105	0.023	0.187	0.056	0.025	**0.831**	0.85	0.857	0.601
SI3	0.059	0.069	0.165	0.060	0.082	0.133	**0.857**			
SI4	0.114	0.011	0.229	-0.006	0.043	0.101	**0.723**			
SCP1	0.152	0.090	0.143	0.081	**0.764**	0.074	-0.004			
SCP2	0.177	0.081	0.057	0.150	**0.836**	0.109	0.074	0.878	0.88	0.647
SCP3	0.106	0.087	0.219	0.061	**0.809**	0.070	0.124			
SCP4	0.070	0.133	0.087	0.182	**0.840**	0.089	0.151			
CI1	0.186	**0.839**	0.123	0.096	0.079	0.019	0.086			
CI2	0.145	**0.833**	0.102	0.114	0.050	0.030	0.125			
CI3	0.142	**0.851**	0.115	0.104	0.100	0.060	0.089	0.914	0.914	0.681
CI4	0.093	**0.825**	0.100	0.090	0.070	0.105	0.070			
CI5	0.129	**0.804**	0.027	0.020	0.114	0.173	0.004			
SN1	0.124	0.115	**0.776**	0.115	0.086	0.119	0.015			
SN2	0.084	0.140	**0.753**	0.140	0.098	0.097	0.094			
SN3	0.132	0.083	**0.708**	0.030	0.220	0.098	0.185	0.891	0.892	0.626
SN4	0.140	0.076	**0.868**	0.065	0.074	0.104	0.099			
SN5	0.092	0.052	**0.852**	0.094	0.075	0.164	0.116			
IC1	**0.781**	0.170	0.121	0.123	0.174	0.199	0.014			
IC2	**0.785**	0.176	0.163	0.085	0.153	0.163	0.018			
IC3	**0.847**	0.068	0.115	0.038	0.037	0.178	0.022	0.917	0.917	0.647
IC4	**0.817**	0.123	0.128	0.112	0.077	0.136	0.149			
IC5	**0.789**	0.181	0.046	0.149	0.073	0.047	0.157			
IC6	**0.727**	0.089	0.087	0.192	0.127	0.066	0.168			
PE1	0.130	0.092	0.126	**0.807**	0.149	0.130	0.166			
PE2	0.188	0.090	0.103	**0.786**	0.141	0.184	0.172	0.889	0.888	0.665
PE3	0.142	0.129	0.120	**0.834**	0.098	0.179	0.040			
PE4	0.142	0.104	0.095	**0.779**	0.107	0.186	0.077			
VCB1	0.209	0.104	0.164	0.192	0.175	**0.750**	0.096	0.891	0.892	0.673

VCB2	0.174	0.083	0.101	0.157	0.022	**0.843**	0.098			
VCB3	0.195	0.125	0.207	0.170	0.058	**0.807**	0.076			
VCB4	0.131	0.084	0.137	0.180	0.130	**0.793**	0.107			

Note: CA=Cronbach's alpha, CR=Composite Reliability, AVE=average variance extracted, SI= Social interaction, SCP= Social cues presentation, CI= Community incentive, SN= Social norm, IC= Identity construction, PE= Positive emotion, VCB= Vlog creative behavior.

Table 2: Correlations matrix among the latent constructs.

	VCB	IC	PE	SI	SCP	CI	SN
VCB	0.820						
IC	0.479	0.804					
PE	0.518	0.424	0.815				
SI	0.328	0.313	0.378	0.775			
SCP	0.337	0.370	0.409	0.314	0.804		
CI	0.304	0.402	0.325	0.285	0.302	0.825	
SN	0.418	0.356	0.337	0.330	0.337	0.286	0.791

Note: The diagonal elements are the square root of variance shared between the AVEs, whereas the off-diagonal elements are correlations among constructs.

Common method bias

Common method bias, caused by the measurement method used in an SEM study, adversely affects the estimation of the research model. For example, the instructions at the top of a questionnaire may influence the answers provided by different respondents in the same general direction, causing the indicators to share a certain amount of common variation. Another possible cause of common method bias is the implicit social desirability associated with answering questions in a questionnaire in a particular way, again causing the indicators to share a certain amount of common variation (Kock, 2015). To eliminate the possibility of common method biases, we adopted Harman's single-factor test. The result reveals that the seven factors combined account for 73.37% of the total variance, and the largest factor accounts for 31.34% of it. This indicates that there is no general factor.

Hypothesis test

First, we checked the fitness of our structural model. All fit indexes performed well：x^2/DF=2.253, IFI= 0.923, TLI= 0.914, CFI=0.922，RMSEA=0.61 . Table 3 presents the results for all path coefficients in the research model. Identity construction (β= 0.319, p <0.001) and positive emotion (β= 0.391, p <0.001) both had a significant influence on Vlog creative behaviors. These results support H1 and H2. Furthermore, identity construction showed a significant positive influence on positive emotion (β= 0.207, p <0.01). Thus, H3 is supported. Social interaction showed a significant positive influence on identity construction (β= 0.121, p <0.05) and positive emotion (β= 0.188, p <0.01). Thus, H4a and H4b are supported. Social cues presentation showed a significant positive influence on identity construction (β= 0.195, p <0.01) and positive emotion (β= 0.21, p <0.001). Thus, H5a and H5b are supported. The influence of community incentives on identity construction(β= 0.258, p <0.001) is significantly positive, but insignificantly on positive emotion(β= 0.258, p <0.001)(H6a supported，H6b not supported). The effect of social norm on identity construction (β= 0.183, p <0.01) is significantly positive, but insignificantly on positive emotion (β= 0.112, p =0.059>0.05) (H7a supported, H7b not supported).

Table 3: Standardized parameter estimates.

Hypothesis	Hypothesized path	Standardized estimate	S.E	C.R	P	Results
identity construction →Vlog creative behavior		0.319	0.071	5.307	<0.001***	H1 Supported
positive emotion →Vlog creative behavior		0.391	0.07	6.311	<0.001***	H2 Supported
identity construction →positive emotion		0.207	0.066	3.261	0.001**	H3 Supported
social interaction →identity construction		0.121	0.064	2.027	0.043*	H4a Supported
social interaction →positive emotion		0.188	0.068	3.09	0.002**	H4b Supported
social cues presentation →identity construction		0.195	0.048	3.235	0.001**	H5a Supported
social cues presentation →positive emotion		0.21	0.051	3.414	<0.001***	H5b Supported

community incentives →identity construction	0.258	0.051	4.375	<0.001***	H6a Supported
community incentives →positive emotion	0.095	0.053	1.608	0.108	H6b Not Supported
social norms →identity construction	0.183	0.042	3.105	0.002**	H7a Supported
social norms →positive emotion	0.112	0.044	1.891	0.059	H7b Not Supported

Note：***p<0.001; **p<0.01; *p<0.05.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary of findings

The emergence of many Vlog communities makes a user more challenging to stay on a specific platform. Platforms that reliably gain consumers' attention stand to make significant financial gains. Involving users to contribute to the community has long been an excellent strategy to prevent switching behavior (Ma & Agarwal, 2007). The previous research of Vlog creative behavior focuses primarily on influencers (Coates et al., 2020; Lewis, 2020). However, a huge body of Vloggers is common consumers facing cold start in the early stage of video creation. Motivating them to start and insist on creation becomes essential for platforms. As such, the present study seeks to advance our understanding of beginning vloggers' creative behavior by proposing and testing a model that explores the impact of extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation on Vlog creative behavior mediated by two critical cognition and affection factors. Through the lens of social cognitive theory and self-discrepancy theory, we identified two extrinsic motivations (social norms and community incentives) and two intrinsic motivations (social cues presentation and social interaction) in the first stage of the model. We concluded a new construction as a mediator, identity construction, usually considered a consequence, not an antecedent of creative behavior (Cheng & Guo, 2015). The analysis of 342 questionnaire surveys shows that intrinsic motivation (social interaction and social cues presentation) positively affects identity construction and positive emotions, and identity construction and positive emotions further significantly affect the creative behavior of Vlog. Contrary to our expectations, extrinsic motivation (community incentives and social norms) only positively affects identity construction and does not significantly influence positive emotions. The explanation may be that vloggers pay more attention to expression management when stimulated by external factors, while their emotions are less affected by the external environment.

Theoretical implications

The current research makes important theoretical contributions to the existing literature of UGC. First, to our knowledge, this is the first study to focus exclusively on beginning vloggers' creative behavior in Vlog community contexts. Second, according to self-discrepancy theory, we concluded a new construction as a mediator, identity construction. Previous studies usually considered identity construction as a consequence, not an antecedent of creative behavior (Cheng & Guo, 2015). Finally, we enhance the existing literature on vlogger engagement by applying social cognitive theory to our model.

Managerial implications

First, the developers and managers of the Vlog community can enrich social function. To facilitate users' social interactions with beginning vloggers, short video platforms can redesign recommendation systems to increase the exposure rate and hits of beginning vloggers by accurate and customizing recommendations. Besides, more presentation of social cues is conducive to identity construction and the generation of positive emotion. The platform can design more functions to display user information. For example, vloggers can add tags in Vlog creation to disclosure more comprehensive and abundant information and. Meanwhile, platforms can offer virtual rewards that show identities, such as badges, specific titles, and others that highlight the user identity of the Vlog community, and offer generous material rewards to call for high-quality Vlogs. Finally, the platform can provide users with rewards to encourage the user to share Vlogs with their friends so as to attract more potential users to create Vlogs.

Limitations and future research

First, in the research on the factors affecting the creative behavior of Vlog, the sample selection is concentrated. The age of more than half of the population is concentrated in the 18-25 years old, and the education background is mostly junior college or undergraduate, which may cause bias in the data results. In the future, the scope of the questionnaire can be expanded, and demographic information will be more comprehensive.

Second, this research focuses on the construction of identity as an important factor in personal cognition, which also confirms the important role of internal and external factors on creative behavior. But for individuals, there are other factors that affect their cognition. In the future, other intermediary factors at the cognitive level, such as satisfaction and trust, can be added to further explore its influence mechanism.

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