The Influence of User-Generated Eudaimonic YouTube Videos on Well-Being

Seok Kang, The University of Texas at San Antonio, USA*

Brianna Villarreal, The University of Texas at San Antonio, USA

Serenity Morales, The University of Texas at San Antonio, USA

ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationships of audience exposure to user-generated eudaimonic YouTube videos with subsequent involvement, empathy, perceived depression, and happiness in two studies. This study adapted self-compassion as a moderated mediator to the models. In Study 1, 402 respondents participated in a survey. Results found that user-generated eudaimonic video viewing on YouTube activated involvement but not depression reduction. Self-compassion mitigated the relationship between empathy and depression. In Study 2, with 189 respondents, a positive and significant indirect influence of eudaimonic YouTube video viewing on happiness through involvement and empathy was found. The results demonstrate that user-generated eudaimonic YouTube videos have the potential to improve well-being when users are involved in and empathetic with the video content. The role of user-generated eudaimonic YouTube video viewing in human well-being research was discussed. Future research directions were suggested.

KEYWORDS

Empathy, Eudaimonic Video, Involvement, Well-Being, YouTube

INTRODUCTION

Entertainment media have been the channels through which audiences expose, engage, empathize, and experience psychological effects intentionally or unintentionally. Recent development in entertainment media encompasses not only hedonic content but inspirational messages that change people's lives. Eudaimonic media channels in the digital environment afford the accessibility, diversity, and volume of meaningful and self-transcendent narratives. Users readily encounter inspirational content on social media and are affected by them for psychological needs (Oltra, Camarero, & San José Cabezudo, 2022; Rieger & Klimmt, 2019). Eudaimonic media can be broadly defined as media narratives that enhance an individual's reflection on life meaning, virtue, value, purpose, and potential for coping and well-being (Dale, Raney, Janicke, Sanders, & Oliver, 2017; Ott, Tan, & Slater, 2021).

Audiences' frequent eudaimonic media experiences have ignited increased research attempts on their effects. From movies and television (Londoño-Proaño, 2022; Weinmann, Schneider, Roth,

Bindl, & Vorderer, 2016) to the Internet to social media (Dale et al., 2020; Williams, & Krisjanous, 2023), how specific portrayals are responsible for self-transcendent emotional reactions has been conducted (Dale et al., 2017; Rieger & Klimmt, 2019). Social media posts were inspirational for users in kindness and overcoming obstacles (Dale et al., 2020). Some scenes of self-sacrifice and nostalgia produced self-affirmation and self-transcendence (Watts, Bonus, & Wing, 2020). Other recent studies have examined the influence of eudaimonic narratives on moral engagement (e.g., Tsay-Vogel & Krakowiak, 2016), user comments on inspirational narratives (e.g., Möller & Kühne, 2019), eudaimonic media format on evaluations (e.g., Weinmann et al., 2016), person-specific inspiration (Valkenburg, Beyens, Pouwels, Driel, & Keijsers, 2022), and cross-cultural motivations of inspirational entertainment consumption (e.g., Odağ, Uluğ, Arslan, & Schiefer, 2018).

These studies, however, are limited in investigating audiences' psychological processes of the narratives and their consequences. The studies testing theoretical models are oriented toward traditional media exposure and the consequence of awe, elevation, admiration, or gratitude (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Dale et al., 2017) rather than improved well-being because of viewing user-generated eudaimonic videos on YouTube, the most widely used social video platform (Auxier & Anderson, 2021). Few studies examined the relationships of user-generated eudaimonic content on YouTube with well-being in terms of engagement processing.

A theoretically posed model test for the information processing of eudaimonic YouTube video consumption in cross-sectional studies may verify whether the exposure to the content from algorithmic selections prompts human well-being. Grounded in self-determination theory and the mediated wisdom of experience perspective, the current study examined the relationships of audiences' exposure to user-generated eudaimonic YouTube videos with subsequent involvement, empathy, and perceived well-being (depression and happiness) in two studies. As an additional factor that can intervene in the relationship between empathy and depression and happiness, this study adapted self-compassion as a moderated mediator to the models. Self-compassion is known to facilitate eudaimonic well-being (Ferguson, Kowalski, Mack, & Sabiston, 2015). As a result of user-generated eudaimonic YouTube video viewing, audiences self-determine to involve, get emotionally embedded, and form well-being. With ubiquitous accessibility, this study can provide important implications as user-generated eudaimonic videos on YouTube may positively contribute to well-being enhancement.

BACKGROUND

Self-Determination and Mediated Wisdom of Experience

Individuals are motivated to act in desired directions by both intrinsic and extrinsic value factors in life. External factors such as rewards, norms, or fear and internal ones such as interests and curiosity interchange to trigger psychological and behavioral engagement. Self-determination theory (SDT) offers a meta-interpretation of motivations (Deci & Ryan, 1985). SDT assumes that people's sense of volition and well-being is determined by relational factors such as individual, social, and cultural interactions. Humans' essential need for relatedness aids in achieving the increase of positive (e.g., happiness) and the decrease of negative (e.g., depression) well-being factors. Using SDT, studies found supporting results. The need for connections resulted in positive psychological outcomes through social media use (Lin, 2016). Media participation with the goal of support-seeking engendered at-risk youth's achievement of well-being (Pienimäki, 2019). Therefore, self-determined experience and positivity can invoke involvement, self-control, empathy, mindfulness, and well-being, which is defined as a sense of meaning, purpose, and global judgment of feelings from joy to depression (Bernard, Martin, & Kulik, 2014). Social media use for information, inspiration, and escape from negative emotions reduces depression (Brailovskaia, Schillack, & Margraf, 2020). Social media influencers' sharing of inspirational media content with followers enhanced fundraising (Duvall, 2022).

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