

Chapter 4

Effects of Narcissism, Leisure Boredom, and Gratifications Sought on User- Generated Content Among Net-Generation Users

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ABSTRACT

This research identifies the gratifications sought by the Net-generation when producing user-generated content (UGC) on the internet. Members of the Net-generation want to vent negative feelings, show affection to their friends and relatives, be involved in others' lives, and fulfill their need to be recognized. These gratifications, to a large degree, were found to be significantly associated with the users' various levels of participation in UGC (e.g., Facebook, blogs, online forums, etc.). What's more, narcissism was predictive of content generation in social networking sites, blogs, and personal webpages, while leisure boredom was significantly linked to expressing views in forums, updating personal websites, and participating in consumer reviews. In particular, the results showed that Net-geners who encountered leisure boredom had a higher tendency to seek interaction with friends online. Implications of findings are discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

The internet has become an integral part of the lives of most young adults. It is flourishing even more in the Web 2.0 era. Users are no longer passive recipients of web contents, they can also be contributors. A number of sites, such as Facebook and MySpace, invite users all around the globe to share experiences and self-produced works. Such content contributed by users is called user-generated content (UGC). In this study, UGC includes personal contents produced by end-users in multiple social media platforms, such as Facebook, YouTube, MySpace, Twitter, blogs, and online forums. This content is unrelated to ones' professional work.

UGC on the internet is not merely used for entertainment or passing time, but may also lead to citizen journalism (Gillmor, 2004) and social movements (Birdsall, 2007). UGCs on social media and various online applications are popular among the "Net-generation," that is, those who were born between the late seventies and mid-nineties (Tapscott, 2009). Members of the Net-generation (Net-geners), are also called digital natives (Prensky, 2001), Generation Y (McCrindle, 2002), Millennials (Howe & Strauss, 1992), and even the Post 80s in China. They are the first generation whose experiences, since their formative years, have been shaped by digital media. Hence, it is assumed that these people have unique attitudes towards technology (Kennedy et al., 2007). Leung (2003) suggested that attitudes and interests among Net-geners are diverse, yet they have the same deeply held values. They believe that they have equal opportunities to access information and are confident in their innovativeness and openness to the outside world. In fact, Net-geners actively join discussions on social issues by generating UGC on the internet. In some countries, such discussions have initiated and consolidated opposition to government policies.

Social network plays an important role in UGC. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) found that creating

content on social networking sites is one of the means through which users connect with friends. The platforms allow users to share photos, video, and to make comment on others' blogs. Blossom (2009) also pointed out that people participate in "social-network publishing" is to share content and build knowledge through discussion.

Employing the uses and gratifications perspective, past studies have examined Net-geners' motivations in their use of the internet; however, the UGC production behavior of Net-geners has not yet been thoroughly explored (Kennedy et al., 2007; Leung, 2003). Being technologically savvy, Net-geners produce immeasurable amounts of content daily using social media. However, the extent to which how personality traits (such as narcissism and leisure boredom) and their gratifications sought affecting their content generation online is largely unknown.

Characteristics of the Net-Generation

Tapscott (2009) identified Net-geners as youths who adapt to new media and are outspoken on the net. They are willing to take the initiative to help their society transform into a more tolerant and open one (Tulgan & Martin, 2001). Net-geners' enthusiasm for the internet is driven by various motivations. Previous research has identified "pleasure of control" and "fluidity of identity" as two properties that seduce Net-geners to the internet. Net-geners are "emotionally open on the net"; they like to share their emotions with others (Leung, 2003; Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005).

Palfrey and Gasser (2008) suggested that the only world digital natives (a synonym to Net-geners) know is a digital one. Unlike prior generations, they grew up with tendencies to multitask, to express themselves, and to connect with others via digital technologies. They enjoy showing off and putting up their most innovative selves in front of the world. Meanwhile, Jones, Ramanau, Cross, and Healing (2010) questioned the existence of the Net-generation. They argued

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