



Original Article

# An Empirical Study of the Motivations for Intention to Read Brand-related User-generated Content on Social Media in Vietnam

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**Abstract:** This study investigates the motivations of social media users for their intention to read brand-related user-generated content (B-UGC). The study applies the uses and gratifications (U&G) approach to identify the typology of UGC reading motivations. It examines other possible motives from theory of planned behavior to a conceptualized research model. Following quantitative methodology, a questionnaire survey was carried out with 263 valid respondents. The assessment of the research model and hypotheses is analyzed using confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling. The research found that information-seeking and social interaction have a significant impact on attitude towards UGC, which is the most significant predictor of intention to read B-UGC. Entertainment and passing time gratifications are significantly related to attitude toward B-UGC, and the perceived power of control would not significantly affect the intention to read B-UGC. This study discusses managerial implications for directing and managing the brand-related content in social media.

*Keywords:* User-generated content, uses and gratifications, social media, theory of planned behavior.

## 1. Introduction

Web technology has enabled and witnessed social media bloom that is a broad range of online sites where users are enabled to interact, collaborate and share content [1]. User-generated media provides new forms of communication, entertainment, and exchanging information with spectacular growth [2]. For

Vietnamese social media user report, Facebook is particularly popular followed by Zalo, YouTube and Instagram [3]. The main user activities on social media are communication, information updating and entertainment. The virtual space of social media was thought to enlarge the producers' ability to advertise to consumers. But the reality is that the power was shifted towards the users of social sites; hence,

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diminishing firms' power [4]. To explain the media power impact, including social media, it is pressing to understand the motivation of audience members [5, 6]. Accordingly, this study aims at investigating the motivation of social media's audience to see brand-related user-generated content (B-UGC).

Brand-related user-generated content refers to content created by the users of social media [7, 8], and includes brand-related information [9]. Social media empowers users to exert their individual opinion and views on both other consumers and brands [10] in a range of forms, including pictures, video, text and audio [11]. The content in the virtual space has changed the power relation between consumers and firms in the direction of empowering consumers [12]. Within retail online environments, for example, social media drives the brand-related content to a broader range of consumers [13]. A large number of researches have proved that B-UGC has an important influence on consumers' attitude towards a brand, and eventually on the purchase decision [14]. The UGC content empowers consumers to take control of their buying process; UGC extends their control over what type of content to consume, not just the content provided by advertisers [15]. Chu and Kim (2011) and Connors (2013) explained that the B-UGC which is transmitted via social media, could have more influence compared to other information sources, as it comes from trust-worthy consumers' networks [16, 17]. Additionally, in the social media environment the transmission of content reaches a broader audience more easily and quickly than traditional means of communication [18]. Such an effect could only happen when there are a relatively large number of audience members to consume the brand content. Therefore, the question should be why the audience of social media chooses to read the content and what they expect to gain from their consumption. Strizhakova et al. (2008) emphasized that B-UGC is a social phenomenon urging for a better focus on consumer meaning [19]. UGC is a significant means for consumers to influence the

marketplace [20]. Therefore, the study of UGC is essential and should start with the audience of UGC. The problem addressed in this research is to understand the young adults' motivations to consume content on social media. The research question is what are the audience's motives for reading B-UGC on social media.

## 2. Literature review and hypotheses

### 2.1. Determinants of intention to view B-UGC

This research applies the theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to explore the factors influencing the intention of viewing B-UGC. The TPB is useful to predict a particular behavior [21, 22]. According to TPB, performing the behavior's intention is the most important determinant of a behavior [22].

Behavioral intention (BI) is the extent to which a person is ready to perform a particular action [22]. The model requires that the examined behavior is as specific as possible by inclusion of a time-frame and context. Applied in this research, behavioral intention is a person's intent to view B-UGC within the next month on social media. In the TPB, there are three influencing factors towards behavioral intention: the attitude toward the behavior, subjective norm and the perceived behavior control.

The attitude towards performing a behavior, is "the individual's positive or negative evaluation of performing the behavior" [21]. Attitude is defined as "a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor" [23]. That is, a positive attitude toward UGC online generally increases content consumption [8]. Therefore, if consumers have favorable attitudes toward a site, they are more likely to read for seeking information [24]. It's proved that the attitude toward a behavior has a significant influence on the intention to perform that behavior [25-27]. In social media context, Chu (2011) considered the significant impact of attitude on intention [28]. To gain a deeper

understanding about social media users in Vietnam, this study examines their general attitude towards UGC and how it influences their intention to read UGC. Applied in the B-UGC context on social media, a favorable attitude toward watching B-UGC is expected to have positive impact on the intention to view B-UGC:

*H1: The viewers' attitude toward B-UGC on social media positively relates to their intention to watch B-UGC.*

The second determinant of the intention of performing a behavior is subjective norm. subjective norm is "the person's perception that most people who are important to him think he should or should not perform the behavior in question" [21]. For traditional media, it's found a positive relationship between subjective norm and behavioral intention [29]. Similarly, discussing social networking sites, many researches found subjective norm plays the role of social influence on individual behavior on a social network. Accordingly, social media audience's perceived social pressure to view B-UGC should have a positive influence on their intention to watch B-UGC.

*H2: The subjective norm of watching B-UGC positively influences the intention to watch B-UGC.*

According to TPB, the perceived power of control is the individual's perceived resources, opportunity and support to perform the behavior [30]. Today technologies have created a new digital media environment where audiences could choose among channels. Media scholars acknowledge audience gains more media control. Within the media domain, viewers decide their media use and watch what they want rather than rely on other gatekeepers [31, 32]. The media control in the context of B-UGC is defined as the audience's capability to decide what media content to see, and where, when and how to consume it [7]. The control power appeals to the media audience both technically and psychologically. This is also identified as one of the primary motivations for using the Internet [33, 34]. In case of UGC sites, the sense of control can motivate people to use. Three

types of control are found that UGC consumers can exert on social media.

Firstly, interpersonal control allows users to communicate without time and space constraints, and without personal restriction and criticism. Chan (2006) explained that viewers can choose to ignore unwanted content and the screen interface somewhat plays as an embarrassment protection [35]. In online discussion, people could be active or passive [36]. As UGC is synchronic and dynamic, people have content-based control. The content is available as the shift of time and space. Moreover, UGC is dynamic in terms of responding to individual digital footprints [37, 38]. It is seen that content is changed in various ways responding to consumer actions. The uses of UGC can exert interface-based control since the sites are responsive to individual needs [39]. It is expected that the sense of control motivates media users to read B-UGC.

*H3. The perceived power of control positively influences the intention to read B-UGC on social media.*

## 2.2. Determinants of attitude toward viewing B-UGC

The TPB assumes that behavioral beliefs determine the behavioral attitude. Behavioral beliefs are "person's beliefs that behavior leads to certain outcomes and his evaluations of these outcomes" [21]. An audience chooses the content to read based on their prior media experience. Rubin et al. (2002) explained that past learning experiences shape a circular process of future media usage pattern [5]. Similarly, LaRose and Eastin (2004) used the user's self-reflective capability to emphasize the role of past experience as a behavioral explanation [40]. Regarding B-UGC on social media, to identify the expected outcomes of viewing B-UGC, the theory of motivations for using media is useful. The U&G theory offers a suitable theoretical approach to understand motivations for media usage [5, 40]. U&G theory recently has been increasingly applied to new media as in social media context [41]. For

media usage, needs are defined as the “combined product of psychological dispositions, sociological factors, and environmental conditions that determine the specific use of the media” [42]. The audience search on specific media for opportunities to satisfy their needs, and therefore, the media usage is need-driven and can be explained by specific motives [43]. In marketing context, the motivation to watch advertising has been explained theoretically. While media content includes B-UGC, few researches attempted to apply U&G theory to understand the motivation of UGC audience [44]. They may gain psychological benefits including socializing, entertainment, self-status seeking, and information seeking [45]. Particularly, primary uses and gratification factors are defined as information seeking, entertainment, social interaction and passing time [46].

Information seeking need implies that people participate in social media discussion to learn about specific products. In U&G research, content on media is often seen as a significant informational - educational source [42]. Shao (2009) concluded that people read UGC to learn about almost any subject - with the result, the consumption of UGC is primarily driven by the information need [2]. Previous studies have shown that consumers trust information from fellow consumers more than from advertisers, which is seen as biased [47]. As a result, they may rather seek information from users rather than marketers and B-UGC is the largest source for such information. Information seeking is considered as cognitive needs and information gratification sought [48]. Desire to improve one’s knowledge of others, the community and the world drives this need.

Users may also read UGC to pursue leisure and amusement activities. For many media users, entertainment is a part of social media [49]. Entertainment motivation is explained within the uses and gratification approach as the form of relaxation, getting enjoyment and emotional relief [50]. A number of researches have proved the positive relationship between

entertainment need with media consumption. Media enjoyment is one of the expected outcomes from UGC consumption [7]. Similarly, reading UGC is considered as to escape from problems and to relax [2, 51, 52].

Passing time is identified as a viewing motivation of traditional media such as television [53, 54]. Passing time can be considered as to escape or to be just a habit in everyday life. There is evidence that media usage is often habitual, ritualistic and unselective of activities [55]. The findings in traditional media environment guide this study to consider the passing time factor as an influencing factor of attitude toward B-UGC in the digital media context.

In terms of social interaction need, social media members want to build and maintain personal relationships online, and to seek advice. The popularity of social media is increasing together with personal social interaction with friends, family and professional networks [56]. Through social media, users are enabled to present themselves, connect to others, and to maintain and develop relationships [57]. One is attracted to content and media to satisfy their social needs [58]. Their study was done in the mass media context, however, it recommended that viewing the media is about how the media gratifies individuals and how people integrate differently into social institutions. That means certain media attributes have a relationship with the social function that they serve. Applied to this research, reading B-UGC may support the audience interacting in social activities. Audience members tend to read content that is of shared interest with members in their network to be included in discussion. Therefore, it is expected that social interaction would predict the reading motivation of B-UGC.

*H4. Each of the expected outcomes of reading B-UGC on social media, including information (H4a), entertainment (H4b), social interaction (H4c) and passing time (H4d) positively influence the attitude towards viewing B-UGC.*

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Measurement

This research applies the typology of media use from the work of McQuail (1987) to construct a scale for B-UGC on social media [50]. This study combines the items of entertainment and passing time motives from Rubin (1983) [59], while the information-seeking and interaction items were adopted from Korgaonkar and Wolin (1999) [60]. The items have been revised based on the focus group interview findings and due to the fundamental difference between traditional and social media.

To test the suitability of the measurement scales, two focus group discussions were conducted with 19 social media users aged from 19 to 25 years old. Based on the discussion, the original version of scales was adjusted according to the research topic and context. The instrument was then administered by 5 respondents to check the understandability and correct any errors. The correction was made based on the feedbacks, hence improving the readability and accuracy.

The questionnaire was originally composed in English and translated into Vietnamese by a professional translator to ensure the equivalence of meaning. The questionnaire is organized into four main parts. Firstly, the introduction provides respondents with research information,

basic concepts and a guide for completing the survey. Secondly, there are screening questions to check whether they are social media users. The usage-frequency questions also reinforce respondents' understanding about the B-UGC concept. Then, dimensions of attitude, social norm, perceived power of control and U&G are measured. All items were measured using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Finally, the participants answered the demographics questions.

#### 3.2. Data collection

A self-administered questionnaire was developed using the Qualtrics website tool. The questionnaire link was distributed by email to university students and shared on social media. There were totally 288 returned questionnaires. Incomplete responses were then eliminated and a cleaning process and assumption checking of data analysis were conducted, leaving 265 valid responses. Respondents were social media users, mainly Vietnamese under 25 and were students. Most of them were living in Hanoi, and the rest located in different cities in Vietnam. The summary of demographic data is presented in Table 1. Most of respondents reported that they had read B-UGC on social networking sites. Other social media sites were reported as the sources of B-UGC (Table 2).

Table 1: Demographic data

Variable		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	102	38.5
	Male	163	61.5
Age	Below 25	205	77.4
	25 to 35	42	15.8
	Above 35	18	6.8
Occupation	Student	203	76.6
	Employee	52	19.6
	Freelancer	10	3.8
Residence	Ha Noi	203	76.6
	Thanh Hoa	17	6.4
	Others	45	17.0

Source: Developed by the authors.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Measurement model

An exploratory factor analysis is conducted using SPSS 23 to identify underlying dimensions of attitude and intention to read B-UGC. The cross loading and low loading items were eliminated. Finally, 25 items result in 8 factors (Information, Entertainment, Social Interaction, Passing Time, Social norm, Perceived Power of Control, Attitude, and Intention), explaining 73.55% of the total variance. The factor loadings after the Varimax rotation range from 0.580 to 0.874. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value is 0.888, which shows good adequacy of the sampling for EFA.

The factor structure derived from EFA is verified by confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using AMOS 20. One item of Information and one item of Social interaction were removed to improve convergent validity. The overall fit

index of the model is acceptable (Table 3). The results show that the goodness fit indexes are acceptable:

$$\chi^2 (247) = 445.242, p < 0.001, \text{CMIN/DF} = 1.803, \text{CFI} = 0.941, \text{AGFI} = 0.848, \text{RMSEA} = 0.055$$

Table 2: Social media sites to read B-UGC

Social media	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Social networking sites	260	98
Blogs	81	31
Forums	109	41
Expert's website	78	29
Company website	155	58
Mobile blogs	44	17
Video blogs	98	37

Source: Developed by the authors.

Table 3: Confirmatory factor analysis results

Factors	Items	Standardized loading	t-value
Information seeking (IF) ( $\alpha = 0.829$ )	IF1 - Reading B-UGC helps to obtain useful information about products	0.869	-
	IF2 - Reading B-UGC helps in acquiring information about product inexpensive	0.757	12.794
	IF3 - Reading B-UGC gives a quick and easy access to large volumes of information about the product	0.763	13.067
Entertainment (EN) ( $\alpha = 0.871$ )	EN1 - Reading B-UGC to relax	0.796	-
	EN2 - Reading B-UGC for pleasant rest	0.813	14.081
	EN3 - Reading B-UGC to unwind	0.771	13.218
	EN4 - Reading B-UGC to cheer up	0.798	13.779
Social interaction (SI) ( $\alpha = 0.824$ )	SI1 - Reading B-UGC helps to do something with friends	0.787	-
	SI2 - Reading B-UGC helps to talk to friends about the brand content	0.755	12.213
	SI3 - Reading B-UGC helps to enjoy talking about the favourite brand content	0.803	12.433
Passing time (PT) ( $\alpha = 0.778$ )	PT1 - Reading B-UGC when having nothing else to do	0.723	-
	PT2 - Reading B-UGC to occupy time	0.793	10.388
	PT3 - Reading B-UGC help to pass the time away when feeling bored	0.697	9.846
Power of control (PC) ( $\alpha = 0.775$ )	PC1 - Reading B-UGC helps to be interactive	0.818	-
	PC2 - Deciding to continue reading B-UGC or not	0.693	10.343
	PC3 - The control over what and when to watch B-UGC	0.677	10.129

Subjective norm (SN) ( $\alpha = 0.798$ )	SN1 - Most people whose opinion I value think that I should read B-UGC	0.712	-
	SN2 - Most people who are important to me think that I should read B-UGC	0.839	10.583
	SN3 - It's expected of me that I read B-UGC	0.717	10.020
Attitude (AT) ( $\alpha = 0.817$ )	AT1 - B-UGC is good	0.804	-
	AT2 - B-UGC is positive	0.774	12.708
	AT3 - B-UGC is attractive	0.747	12.239
Intention (IN) ( $\alpha = 0.874$ )	IN1 - I intend to read B-UGC within the next month	0.825	-
	IN2 - I will make an effort to read B-UGC within the next month	0.841	15.239
	IN3 - I am sure that I will read B-UGC within the next month	0.842	15.229

Source: Developed by the authors.

Then all constructs are computed with average variance extracted and construct reliability (Table 4) for the convergent and discriminant validity checked. The construct reliability (CR) of constructs are higher than 0.7, and average variance extracted (AVE) of all are

higher than 0.5; the convergent validity is adequate. The AVE is higher than the maximum shared variance (MSV), indicating discriminant validity. Cronbach's alpha values are from 0.775 to 0.874 which secure the reliability.

Table 4: Reliability and validity test

Factors	Standardized loading			Max R (H)								
	CR	AVE	MSV		AT	EN	IF	IN	PC	SN	SI	PT
AT	0.819	0.601	0.498	0.821	0.775							
EN	0.873	0.631	0.482	0.873	0.490	0.795						
IF	0.839	0.636	0.349	0.853	0.573	0.379	0.798					
IN	0.874	0.698	0.498	0.874	0.706	0.513	0.371	0.836				
PC	0.775	0.536	0.349	0.791	0.557	0.357	0.591	0.447	0.732			
SN	0.801	0.575	0.203	0.817	0.451	0.265	0.158	0.407	0.131	0.758		
SI	0.825	0.611	0.446	0.827	0.629	0.668	0.477	0.624	0.582	0.388	0.782	
TP	0.782	0.546	0.482	0.789	0.387	0.694	0.237	0.358	0.334	0.349	0.549	0.739

Note: CR: Construct reliability; AVE: Average variance extracted; MSV: Maximum shared variance.

Source: Developed by the authors.

#### 4.2. Structural model

A structural equation model is constructed using AMOS 20. There are six exogenous constructs including four uses and gratification factors: Information, Entertainment, Social interaction, Passing time, and Perceived power of control and Subjective norm. They are related to two endogenous constructs, Attitude and Intention. The result of the test is presented in Fig.1, indicating the acceptable goodness-of-fit

statistics,  $\chi^2 (252) = 450.498$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , CMIN/DF = 1.795, CFI = 0.939, AGFI = 0.847, RMSEA = 0.055.

#### 4.3. Hypotheses testing

Path analysis was conducted to test the hypotheses. To improve the overall fit of the hypothesized model, two paths were introduced from social interaction to the intention, and from subjective norm to attitude toward B-UGC. The

model results show that H1, H2, H4a, H4c are accepted while H3, H4b and H4c are not accepted (Figure 1). Attitude and subjective norm toward B-UGC affects the intention to read, while the perceived power of control does not. The information-seeking, social interaction and subjective norm are significantly related to the attitude towards reading B-UGC, confirming hypotheses H4a and H4c. It is not likely in the model that entertainment-seeking and passing time are strongly related to the attitude towards B-UGC, rejecting hypotheses H4b and H4d. The new introduced paths show that subjective norm positively influences attitude toward B-UGC, while social interaction has a similar effect on the intention to read B-UGC. Among the influencing factors of intention to read B-UGC, attitude is the most influential, followed by the subjective norm. As expected, information-seeking has the strongest correlation with attitude toward B-UGC. The findings indicate that social media users seek information and social interaction in reading B-UGC, and the benefits of entertainment and passing time are not considered as a positive influencing factor.

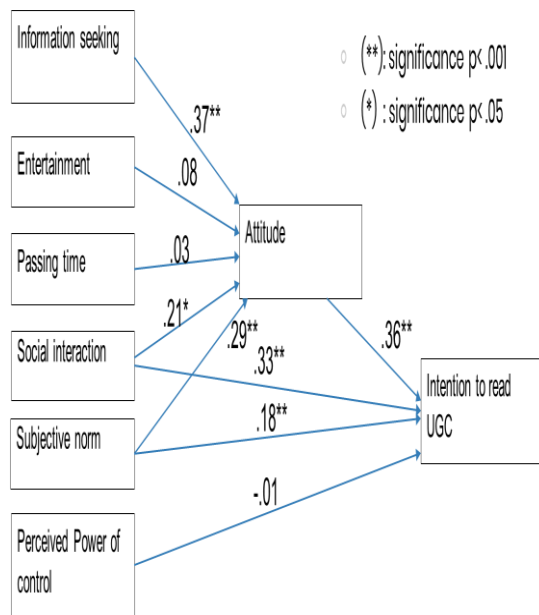


Figure 1: Results of the structural equation modeling  
 Source: Developed by the authors.

### 5. Discussion

In social media, little prior research focuses on the expected uses and gratification of reading user-generated content. The present study constructs a model to explain motivation and expectation as the affecting factors of the intention to read B-UGC. The model considers four expected uses and gratifications together with two affecting factors from TPB theory. Overall, the model is confirmed as significant with all the factors statistically substantiated. The key findings help to explore the benefits sought by media users and the determinants of their intention to read B-UGC.

Information-seeking, which is the gratification sought of cognitive needs, is the strongest impacting factor on attitude towards B-UGC. Hussain (2020) [48] put the discussion further to compare between gratification sought and gratification obtained among information professionals. He explained that people seek for information needs, but they may obtain destructed gratification in return. Research in other countries such as that of Muyingo (2017) reported similar findings that information gratification and social interaction are the most important motivations for using social media [61]. For social media in China, content gratification, which relates to information seeking, social gratification and hedonic gratification are proved to be important factors for using social media [62]. Many other previous researches examined three impacting factors of uses and gratification theory, in which the two factors of information-seeking and social interaction are found to have a significant relationship with social media usage, while entertainment does not have a similar impact [63]. The possible explanation that entertainment gratification is not significantly related to B-UGC on social media might be interpreted as people consuming UGC are not doing it for the purpose of seeking entertainment, and entertainment is a common additional product associated with the content; and it is a common practice of using social media in general.



Unlike traditional media, where passing time is a habit [64, 65], social media users normally express negative feelings towards their using too much time on social media, even though they consider it as a part of their ordinary life [63]. It explains why passing time would not be an influencing factor on attitude toward B-UGC. Subjective norm was found to have a significant effect on the use of UGC to make purchase decisions [66]. Especially if the social media users belong to a network or an online community, the impact of subjective norm is more positive, implying that group members have more tendency to consume the UGC created by network members [67].

Previous researches reported a similar result that perceived behavioral control did not predict behavior [68, 69]. Ajzen (1991) explained that the influencing strength of perceived power of control on behavior depends on the “illusions of control” [30], which is the tendency of people to believe that they were controlling the situation while in fact it occurred independently [70]. Therefore, perceived power of control is less likely to reflect the actual control accurately in the online environment [71].

## 6. Conclusion

Social media has a significant impact on how people find information, communicate, socialize and interact with each other. This research applies quantitative research methodology to describe the behavior of social media users. Based on the well-structured previous theories, this research has proposed a new framework to explain new media consumption. The model is tested by primary quantitative data and proved a good fit by structural equation modeling. The research findings are consistent with other previous studies.

### 6.1. Theoretical and managerial implications

The research model demonstrates that the TPB and uses and gratification are robust theories that can be incorporated to develop a

broader understanding of factors that influence user intention to read B-UGC. The research applies well-established theories into the new context of social media and focusing on specific content. This study enriched the understanding of online users and confirms the importance of providing information in the UGC and social interaction enhancement in social media. The finding about perceived power of control attribute is not consistent with previous research and will add into the debate over its effect on different social media usage. Unexpectedly, the entertainment and passing time factors do not predict users' attitude. These non-significant findings might be because of the users' belief about getting these outcomes from other users.

Managerial implication of this research is mainly in three key areas. Firstly, managers should focus on the useful information provided in B-UGC. It can be achieved by directing and facilitating social media users to add specific information to their contributed content. Secondly, media users expect B-UGC to facilitate their social interaction by providing interesting topics for social conversation and interest sharing. Finally, readers of B-UGC are likely to be affected by other people's opinion. In the context of social media, brand-related information online may contradict a brand's intended message and therefore would damage the marketing effort [72]. Therefore, brands should work with their customers to ensure that the B-UGC is in line with the intended message [72, 73]. Managers should find a suitable theme to communicate with their social media audience to direct and encourage the users' contribution, which helps to improve the gratification of other readers.

### 6.2. Limitation and future research

The model of the research has two major shortcomings. Firstly, the instrument is developed employing a self-reported approach in which all the responses are what the participants think, but not their actual action. The actual obtained benefits of reading B-UGC may be different. The use of a self-reporting technique

has some criticisms [74]. The respondents may not be sure or able to clearly explain why they chose to read what they read. Some people may assume or invent some reasonable explanation, or simply report the reasons which they have learned from others. Furthermore, it is problematic that respondents' answers are based on memory [75]. They may recall the reasons inaccurately and thus distort the study results.

The social-cultural context limitation is the second shortcoming of this research. Morley (2005) indicated that subcultural and social-economic differences are important in the way that individuals interpret their media experiences [76]. Therefore, future research should develop the theoretical framework based on the psychological characteristics and personality of the individual, as well as their sociological background. Future research is advised to overcome the above shortcomings.

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