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The Desire for Fame: An Extension of Uses and Gratifications Theory

Jian Raymond Rui & Michael A. Stefanone

Social network sites (SNSs) enable users to self-disclose to broad and anonymous audiences. Drawing on social cognitive theory (SCT) and the uses and gratifications (U&G) approach, this study investigates how reality television (RTV) cultivates desire for fame in its audience, which is operationalized as a human desire motivating nondirected self-disclosure (NDS) online, a technique seeking fame. Results from an online survey (N = 221) show that whether watching RTV with friends interacted with time spent viewing RTV to affect desire for fame, which in turn affected the use of SNSs to pursue fame. In addition, exhibitionism, a motive of SNS use for the purpose of fame, fully mediated the relationship between desire for fame and NDS. These results have implications for refining U&G and new media research.

Keywords: Fame Seeking; Human Desires; Reality Television; Social Network Sites; Uses and Gratifications

In 2009, an ordinary Chinese woman became famous overnight. Yufeng Luo shared an extensive collection of personal photos on her blog, where she exaggerated her physical attractiveness and intelligence (Gao, 2011). While her self-promotion behavior made her controversial, she soon found herself at the center of intense attention across China and was awarded with fame.

This story is a typical example of how ordinary people pursue widespread attention and fame in contemporary society. The Internet makes it relatively easy for individuals like Yufeng to pursue fame. Social network sites (SNSs) are particularly useful

Jian Raymond Rui (PhD, University at Buffalo, 2014) is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication, Lamar University. His research area is how new communication technology affects human communication and personal relationships. Michael A. Stefanone (PhD, Cornell University, 2004) is an Associate Professor in the Department of Communication, University at Buffalo, State University of New York. His research interest focuses on the social psychology of technology use. Correspondence to: Jian Raymond Rui, P. O. Box 10050, Lamar University, Beaumont, TX, 77710, USA. E-mail: raymond.rui@lamar.edu

tools for this purpose as they create new opportunities for ordinary people to compete for others' attention. Traditionally, individuals were limited to passive media consumption and rarely able to contribute to mass media production. Nowadays, SNSs have fundamentally transformed our role from media *consumers* to media *producers*. Anyone with Internet access can easily create and share text, photos, and videos with other users around the world. By creating and sharing media content to massive audiences through a variety of self-disclosive practices, ordinary people actively compete for public attention.

In contrast to self-disclosure at dyadic levels, SNS users have the ability to share volumes of personal information with massive and often anonymous audiences (hereafter nondirected self-disclosure [NDS]). The result is heightened exposure across social networks that yields increased attention to the individuals sharing information. Recent research highlights how SNSs and personal blogs are employed specifically for this purpose (Hollenbaugh, 2010; Stefanone & Lackaff, 2009). However, systematic investigations into the use of SNSs for NDS to seek fame are still lacking.

The uses and gratifications (U&G) approach provides a theoretical framework to study motivations for media use (Blumler, Katz, & Gurevitch, 1974). U&G conceptualizes media use as a means to satisfy human needs. In the present study, we argue that desire for fame should motivate SNS use for fame-seeking behavior.

However, two gaps are identified in extant U&G scholarship. First, the process of the human needs/desires formation remains unclear across the literature in this theoretical framework. Prior work only vaguely contends that desires are innate and learned products, shaped by genetics as well as a range of cultural, personal, and social factors (Reiss, 2000). This absence of evidence addressing the development of specific needs and desires is particularly evident within U&G scholarship focusing on new media (Ruggiero, 2000).

We employ social cognitive theory (SCT) to explain the social origins of desire for fame. SCT argues that human behavior is a function of environmental stimuli and personal factors (Bandura, 2001). Although mediated characters are models for behavior, the context of media consumption can moderate media effects (Roberts, 2004; Southwell & Yzer, 2007). In this study, we suggest reality television programming (RTV) provides a viable context to explore the relationship between traditional media use and the development of desire for fame. Specifically, RTV programming features ordinary individuals who engage in NDS and rewards those individuals with fame, thereby equating fame with success (Stefanone & Lackaff, 2009). This value is nurtured in heavy RTV viewers, but this modeling effect should depend on the social context of RTV consumption.

Another gap in extant U&G research is that the typology of motives for new media use is still based largely on the characteristics of traditional mass media (Sundar & Limperos, 2013). While motives for media use largely depend on users' needs/desires, users' expectations of the gratifications they will obtain from media consumption also play an important role in shaping their motives (Katz, Haas, & Gurevitch, 1973). Expectations for media gratifications are closely related to technological affordances of media (Sundar & Limperos, 2013). As SNSs provide vastly different features from

traditional mass media, novel motives and gratification opportunities likely exist. Therefore, this study examines psychological motivations for and behavior related to fame seeking (i.e., NDSD), which we term *exhibitionism*. Exhibitionism is proposed as a novel motive for SNS use.

The overarching goal of this study is to explicate the relationship between RTV consumption and NDSD operationalized as an attention-seeking technique, through desire for fame and exhibitionism. Besides the theoretical contributions that further the U&G approach, this study also aims to improve the general public's literacy of traditional and Internet-based media. The literature review is structured as follows. We begin by conceptualizing desire for fame within the theoretical framework of U&G, followed by presenting the relationship between RTV consumption and desire for fame from the perspective of SCT. Next, we propose that exploring novel gratifications that new communication technology may provide is a valuable contribution to the refinement of U&G theory. We then explicate and operationalize fame-seeking behavior online and leverage U&G to explain fame-seeking behavior on SNSs.

U&G and Desire for Fame

U&G provides a functional approach to media use. A core assumption of U&G is that audiences are aware of their needs and these needs motivate media choices for need gratification. This process of media use works as follows: "(1) the social and psychological origins of (2) needs, which generate (3) expectations of (4) the mass media or other sources, which lead to (5) differential patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in (6) need gratifications and (7) other consequences, perhaps mostly unintended ones" (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973, p. 510). Therefore, U&G conceptualizes media use as a means of satisfying individual needs.

This theoretical framework suggests that *need* is core to predicting media use. Later work shows that *desire* also predicts media consumption because individuals use media to satisfy their desires (Reiss & Wiltz, 2004). There are slight differences between these two concepts. While *need* is fundamental to human survival, *desire* refers to excessive satisfaction of human needs (Evans & Yamaguchi, 2009). For example, food is a human *need*, but we may *desire* extravagant banquets. All humans need some minimum level of attention to maintain self-esteem (Crocker, 2002), but excessive attention from large and anonymous audiences certainly is not necessary for human survival. Instead, cultivating large audiences is part of the fame-seeking process associated with the pursuit of celebrity status (Celedonia & Williams, 2006; Gountas, Gountas, Reeves, & Moran, 2012). Hence, fame is most appropriately conceptualized as a desire.

However, prior U&G research uses these two terms interchangeably (Ruggiero, 2000) because both need and desire motivate media use. We thus follow this research and argue that U&G is well suited to explain the relationship between desire for fame and SNS use.

The Pursuit of Fame

Historically, achieving celebrity status requires exceptional attributes (Marshall, 1997). Celebrities in ancient Greece embodied attributes like bravery or wisdom. These exceptional attributes were the basis of their fame.

However, since the nineteenth century, anyone attracting wide public attention is recognized as a celebrity (Marshall, 1997). Although this makes the pursuit of fame less meaningful (Celedonia & Williams, 2006), baseless success still drives individuals to invest in acquiring fame, often at the cost of their careers and relationships. In addition, although fame can boost self-esteem, this confirmation is contingent on evaluations of mass audiences and so is unstable (Estes, 1998). Heavy reliance on public interest results in fluctuations of self-worth and psychological vulnerability (Crocker, 2002).

Despite these risks, recent evidence shows a trend of increased desire for fame among younger individuals. A survey conducted in the United Kingdom shows that 16% of children between 16 and 19 years old believed they would be famous, and 11% planned to stop formal education in pursuit of fame (UK's Learning and Skills Council, 2006). Similar findings have also been reported in the popular press and academic research (Clark, 2009; Maltby, 2010; Smith, 2013). Many reasons account for this shift. In the present study, we explain the formation of desire for fame from the perspective of mass media use.

Media-Cultivated Desire for Fame

The process behind the formation of human needs/desires is unclear, which is a major criticism of U&G scholarship (Ruggiero, 2000). Prior work suggests that genes and the social environment can shape human desires (Reiss, 2000). We argue that desire is a product of social and cultural learning. For example, direct experiences can cause physiological arousal and reinforce attitudes that shape desires (Moses, Coon, & Wusinich, 2000). Yet direct experience is not the only path of social and cultural learning. The majority of learning is completed through vicarious experiences (Bandura, 2001). Because social, cultural, and personal environments shape human desires and behavior is a means to satisfy those desires (Reiss, 2000), we leverage SCT to explain how the desire for fame is shaped by mass media consumption.

SCT explains human functioning in terms of triadic reciprocal determinism in which behavioral, environmental, and personal factors all affect and are affected by each other (Bandura, 2001). Environmental stimuli include the social context that influences perceptions and actions. Personal factors encompass cognitive, biological, affective, and other internal conditions that affect perceptions and behavior. Bandura (2001) argued that human behavior creates and is created by internal factors and stimuli in the external environment.

Among all environmental stimuli, media are particularly important and influential vehicles of learning and socialization. Communication scholarship shows that media can exert direct effects on audiences, and repeated exposure to media content can

increase its effect on individuals. For example, heavy mass media consumers form perceptions of the world that are consistent with media content (Gerbner, 1998). Bandura (2001) explained that this effect is the result of observational learning. Media demonstrate not only how to perform certain behavior but also model the outcomes associated with those behaviors. Not surprisingly, when positive outcomes are modeled, audiences are further encouraged to engage in those behaviors.

However, human behavior is far from simple imitation and replication (Bandura, 2001). Instead, the social context of media consumption can moderate the effect of media on human behavior (Roberts, 2004; Southwell & Yzer, 2007). Denham (2004) contended that the effect of a particular program is intensified when viewed simultaneously by homogeneous groups. For instance, sports-related television programming often reflects masculine norms that are intensified when groups of males watch that programming together because males endorse these norms. This finding is consistent with SCT's contention that observational learning is influenced by a range of external and internal stimuli (Bandura, 2001).

Directly related to the current study, the spectrum of RTV programming portrays a culture that equates fame to personal success (Stefanone & Lackaff, 2009). RTV programming generally consists of ordinary individuals exposing their private thoughts and feelings to large, anonymous audiences (i.e., NDSD). In return, participants on the show are rewarded with fame. Consistent with SCT, heavy RTV viewers should be more likely to internalize the value system that equates NDSD with fame and success. Therefore, these viewers should be more likely to develop a strong desire for fame. However, this relationship also depends on the context in which RTV consumption occurs. Stefanone and Lackaff (2009) found that participants who watched RTV with their friends were significantly more likely to self-disclose online. They argue that the effects are compounded because RTV's primary audience is comprised of young people who identify strongly with a culture of celebrity and fame seeking. Thus, watching RTV with friends reinforces and normalizes NDSD (Stefanone & Lackaff, 2009). This finding is consistent with Denham (2004), who argued that watching television programming with homogenous groups that endorse the value of that particular programming can intensify media effect. Thus, we propose the following:

H1: Watching RTV with friends moderates the relationship between time spent viewing RTV and desire for fame.

The Motive of SNS Use: Fame Seeking

Motives for SNS use include relationship initiation (Tosun, 2012), relationship maintenance and development (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Tosun, 2012), social interactions (Barker, 2009; Smock, Ellison, Lampe, & Wohn, 2011), information seeking (Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009), entertainment (Park et al., 2009; Smock et al., 2011), escapism (Smock et al., 2011), self-status seeking (Park et al., 2009), and professional development (Smock et al., 2011).

While this research explains why individuals use SNSs, these motives are similar across most media platforms. For instance, information seeking was found in news consumption (Vincent & Basil, 1997), entertainment and social interactions in TV viewing (Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2007), and relationship development and maintenance in cell-phone use (Wei & Lo, 2006). Individuals may exhibit similar motives when using different media because need and desire, which motivate media use, are relatively stable across different media. However, individuals vary their media use based on what *gratifications* they expect media can provide (Katz et al., 1973). Media gratifications are related to media characteristics, including media content, the typical context of media consumption, and technological attributes (Katz et al., 1973). These characteristics enable media to provide different gratifications. Therefore, the vastly different technological attributes between traditional mass media and new media suggest that new media users likely exhibit unique motives.

Recent scholarship also supports this argument. Ruggiero (2000) proposed that exploring novel gratifications of new media should start with three attributes unique to new media: interactivity, demassification, and asynchronicity. Sundar and Limperos (2013) argued that there are four general categories of technology-related gratifications: modality, agency, interactivity, and navigability. Empirical research also shows that new technology generates new gratifications and new motives of media use. For example, cell phones are portable and enable users to communicate without geographic and temporal restrictions. Thus, mobility and accessibility are two new dimensions of cell-phone gratifications (Wei & Lo, 2006). Similarly, SNSs are depositories for user-generated media content, resulting in self-expression and self-actualization as motives of SNS use (Shao, 2009). Therefore, we argue that SNS users possibly exhibit different motives because different technological affordances of these new media result in different gratifications.

Note that we do not argue for a technological deterministic approach. Human needs and desires are inherent and independent of media characteristics. However, different technological affordances of media platforms provide opportunities to satisfy different needs and desires. As a consequence, individuals develop different expectations for media in terms of need satisfaction, which results in different motives for media use. In other words, media do not determine but either facilitate or restrict the satisfaction of certain needs, depending on technological affordances these media provide. Next, we discuss how technological affordances of SNSs enable users to seek fame through NDSD.

Exhibitionism as a New Motive of SNS Use

Recall that seeking public attention is synonymous with pursuit of fame. At least two technological affordances of SNSs enable users to seek attention from mass audiences, facilitating the pursuit of fame. First, SNSs enable users to build large social networks, which is analogous to increasing audience size. Thus, SNS users can cultivate large audiences from whom wide public attention can be solicited. Second, it has never been

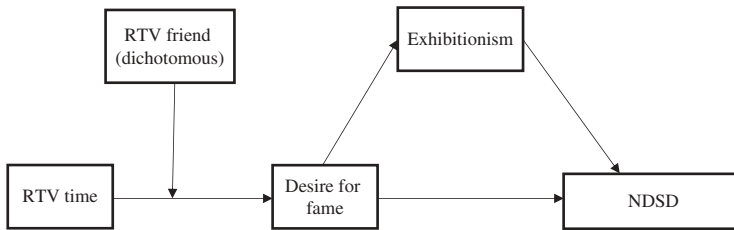


Figure 1 The path model predicting NDSD

easier to share text, photos and videos. This technological affordance thus reduces the cost of self-promotion to large audiences.

These technological affordances make NDSD possible, specifically in the form of excessive sharing of text, photos, and videos to large anonymous audiences (Stefanone & Lackaff, 2009). By engaging in NDSD, individuals publicly share personal information that should have been kept secret. This behavior involves risks of privacy violation (Petronio, 2002), but more public attention can be solicited. In the present study, fame-seeking behavior is conceptualized as behavior that sacrifices personal privacy in exchange for the opportunity to gain attention from others, termed as NDSD, and operationalized as the number of photos and videos posted and the frequency of updating text-based statuses.

NDSD is not unique to SNSs. Hollenbaugh (2010) found exhibitionism—the tendency to create and share online content (e.g., blogs) because individuals want to gain fame—is a common motivation for blogging. The tendency toward exhibitionism translates into large amounts of blog writing (Hollenbaugh, 2010).

In addition, U&G argues both direct and indirect relationships between human needs and media use. Human needs can directly predict actual media-use behavior (Elliott & Quattlebaum, 1979) or function as the seeds of the motive for media use, which in turn influences actual media use (Blumler et al., 1974; Katz et al., 1973). As desire functions the same as need, we expect the same logic for desire for fame. Based on this evidence, desire for fame should be positively related to the exhibitionism and NDSD. In addition, as exhibitionism should be positively related to NDSD, at least part of the relationship between desire for fame and NDSD should be attributed to exhibitionism. Thus, we propose the following:

H2: Exhibitionism mediates the relationship between desire for fame and NDSD.

Taken together, we propose a moderated mediation model, as Figure 1 shows.

METHOD

Sample

An online survey was conducted in a large Northeastern University. Undergraduate students were the target population because they represent the heaviest SNS users and

are the target audience for RTV. Facebook was chosen to be the example of SNS studied in the present study. Informed consent was obtained from participants, and all procedures were approved by an Institutional Review Board.

A total of 221 complete responses were collected. Over half of the sample was female ($n = 126$; 57%). There were 42 freshmen (19%), 78 sophomores (35.3%), 66 juniors (29.9%), and 32 seniors (14.5%). The majority of participants identified themselves as Caucasian (67.9%), followed by Asians (17.6%), African Americans (9.5%), Hispanic (5%), and Native Americans (about 1.8%).

Measures

Following Stefanone and Lackaff (2009), RTV viewing was measured by two questions assessing how many hours per day and days per week participants spend watching RTV. Participants were provided with a list of the 10 most popular RTV shows at the time when the study was conducted, as examples to help answer this question. Responses to these two questions were multiplied to create the *time spent viewing RTV* variable ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 6.69$).

Next, participants were asked to indicate *whether they watch RTV with any friends*. This variable was coded dichotomously. One hundred and ten participants reported watching RTV without friends, whereas 111 watched with friends.

Desire for fame was measured with items from Maltby's (2010) 5-point Likert scale accessing interest in fame. The original scale included six dimensions: intensity (the strength of yearning for fame), vulnerability (seeking fame to overcome self-esteem issues), celebrity lifestyle (craving for celebrity lifestyle), drive (the determination to pursue fame), suitability (possessing talent appropriate for being famous), and altruism (fame as a means to help others). However, vulnerability and altruism describe reasons for fame pursuit, and suitability represents one's belief in the chance of becoming famous. These dimensions do not define desire for fame, so they were excluded. Thirteen items with the highest loadings were selected from three remaining dimensions to measure participants' desire for fame ($M = 1.97$, $SD = 0.81$, Cronbach's $\alpha = .92$).

Exhibitionism was measured by a three-item (5-point) Likert scale. We rewrote Hollenbaugh's (2010) scale addressing blogs as a means for seeking attention to fit in Facebook, the context of the current study ($M = 2.15$, $SD = 0.93$, Cronbach's $\alpha = .80$).

NDS was operationalized as the number of photos and videos posted and the frequency of updating text-based statuses. Participants were asked the following: "How many photos/videos have you posted on Facebook" (photo: $M = 518.67$, $SD = 623.04$; video: $M = 5.83$, $SD = 14.64$). They were also asked to indicate the frequency of updating Facebook status on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = once a month or less, 2 = a few times per month, 3 = once per week, 4 = several times per week, 5 = once a day, 6 = many times per day; $M = 2.25$, $SD = 1.46$). Although it was assessed by single-item measures, Bergkvist and Rossiter (2007) argued that single-item measures produce similar reliability and predictive validity to multiple-item measures when they reference singular and precise constructs.

Data Analysis Strategy

Path analysis

By using the Lavaan package in R 3.1.1, we conducted path analyses on the three models predicting the number of photos and videos posted and the frequency of updating Facebook statuses. We chose structural equation modeling (SEM) because SEM enables researchers to test a complex process. As mentioned earlier, we proposed a moderated mediation model. Thus, SEM serves the purpose of our study well.

Normal distribution is an assumption of SEM (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012), but two of the three endogenous variables in our models are skewed. Usually data transformation is recommended to correct for normality. However, Tabachnick and Fidell (2012) argued that some variables are not expected to be normally distributed like substance use. In this study, large variances are expected because some SNS users may share many photos and videos for self-promotion purposes.

When variables are not expected to be normally distributed, Tabachnick and Fidell (2012) recommended more robust estimation methods for SEM. We chose the Yuan-Bentler test for our path analysis because it better addresses skewed data and small sample sizes (Bentler & Yuan, 1998).

We first conducted goodness-of-fit tests, demonstrated by a nonsignificant χ^2 goodness-of-fit statistic, χ^2/df ratios of less than 5, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) less than .06, comparative fit index (CFI) greater than .95, and standardized root mean square (SRMR) less than .08 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012). Next, in order to test H1, path analysis with multiple group comparison was conducted to assess the statistical significance of each link in every model with p values (Beaujean, 2014). Specifically, we reported results of path models among participants that watched RTV with and without friends. If the relationship between RTV viewing time and desire for fame is different, moderation relationship can be claimed.

Mediation analysis

We also employed Hayes (2013) to test the proposed mediation relationships (H2). NDSD was used as the dependent variable, desire for fame as the independent variable, and exhibitionism as the mediator. The model was estimated for 1,000 bootstrapped samples. The 95% confidence interval (CI) of the indirect effect of desire for fame on NDSD via exhibitionism was calculated. If zero was not included in the 95% CI, the indirect effect was significant and the mediation relationship could be claimed.

Hayes (2013) employed bootstrapping to test the mediation relationship, which does not require normally distributed data. Thus, in order to control for Type II error, data transformation was not performed to correct for normality (Russell & Dean, 2000).

RESULTS

Path Analysis

The number of photos posted

Table 1 summarizes correlations between variables used in the analyses. The model predicting the number of photos posted demonstrated an acceptable fit ($\chi^2 = 5.93$, $\chi^2/df = 1.48$, $p < .20$, RMSEA = .066, CFI = .96, SRMR = .04). Among participants who watched RTV *without friends*, RTV viewing time was not significantly related to desire for fame ($B = 0.01$, $p < .53$). Desire for fame was significantly related to exhibitionism ($B = 0.42$, $p < .001$), but not to the number of photos posted ($B = -74.23$, $p < .34$). Exhibitionism was significantly related to the number of photos posted ($B = 147.11$, $p < .02$).

Among participants who watched RTV *with friends*, RTV time was significantly associated with desire for fame ($B = 0.04$, $p < .001$). Desire for fame was significantly related to exhibitionism ($B = 0.24$, $p < .02$), but not to the number of photos posted ($B = -120.93$, $p < .072$). Exhibitionism was significantly associated with the number of photos posted ($B = 271.14$, $p < .001$, see Table 2).

The number of videos posted

The model demonstrated a good fit ($\chi^2 = 1.15$, $\chi^2/df = .29$, $p < .89$, RMSEA = 0, CFI = 1, SRMR = .013). Among participants who watched RTV *without friends*, the only significant link was from desire for fame to exhibitionism ($B = 0.42$, $p < .001$).

Among participants who watched RTV *with friends*, time spent viewing RTV was significantly related to desire for fame ($B = 0.04$, $p < .001$). Desire for fame was significantly associated with exhibitionism ($B = 0.24$, $p < .02$), but not to the number of videos posted ($B = -1.38$, $p < .11$). Exhibitionism was significantly associated with the number of videos posted ($B = 1.67$, $p < .032$, see Table 3).

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics and Zero-Order Correlations for Variables: Means (Standard Deviations) Presented Along the Diagonal

	RTV time	Desire for fame	Exhibitionism	Photo	Video	Status
RTV time	3.89 (6.69)	.27**	.07	.16*	-.01	.01
Desire for fame		1.97 (0.81)	.27**	-.04	-.04	.07
Exhibitionism			2.15 (0.93)	.29**	-.02	.34**
Photo				518.67 (623.04)	.13	.15*
Video					5.83 (14.64)	-.01
Status						2.25 (1.46)

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 2 The Path Model Predicting the Number of Photos Posted

	Watching RTV without friends	Watching RTV with friends
RTV time→desire for fame	0.01	0.04***
Desire for fame→exhibitionism	0.42***	0.24*
Exhibitionism→photo posting	147.11*	271.14***
Desire for fame→photo posting	-74.23	-120.93

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 3 The Path Model Predicting the Number of Videos Posted

	Watching RTV without friends	Watching RTV with friends
RTV time→desire for fame	0.01	0.04***
Desire for fame→exhibitionism	0.42***	0.24*
Exhibitionism→video posting	-2.34	1.67*
Desire for fame→video posting	0.75	-1.38

* $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

The frequency of updating Facebook status

The model demonstrated a good fit ($\chi^2 = .35$, $\chi^2/df = .09$, $p < .99$, RMSEA = 0, CFI = 1, SRMR = .01). Time spent viewing RTV was only significantly related to desire for fame among participants who watched RTV *with* friends ($B = 0.04$, $p < .001$). In both groups, desire for fame was significantly related to exhibitionism (without friends: $B = 0.42$, $p < .001$; with friends: $B = 0.24$, $p < .02$) but not to the frequency of updating Facebook status. Besides, exhibitionism was significantly associated with the frequency of updating Facebook status in both groups (without friends: $B = 0.59$, $p < .001$; with friends: $B = 0.51$, $p < .001$, see Table 4).

In summary, results consistently show that the relationship between time spent viewing RTV and desire for fame was only significant among participants who watched RTV with friends. Thus, H1 was supported.

Table 4 The Path Model Predicting the Frequency of Updating Facebook Status

	Watching RTV without friends	Watching RTV with friends
RTV time→desire for fame	0.01	0.04***
Desire for fame→exhibitionism	0.42***	0.24*
Exhibitionism→status updating	0.59***	0.51***
Desire for fame→status updating	-0.21	0.08

* $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

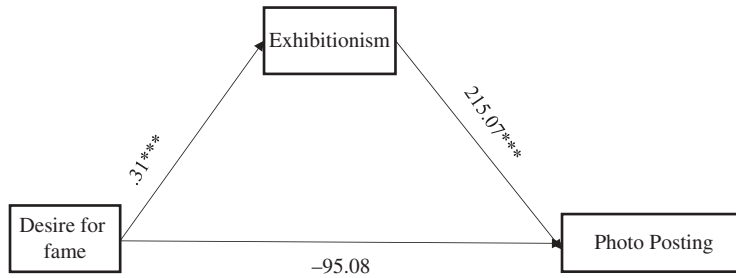


Figure 2 The mediation model predicting the number of photos posted. Note: *** $p < .001$.

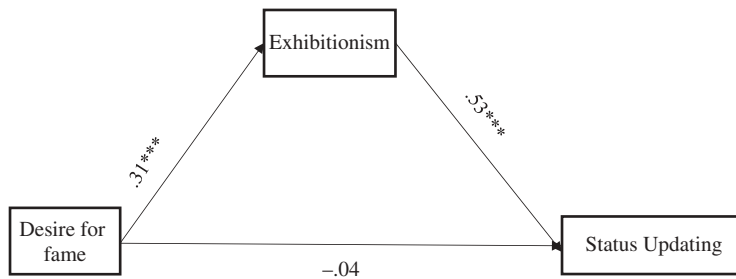


Figure 3 The mediation model predicting the frequency of updating Facebook statuses. Note: *** $p < .001$.

Mediation Analysis

A full mediation was found for the number of photos posted and the frequency of updating status, as the direct effect of desire for fame on the number of photos posted ($B = -95.08$; 95% CI: $[-195.90, 5.74]$; $p < .06$) and on the frequency of updating status ($B = -0.04$; 95% CI: $[-.27, .20]$; $p < .77$) was not significant, but the indirect effect via exhibitionism on photo sharing ($B = 67.27$; 95% CI: $[28.74, 114.87]$, see Figure 2) or status updating ($B = 0.17$; 95% CI: $[0.09, 0.28]$, see Figure 3) was significant. However, neither the direct effect of desire for fame on the number of videos posted ($B = -.62$; 95% CI: $[-3.12, 1.87]$; $p < .62$) nor the indirect effect via exhibitionism ($B = -0.03$; 95% CI: $[-1.09, .52]$) was significant (see Figure 4). Therefore, H2 was partially supported.

DISCUSSION

SNSs enable individuals to build large networks and to disclose volumes of information to their audiences. This affords ordinary users opportunities to pursue fame on these sites. Our research addresses this novel use of SNSs. We first investigated the social-contextual factors that shape desire for fame, specifically viewing RTV programming with friends. In addition, we examined the psychological motivation for using SNSs to pursue fame. Together, the results presented herein refine U&G by incorporating human desire into the framework, explaining the social origin of desire

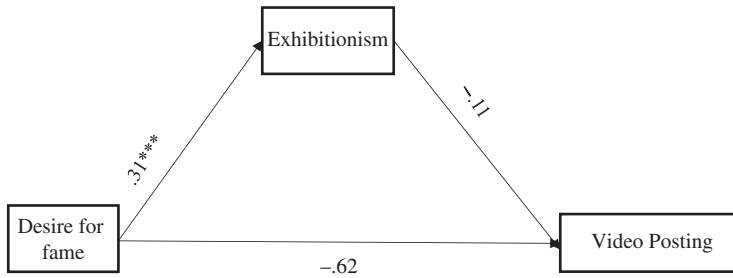


Figure 4 The mediation model predicting the number of videos posted. Note: *** $p < .001$.

and demonstrating how human desire and affordances of new communication technology combine to motivate novel uses of these popular communication platforms. Our findings also provide practical implications for improving the general public's media literacy.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Our research started by leveraging SCT to investigate how RTV consumption relates to desire for fame. We found whether individuals watched RTV with friends moderated the relationship between time of RTV viewing and desire for fame. Specifically, our findings consistently show this relationship was only significant among participants who watched RTV with friends. These results first demonstrate that the RTV effect depends on the social context where RTV viewing occurs. The primary audience of RTV is young people who exhibit stronger identification with a culture of celebrity. Therefore, when groups of friends view RTV together, their interpersonal conversations about the television content likely reinforce the value system and behaviors those television programs endorse. Hence, our results support previous research that shows that covieing with audiences that endorse the value of certain media programming reinforces media effect on human behaviors (Denham, 2004; Stefanone & Lackaff, 2009). Furthermore, the current research extends these findings by showing that these effects are not limited to behavior but ultimately stimulate individual viewers' desire.

However, cautions are needed to interpret this finding. First, although the relationship between RTV viewing and desire for fame was significant among participants who watched RTV with friends, the effect size was small (see Tables 2–4). Therefore, the relationship between RTV viewing and desire for fame may not be as strong as the general public imagined. Recall that desire is a product of the social and cultural environment, but RTV is only one part of this large environment. Individuals may develop desire for fame from other sources. This suggests that future research should employ communication multiplexity to explicate the unique effect of RTV consumption on desire for fame. Controlling other communication channels that contribute to desire for fame may attenuate the effect we observed in the present study, or even make the effect nonsignificant.

Second, we found that coviewing with audiences that endorse the culture of celebrity could strengthen the RTV effect. This is because the primary audience of RTV is already strongly identified with the value that RTV programming endorses. Thus, the impact of the coviewing context on desire for fame is compounded with audience characteristics. Hence, future research should investigate the content of interpersonal discussions that take place while watching RTV. If the coviewing audience has strong opinions against the value that RTV endorses, interpersonal discussions about RTV may be negative. Consequently, individuals who watch RTV with these friends may exhibit lower levels of desire for fame. This generates important implications to media effect research. As the multiple-step flow model of media effects shows, interpersonal communication has a great impact on media effect. Many prior studies focus on the frequency of interpersonal communication. Yet, the content of those interactions plays a more important role in influencing media effect, which suggests an important direction for future research.

In addition, the cross-sectional nature of the present study means a causal relationship cannot be established. It is also possible that individuals with heightened desire for fame spent more time watching RTV. However, results of multiple group comparison support the moderating role of whether to view RTV with friends for the relationship between RTV viewing time and desire for fame. Regardless, future research should conduct longitudinal study and employ a media diary to establish causal relationship between RTV consumption, desire for fame, and subsequent SNS-use behaviors.

The second goal of this study was to test whether SNS users exhibit novel motives for using these sites. We propose that technological affordances of SNSs encourage a new motive of SNS use: exhibitionism. Results show that exhibitionism fully mediated the relationship between desire for fame and NDSD in the form of posting photos and updating Facebook statuses. These behaviors are not targeted at specific individuals but broadcast across the entire network. Thus, those who desire fame and use SNSs to pursue fame can receive more attention by engaging in these behaviors. Furthermore, the full mediation relationship suggests that the relationship between human desires and media use should be attributed to the motive for media use. In other words, compared to desires, motives for media use may have a greater impact on use behaviors.

This argument is consistent with the functional approach of U&G to media use. As discussed earlier, U&G describes media use as a means to satisfy human need/desire. In other words, media consumption is only one of many possible approaches to need/desire satisfaction. Hence, there is no necessary relationship between needs/desires and media-use behavior. For example, if Katie has a need for social interaction, she is not limited to using SNS; calling friends also satisfies her need. Therefore, if there is a relationship between need/desire and media use, it should be attributed to the motive of media use. Individuals must purposefully use certain media to satisfy their needs and desires. This develops prior U&G research, which is criticized for unclear explanations regarding need/desire and motive (Ruggiero, 2000). By suggesting

different functions of need/desire and media-use motive, we bridged a gap in extant U&G literature.

The mediation relationship was not significant for sharing videos. We found neither desire for fame nor exhibitionism was significantly associated with the number of videos posted (see Figure 4). However, results of the path model show that desire for fame was significantly related to exhibitionism and exhibitionism was significantly related to the number of videos posted only among participants watching RTV *with* friends (see Table 3). Therefore, perhaps the nonsignificant relationship between exhibitionism and the number of videos posted among participants watching RTV *without* friends accounts for the nonsignificant mediation relationship in the *full* sample.

LIMITATIONS

This study presents the following limitations. First, Facebook may not be the best venue for the purpose of the present study because individuals use it primarily for relationship development and maintenance. Perhaps those Web sites that are primarily used for sharing self-generated media content, like Youtube, Flickr, and Tumblr, are more appropriate venues for researching fame-seeking behavior on SNSs.

Second, our sample size is relatively small ($N = 221$), and some of our variables are skewed. This violates the assumptions of SEM. However, we employed the Yuan-Bentler test to address these issues. In addition, the ratio between the sample size of SEM analysis and the number of free parameters should be at least 10:1 (Kline, 2011). In the present study, the number of free parameters is 11, so the minimum requirement for sample size was met. Regardless, a larger sample could provide more robust test.

Next, our measure of coviewing of RTV programming is dichotomous. It is possible that individuals may watch some RTV programs with friends while watching other programs alone. Therefore, measuring this variable dichotomously may undermine the variances of RTV coviewing. Besides, certain types of RTV programming may be more likely to heighten desire for fame and to facilitate NDS than other types. Furthermore, the setting in which individuals watch RTV can also have an impact. For example, watching RTV in a noisy environment may attenuate media effects. Future research should address these limitations by using media diaries to provide more knowledge about patterns of RTV coviewing.

In addition, we conceptualized NDS as behaviors that trade personal privacy for public attention and operationalized those behaviors as the number of photos and videos shared, as well as the frequency of Facebook status updates. However, there may be more attention-seeking strategies associated with the interactive nature of SNSs. Future research should conduct systematic investigations into the relationship between technological affordances of SNSs and seeking attention and explore other strategies that serve this purpose.

The biggest limitation is the cross-sectional design of the present study, which prevents us from making causal arguments. Although the moderation relationship supports our argument, more rigorous method is needed. Furthermore, as a preliminary attempt to investigate the role of the coviewing context in mass media effect, we only focused on whether coviewing happened but did not take the content of coviewing conversation into account. However, the valence of the conversation about media can moderate media effect. Therefore, based on these concerns, future research should employ a media diary, which enables researchers to better capture the dynamics by which media and the coviewing context combine to influence human desire.

Theoretical Implications

We found that coviewing moderates the impact of media exposure. We speculate the reason is that coviewing triggers discussions about media content and ultimately reinforces the modeled behavior. This result highlights the importance of interpersonal communication to media effects. Therefore, future research should take an ecological perspective to study media effects by examining how media use and interpersonal communication interact to affect individuals.

In addition, we generate empirical evidence that shows new communication technology provides potential opportunity for new motives and novel gratifications due to their technological affordances. We do not advocate technological determinism because technological affordances only provide potential opportunity to seek new gratifications. Whether individuals actually use certain media to seek these gratifications depends on their motives. Yet, focusing on unique technological features of new media provides a promising approach to understanding how new media may satisfy additional evolving human needs and desires. For instance, although traditional communication methods and SNSs can both help relationship maintenance, SNSs reduce the cost of maintenance. Traditionally, if Amy wants to express simple wishes to her friend living thousands of miles away, she has to take time to write a letter and mail it. Nowadays, SNSs enable Amy to finish the entire process in a minute by writing a comment on her friend's profile page. The increased efficiency of relationship maintenance that SNSs enable makes individuals likely to maintain a much larger network than before. However, mail may be more effective to develop close, meaningful relationships because it requires individuals to make more effort to maintain relationships, for example, spending time writing a good letter. This heightened level of effort signals the sender's true concern over the recipient, which can strengthen their relationship. Hence, traditional communication methods may enable individuals to keep a small but strong-tie network, but those efficient, low-cost techniques that SNSs enable may allow individuals to keep a large weak-tie network, which can be suitable for maintaining professional relationships. This speculation provides an example about how traditional and new media are similar in fulfilling basic human needs but different in satisfying more nuanced needs, which is not

covered in the classical U&G literature. Therefore, future research should investigate how novel technological affordance may contribute to new motive and behavior of new media use.

Practical Implications

These results may improve the general public's knowledge of traditional and Internet-based new media. For instance, as argued earlier, although the general public tends to attribute heightened desire for fame to RTV consumption, our results show that the relationship between RTV consumption and desire for fame was small and only significant among those watching RTV with friends. Therefore, the impact of RTV may not be as strong as imagined. These findings enable the general public to understand mass media and new technology better and to critically analyze the role that these media play in our society.

Future Directions

This study suggests multiple directions for future research. First, our conceptualization of fame-seeking strategies is based on the assumption that seeking fame presents a tension with privacy management. However, there may be other fame-seeking strategies that are not related to privacy management. For example, fame seekers may intentionally use profanity or share inappropriate media content to solicit public attention.

Second, we used college students as our sample. However, teenagers in middle school and high school may be better for studying RTV viewing as well as seeking public attention and celebrity status. Future research should replicate our study in a sample of younger population.

In addition, as argued above, future research should conduct longitudinal research to make causal predictions about how coviewing interactions shape the effect of RTV viewing. Besides, a media diary should be employed to generate more understanding of RTV coviewing, including the content of coviewing conversations and what specific television shows are watched with/without friends. Future research can also analyze the specific RTV shows and examine which types of RTV are more likely to heighten individual desire for fame and to facilitate NDSD.

Finally, there are still many questions about the outcomes associated with conspicuous fame-seeking behavior, such as their effects on self-presentation, social capital, and psychological well-being.

CONCLUSION

Our study presents a preliminary investigation into one novel use of SNSs: fame pursuit. We found that coviewing moderated the relationship between time spent viewing RTV and desire for fame. In addition, we proposed exhibitionism as a novel motive of SNS use for the pursuit of fame and identified NDSD as a strategy to solicit

public attention and to seek fame. Results show that exhibitionism fully mediated the relationship between desire for fame and NDS. Taken together, our study establishes a connection between traditional mass media consumption and new media use and explicates that new media use is a result of psychological and social factors.

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