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Full Length Research Paper

Communicating in the multichannel age: Interpersonal communication motivation, interaction involvement and channel affinity

Shaojing Sun[1]*, Gwen Hullman[2] and Ying Wang[3]

[1]School of Journalism, Fudan University Shanghai, 200433. P. R. China.
[2]University of Nevada, Reno, Division of Communication Studies, Mail Stop 0229, Reno NV 89557-0229. USA.
[3]Department of Marketing Youngstown State University Ohio USA.

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Motivation for communication, interaction involvement, and channel affinity were examined to assess their influence on channel choice. Participants (N = 230) completed a self-report survey that assessed their main reasons for using interpersonal communication. In addition, participants identified frequency of use, level of interaction involvement, and channel affinity for face-to-face, phone, email, and text messaging. The vast majority of participants used face-to-face and phone channels often, email and text messaging regularly, and instant messaging and chat rooms infrequently. Channel affinity was a significant predictor of use for face-to-face, phone, email, and text messaging. Communication motivated by social feeling and control predicted face-to-face channel use. Communication motivated by pleasure and escape, however, significantly predicted interaction involvement for face-to-face and phone channels. In addition, communication motivated by social feeling significantly predicted interaction involvement for email use, and communicating for control significantly predicted interaction involvement for text messaging Interaction involvement was not a significant predictor of channel use.

Key words: Interaction involvement, communication motives, channel affinity, channel use.

INTRODUCTION

New technologies ushered in a multichannel communication age. In addition, to face-to-face communication, people can use phone, text messaging, email, and instant messaging. Such an expansion provides the freedom to select from among a multitude of communication channels. Because perceptions about channels may vary across conversational participants and could possibly lead to mutual misunderstandings, it is of value and necessity to investigate the underlying reasons for channel choice decision-making. To that end, studying individual perception of different communication channels for interpersonal conversation might shed light on the process of channel choice. In Boase's (2008) study of a random digit dialing sample, 63% of 2200 adult respondents reported using email, and 74% using cellular phones within the month.

According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project (2009), about 39% of Americans hold positive or favourable attitudes toward mobile communication devices. Examining possible outcomes associated with various channels is not a new idea. McLuhan (1964) argued that the meaning is inherent in the medium independent of the message, and influences the evaluation of the communicator (Williams, 1975). Furthermore, Walther (1996) reviewed trends in computer-mediated communication and highlighted the role that new technologies play in interpersonal interactions. Specifically, the built-in nature of new technologies affords a new platform where interactions take place and results in a new multifaceted mode of communication that is intrapersonal, interpersonal and hyperpersonal. Echoing the coming of

*Corresponding author. E-mail: shaojingsun@gmail.com.

a multi-channel communication era, Boase (2008) also advocated for further research addressing the channel choice process. Uses and gratifications theory (UGT), built upon the premise of an active audience, provides a compelling rationale for examining channel choice decisions (Katz et al., 1974). The UGT framework serves as a structure in which to view people as communicators who make decisions based on their own motivations and preferences.

Interpersonal communication motives

Interpersonal communication motives are reasons why people talk to one another. Rubin et al. (1988) built their discussion of interpersonal communication motives on the UGT framework which purports that people are aware of their needs and make conscious choices to fulfill them through communication. Following this argument, then, people know why they communicate with other people, and understand that interpersonal communication fulfills some of the needs that they have. In the initial study, Rubin et al. (1988) identified six main motives including control, affection, inclusion, relaxation, escape, and pleasure. Rubin and Martin (1998) suggested that control, inclusion, and affection are the primary motives that serve to fulfill ego-achievement, social-affiliation, and safety/security needs. Relaxation, escape, and pleasure are secondary motives. Relaxation and escape serve to reduce stress, whereas pleasure serves an arousal function. Along this line of thought, the motives support a needs-based model of communication.

The majority of studies of interpersonal communication motives are designed or conducted in face-to-face interactions, nonetheless, little research has concentrated on how interpersonal communication motives affect channel choice in mediated settings. The proliferation of mediated channels warrants such a line of inquiry. An initial investigation (Flaherty et al., 1998) suggested that Internet and face-to-face communication are not functional alternatives despite earlier claims that they could be (Rubin and Rubin, 1998). In addition, Perse and Courtright (1993) found that people would rather use face-to-face communication than mediated communication to satisfy typical interpersonal needs, such as interpersonal conversation. The interpersonal communication motives (control, inclusion, affection, relaxation, escape, and pleasure etc.) discussed by Flaherty, Pearce, and Rubin (1985) have seldom been examined within the context of mediated communication. Other researchers focusing on media, however, identified motives that seemed interpersonally relevant, for consuming media.

For example, people use the Internet to pass time (Perse and Dunn, 1998; Korgaonkar and Wolin, 1999; Papacharissi and Rubin, 2000), to escape (or to seek companionship) (Lin, 1999), to socialize (James et al., 1995), and to maintain interpersonal relationships (Stafford et al., 1999). Different channels afford people unequal gratification opportunities, and, thus, may lead to diverse motivations for using a particular medium (Stafford et al., 1999). Needless to say, other factors (e.g., channel familiarity) could also influence channel option for communication; nonetheless, motivation is an important antecedent of media uses and gratifications (Rubin, 2002). The UGT supports the argument that use of certain communication channel is goal-directed. This study asks whether interpersonal communication motivation (control, inclusion, affection, relaxation, pleasure, or escape) predicts channel (e.g., face-to-face, cell phone, email, instant messaging, chat room, texting) use?

A review of UGT literature suggests that understanding additional variables (e.g., involvement) is conducive to disentangling the forming process of media uses and gratifications (Rubin, 2002). Involvement entails an active audience and is tied closely to motivation. On the other hand, involvement is an important dimension to characterize interpersonal communication (Dillard et al., 1999). To date, little research has investigated the role of involvement in mediated settings; though, it is not rare to identify studies of involvement in either mass or interpersonal contexts.

Interaction involvement

Cegala (1981) explained interaction involvement as “the extent to which an individual partakes in a social environment” (p. 112). An involved communicator is aware of and attends to both the self and the other person during the interaction. The more attentive and adaptive to the current situation, the more involved the communicator is. Highly involved people are more likely to be engaged and focused on the interlocutor with whom they are interacting. As Dillard et al. (1999) argued, involvement is a reflection of how two people are engaged in the interaction and depend on each other. Therefore, the extent of involvement can be described along a two-dimensional continuum: involved-uninvolved or engaged-withdrawn (Dillard et al., 1999).

Researchers have different opinions about the number of dimensions interaction involvement should encompass. For example, Cegala et al. (1982) identified three dimensions of involvement: responsiveness (i.e., mental alertness to the situation), perceptiveness (that is, ability to make attributions about one’s or others’ behavior), and attentiveness (that is, awareness of factors impacting interaction). Coker and Burgoon (1987) proposed five dimensions of interaction involvement: immediacy, expressiveness, interaction management, social anxiety, and altercentrism. More recently, Burgoon et al. (2002) pointed out that interaction involvement should be a sign of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement in

human interaction. Although researchers have identified different dimensions of involvement, they tend to agree that both cognition and emotion are equally important in interaction involvement. This trend is more salient in the field of interpersonal communication (Dillard et al., 1999). So, interaction involvement, at the very least, encompasses both cognitive involvement and affective involvement. Furthermore, it is a reflection of great mental participation with a social subject (Burgoon et al., 2002; Dillard et al., 1999). In the past, researchers examined interaction involvement in a variety of communication contexts: small group, intercultural, and instructional settings. Rubin et al. (1988), however, found no significant relationship between social attitudes (e.g., political efficacy) and interaction involvement (i.e., attention) in the context of television viewing, but called researchers' attention to the role of interaction involvement in media research. To date, few studies have examined the role of interaction involvement in the computer-mediated communication context, and this may be because early communication researchers narrowly conceptualized interaction involvement.

The definition of interaction involvement evolved from a concept describing primarily those in interpersonal settings to a concept describing interlocutors of more broadly defined contexts. For example, Cegala et al. (1982) stressed that interaction involvement is only restricted to face-to-face settings. This argument is no longer compelling in the new media environment because the line between mediated communication and face-to-face communication is blurring. For instance, Sherblom's (1990) study suggested that people's expression of interaction involvement in email is very similar to their expression in face-to-face interaction. Sherblom (1990) found that one tended to use more words like 'we' and 'them' in email when they were highly involved in communicating with others. This is similar to highly involved people's language use in face-to-face communication. Therefore, it is of interest to examine whether the level of interaction involvement with a mediated channel affects the amount of time people spend on using that particular channel. The second research question asks whether interaction involvement influence channel use?

Describing patterns of channel use is worthwhile, and channel affinity might be useful in determining why people are gravitating toward certain channels while shying away from others. Outcomes or consequences of patterns of media use could be cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral (Rubin, 2002). On the other hand, attitudes or feelings about specific channels used for communication could also influence one's continuous usage of mediated channels (Kelly and Keaton, 2007).

Channel affinity

In mass communication, research on affinity has focused on people's attitude towards either a specific medium or toward media content. Previous studies examined affinity in the context of television viewing. Affinity is defined as loyalty or commitment (Papacharissi and Rubin, 2000). Most research suggests that affinity is closely related to viewing motivation and involvement. For example, Lin et al. (2002) found that viewing motives are the most influential predictors of television station or network affinity. Affinity also plays an important role in audience activity. Typically, more affinity for a channel or content predicts more exposure to the channel or content (Davies, 2007; Iyengar and Hahn, 2009; Vandebosch and Van Cleemput, 2007).

Smit and Neijens (2000) reported that people with differing levels of affinity for advertising varied in their behavioral reactions to advertisements. Specifically, people with strong affinity watched and read advertisements more often than those who had weak affinity with advertising. In addition, Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) found that people who were dissatisfied with their lives used the Internet more often for interpersonal communication and demonstrated greater affinity with the Internet than did their counterparts. More recently, Kelly and Keaton (2007) found that people can develop affect for certain channels, and such an affect impacts their channel choice in different communication settings. For example, positive affect with email is positively associated with high frequency of using email for communicating embarrassing topics. In this sense, it is logical to argue that people who have high media affinity are more likely to use the corresponding medium frequently. To test this idea, the following hypothesis is posed: channel affinity predicts channel use.

Thus far, reviewed are interaction involvement, interpersonal communication motivation, channel affinity, and their relevance to channel use. In addition to their relationships to channel use, there is reason to investigate how interaction involvement and interpersonal communication motivation are related, especially for mediated channels of communication. Anderson and Martin (1995) concluded that interpersonal communication motivation during a small group setting does influence the level of interaction involvement (that is, attentiveness, perceptiveness, and responsiveness). Specifically, motives of control, escape, and inclusion were negatively related to responsiveness, and pleasure was positively related to responsiveness. In addition, Downs (1985) found that people who were highly involved in interaction responded more effectively to their communicators' needs. In light of previous findings, the following hypothesis is proposed: Motivation for interpersonal communication predicts interaction involvement.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sampling

After IRB approval, college students enrolled in two US universities

volunteered for the study. Participants who wished also completed a lottery ticket to win one of two IPod shuffles. Of 240 questionnaires, 230 of them were identified as complete and included in the analysis. The sample was comprised of 47.8% male and 52.2% female. Participants' ethnicity was 90.0% Caucasian, 2.2% African American, 3.0% Asian, 1.3% mixed-ethnicity, and 2.2% unidentified. The age range was from 18 to 54 years old (M = 24.11; SD = 5.715). Participants completed an assessment of interpersonal communication motives, and answered questions about interaction involvement and channel affinity for face-to-face, email, phone, and text messaging.

Measurement

Interpersonal communication motives

The Interpersonal Communication Motives (ICM) scale developed by Rubin et al. (1988) was used to measure individuals' motivation for interpersonal interaction. The ICM consists of 28 items asking for reasons people give for why they talk to other people. Example items are "I talk to people because it's fun," "I talk to people because I have nothing better to do." Response options are in the format of 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (exactly). Descriptive statistics of the 28 items are presented in Table 1. Principal components analysis with varimax rotation was conducted to examine the underlying structure of those 28 items. The rules of a minimum Eigenvalue of 1.0 and at least 2 loadings (60/40 loadings) per factor were referenced for extracting factors. Together, 24 items and five factors were retained and 60.77% of the total variance was explained. Factor loadings of retained items are presented in Table 2.

Factor 1 was pleasure (Eigenvalue = 9.21, Cronbach = 0.90). This factor consists of seven items and reflects individuals' motivation for seeking fun and enjoyment during interaction. About 32.9% of the total variance was explained by the factor. Examples of items included in Factor 1 were: 1) I talk to people because its fun, 2) I talk to people because it's entertaining, and 3) I talk to people because it peps me up. High scores on this factor refer to a strong motivation for enjoyment and fun. Factor 2 was social feeling (Eigenvalue = 2.54, Cronbach = 0.84). This factor consists of seven items and reflects individuals' motivation for social ritual or showing concern for others. About 9.06% of the total variance was explained by the factor. Items included in Factor 2 were: 1) I talk to people to help others; 2) I talk to people to let others know I care, and 3) I talk to people because I am concerned about them. High scores on this factor refer to a strong motivation for affection and care for others.

Factor 3 was relaxation (Eigenvalue = 1.92, Cronbach = 0.83). This factor consists of four items and reflects individuals' motivation for resting and unwinding. About 6.85% of the total variance was explained by the factor. Items included in Factor 3 were: 1) I talk to people because it relaxes me, 2) I talk to people because it allows me to unwind, 3) High scores on this factor refer to a strong motivation for resting. Factor 4 was escape (Eigenvalue = 1.74, Cronbach = .75). This factor consists of three items and reflects individuals' need to escape other activities through communicating. Items included in the Factor 4 were: 1) because I have nothing better to do, 2) to get away from what I am doing, and 3) to put off something I should do. About 6.22% of the total variance was explained by the factor. High scores on this factor refer to a strong motivation for escaping other activities. Factor 5 was control (Eigenvalue = 1.48, Cronbach = .73). Items included in Factor 5 were 1) I talk to people to get something I don't have, 2) I talk to people to tell others what to do, and 3) I talk to people because I want someone to do something for me. This factor consists of three items and reflects individuals' motivation for communicating out of instrumental compliance-gaining reasons. About 5.3% of the total variance was explained by the factor. High scores on this factor refer to a strong motivation for instrumental or utilitarian purposes.

Interaction involvement

Items from Cegala's (1981) Interaction Involvement Scale (IIS) were adapted to measure individuals' interaction involvement across different communication channels. Past studies (e.g., Allen, 1991) have demonstrated that the IIS is a valid measure of interaction involvement in a variety of contexts. The original IIS has three dimensions: responsiveness, perceptiveness, and attentiveness. Response options for each IIS item range from 1 (not at all like me) to 7 (very much like me). The items of the IIS describe people's feeling about their interaction behavior (e.g. I am keenly aware of how others perceive me during my conversations). In light of the different communication channels, only items associated with responsiveness were used to assess interaction involvement. The responsiveness construct was reliable across different communication channels (face-to-face: Cronbach = 0.82; phone: Cronbach = 0.81; email: Cronbach = 0.75; text messaging: Cronbach = 0.82). This factor consists of three items including: 1) Often in conversations I'm not sure what to say, I can't seem to find the appropriate lines, 2) Often in conversations I'm not sure what my role is, I'm not sure how I'm expected to related to others, and 3) Often during my conversation I can't think of what to say, I just don't react quickly enough. Responses to the items were reverse coded and high scores refer to high interaction involvement with communication.

Channel affinity

The Television Affinity Scale (Rubin, 1981) was adapted to measure individuals' affinity for different communication channels. The Cronbach alpha for the television affinity scale ranged from 0.79 to 0.93 in prior studies (Perse, 1994). Moreover, this scale has been used to measure affinity with different genres such as soap operas and news. It demonstrates good face validity, construct validity, and criterion-related validity (Perse, 1994). In addition, this scale has been adapted to measure Internet affinity and is reliable (e.g., Papacharissi and Rubin, 2000). The adapted instrument includes five items (e.g., emailing with others is one of the most important things I do each day). Response options ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). In the present study, the mean of the five items produced the index of channel affinity (face-to-face: Cronbach = 0.81; phone: Cronbach = 0.89; email: Cronbach = 0.88; text messaging: Cronbach = 0.91).

Amount of channel use

Participants self-reported how many hours they used each channel to communicate the previous day. Measuring media exposure, particularly assessing new technology use, has always been a challenging and complex job for communication researchers (R. B. Rubin et al., 2009). In reference to prior studies measuring Internet exposure (e.g., Papacharissi and Rubin, 2000; Sun et al., 2008), four questions were presented to indicate hourly channel use: (a) Do you communicate using this channel, (b) How many hours did you use the medium in the past month, (c) How many hours did you use the medium last week, and (d) How many hours did you use the medium yesterday. The first question served as a contingency to answering or skipping questions related to that specific channel. Scores on the rest three questions were averaged to serve as an index for amount of channel use.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Interpersonal Communication Motives

I talk to people …	M	SD
1. because it's fun.	3.87	0.84
2. because I just need to talk about my problems sometimes.	3.05	1.03
3. to help others.	3.72	0.83
4. to get something I don't have.	2.82	0.97
5. to have a good time.	3.99	0.85
6. because it's thrilling.	3.01	1.03
7. because I need someone to talk to or be with.	3.23	1.08
8. because it relaxes me.	3.18	0.96
9. because it allows me to unwind.	3.28	1.01
10. to tell others what to do.	2.49	1.06
11. because it's stimulating.	3.31	0.96
12. because I want someone to do something for me.	2.66	0.95
13. because it's entertaining.	3.72	0.86
14. because I have nothing better to do.	2.66	1.04
15. to get away from what I am doing.	3.13	0.92
16. because I enjoy it.	3.97	0.91
17. because it peps me up.	3.30	1.01
18. because it's reassuring to know someone is there.	3.48	1.03
19. to put off something I should be doing.	3.09	1.08
20. to let others know I care.	3.80	0.91
21. to get away from pressures and responsibilities.	2.96	1.02
22. to thank them.	3.77	0.87
23. because it makes me feel less lonely.	2.87	1.07
24. to show others encouragement.	3.64	0.86
25. because it's exciting.	3.32	0.98
26. because I'm concerned about them.	3.53	0.82
27. because it's a pleasant rest.	3.12	0.95
28. Because it makes me feel less tense.	3.08	0.87

RESULTS

About 99.6% of respondents reported using cell phone/ phones to communicate with others regularly. Also, a majority used email (84.8%) and texting (79.6%), but only a few reported using instant messaging (39.6%) and chat rooms (3.9%). Recall that hourly use was assessed in three different ways. Correlations among different indicators of hourly channel use are presented in Table 3. These indicators are positively correlated with each other across most channels. Linear regression was conducted to examine the impact of interpersonal motives, interaction involvement, and channel affinity on channels use simultaneously. Only 9 respondents reported chatting in chat rooms, and only 92 respondents reported for IM. Thus data for these two channels were omitted from the regression analysis. Results varied across different communication channels. For the face to face channel, social feeling (β = .27, p < .01) and control (β = -.15, p < 0.05) motives were two significant predictors of channel use (R = .34, p < .001). However, interaction involvement and affinity were not statistically significant. Together, 11.2% of the total variance was explained by the predictors. For phone, email and texting channels, only affinity (phone: β = .29, p < .001; email: β = 0.36, p < .00; texting: β = .40, p < 0.001) was a statistically significant predictor of phone usage. All predictors accounted for about 10.9% of the total total variance of phone usage (R = 0.33, p < 0.001), 15.3% of the variance of email usage, and 20.4% of the total variance of phone usage (R = 0.45, p < 0.001).

Linear regression was also conducted to examine the impact of interpersonal motives on interaction involvement. Regression coefficients for all channels are presented in Table 4. For face-to-face and phone channels, pleasure (β = .30, p < 0.001, and β = 0.22, p < 0.01 respectively) and escape (β = -.16, p < 0.05, and β = -0.21, p < .01 respectively) Social feeling (β = 0.22,

p < 0.05) was the only statistically significant predictor of interaction involvement for email. Control (β = -0.16, p < 0.05) was the only statistically significant predictor of

Table 2. Factor loadings of interpersonal communication motives.

	Motive factors				
	Pleasure	**Social feeling**	**Relaxation**	**Escape**	**Control**
Pleasure					
because it's fun	0.73	0.15	0.19	- 0.02	0.03
to have a good time	0.75	0.23	0.11	0.16	-0 .02
because it's thrilling	0.74	0.10	0.13	0.07	0.04
because it's entertaining	0.78	0.02	0.12	0.27	0.03
because I enjoy it	0.75	0.24	0.17	0.11	-0 .13
because it peps me up	0.59	0.33	0.38	0.15	0.08
because it's exciting	0.77	0.21	0.15	0.12	- 0.01
Social feeling					
just need to talk about my problems	0.08	0.59	0.35	- 0.03	0.16
to help others	0.26	0.57	0.19	-0 .11	0.08
assuring to know someone is there	0.09	0.71	0.30	0.16	- 0.08
to let others know I care	0.24	0.69	0.16	0.27	- 0.08
it makes me feel less lonely	-0 .05	0.57	0.34	0.25	0.19
to show others encouragement	0.29	0.73	-0 .03	0.14	0.07
because I'm concerned about them	0.32	0.64	0.09	0.08	0.09
Relaxation					
because it relaxes me	0.36	0.22	0.70	0.00	-0 .10
because it allows me to unwind	0.37	0.18	0.63	0.09	0.00
because it's a pleasant rest	0.23	0.15	0.70	0.22	0.06
because it make me feel less tense	0.15	0.20	0.77	0.19	0.02
Escape					
because I have nothing better to do	0.18	0.13	- 0.00	0.74	-0 .01
to get away from what I am doing	0.19	0.13	0.16	0.76	- 0.13
to put off something I should do	0.08	0.12	0.20	0.75	0.19
Control					
to get something I don't have	-0 .08	0.12	-0 .04	-0 .02	0.69
to tell others what to do	0.03	0.06	0.11	0.06	0.84
I want someone to do something	0.08	0.04	0.01	0.06	0.84
Eigenvalues	9.21	2.54	1.92	1.74	1.48
Variance Explained	32.90	9.06	6.85	6.22	5.30
Cronbach Alpha	0.90	0.84	0.83	0.75	0.73

Table 3. Channel Use and Correlations among Indicators of Hourly Use

Channel	**Face-to-face**	**Phone/cell**	**E-mail**	**Texting**	**IM**	**Chat room**
Utilized	100%	99.6%	84.8%	79.6%	39.6%	3.9%
Yesterday/Last Week	0.329**	0.611**	0.666**	0.647**	0.517**	0.492
Yesterday/Last Month	0.228**	0.128	0.318**	0.119	0.254*	0.186
Last Week/ Last Month	0.452**	0.445**	0.677**	0.515**	0.858**	0.853**

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level, 2-tailed. **Correlation is significant at the .01 level, 2-tailed.

Table 4. Regressing Interpersonal Communication Motives on Interaction Involvement

Channel	Variable	B	SE B	β	T
Face-to-face					
	Pleasure	0.58	0.16	0.30***	3.70
	Social feeling	-0.22	0.17	-0.11	-1.29
	Relaxation	0.16	0.15	0.09	1.10
	Escape	-0.27	0.12	-0.16*	-2.27
	Control	-0.21	0.11	-0.12	-1.86
Phone/Cell					
	Pleasure	0.39	0.14	0.22**	2.69
	Social feeling	-0.00	0.16	-0.00	-0.02
	Relaxation	0.09	0.14	0.06	0.66
	Escape	-0.33	0.11	-.21**	-3.00
	Control	-0.19	0.11	-.12	-1.84
E-mail					
	Pleasure	-0.19	0.15	-0.11	-1.25
	Social feeling	0.39	0.17	0.22*	2.35
	Relaxation	-0.14	0.14	-0.09	-1.00
	Escape	-0.07	0.11	-0.05	-.59
	Control	-0.18	0.11	-0.12	-1.66
Texting					
	Pleasure	-0.11	0.16	-0.06	-0.68
	Social feeling	-0.04	0.18	-0.02	-0.23
	Relaxation	-0.06	0.16	-0.04	-0.38
	Escape	-0.11	0.13	-0.07	-0.82
	Control	-0.24	0.12	-0.16*	-2.09

Note: R = 0.33, R2 = 0.11, F(5, 224) = 5.58, $p < .001$ for face-to-face channel. R = .30, R2 = .09, F(5, 224) = 4.26, $p < .001$ for phone/cell channel. R = 0.20, R2 = 0.04, F (5, 189) = 1.60, $p > .05$ for e-mail channel. R = .22, R2 = .05, F (5, 177) = 1.81, $p > 0.05$ for texting channel. *$p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. *** $p < 0.001$.

interaction involvement for text messaging.

DISCUSSION

This investigation sheds light on relationships among interpersonal communication motivations, interaction involvement, channel affinity, and channel use. In general, respondents use face-to-face, cell phone/phone, emailing, and texting more often than instant messaging and much more often than chat rooms. These results support results reported by Boase (2008), who found that people use face-to-face and phone/cell phone more often than other mediated channels. However, in the present sample, percentages of mediated (other than face-to-face) channel use were higher than Boase reported. The difference could be due to the makeup of samples across these two studies. The present study's sample was younger and more narrowly defined, as it was representative of college-aged students as opposed to a cross-section of the national population.

In addition, respondents' scores on hourly indicators of channel use correlated across day, week, and month. A notable finding is the lack of correlation for daily and monthly cell phone/phone use and texting. There are two interpretations for this result. First, it is plausible that texting and cell/phone use occurs in highly clustered amounts of time, so that the amount of time spent texting varies between days. It is also possible that respondents did not accurately report what happened over the course of an entire month. As stressed earlier, how to effectively measure usage of new technologies is a pressing and challenging task for communication researchers.

Channel affinity

There was a significant relationship between channel affinity and hourly use. Affinity was a significant predictor of channel use across all channels analyzed here. The

affinity scale items tap loyalty and commitment toward specific channels. Therefore, the strong relationship between feeling committed to or loyal to a channel and subsequently using that channel more frequently supports previous literature on channel affinity and channel use (Davies, 2007; Iyengar and Hahn, 2009; Papacharissi and Rubin, 2000; Smit and Neijens, 2000; Vandebosch and Cleemput, 2007). More recently, Haridakis and Hanson (2009) failed to find a predictive relationship between affinity for YouTube and viewing or sharing YouTube videos. The nature of watching YouTube videos, however, is different from directly communicating with other individuals. In addition, Haridakis and Hanson (2009) suggested a more narrow motivational set for viewing YouTube videos (leisurely entertainment and information seeking) than the set identified for the mediated channels in the present study.

Interaction involvement

Interaction involvement did not significantly predict hourly channel use. One conclusion is that people treat mediated channels in the same way they treat the face-to-face channel, and therefore, rely on some of the same mechanisms to indicate involvement in both. Sherblom (1990) found that indication of involvement in both mediated and face-to-face settings was similar. If interaction involvement is a reflection of engagement in reacting to another communicator, this explanation seems plausible (Burgoon et al., 2002; Dillard et al., 1999). An alternative explanation is that interaction involvement is best defined as a personal tendency, which is less impacted by the communication context. In fact, previous studies show that interaction involvement is related to other 'trait-like' characteristics of communicators, such as competence credibility, appropriateness, effectiveness, and social composure. Villaume and Cegala (1988) also found that highly involved people interpreted conversations on relational levels as opposed to content levels. In this case, highly engaged individuals might consciously place extra emphasis on relational cues of messages regardless of the channel. Additional explanations for this finding might be seated in the relationships among interpersonal communication motivations and interaction involvement.

Interpersonal communication motivation

For some channels, significant relationships exist among interpersonal communication motives and interaction involvement. For example, pleasure and escape predicted higher levels of involvement for face-to-face and phone channels, whereas control predicted higher levels of interaction involvement for face-to-face communication. Finally, relaxation predicted higher interaction involvement for text messaging. Such findings are in sync with UGT literature positing that involvement is a motivated activity (Rubin, 2002). Interaction involvement entails communication motivation which is a precursor of the former one. The findings also point to the possibility of interaction effects for individual differences and channel choice (Rubin, 2002; Stafford et al., 1999), although those effects were not measured in the present study.

Limitations and future directions

Limitations for the present study include the narrow cross-sectional sample of college-aged students. Although this age cross-section was purposely chosen for their wide variety of channel use, subsequent investigations should address how populations who differ in age and ethnicity from the present sample view mediated channels of communication. In addition, an independent measure of channel use, such as phone records, would add more validity to self–report measures of channel use. Given the monthly all-inclusive billing packages for mediated communication channels, objective third-party measurement are difficult to address.

Future research should explore the interdependent nature of channel use. Our results support that affinity to channel predicts the amount of use; however, communication can be initiated by one person through one channel, and then reciprocated through that same channel not because the receiver prefers the channel but because it was the initial channel used to start the dialogue. So, in essence, the channel used is not always the channel of choice for both people. For example, Minsky and Marin (1999) found that faculty email use was predicted by a superior's preference for email use. They argued that social influence theories are one way to explain this force in channel use. Overall, the present findings point to the importance of channel affinity on channel use. In addition, the relationships among communication motives and interaction involvement dimensions illustrate the complex nature of communication processes, especially given the absence of differences in interaction involvement across channels.

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