

Predictors of Social Television Viewing: How Perceived Program, Media, and Audience Characteristics Affect Social Engagement With Television Programming

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This study investigated social television viewing by introducing the social engagement construct. Three categories of factors, television program related perceptions, social media characteristics, and audience attributes, were proposed to predict the social engagement experience. This investigation tested 10 audience motives for using social media to engage with television content. It was found that social engagement is a complex process driven by multiple factors, particularly, program-related variables such as affinity, involvement, and genre preferences, as well as individuals' innovativeness trait.

Today television audiences are experiencing greater control over how they consume television in the platforms that best suit their needs. As social media like Facebook and Twitter enter the mainstream and reach a broad demographic spectrum (Stephen & Galak, 2009), social television viewing is emerging as a noteworthy phenomenon—the act of social networking while watching television (CTAM, 2012). The marriage between traditional television and the emerging social media can be attributed to the growing adoption of social media tools by consumers and their increasing cross-platform and multitasking patterns (Nielsen, 2010). The degree of cross-media multitasking is even higher when it comes to “event TV” like the Super Bowl or Academy Awards (Toy, 2010). In essence, social television viewing is becoming increasingly important to broadcasters, program producers, and advertisers as they justify their investment in content, acquire and retain customers, enhance brand affinity and program loyalty, as well as identify and market the most valuable audiences (Epps, 2009; Harris Interactive, 2011). Given the significance of social television viewing in today’s media environment, this study aims to identify the factors that might play a role in the process.

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Literature Review and Conceptualization

Social Engagement

Social engagement in this study refers to the degree of interactions or connections that a viewer develops with television content through various social media. The core component of the construct, "social engagement," is engagement. It was suggested that engagement is primarily driven by program content in the television consumption context, and the deepest engagement experience happens at the content level (Russell, Norman, & Heckler, 2004a). Note that the term "television content" is defined broadly in this study, which includes the program content itself, characters/celebrities in the show, and related personnel such as writers, directors, or producers, etc. McClellan (2008) claimed that viewer engagement is "a more passion-driven and more socially driven mode of watching television" across as many platforms as possible.

Russell, Norman, and Heckler (2004a) proposed the connectedness construct akin to engagement to capture the parasocial relationship between television viewers and television programs/characters. The authors defined connectedness as "the level of intensity of the relationship(s) that a viewer develops with the characters and contextual settings of a program in the parasocial television environment" (p. 152). In addition, the authors (2004b) emphasized the social nature of television viewing and developed the connectedness construct into three dimensions: vertical connections (viewer-program) which described the commitment that individual viewers feel toward their favorite programs; horizontal connections (viewer-viewer) which focused on the interpersonal relationship that viewers form with others around the show; and vertical connections (viewer-character) which defined the imagined and parasocial interactions that viewers develop with characters in their favorite programs. Considering the current multiplatform video consumption pattern, Askwith (2007) revised Russell et al.'s (2004b) social interaction model, suggesting that the viewer-viewer connections could be in the form of audience communities via online social groups and activities. The viewer-celebrity interactions could be facilitated by social media like Twitter and Facebook and the diagonal interaction of viewer-character might occur via blog postings. The behavior of social engagement materially involves three actors: the program, the media, and the audience. Therefore, it is logical to explore the predictors of such conduct from these perspectives.

Program Affinity, Involvement, and Genre Preference

From the programming aspect, affinity is defined as the level of importance one attached to media content, (Rubin, 1983, 2009). Rubin and Perse (1987a, 1987b) measured program affinity as the perceived importance of watching favorite television programs in audiences' daily lives. Affinity was found to be associated with diverse media use behavior and viewing motives (Rubin, 2009). For instance,

Haridakis and Hanson (2009) found affinity to be one of the antecedents that predicted co-viewing and video sharing behavior on YouTube.

Rubin and Perse (1987a, 1987b) suggested that an involved television viewer may feel affective toward those in need on the show (i.e., affective involvement), consider the messages of the show (i.e., cognitive involvement), and/or talk about the show with others (i.e., behavioral involvement) during and after the exposure. Prior study found that television program connectedness/engagement may start by fostering simple involvement with the program. Over the course of repeat viewing, it may end up absorbing its audience in parasocial relationships with the characters in the program (Russell et al., 2004a).

Another programming fact, genre preference, refers to television viewers' predisposed liking of one specific program type or genre among a set of available program types or genres (e.g., soap opera, sports, drama, etc.) (Youn, 1994). Researchers claimed that television genre is an important predictor in viewing choice because the industry relies heavily on imitation (Bielby & Bielby, 1994). The common knowledge in program choice behavior is that conventional program types, such as drama, sitcom, and so on, bear systematic relationships to program preferences (Geerts, Cesar, & Bulterman, 2008; Webster & Wakshlag, 1983). The preferences on different types of content could stimulate diverse social viewing experiences and communication patterns surrounding certain programs. Specifically, genre preferences can influence the way viewers talk, chat, or interact with each other while watching television or afterwards (Geerts et al., 2008). Therefore, the following research questions are proposed:

RQ_{1a}: How does program affinity relate to social engagement with the program?

RQ_{1b}: How does program involvement relate to social engagement with the program?

RQ_{1c}: How does program genre preference relate to social engagement with the program?

Compatibility, Perceived Ease of Use, and Social Presence

As for the media perspective, this study focused on the perceived effectiveness of the "connecting" function provided by social media, particularly compatibility, ease of use, and social presence, as "connection" is the essence of social engagement. Compatibility refers to "the degree to which the adoption of a technology is compatible with existing values, past experiences, and needs of potential adopters" (Rogers, 2003, p. 15). Prior innovation diffusion research found that compatibility is salient in predicting the adoption of a range of new communication technologies (Chen, Gillenson, & Sherrell, 2002; Lin, 2001).

Perceived ease of use is defined as "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free of effort" (Davis, 1989, p. 320). Prior studies showed that perceived ease of use has significant effects on user's enjoyment on

cell phone usage (Kwon & Chidambaram, 2000), online learning systems adoption (Saade & Bahli, 2005), and mobile Internet applications acceptance (Cheong & Park, 2005). The above research suggests that audiences' perceived ease of use on relatively new online communication technologies like social media systems would be related to the adoption of them to interact with media content.

Social presence refers to the degree of salience (i.e., quality and state of "being there") between two communicators using a communication medium (Short, Williams, & Christie, 1976, p. 65). Biocca and Harms (2002) further revised the concept as "sense of being with another in a mediated environment," and "the moment-to-moment awareness of co-presence of a mediated body and the sense of accessibility of the other being's psychological, emotional, and intentional state" (p. 14). In other words, social presence is a sense that others are psychologically present and that communication exchanges are warm, personal, sensitive, and active. The performance of social presence varies along a range of communication technologies (Rice, 1993), and is positively associated with personal identity satisfaction, such as expressing, commenting, and interacting opinions with others (Garramone, Harris, & Anderson, 1986). As social media like Facebook and Twitter exhibit the capacity of interpersonal communication, the present study expects that the perceived social presence of online social media will stimulate audiences to actively engage in these platforms with other viewers in the context of television viewing. Thus, the following research questions are proposed:

- RQ_{2a}: How does the perceived compatibility of social media relate to social engagement with the program?
- RQ_{2b}: How does the perceived ease of use of social media relate to social engagement with the program?
- RQ_{2c}: How does the perceived social presence of social media relate to social engagement with the program?

User Motives, Innovativeness, and Social Characteristics

From the audience perspective, prior studies have identified habit, relaxation, companionship, passing time, information/learning, arousal, social interaction, escape, and entertainment as major drivers for television viewing (Rubin, 1983). Lin (2001) found that, in an online context, entertainment appears to be less potent than information learning and escape/ interaction. However, with further exploration of webcasting adoption at a later time, the author concluded that entertainment plays a more critical role than news and information learning (Lin, 2004, 2006). Furthermore, audience motives are found to predict viewing activities (Rubin & Perse, 1987a, 1987b). Specifically, the more strongly viewers are motivated, the more actively they engage in various audience activities before-viewing (e.g., viewing intention), during-viewing (e.g., attention and involvement), and post-viewing (e.g., discussion) (Lin, 1993).

Prior studies have indicated that alternative video platforms and traditional television viewing share a majority of motives such as entertainment, information, diversion, personal communications, and passing time. However, due to other innate media characteristics associated with the Internet and its online applications, there are additional motives involved with these online platforms, such as convenience, immediate access, and social interactions. The current study therefore synthesizes various motives of traditional television, the Internet, and new media technologies to assess the social and physiological origins of the social television viewing experience, and poses the following research question:

RQ_{3a}: What are the user motives for social engagement with the program?

Individual audience traits related to an innovation could also help predict how a television viewer might use social media to engage with television content. According to the innovation diffusion theory, early adopters are characterized as having a higher degree of personal innovativeness (Rogers, 2003). Prior research showed that both innate innovativeness (the social-cognitive foundation) and actualized innovativeness (the social-situational basis) of an individual's personality traits are associated with the adoption of an innovation (Midgley & Dowling, 1978). A YouTube study showed that personal innovativeness predicts viewing and sharing of video in the content sharing community website (Haridakis & Hanson, 2009). The following research question is posited:

RQ_{3b}: How does audience innovativeness relate to social engagement with the program?

As suggested in the uses and gratifications approach, media compete with other forms of communication or functional alternatives for a finite amount of time among limited audiences (Kaye & Johnson, 2003; Rubin, 2009). The relationship between media and audience is therefore moderated by people's social and psychological circumstances such as lifestyle. People's offline activities like interpersonal interaction and social activities are suggested to play a role in their online media use behavior (DiMaggio, Hargittai, Neuman, & Robinson, 2001). In the social media context, Haridakis and Hanson (2009) empirically concluded that socially active audiences, particularly those watching for purposes of social interaction and co-viewing, use YouTube as a way of sharing online activities with family/friends and with persons with whom they have existing social ties. Accordingly, social media users' social activities and interpersonal interactions are hypothesized to be salient when using social media to engage with television content. Thus, the following research question is posited:

RQ_{3c}: How do audiences' social characteristics (i.e., interpersonal interaction and social activities) relate to social engagement with the program?

Pilot Studies

Two pilot studies were implemented to identify the activities associated with the proposed social engagement construct. That is, the means that an audience might adopt to interact/connect with a television program through various social media. Three focus groups using student volunteers were conducted at a southeastern university to explore these activities. The results were thematically analyzed and combined with the relevant scales from prior literature that measured engagement related experiences of the Internet (Calder, Malthouse, & Schaedel, 2009), social networks (Takahashi, 2010), blogs (Yanga & Kangb, 2009), and television (Russell et al., 2004a, 2004b). The final analysis yielded nineteen behavioral statements. The second pilot test took form of an online survey using a national consumer panel managed by a leading market research firm, *uSamp*. The panelists were asked if they had experiences using any of the social media and if they have ever utilized their chosen social media to comment, post, watch, or read anything about television programs. If the respondents answered affirmatively to BOTH questions, they were further asked to identify the specific programs that they used social media to interact with, as well as to indicate their level of agreement with the nineteen social engagement statements on a five-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*).

A total of 435 individuals responded to the online pilot survey in 2011. Among them, 161 participants answered affirmatively to both qualifying questions, providing an incident rate of 37.0%. An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted and resulted in a 15-item scale for the social engagement construct with satisfactory reliability.¹ The 15-item scale was then used to measure the social engagement variable in the main test.

Method

Sample and Data Collection

The main test, an online survey utilizing a national consumer panel, was conducted in the fall of 2011. The panel members were part of the U.S. general consumer panel maintained by *uSamp*, a leading online market research company that provides opt-in consumer panels globally with over twelve million online participants. Such consumer panels have been commonly used in market research to investigate consumer behavior toward products and services (Fox, Albaum, & Ramnarayan, 1993; Sultan, 2002). Note that while the first qualifying question remained the same for the main test, the second screening question was revised to ask whether the respondents have ever used their chosen social media to comment, post, watch, or read anything about a specific show from a program list provided by the researchers. If qualified, the survey then asked the respondents to identify one of

the socially engaged shows as his/her favorite, so the subsequent set of questions was based on their favorite shows. A total of 1,427 individuals responded to the online survey and 494 were qualified to complete the whole survey, yielding a 34.6% incident rate. Among the respondents, the average age was around 38 and males accounted for 30.6% of the sample. While Caucasians accounted for 74.5% of the participants, African-Americans and Asians had the same weight (7.4%), followed by Latino/Latina/Hispanics (6.0%).

Television Program List

Based on the finding from the pilot study, the main study identified the five most popular genres in the context of social engagement, reality shows, drama, game/talk shows, sitcoms, and animated comedies. The specific program list was then composed by referring to an online database, *Social Television Charts* (<http://trendrr.tv/>), which is a comprehensive television index that incorporates multiple social and syncoated data sources tracking all major networks and shows. The index includes such social media activities as public Facebook posts, Twitter mentions, GetGlue check-ins, and Miso check-ins. By referring to the social television index from August 29 to September 4, 2011, the week before the main survey was implemented; this study developed a final program list with 19 popular shows delivered through major broadcast and cable networks.²

Measures

Social Engagement. The social engagement scale measured how audiences used each social medium to engage with television program content and related information, characters/celebrities, and other television viewers over time. The respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with the aforementioned fifteen statements,³ using a 5-point Likert scale. The items formed a single factor and were averaged ($M = 2.63$, $SD = 1.01$, $\alpha = .94$).

Program Affinity. Two sets of measures, Television Affinity Scale (Rubin, 1983) and program affinity (Rubin & Perse, 1987a, 1987b), were adapted to assess the respondents' attitudes about their favorite television shows with which they interacted using various social media. The 3-item affinity scale was used to assess how important and how much affinity the respondents felt watching their favorite shows using statements such as "Watching the program is one of the most important things I do each day or each week." The items were averaged ($M = 3.30$, $SD = 1.09$, $\alpha = .86$).

Program Involvement. To assess the personal cognitive, affective, and functional dimensions of involvement with a particular television program, 7 semantic differen-

tial items were applied on a 5-point scale, including irrelevant/relevant, means nothing to me/means a lot to me, doesn't matter/matters to me, uninterested/interested, insignificant/significant, superfluous/vital, and nonessential/essential (Park & McClung, 1986) ($M = 3.94$, $SD = .84$, $\alpha = .89$).

Program Genre Preference. Based on the specific program that the respondent selected in the main test, this study evaluated the participants' overall program genre preferences among the followings: reality shows, drama, game/talk shows, sitcoms, and animated comedies. Two statements were employed to focus on respondents' viewing attention and enjoyment experience regarding each program genre, using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *extremely*) (Hawkins, et al., 2001; Moyer-Gus  , 2010). The items formed a single factor and were averaged ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 1.05$, $\alpha = .91$).

Compatibility. This study used 3 items borrowing from Tronataky and Klein (1982), Chen et al. (2002), and Chan-Olmsted and Chang (2006). A 5-point Likert scale was used to evaluate respondents' level of agreement with each of the statements assessing the variable of perceived compatibility with social media systems in general. The items were averaged ($M = 3.52$, $SD = .95$, $\alpha = .91$).

Perceived Ease of Use. Three items were adapted from prior studies to assess perceived ease of use of a general social media system in terms of learning, skillfulness, and usage through a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) (Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1989; Wu & Wang, 2005). The 3 items formed a single factor and were averaged ($M = 3.95$, $SD = .93$, $\alpha = .94$).

Social Presence. The construct was measured by using a semantic differential technique on bipolar items such as *unsociable/sociable*, *impersonal/personal*, *insensitive/sensitive*, *cold/warm*, and *passive/active* (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Short et al., 1976). Social media having a high degree of social presence were judged as being sociable, personal, sensitive, warm, and active. The present study constructed a social presence index by summing and averaging the 5 responses ($M = 3.77$, $SD = .82$, $\alpha = .86$).

Motives. The current study compiled a total of 49 motives behind television viewing (Rubin, 1983), the Internet use (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000), and YouTube video viewing (Haridakis & Hanson, 2009) from previous empirical studies. They include relaxation, companionship, habit, passing time, entertainment, social interaction, information seeking, arousal, escape, convenience, and personal utility. Specifically, the respondents were asked to indicate their agreement through a Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) that each of the 49 motive statements was their reason behind using various social media to engage with television content.

Innovativeness. This study adapted Goldsmith and Hofacker's (1991) innovativeness scale to assess audiences' innovativeness with social media. The present study modified the six items to reflect the social media context and asked respondents to rate their level of agreement with each statement using a five-point Likert scale, including their perceptions and behaviors ($M = 2.98$, $SD = .95$, $\alpha = .81$).

Social Characteristics. Adapted from the previous studies on contextual age scales (Rubin, 1986; Rubin & Rubin, 1982, 1989), the present study measured two dimensions of social characteristics of the respondents—the level of interpersonal interaction and offline social activities. The respondents rated their level of agreement with four statements assessing their interpersonal interaction (e.g., "I have ample opportunity for conversations with others."). The items formed a single factor and were averaged ($M = 3.43$, $SD = .82$, $\alpha = .80$). Another five statements were used to measure their offline social activity (e.g., "I often participate in the meetings or activities of clubs, lodges, recreation centers, churches, or other organizations.") ($M = 3.04$, $SD = .97$, $\alpha = .86$).

Results

Motivations Behind Social Engagement

RQ_{3a} investigated what motives the audiences have for using social media to engage with television content. To answer the research question, the EFA procedure was carried out to analyze the 49 motive statements. By analyzing the screen plots and goodness of fit indices, a series of models was estimated and compared, and a 10-factor model showed the best fit ($\chi^2 = 1999.91$, $df = 731$, $p = .000$; CFI = .940, TLI = .903, RMSEA = .060, SRMR = .022). Thus, this study concluded that the 10-factor solution best describes the motive test, and the ten motives behind social engagement behavior correspond to previous television viewing motives (Rubin, 1983), the Internet use motives (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000), and YouTube video viewing motives (Haridakis & Hanson, 2009).

The first factor, *Relaxation*, was comprised of three items related to a pleasant rest and relaxation-driven motivation. The second factor, *Companionship*, described aloneness relief as one of the reasons behind social engagement behavior. The third factor, *Passing Time*, described how television audiences use social media to interact with television content out of habit and to occupy time. The fourth factor, *Entertainment*, was comprised of three items illustrating the experience of social engagement with television content for amusement and enjoyment. The fifth factor, *Information*, explained how the social engagement experience is derived from being informed. The sixth and seventh factors contained three items respectively, describing the *Arousal* and *Escape* motives. The eighth factor, *Access*, measured the use of social media to access television content, because it is easier and a novel way of searching for information and keeping up with current issues. The ninth factor,

Learning, reflected learning unknown and useful things as a motivation for social engagement behavior. The last factor, *Interpersonal Utility*, was comprised of eight items related to using social media to be involved with television programs that measured belonging, inclusion, affection, social interaction, and expressive needs.

Based on the motive factor structure, this study further conducted reliability testing for each motivation using Cronbach's coefficient alpha. The Cronbach's coefficient alpha values for the ten motives ranged from .882 to .937, suggesting that the ten motivation scales are reliable measures. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics, alpha values, and intercorrelations for the ten motive factors.

Predictors of Social Engagement

To test the predictors of social engagement, this study first conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) for a measurement model. To assess the model fit, the minimum fit function Chi-square for the measurement model was 6060.703 ($df = 3637$, $p < .001$). The goodness of fit indices for the measurement model were desirably above or below their recommended thresholds (CFI = .919, TLI = .911, RMSEA = .037, and SRMR = .053), suggesting that the measurement model fit the data adequately. This study next examined the suggested causal relationships through structural modeling test by using the selected goodness-of-fit results as well. The minimum fit function Chi-square, χ^2 , for the structural model was 7315.180 ($df = 3708$, $p < .001$). The goodness of fit indices were CFI = .901, TLI = .893, RMSEA = .044, and SRMR = .078, suggesting that the measurement model and the simultaneous model were almost identical without a significant decrement in fit.

The significant predictors of social television viewing included program affinity ($\gamma = .207$, $p < .001$), program involvement ($\gamma = .163$, $p < .001$), program genre preference ($\gamma = .066$, $p < .01$), the motive of passing time ($\gamma = -.064$, $p < .05$), innovativeness ($\gamma = .156$, $p < .01$), and interpersonal interaction ($\gamma = .099$, $p < .01$). Specifically, the results first indicated that all program-related variables, such as program affinity, involvement, and genre preference, were positively associated with social television engagement behavior. This suggested that viewers who possess stronger preference for a specific type of program, show more affinity toward the program, and perceive it as more important and relevant in their daily lives tend to actively utilize various social media to connect with television shows. Furthermore, it appeared that the more innovative tendencies that the individuals demonstrate; the more likely they are to employ different social media to obtain information of the program, to interact with celebrities/characters of the program through Twitter, to form intimate connections with other viewers through peer-to-peer activities in blogs/online discussion forums, or to identify their "fan" status in social networks.

With respect to the predictive power of the individuals' social characteristics in their real lives, interpersonal interaction rather than social activity appeared to be significantly predictive of the social engagement experience. The results suggested that even though the individuals have ample opportunities to interper-

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics, Internal Consistency Values, and Intercorrelations for Motive Factors

Factor	Motive	No. of Items	Mean	SD	alpha	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	Relaxation	3	3.525	.98	.918	1.00									
2	Companionship	3	2.742	1.10	.891	.485***	1.00								
3	Pass time	3	3.301	1.07	.898	.310***	.519***	1.00							
4	Entertainment	3	3.928	.90	.932	.650***	.289***	.318***	1.00						
5	Information	3	2.936	1.12	.899	.550***	.651***	.396***	.370***	1.00					
6	Arousal	3	3.357	1.09	.905	.671***	.481***	.323***	.651***	.640***	1.00				
7	Escape	3	2.976	1.15	.882	.473***	.536***	.473***	.377***	.573***	.547***	1.00			
8	Access	3	3.610	.93	.921	.451***	.358***	.400***	.471***	.450***	.470***	.386***	1.00		
9	Learning	3	3.468	.98	.911	.484***	.427***	.337***	.497***	.590***	.523***	.437***	.719***	1.00	
10	Interpersonal utility	8	3.380	.91	.937	.555***	.541***	.362***	.447***	.647***	.585***	.464***	.635***	.685***	1.00

Note. alpha = Cronbach's alpha; *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed).

sonally communicate with friends, family, relatives, or others in their real lives, they desire to further engage in their communication with other audience members with different levels of social media activities “surrounded” or “submerge” by a television program in the virtual space. By contrast, the individuals’ offline social activity did not exhibit any influences on the social engagement tendency.

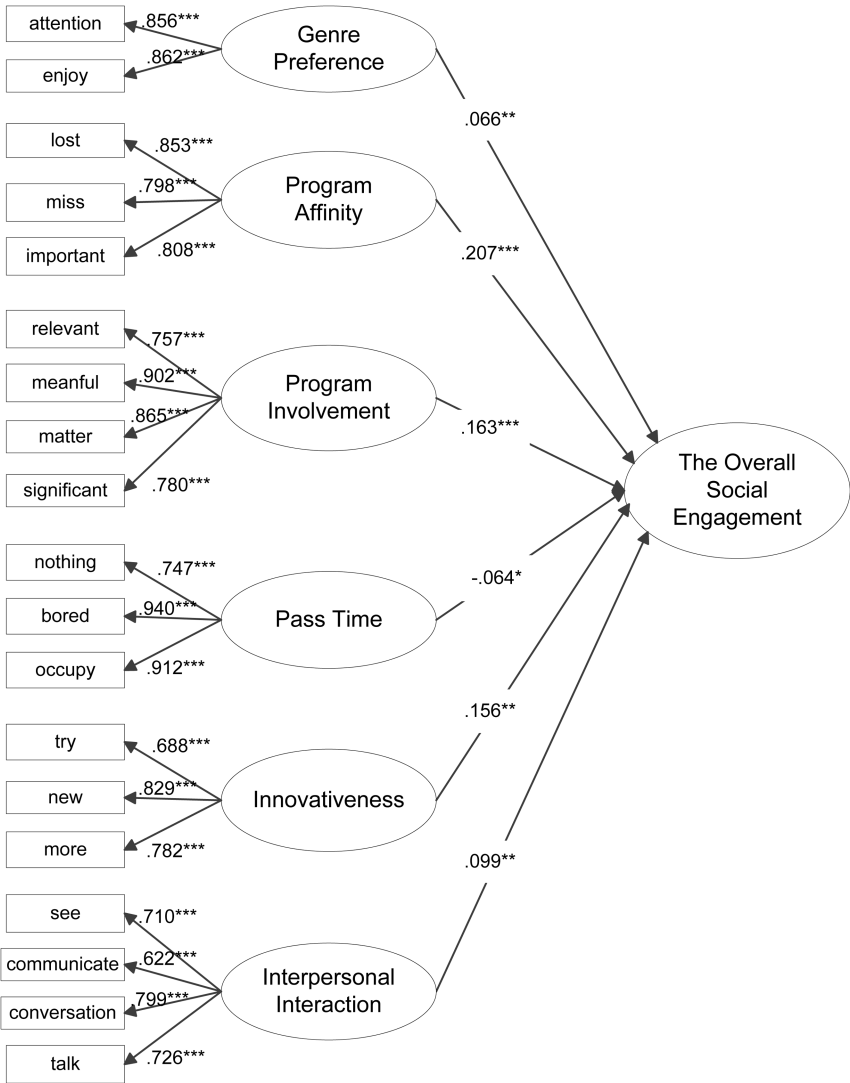
When it comes to the motives behind the social engagement behavior, the results showed passing time to be the only significant motivation, but it had a negative impact on social engagement. It seemed that people who were driven by the motivation of passing time tend to be less likely to use various social media to interact with television content as the behavior involves more active participation and time consumption. To sum up, perceptions of program and audience characteristics rather than the perceived attributes of social media or motives appeared to be significant predictors of the social engagement experience. Table 2 presents the causal relationships and Figure 1 display the schematic representation of the significant predictors of social engagement with television content.

Table 2
Predictors of Social Engagement with Television Programming

	Predictors	Social Engagement Standardized Path Coefficient	SE
RQ1a	Program affinity	.207***	.042
RQ1b	Program involvement	.163***	.037
RQ1c	Genre preference	.066**	.022
RQ2a	Compatibility	.028	.032
RQ2b	Perceived ease of use	-.006	.029
RQ2c	Social presence	.009	.030
RQ3a	Relaxation	-.007	.035
RQ3a	Companionship	-.042	.034
RQ3a	Pass time	-.064*	.026
RQ3a	Entertainment	.048	.036
RQ3a	Information	.069	.050
RQ3a	Arousal	-.028	.041
RQ3a	Escape	.030	.029
RQ3a	Access	.053	.038
RQ3a	Learning	-.018	.043
RQ3a	Interpersonal utility	-.001	.040
RQ3b	Innovativeness	.156**	.053
RQ3c	Interpersonal interaction	.099**	.033
RQ3c	Social activity	.019	.041

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed). The goodness of fit indices: $\chi^2 = 7315.180$ ($df = 3708$, $p < .001$); CFI = .901, TLI = .893, RMSEA = .044, SRMR = .078.

Figure 1
Predictors of Social Engagement with Television Programming



Discussion and Implications

This study takes the approach of an active audience behavioral model and examined various factors associated with the theory of television program choice, technology acceptance model, innovation diffusion theory, social presence theory,

and the uses and gratifications approach to investigate the drivers of the so-called social television or social engagement phenomenon. Specifically, this study identifies three categories of explanatory factors to predict social television viewing from the perspectives of media content (i.e., perceptions of television programs), media channel (i.e., perceived characteristics of social media), and media user (i.e., audience attributes). The findings reveal that media content and user characteristics played the most critical role in predicting audience social television viewing behavior.

This investigation first discovers that all program-related variables, especially program affinity, are strongly predictive of the social engagement behavior. The findings are indicative of the value of content, implying that "content is still king" in the cross-media multitasking consumption environments. Particularly, in the contemporary and interactive video consumption networks, the definition of television content expands to a broader scope, including the core programming content, the characters/celebrities, and other media persona of the program. Thus, the deepest level of social engagement is primarily driven by the quality of content, regardless of which content formats and media platforms are used. Accordingly, how to develop the best strategy to foster viewer affinity towards the specific television content and to further enhance involvement with the program over time become the most critical issues when examining audience social engagement tendency.

Regarding the individual's attributes, the empirical validation of the positive, predictive power of interpersonal interaction on social engagement is particularly interesting. The behavioral discovery implies that audiences, who do have ample opportunities or are satisfied with their interpersonal communication in their own lives, would still be inclined to utilize various social media, especially Twitter, to interact with characters, celebrities, and working staffs related to their favorite shows. The social interaction between viewers and media figures to some degree is a type of parasocial interaction, in which viewers believe that they know the media persona as they do a friend, treating the interaction as an interpersonal relationship. Thus, the empirical finding provides the evidence in support of the social enhancement premise, which states that the extroverted and outgoing persons are motivated to add online contacts to their established large network of offline friends (Zywica & Danowski, 2008).

The audience dispositional factor, innovativeness, is found to be another salient determinant of the social engagement behavior. The individual's innovativeness trait is purported to "contribute to his or her cognitive response towards making an innovation adoption decision" (Lin, 2004, p. 447). The degree of innovativeness, novelty-seeking, and creative ability displayed in an individual's personality traits single out those who have a greater propensity for early adoption of an innovation (Hirschman, 1980). Recent studies on innovative attributes and Web-based technology adoption generally support the effects of innovativeness on innovation adoption. In particular, prior studies found that the more innovativeness an individual possesses the higher the level of Internet use (Busselle, Reagan, Pinkleton, & Jackson, 1999). Likewise, Lin concluded that an individual's need for innovativeness is a significant predictor for personal computer adoption (1998) and Web casting

adoption (2004). The significant role of personal innovativeness seems to hold true in the context of social engagement as well.

Note that the social television consumption pattern is still prevalent among a small proportion of the television population. Furthermore, the social media used to interact with television content were mainly concentrated on the most popular platforms like Facebook and Twitter. Several entertainment-oriented social networks like GetGlue are still not well known by the majority of online users, even though these platforms provide the check-in applications specific for television shows. Accordingly, to plunge oneself into becoming a socially engaged audience, the online user has to solicit a certain level of curiosity, initiative, and skills in exploring this relatively new and somewhat challenging digital communication mode. It is logical that the social media experience with television content will be comprised of those online users who represent more innovativeness in their social engagement patterns.

The negative effect of passing time on social engagement provides the evidence in support of the notion that social media uses in the context of television consumption are more driven by instrumental than ritualized needs. Prior uses and gratifications studies concluded that instrumental and ritualized orientations reflect the amount and type of media use, media attitude, and expectation (Rubin, 2009). Specifically, ritualized orientation means "using media more habitually to consume time and for diversion. It entails greater exposure to and affinity with the medium" (Rubin, 2009, p. 172). Instrumental orientation focuses on "seeking certain message content for information reasons" (p. 172). Instrumental use is active and purposive, suggesting utility, intention, selectivity, and involvement (Rubin, 2009). The passing time motivation behind social engagement can be seen as ritualized-oriented. The negative effect of this motivation indicates that, while audiences may actively engage in social television viewing behavior to fill the free time they have, it appears that they do not consider using social media to interact with television as the ideal way to pass time for a diversion.

Limitations and Future Research

This study highlights some valuable findings related to utilizing social media to engage with television content. However, there are several limitations that should be taken into account when evaluating the results of the research and interpreting the conclusions. While the use of online consumer panels sampled from the real online population for the research questions helps enhance the external validity of the findings, these results should not be generalized to *all* online users. Given that the research questions in this study necessitated the use of a purposive sample of online users who possess certain social media experiences related to television programming, these findings are not necessarily applicable to all online consumers or social media users. As the online surveys were conducted before the emergence of many popular social media such as Snapchat and Instagram, as well as growing

second screen social television tools like TVtag and Zeebox, the results of the study were constrained by the dynamic nature of social media and their functionality. Many social television related platforms have emerged, grown, and, in many cases, disappeared in the past few years, it is reasonable that television viewers have experienced different aspects of social television interaction and become more accustomed to utilizing the second screen content. Therefore, the audiences' social television viewing behavior presented here may serve mostly as the starting point of the investigation in this emerging social television phenomenon. Additionally, this study identifies three major exploratory factors of social engagement from the perspectives of media content, media platforms, and audience attributes. Thus, the theoretical and practical implications of this investigation also center on these aspects. There are other external, structural factors that might impact the adoption process. Therefore, it is necessary to take these external factors into account when interpreting the social engagement process.

The integrated theoretical framework and empirical findings provided by the present study should serve as a good start for future research. One fruitful approach would be for future studies to address the cycling process of social engagement experience and its resultant effects. The social engagement viewing may experience three stages, i.e., point of engagement (re-engagement), engagement, and disengagement. It is also suggested that the intensity of engagement is varied among different program genres. Drama and action shows are found to be low social programming, while reality games and sports shows are both high in social engagement. Accordingly, to further investigate the cycling process of social engagement among different program genres and its ensuing effects may highlight the different attributes represented in the different stages of social engagement.

Notes

¹The 15 social engagement scale items are: "I have used social bookmarks (e.g., Digg and Delicious) to tag the program(s)." "I have used widgets to embed the program(s) 'video clips or photos online.'" "I have used check-in apps for the program(s) in Foursquare, Miso, Philo, Starling, or GetGlue, etc." "I have used my mobile phone to watch video clips, check photos, and text alerts, or play games relevant to the program." "I have subscribed to the program(s)' RSS feeds or podcasts." "I have uploaded or forwarded videos or photos relevant to the program(s)." "I am a follower of the program(s) (including actors, writers, producers, etc.) in microblogs (e.g., Twitter)." "I have read the program(s) tweets (including actors, writers, producers, etc.) in microblogs (e.g., Twitter)." "I have written or commented on the program(s) tweets (including actors, writers, producers, etc.) in microblogs (e.g., Twitter)." "I have read blog posts relevant to the program(s)." "I have written or commented on blog posts relevant to the program(s)." "I have read the program(s) posts in online discussion forums." "I have written or commented on the program(s) posts in online discussion forums." "I am a fan of the program(s) and share them with my friends in social networks (e.g., Facebook and MySpace)." "I have written or commented on the program(s) posts in social networks (e.g., Facebook and MySpace)."

²The television program list by the number of social media users: *NCIS, America's Got Talent, Family Guy, The Simpsons, Glee, True Blood, South Park, The Big Bang Theory, How*

I Met Your Mother, Big Brother, Jersey Shore, Teen Mom, The Office, The Vampire Diaries, Keeping Up with the Kardashians, Conan, Gossip Girl, Monday Night Raw, and Pretty Little Liars.

³See Note 1 for the 15 items.

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