

**Participating in YouTubing practice: towards a practice perspective
to understand user participation motivations**

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Abstract

By drawing on a recent practice turn in media studies, and also based on an 18 months' participant observation study within the Australian context, this paper investigates people's motivations for uploading videos on YouTube through examining how people participate in YouTubing practice through uploading their first videos. In line with the duality of practice theories, the focus of this study is on respondents' ongoing or background social practices which contain the seeds of their motivations for uploading videos on YouTube. Four types of YouTubing participation are identified, which represent different relations between YouTubing practice and other social practices which my respondents are already engaged in. Moreover, to some extent, these relations influence the way in which my respondents participated in YouTubing practice. The findings inform us about how human act motivations are embedded in the dynamics between social practices rather than human inner minds.

Keywords

User motivation, participatory culture, practice theories, UGC, YouTube, audience studies

Introduction

The question of what drives new media users to contribute content has been a hot topic in new media participatory culture studies. However, most existing research is still dominated by old theoretical approaches which base their premises primarily on methodological individualism. Notably, these approaches primarily include uses and gratifications theory (Hollenbaugh, 2011; Leung, 2009), involvement theory (Hemetsberger and Pieters, 2001) and motivation and self-determination theory (Coleman et al., 2009; Nov et al., 2010). As to YouTube participation studies, by drawing on the technology acceptance model (TAM), Yang et al. (2010) suggest that ease of use is an important determinant that drives people to upload videos on YouTube. Haridakis and Hanson (2009) rely on individual differences to predict people's YouTube video sharing behaviours and they find that people upload videos primarily for social utility.

Although the above studies reveal a broad range of motivational factors, they still assume that human agents are self-determined and self-interested so that their acts are generally purposeful, autonomous, proactive and pragmatic. In addition, they posit that human desires or needs originate from people's rational inner mind and remain constant across different contexts throughout their life. This individualist schema leaves us uninformed about the social and cultural contexts in which user contributions take place or take effect. Therefore, these studies have left out much of the richness and complexity of the motivational aspects of people's new media participation activities.

To remedy the weakness of the above studies, this paper uses a practice approach to investigate people's motivations for uploading videos on YouTube. This practice approach is premised on a practice turn in social theories which attempts to seek a middle way between methodological individualism and wholism (Giddens, 1984; Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 1996, 2005). By drawing on Alan Warde (2005), I propose that people's use of YouTube can be regarded as a moment occurring in YouTubing practice, which is an integrative social practice characteristic of people's video uploading and sharing activities in everyday life. Then I suggest that the issue of YouTube user video uploading motivations can be converted into a question which

asks about people's motivations for participating in YouTubing practice. Specifically, I examine the process and mechanism through which people participate in YouTubing practice by uploading their first videos. The ultimate purpose of this study is to see to what extent practice theories can help us understand that user participation motivations are not something transcendental but are something expressing how people make sense of the practices that go for them across time and space.

Counting YouTubing as a practice

There has been a rise of the practice approach in both sociological consumption studies and media studies. The two main sources of inspiration are Warde (2005) from British sociological consumption studies and Couldry (2004) from media studies. By viewing consumers or media users as social actors, this approach counts media use or commodity consumption as a moment embedded in various social practices in everyday life. For example, consumption of a car is regarded as a moment embedded in motoring practice in our social life; or fans' football game watching in a pub is a moment taking place in fan practice. As a result, commodity consumption or media use is diffused into diverse social practices and incorporated into the whole process in which a practice comes into being, evolves and even comes to an end. By drawing on the rationales of practice theories, the consumption patterns of artefacts or media products then can be illuminated by the way in which they are appropriated in the organizations of social practices.

Here, we need to note, consumption itself is not a practice but rather a moment or component 'partitioned through its boundedness within practices' (Warde, 2005: 146). This rationale actually leads to the 'death' of consumers and users by viewing them more as social actors carrying out basic social practices in everyday life. Couldry (2004: 119) argues, in a media-saturated world where media is widely and discretely involved in social and cultural practices, we need to develop an approach that 'starts not with media texts or media institutions, but with practice — not necessarily the practice of audience, but media-oriented practices, in all its looseness and openness'.

In my view, the practice approach fits in well with YouTube studies since people's use of YouTube is increasingly involved in manifold social fields. Compared to other Web 2.0 websites, YouTube is more of a versatile and hybrid website which can meet users' plural needs in their social life. I propose, therefore, that people's use of YouTube has developed into an independent YouTubing practice in our social world.¹ This YouTubing practice is characteristic of people's video uploading and sharing activities.² Then, by viewing people's use of YouTube as a moment occurring in YouTubing practice, we can study people's use of YouTube through its embeddedness in YouTubing practice. Consequentially, YouTube users are no longer construed as producers, consumers, or users, but as competent and knowledgeable actors who conduct YouTubing practice in their everyday life.

Practice and human act motivations

By viewing YouTube users as practitioners of YouTubing practice, the theme addressed in this research actually can be turned into a question which asks about people's motivations for doing YouTubing practice. After a comprehensive review of practice theories, I find some scattered accounts which address the issue of people's motivations for doing a specific social practice. These accounts are primarily

contributed by Schatzki (1996), Røpke (2009) and Giddens (1984). They unequivocally take a stance against methodological individualism by arguing that human act motivations are derived not from people's intrinsic cognitive abilities but from the practices which people are involved in.

In practice theories, motivations for doing a practice usually refer to intentional mechanisms which drive and sustain people's activities. Both Giddens and Schatzki deem that these mechanisms will remain constant due to the routinization of day-to-day life. However, they might also change for various reasons over time. Therefore, when talking about human act motivations, what distinguishes practice theories from those individualistic accounts is firstly a stance that human acts should be studied in a time dimension. Røpke's 'flow of projects', Giddens' 'routinization of everyday life' and Schatzki's 'signifying chain' all embody this point. However, existing motivation studies tend to extricate human acts from the context of time-space. Most of them give a static analysis of human act motivations by assuming they are invariable over time. In my research, I will focus on people's motivations for uploading their first videos on YouTube since the first videos formally mark the very beginning of their YouTubing practices. Due to the routinization of everyday life, these motivations largely remain stable across their YouTubing careers. However, they might also change in the long run. Therefore, when doing motivation studies with a practice approach, the term 'motivation' has to be treated with caution and researchers must be very clear about what their focus is. Future research can be made on the change and development of user motivations.

Practice theorists also believe that there is no cause-and-result logic between human mind and human acts. Røpke (2009: 2493) suggests that practitioners are not the starting point of analysis since 'practices logically and historically precede individuals'. Therefore, in a situation in which individuals are confronted with a myriad of possible practices, researchers need to ask how practices recruit practitioners rather than how practitioners pick up practices. According to Røpke (2009: 2493), the practices which people have ever pursued as well as are now undertaking will accumulate some 'experiences' or impose some necessities for them to further participate in certain practices.

Schatzki (2005: 480) strongly believes that human act motivations are not individual properties but are deeply rooted in the organization of social practices which people are involved with. That is to say, motivations are the properties of social practices rather than individuals. According to him, a practice is socially constructed by a range of constitutive elements, including people's understandings, materials, rules and social contexts. Then this practice will open up a range of possibilities for motivations which are independent of man's will. When people participate in this practice, they will perform their doings and sayings according to what this practice makes sense to them to do so that their acts are mutually understandable to each other. In this process, the constitutive elements of practices are internalised by individuals in so far as 'understandings, for instance, become individual know-how, rules become objects of belief, and ends become objects of desire' (Schatzki, 2005: 480-481).

What governs the mechanism by which people make sense of a practice is people's 'intelligibility' — a tacit dimension of embodied cognitive capacity. ³According to Schatzki (1996: 114-115), intelligibility is composed of 'world intelligibility' — how

things make sense to people — and ‘action intelligibility’ — what makes sense to people to do. It is a ‘battery of bodily abilities that result from, and also make possible, participation in practices’ (Schatzki, 2001: 9). More importantly, intelligibility is socially and collectively constituted through life-long experiences in which people observe, perceive, identify, interact and orchestrate with each other (Schatzki, 1996: 76-80). People then will act towards things and actions in a mutually intelligible way without needing to (or perhaps even being able to) spell out explicitly what they have grasped. Consequentially, according to Schatzki (1996: 119-123), when participating in a practice, people will perform their acts as a chain of ‘reactions’ which articulate what this practice makes sense to them to do. More importantly, people are usually in a status void of explicit thoughts and do not act ‘after consciously considering that he wants a, expects b, sees c and therefore should x’ (Schatzki, 1996: 121). They just simply ‘react’ to a certain practice by performing an action which is signified as the one now to perform.

Further, Schatzki (1996: 75) importantly distinguishes between the logic of ‘because of the elucidation of intelligibility’ and ‘because of causality’ by taking an example of ‘she did it because she was angry’. According to him, the explanation of this kind ‘does not yet indicate what qualifies it as such an expression’ (Schatzki, 1996: 75). While exploring the first type of logic might help us gain a deep understanding of the situation and practice in which anger was expressed, such as overwhelming work pressure or the recent break-up with her boyfriend, without pretending to provide us with a cause of an effect. Schatzki (1996: 75) argues:

Even though she acted as she did because she was angry, what qualifies her behaviour as an expression of anger is not its being the effect of anger, but the place it occupies in the play of expressions and contexts of behaviour, in conjunction with our understandings of how things can stand and be going for people.

To summarize, the real point of practice theories is to establish a framework which delves into human actions by treating ongoing or background practices rather than actors’ intrinsic cognitive abilities as the starting point of analysis. Both Røpke and Schatzki point human act motivations to background practices or situations which people are embedded in. Therefore, in my study, I will focus on the background experiences, situations and practices which are involved in the process by which people upload their first videos. I particularly examine how YouTube participants’ motivations are embedded in their everyday social practices, their initial contact with YouTube and the broad situations with which they are confronted at the time of uploading their first videos.

Methodology

Although the application of practice theories, especially Schatzki’s approach, is not without difficulties because in most cases social actors conduct routine activities under the guidance of intelligibility without a conscious reflection on their act motivations, Schatzki (1996: 150) suggests that people still can report them as post hoc ‘reconstructions’. By drawing on G. E. M. Anscombe (1957), he suggests that a series of ‘why’ questions is helpful for social researchers to explore people’s motivational states which are implicitly expressed in their acts. In addition, in order to understand people’s motivational states of a practice, it is important for researchers to observe their performances and carry out the same practice with them in person (Schatzki, 1996: 40, 108). He explicitly suggests that a ‘participant observation’

method is necessary when working with practice theories (Schatzki, 2005: 476). Therefore, I suggest that a participant observation investigation which integrates direct observation, self-reflexive participation and in-depth interviewing is a suitable methodological strategy to understand human practices and motivational states behind them.

I conducted an 18 months' participant observation study within the context of 'YouTube Australia'.⁴ I set up a research-oriented YouTube channel on 10 May 2008. Through this channel, I not only observed what other YouTube participants did and said but also conducted a research-oriented YouTubing practice in person. My experiences as a real YouTube participant gave me a preliminary understanding of YouTubing practice from my own perspective. My overall plan was to use my personal reflexivity of YouTubing practice as a robust basis for the further formulation of my interview research questions.

I conducted 23 semi-structured in-depth interviews in order to explore people's understandings of the process in which they participated in YouTubing practice. I focused on individual YouTube users who were based in the Australian context. Theoretically, this preference is informed by the rationale of practice theories that the organization of a specific practice is contingent on different social and cultural contexts. It is not my intention to do a comparative study between YouTubing performances in different countries or regions. By keeping my field work site within the bounds of Australia, I can better understand the internal differentiation of YouTubing performance in a specific cultural context. As the overall objective of my research is not to make generalizations about the pattern of how Australian people use YouTube, I recruited respondents based on a non-probability sample by applying a mixture of non-probability sampling techniques, which included voluntary sampling, convenience sampling, snowball sampling and purposive sampling. This sampling strategy enabled me to ensure a certain degree of variation of my sample on the one hand and avoid an inadvertent 'clustering' of respondents around some specific criteria or characteristics on the other hand.

Ultimately, a total of 23 respondents comprised my final research sample. This sample was composed of five women and eighteen men. It seems that there is a severe imbalance between the number of male and female respondents. However, as noted above, practice theories contend that the pattern of human activities within a practice is not so much a result of individual attributes, such as socio-demographic differences, but a result of the diversified organizations of practice bundles. Therefore, the socio-demographic distribution of respondents was not a big concern in my research. Ultimately, I conducted 12 face-to-face interviews, 10 email interviews and one online instant voice chatting interview.

Results

I discover four types of YouTubing participation, which generally represent different relations between YouTubing practice and other social practices which my respondents were already part of. Implicitly, these different relations to some extent influence the way in which people participate in YouTubing practice. Here, one point I need to point out is that this typological analysis is not based on methodological individualism. That is to say, when attending to my respondents' YouTubing

participation motivations, although my investigation still relied on the analysis of individuals' subjective views and activity patterns, the focus shifted towards the patterns of enacted practice performances rather than the patterns of individual persons. As aforementioned, practice theories strongly argue that human acts are not the results of individuals' preferences but the results of the organizations of social practices. Therefore, Halkier (2010) suggests that researchers should make an analytical generalization rather than a statistical generalization of people's practice performances when using a practice approach. This analytical generalization avoids using 'quasi-quantitative language' to make theorized claims about patterns of distributions of individual practitioners (Halkier and Jensen, 2011: 113). Rather, it aims to make theorized claims about the patterns of categories and dynamics of the material' and make sample results representative of 'categories related to social scientific concepts due to the theoretical relevance of the sample' (Halkier and Jensen, 2011: 113). In line with this rationale, the identified YouTubing participation types not only represent YouTubing participation patterns across several participants but also synthesize the commonalities of different YouTubing participation patterns performed by individuals in different situations and contexts in their everyday life.

(1) YouTubing practice extends ongoing practices

The first type of YouTubing participation can be considered as a natural extension of the practices which people are undertaking when they come across YouTube. There were 14 respondents involved in this type. For them, participating in YouTubing practice was a natural extension of the practices which they were already engaged in since these practices and YouTubing practice had similar objectives or functions. There were four types of motivations expressed in the first videos of these 14 respondents.

The motivation expressed in the first videos of the first group of respondents was consistent with what YouTube was originally designed for — sharing things (videos) with other people. This group of respondents all had a long history of sharing things of interest with other people in their life. 53531640 told me that he loved to share interesting things with people in his everyday life.⁵ Therefore, the encounter with YouTube became what he termed 'a golden opportunity' to extend his ongoing 'interest sharing' practice: 'I had received some interesting email video clips that I wanted to share with other people. I love sharing interesting things with others and I saw this as a golden opportunity'.

For the second group of respondents, they participated in YouTubing practice because YouTubing practice can advance their social networking practices over the internet. The third group all pursued some practices which inherently anticipated a large audience before they found YouTube. Impressed by YouTube's enormous potential of reaching massive audience, they began to upload videos. The last group, which only consisted of one respondent whoiscraig, always liked trying something new in everyday social life.⁶ As he had never made a video before, trying to make a video for YouTube became a taken-for-granted action for him.

(2) YouTubing practice intersects with other social practices

Another group of respondents were all pursuing some social practices which to some extent intersected with YouTubing practice when they encountered YouTube. Specifically, YouTubing practice can accomplish a task which was imposed by the

other practices which were already engaged in. For example, jackyfan was asked by his boss to do a promotion video for the music company he worked for.⁷ So he uploaded his first video on YouTube. As such, I suggest that jackfan's YouTubing practice actually intersected with his work practice.

Bustki69 and Wuyuan8's stories were similar to each other.⁸ Both of them used YouTube as an online video archive to store videos which they had made prior to their YouTube careers. Bustki69 said:

The reason I did that was because I was starting to have problems with my computer. And I had a lot of videos that I've taken overseas, and I didn't want to lose them, and I didn't have an external hard drive. And I thought, well, I might as well just put them on YouTube. I'll know that they're always going to be there. To tell you the truth, that's why I posted them.

As a result, bustki69 uploaded his first 40 videos within two days because those videos had been lying around for years.

Strictly speaking, in the initial stage, these three respondents' YouTubing practices could not be classified as an extension of their former video or work practices. Rather, they were simply tasks that they had to accomplish for their video or work practices because these practices and YouTubing practice obviously have different objectives in our social world. People go to work mainly in order to make a living or realize their career objectives. In contrast, YouTubing practice exists in our society because it can enable people to share things or have fun. Therefore, at the very beginning, participating in YouTubing practice was nothing more than a task jackyfan had to do in order to realize the objectives of his work practice.

(3) YouTubing practice restores routinized practices

The third group participated in YouTubing practice because one of their routinized practices had been broken for some reasons in their everyday life. Hence, to some extent, YouTubing participation was an attempt to restore their everyday routines (Giddens, 1984). For example, when I asked people why they uploaded videos on YouTube, TheSydneyLife said: 'I started making videos on YouTube just to kill time and for fun'.⁹ At the first glance, this answer seems to be very individualistic and it is a typical finding which has been frequently quoted by internet adoption studies (cf. Fallows, 2006; Ferguson and Perse, 2000; Papacharissi and Rubin, 2000). However, with the practice approach, I paid more attention to the situations which laid behind his video uploading motivations on the surface. Then I found that TheSydneyLife actually experienced a boring time three years ago. He broke up with his girlfriend so he had nothing to do. It was just at that time that he found YouTube, and he thought making videos might be a good way to pass time. Zebidee55's story was quite similar.¹⁰ In late 2007, he lost his job and his girlfriend went to Germany for a study leave. As a result, the feeling of isolation and loneliness brought him to YouTube where he could interact and make friends with other YouTube users.

Apparently, when reflecting on his first video, these two respondents both pointed to some uneasy or disturbing situations in their everyday life. Moreover, it seems that their YouTubing participation was a kind of remedy for those uneasy situations. To explain this, I think Giddens' (1984) idea about the dynamics between human routines and 'ontological security' is a good choice. For instance, TheSydneyLife actually was engaged in a routine love practice before he encountered YouTube. However, when this routine was broken and his ontological security was disrupted in a critical

situation, participating in YouTubing practice became a solution for him to re-establish ontological security.

Leokimvideo's case was a bit different.¹¹ His participation in YouTubing practice was primarily due to the disruption of his usual understanding of the criteria for a good video. Leokimvideo used to be a professional video maker and had worked for the film industry for over 15 years. One day, one of his friends talked to him about his difficult situation on YouTube. This friend was leokimvideo's colleague from the film industry and also excelled in making videos. However, when he uploaded some of his well-made videos on YouTube, he was surprised to find that his high-quality videos failed to find any audience while many mediocre videos, according to his criteria, seemed to achieve great success by pulling thousands of views. This unusual circumstance aroused leokimvideo's curiosity and he uploaded one of his old videos 'Snails Day Out', a really good video in which leokimvideo filmed a snail with a professional macro lens. Interestingly, leokimvideo hit the same wall as his friend did. In the first month, his video only collected dozens of views: 'I got tired of sending it to my own friends. So the same question was seeded in my mind — how does it work?'. From then on, leokimvideo started to upload videos regularly in order to puzzle out the answer.

Compared to the other two respondents, I think that leokimvideo's YouTubing participation was more associated with his usual understanding of the criteria for good videos. It was the disruption of his routine understanding of the criteria for good videos that generated the main impetus for his persistent YouTubing participation. For leokimvideo, I suggest, participating in YouTubing practice was not to restore routinization so much as to explore a new normativity which could re-establish his self-esteem and avoid anxiety in his life (Giddens, 1984: 57, 177).

(4) YouTubing practice hardly intersects with other practices

The last YouTubing participation type was characteristic of little intersection between YouTubing practice and other practices my respondents had been involved with. As a result, this group of respondents did not start active video uploading until some external factors turned up and pushed them into action. In the interview, I found that a group of respondents felt an impulse to upload videos when they first saw YouTube because they simply thought that YouTube was a place for ordinary people to upload videos. When talking about her first impression on YouTube, parisblonde said:

I had a friend at work, loading up YouTube videos when I was at work. Wow, what's this site? When he left, I was there by myself. I noticed on the site there were normal people and celebrities. So I started clicking on those videos, and I was like, wow, anyone can do this! So I bought a webcam.¹²

However, even after parisblonde bought the webcam, she did not start uploading videos. She said: 'I paused for a while because I had no idea what to upload'. Indeed, parisblonde's first video was the direct result of a request from her YouTube friend: 'Because I had been commenting on people's videos, and I got comments from someone saying "I'd like to know who you are, why not do a video?"... So I did it because someone asked me.'

Similar to parisblonde, the other two respondents, AndySmiirnoff and BradofQBN, did not turn their thoughts into action immediately until some external catalysts turned up.¹³ And without exception, the catalyst was a request or encouragement from their

friends inside or outside of YouTube. Since these three respondents all became aware of an idea of uploading videos for YouTube upon encountering YouTube, why did they still need some external catalyst? Further analysis reveals some implicit explanations.

Indeed, YouTubing practice was very strange to this group of respondents when they first came to know YouTube. In other words, these respondents had rarely pursued any social practices which shared elements in common with YouTubing practice. After uploading their first videos, AndySmiirnoff and parisblonde appropriated YouTubing practice primarily for interacting with other YouTube participants. However, my follow-up interviews revealed that they had never conducted any social networking practices on the internet before they encountered YouTube. Moreover, both of them were 'light' internet users. Parisblonde only checked email once a day. AndySmiirnoff only used the internet for his study after going to universities. In other words, even internet practice was to some extent strange to them.

As to BradofQBN, there was an indication that he was not very much confident about the quality of his video when thinking about joining YouTube:

I recorded it a few times before the final version was ready. I was always finding faults and reasons to redo the video. I let a few people see the final video before posting it and they had mixed comments and I realised that not everyone was going to have positive comments and I should not fear them but see them as learning opportunities.

This testimony indicated that BradofQBN's competence of doing YouTubing practice was relatively weak. Indeed, BradofQBN had zero video making experiences before he joined YouTube. That might be the reason he needed some encouragement from his friends to do his first video. In other words, I can hypothesize that the lack of YouTubing competence constituted an obstacle to his entry into YouTubing practice at the very beginning.

Therefore, I suggest, for this group of respondents, pursuing YouTubing practice was like picking up a brand new practice. In light of this, external catalyst might be necessary for them because the little intersection between YouTubing practice and their other social practices in their life might impose a challenge on or create a barrier to their YouTubing participation.

Discussion and conclusion

The first aim of this research is to see to what extent practice theories can contribute to our existing motivation studies, which are dominated by methodological individualism. In my research, the YouTubing participation stories of some respondents, such as parisblonde, indicate that people's video uploading motivation can only be a common understanding of what YouTubing practice is socially intended for. By stating that 'I noticed on the site that there were normal people and celebrities', parisblonde demonstrated to us how her motivation for uploading videos was nurtured through her exposure to YouTubing practice in which she perceived and learned what other people were doing (Schatzki, 1996: 76-80). This finding also sustains Schatzki's argument that user motivations are embedded in the organizations of trans-individual social practices rather than their inner minds.

Moreover, parisblonde's story told us that at the initial stage her video uploading was purposeless because she actually had no idea what to upload. For parisblonde,

participating was a motivation in itself without the necessity of carefully considering what to upload and why to upload. This finding challenges the sovereignty of the causal efficacy of human actions by giving primacy to something tacit and immanent — intelligibility — in human capacities. It reminds us that new media user motivations should be treated not so much as the result of a rational and pragmatic choice but as the result of a tacit understanding. Indeed, in audience activity studies, irrational use of media, such as habitual use, has been widely identified among media audience (cf. Hawkins et al., 1991; Rubin, 1981; Stone and Stone, 1990). However, as Hartmann (2009: 2) suggests, these studies are still based on methodological individualism and assume that ‘media choice — whether performed deliberately or mindlessly and whether based on reasoned grounds or highly automatic processes — is always affected by an inner drive or impulse’.

My finding also suggests that people’s contributions in the Web 2.0 era are not entirely active behaviours but sometimes are more of passive responses to other people’s encouragement or request. The behavioural profiles of some of my respondents were in stark contrast to the image of self-contained and self-motivating human agents as suggested by self-interest theories. This finding reinforces Geertz’s (1973) ‘strain theory’ which highlights the complexities of situations in which human acts take place and Ortner’s (1984) suggestion that human acts can be solutions to constraints and requirements which are enforced upon them. It also echoes Van Dijck’s (2009: 44) argument that ‘participation’ does not equal ‘active contribution’ to UGC sites’ because in fact the vast majority of new media users remain recipients of content.

Although most of the motivations identified in my findings, such as ‘to complete a task’ or ‘to kill time’, have been frequently mobilized in user motivation studies, my research helps us gain a deep understanding about how those familiar user motivations originate from the complex ways in which YouTubing practice is embedded in or related to other social practices in people’s everyday life. This finding greatly contributes to our understanding about the question of ‘the potential hierarchies between media practices and other sorts of practice’ which is raised by Couldry (2004: 127). Furthermore, my study provides user motivation studies with a unique perspective by looking at ‘how practices are differentially ordered for those with ready access to media resources and for those without’ (Couldry, 2004: 129). Settlement of this issue will further our understanding about how media is involved in the distribution of social power.

There is also some evidence that the relations and interactions between YouTubing practice and other practices can shape the way in which people participate in YouTubing practice. This finding greatly advances practice theories which so far have not offered an explicit portrayal of the mechanisms by which people flow across different practices in social life. Generally, I suggest that, these four YouTubing participation types imply a different degree of affinity and relevancy between YouTubing practice and other social practices in our social world. Moreover, the greater the affinity and relevancy between YouTubing practice and other social practices, the more spontaneous and active people’s YouTubing participation. For instance, when YouTubing practice can achieve similar objectives or functions of the practices my respondents were undertaking or used to carry out, their YouTubing participation seemed to be a matter of course. For the respondents in the first

YouTubing participation type, their first videos were more like natural reactions to what their ongoing practices made sense to them to do. Schatzki has suggested that people usually perform their acts as a chain of reactions within a practice without any reflections on their act motivations. My research provides supplementary information with the fact that natural reactions can also take place as well as take effect at the interfaces between two intimate social practices. Indeed, much of the scholarship working with practices takes it for granted that practitioners are already involved in a specific practice with some particular motivational conditions. Seldom do practice theorists look at the mechanism through which people come to participate in a new practice or transfer between different practices.

However, YouTubing practice can also intersect with some other social practices, such as business practice or amateur video making practice. Sometimes it can even be counted as uncharted territory for some people in their life world. That is to say, the extent to which YouTubing practice overlaps other social practices is minimal and even can be nothing. Consequently, there seems to be a trend towards passive YouTubing participation among my respondents. They even needed some catalyst to facilitate their YouTubing participation. This is particularly exemplified by the second and fourth YouTubing participation types. Admittedly, this comparative analysis and the generalized conclusion are made on the basis of a relatively small research sample. Nevertheless, it does find a way for us to investigate human act motivations by virtue of the practice approach. A more definite conclusion and richer finding can be expected if we enlarge the research sample size in future research.

In my findings, besides the constitutive element of objectives, BradofQBN's story told us that competence could also exert an influence when my respondents migrated between different practices. This reminds us about the complex organizations of social practices. According to Schatzki (1996, 2005), the constitutive elements of a practice usually include objectives, beliefs, understandings, emotions, rules, materials, competence, etc. So when attending to the participation issue, we need to take into account the dynamics of all involved elements. This further brings up an issue about the hierarchized order among the nexus of the constitutive elements of a practice (Schatzki, 1996: 98-100). According to him, different social practices have different inter-relations between their constitutive elements. For example, for science practices, the elements of materials and equipment occupy the highest position in the hierarchized order of constitutive elements and largely determine the contour of science practices (Knorr-Cetina, 2001; Pickering, 1995). This rationale suggests to us that people's migration between different social practices is a multi-construct which involves multiple influential elements of different weights. Therefore, in future research, when applying a practice approach to human act motivations, we need to consider the possible hierarchy of, as well as the dynamics between, involved elements in terms of their roles in shaping practice participation.

Another issue emerging from the comparative analysis between my findings and the literature of practice theories is about whether human agents have a conscious reflection on their act motivations. As suggested by Schatzki, although people's acts can be and in most circumstances must be purposeful, people do not necessarily and deliberately run the motives through their minds when their acts are simply a series of reactions within a practice. To test this theoretical assumption in my practice-centred research, some empirical difficulties cannot be avoided. In interviews, when reflecting

on their first videos, I found that most of my respondents were able to articulate their motivations. However, it was hard to tell whether these motivations were beknownst to my respondents at the time of uploading their first videos only through the analysis of their after-thoughts. When I asked my respondents whether they were conscious of their motivations when uploading their first videos, most were unable to give me a definite answer. Only one respondent, whoisraig, claimed that there were some unconscious mechanisms involved:

When I first started my 'Spore' walkthroughs, I had been watching a lot of other gaming walkthroughs from other YouTube users. So I guess you could say that it did influence me. Although at the time, I wasn't aware of it. Emulating those videos wasn't a conscious decision, but thinking back on it now, I guess the videos I watched influenced me more than I realized.¹⁴

Therefore, we should not jump to quick conclusions whether human act motivations are conscious to social actors or not without a careful investigation. However, if following Schatzki's rationale, I might suggest that people will participate in YouTubing practice unconsciously provided that YouTubing practice has much in common with their ongoing practices in terms of their constitutive elements. Thus, a seamless link is formed at the interface between two intimate social practices in so far as conscious reflections are not necessary as if uploading the first video takes place within the same social practice. In view of the complexity of this issue, I think Gronow and Warde's (2001: 34) suggestion is more tenable. They suggest that human practices are neither entirely guided by conscious reflections nor by taken-for-granted routines. Rather, these two mechanisms are usually intertwined in human practices. This suggestion has been reinforced by Gram-Hanssen's (2011) practice-centred study on residential energy consumption in which she argues that changes in people's residential energy consumption can come both from engagement and conscious reflections but also from naturalizing new habits into routines.

¹Notes

In recent years, more and more studies have emerged with their focus on a specific type of new media practice, such as blogging practice (Schmidt, 2007) or mobile phone practice (Okabe, 2004). Or some studies just use the term 'practice' in a loose manner to describe users' activities centring around some specific media or media services, such as podcasting practice or twittering practice (Fernandez et al., 2009; Hermida, 2010). As to YouTube, writers have also frequently used the term 'YouTubing practice' as a reference to people's use of YouTube (cf. Aragon, 2007; Martin, 2007).

² In addition to video uploading, admittedly, most people also watch videos and interact with other users on YouTube. The activities of video watching and social interacting then become indispensable components of this YouTubing practice. We need to be aware that these three activities are not completely discrete entities. To some extent, they are intermingled with each other and jointly form an organic whole of YouTubing practice.

³ Røpke's 'experience' and Giddens' 'practical consciousness' also refer to this tacit capacity. However, Røpke fails to give a lucid explication of what exactly his experience means. In Giddens' framework, the determinative factor of human actions within a practice is not practical consciousness but rules and resources which compose the 'structure' of that practice. This point is seriously challenged by Schatzki (1996: 144-148). This conceptual conflict is beyond the scope of my current research.

⁴ YouTube has been launching localised versions of YouTube since July 2007. Now the interface of the YouTube website is available with localised versions in 42 countries, one territory (Hong Kong) and a worldwide version. These localised YouTube versions draw on the same database of videos as the US site. As the version of YouTube is automatically chosen on the basis of the IP address of the user, localised YouTube versions aggregate users from the same regions or countries. Moreover, the use of local languages and country-specific video and user rankings also greatly attracts and encourages YouTube users to use localised versions. 'YouTube Australia' was launched on 22 October 2007.

⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/user/53531640>. Last accessed 21 August 2013.

⁶ <http://www.youtube.com/user/whoisraig>. Last accessed 21 August 2013.

⁷ <http://www.youtube.com/user/jackyfan>. Last accessed 21 August 2013.

⁸ <http://www.youtube.com/user/bustki69>. Last accessed 21 August 2013.

<http://www.youtube.com/user/Wuyuan8>. Last accessed 21 August 2013.

⁹ <http://www.youtube.com/user/TheSydneyLife>. Last accessed 21 August 2013.

¹⁰ <http://www.youtube.com/user/zebidee55>. Last accessed 21 August 2013.

¹¹ <http://www.youtube.com/user/leokimvideo>. Last accessed 21 August 2013.

¹² <http://www.youtube.com/user/parisblonde>. Last accessed 21 August 2013.

¹³ <http://www.youtube.com/user/AndySmiirnoff>. Last accessed 21 August 2013.

<http://www.youtube.com/user/BradofQBN>. Last accessed 21 August 2013.

¹⁴ Spore is a multi-genre single-player god game released for the Microsoft Windows and Macintosh operating systems by Electronic Arts, Inc. in September 2008. It allows players to control the development of a species from its beginnings as a microscopic organism, through development as an intelligent and social creature.

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