

MEDIATING EFFECT OF PUBLIC SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS TOWARD THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GRATIFICATION NEEDS AND AUTHENTIC SELF- EXPRESSION ON INSTAGRAM

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the complex interplay between gratification needs, public self-consciousness, and authentic self-expression on Instagram. Recognizing the platform's impact on self-image through likes, comments, and follower dynamics, this research investigates how individuals navigate the complexities of online self-presentation. Specifically, it examines the mediating role of public self-consciousness on the relationship between various gratification needs (social, communication, motivation, and recognition) and the extent to which individuals authentically express themselves online. Employing a quantitative research design, data were collected from 450 participants via online questionnaires. Structural Equation Modeling was used to analyze the data and test the proposed hypotheses. The findings reveal a compelling insight: for individuals with heightened public self-consciousness, specific communication needs are crucial in facilitating authentic self-expression. This underscores the potential of communication skills interventions to empower individuals in cultivating genuine online interactions and bridging the gap between their online and offline selves.

Keywords: use and gratification theory; authentic self-expression; public self-consciousness; smart-PLS

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INTRODUCTION

On social media platforms, people often post authentic self-expressions for various reasons, but these motivations do not always align with their individual personality traits. As a result, these displays appear to be associated with personality perceptions from onlookers. For instance, certain users in social media may interpret different motivations depending on the visual content of the posters, due to differences in personal characteristics or self-perceptions of different people. (Lee & Sung, 2016).

Furthermore, as Leary (1995) noted, impression management (i.e., a thoughtful, considerate behavior that reflects our public persona). Therefore, further research is warranted to understand whether social media posts positively or negatively affect others' opinions, given that these perceptions can significantly influence subsequent social media actions and even offline interactions. Importantly, certain types of social media content seem to instigate variations in perceptions of the poster.

The content generated by social media users varies depending on their individual level of public self-consciousness. This concept, as described by Doherty and Schlenker (1991), is primarily expressed through an individual's focus on internal and external orientations. Public self-consciousness involves a deep concern for and reflection upon how one presents oneself in the public sphere (Greenwald, Bellezza, & Banaji, 1988; Scheier & Carver, 1985).

Studies on online self-presentation reveal that inauthentic expressions correlate with reduced self-esteem, whereas authentic self-expressions are linked to higher self-esteem levels (Twomey & O'Reilly, 2017). Additionally, the characteristics of these self-presentations on social media may be shaped by individual dispositional factors, indicating that personal traits significantly influence how users portray themselves online (Gil-Or, Levi-Belz, & Turel, 2015; Schreurs, & Vandenbosch, 2022). This relationship between self-expression and individual traits underscores the intricate dynamics involved in the formation of online identities.

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Theoretical Gap of Research

Previous research on authentic self-expression has primarily focused on the uses and gratifications theory, often overlooking the crucial mediating role of public self-consciousness. To address this gap, the present study incorporates the looking-glass self-theory and the concept of self-consciousness to better understand the relationship between gratifications derived from Instagram usage and the development of authentic self-expression. This study aims to integrate and test the role of public self-consciousness as a mediator. This is based on the premise that public self-perception is deeply rooted in concerns about self-presentation, aligning with the uses and gratifications theory, which posits that an individual's social and psychological environment significantly influences their media consumption and its subsequent impact (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1973).

The uses and gratifications theory focuses on how individuals fulfil their needs and desires by engaging in specific behaviors or navigating platform-specific content (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000). Accordingly, many social media studies have revealed users' motivations and gratifications related to their activities on these platforms (López, Hartmann, & Apaolaza, 2019; Bowden-Green, Hinds, & Joinson, 2021; Shane-Simpson, Manago, Gaggi, & Gillespie-Lynch, 2018). While the literature highlights the application of the uses and gratifications theory to platforms like Facebook and Twitter, but previous studies are not focus on Instagram as a tool for authentic self-expression.

Gratification Need on Instagram

As people increasingly engage with social influencers, understanding motivations and gratifications for this engagement becomes crucial. The uses and gratifications theory (U&G; Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1974) posits that motivations to interact with various media are influenced by individual characteristics. Furthermore, when exploring interpersonal connection, social activity, and economic security can be more revealing than demographics (Rubin & Rubin, 1982). The use of Instagram can be understood within the framework of uses and gratifications theory, which suggests that audiences engage with social media in various reasons: personal integration needs, social needs, motivational needs, communication needs, and recognition needs.

Social Needs

Katz (1974) defined social needs as affiliation needs, which relate to belonging and include the consumer's desire to associate with a group and be recognized as such. According to Kohut (1977), the human organization of experience is composed of grandiosity, idealization, and the need for an alter ego or belonging.

Further studies highlight the link between solitary emotions and overall customer well-being, directly influencing well-being (Reddy, Baum, Fleming, & Aiello, 1981; Rook, 1987). These emotions can be categorized into four types: 1) kill time, escaping, and relaxing; 2) enjoyment and excitement; 3) information; 4) partnership and social interaction. The benefits of forming and maintaining interpersonal such as relationships, intimate connections, and social support networks, are categorized as interpersonal contact maintenance. These benefits include the sense of acceptance and acknowledgment individuals receive from others, as well as the enhanced social standing that results from their contributions. People may adopt new temporary content features on social media in order to escape peer pressure, as social pressure can cause stress when there is little to no connection with others or when one is disregarded by others.

According to earlier studies, users mostly use social media to contact with friends in order to satisfy their desire for socialization (Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009; Lee & Ma, 2012; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000). Additionally, several studies have discovered that social media can help people feel like they belong and improve interpersonal connection (Cemalcilar, Falbo, & Stapleton, 2005; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Viswanath, Mislove, Cha, & Gummadi, 2009). (Lee & Ma, 2012; Rubin, 1994). Synthesizing the views of these scholars, social media can be understood as an interactive mechanism through which users exchange information to satisfy their social needs and strengthen social ties within their communities.

Motivation Needs

Originating in mass communication research, the Uses and Gratification Theory is now frequently used to study why people utilize new media (Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Pearo, 2004). This theory posits that media audiences aim to fulfill fundamental needs, indicating the primary facets influencing a consumer's choice of a medium are its functionalities.

The current study attempts to offer insights into the mechanism underpinning the use of ephemeral content by defining users' motivations, psychological tendencies, and media use consequences holistically via the lens of uses and gratification theory (Katz & Blumler, 1974).

Research of television-viewing motives using Uses and Gratification Theory has recognized the following: arousal, social connection, friendship, escape, information seeking, relaxation, pass time, amusement, and time consumption (Rubin, 1981; Alonzo & Aiken, 2004). According to Alonzo and Aiken (2004), people engage in various online activities for numerous reasons, including avoidance, entertainment, engagement, monitoring, communication, and personal identity. A person's genuine self-expression might serve as evidence of their identity. On the other hand, Beyens, Frison, and Eggermont (2016) contend that the need to always stay up to date with what other people are doing serves as the driving force behind the fear of missing out.

When confronted with social exclusion, individuals experiencing fear of missing out (FOMO) may engage an adaptable social monitoring system to seek social connections. Consequently, these individuals might exhibit heightened social media usage to fulfill their need for inclusion (Lai & Chong, 2023).

Communication Needs

Panteli and Sockalingam (2005) concluded, based on previous studies, that chatting and communicating regularly can promote the development of interpersonal relationships. In general, the emergence of social media can provide media users with a platform for self-presentation and can also attract users to easily connect with others (Cheung & Lee, 2010; Lin & Lu, 2011). Similarly, according to the findings of other researchers, self-presentation plays a significant role in facilitating interpersonal communications. (Laurenceau, Barrett & Pietromonaco, 1998).

Research on social media usage motivations suggests that Facebook is used to escape unpleasant emotional states, such as boredom and loneliness (Lampe, Ellison, & Steinfield, 2007; Burke, Marlow, & Lento, 2010).

Dissatisfaction with the current state of one's relationships has been cited as a motivation for using social media to improve those relationships (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). Fear of Missing Out is driven by a desire to stay in constant contact with what others are doing, and to view this as a motivation (Przybylski, Murayama, DeHaan, & Gladwell, 2013).

Recognition Needs

People want to be recognized and praised by others for their interactions with them and to be able to improve their social status in the community through participation in activities (Baumeister, 1997). For example, several studies have shown that many people engage in virtual communities to answer questions from other users, primarily for peer recognition (Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Pearo, 2004, Alexande, 2002). As a driving force behind preserving a

sense of belonging within a social group, this is the primary expression of the needs for recognition (Cheng, Liang & Leung, 2015).

Recognition needs also contributes to Instagram addiction. Sheldon and Bryant (2016) found that Instagram users actually focus more on showcasing personal identity and self-expression. The formation of personal identity and self-expression reflects a needs for recognition, a desire to be noticed, and a need to establish one's presence among others (Adristiyani & Halimah, 2021). These needs can be met by posting photos on Instagram. These results are also in line with research conducted by Ponnusamy, Iranmanesh, Foroughi and Hyun (2020). Which suggests that the likes and comments feature is seen as a way of fulfilling recognition needs.

The term "recognition needs" signifies gratification derived from social interaction and participation in collective actions (Leung, 2007). This is reflected in the ways internet users create and share information to enhance knowledge, gain esteem, and establish personal identity (Leung, 2009). Essentially "recognition needs" refers to the satisfaction individuals experience from interacting with others and collaborating on projects (Leung, 2007).

Public Self-Consciousness on Social Media

With the growing popularity of social networking sites (SNS), the central role they play in self-expression and relationship management has attracted widespread attention (Sun, & Zhang, 2021). Previous research has identified two primary elements of self-presentation on social media, self-construction, which refers to the extent to which individuals perceive themselves as independent from or interdependent with others (White, Habib, & Hardisty, 2019; Kitayama, Salvador, Nanakdewa, Rossmair, San Martin, & Savani, 2022); and public self-consciousness, which refers to a focus on the public aspects of the self (Feinstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975; Scheier & Carver, 1985). Both variables relate to the extent to which individuals associate themselves with others, and as such, they may be important in understanding why some people will make to engage in positive self-presentation on SNSs in certain situations, while others will not.

The public self-consciousness factor was defined as a general awareness of the self as a social object that influences others (Fenigstein, Scheier & Buss, 1975). Drawing on both intra- and interpersonal aspects of self-consciousness, Carden, Jones, and Passmore (2022) differentiated between private and public self-consciousness, stating that "private self-consciousness is concerned with attending to one's inner thoughts and feelings," while "public self-consciousness is defined as general awareness of the self as a social object that has an effect on others.

Individuals are not only concerned about their own appearance and behaviors but are also more sensitive and reactive to others' gaze, reactions, attitudes, and evaluations of their physical appearance and behaviors (Morita, Asada & Naito, 2021). Prior studies on self-consciousness (e.g., Fenigstein et al., 1975; Scheier & Carver, 1985) have found that Individuals with high self-consciousness tend to be more concerned with how they are perceived by others and more interested in others' opinions of them than those with low self-consciousness.

According to studies on self-consciousness (Fenigstein et al., 1975; Scheier & Carver, 1985), individuals with high self-consciousness may be more attentive to how others respond to their social media posts. Moreover, research on social comparison (e.g., Gibbons & Buunk, 1999; Lee, 2014) has found a positive relationship between an individual's level of self-

consciousness and their frequency of social comparison. The level of public self-consciousness a person possesses can influence their self-evaluation.

This study focuses on public self-consciousness, which is distinct from private self-consciousness in its emphasis on awareness of the self as perceived by others (Carden, Jones, & Passmore, 2022). Public self-consciousness refers to "an awareness of the self as a social object" (Fenigstein, 1979, p. 76). Individuals with high public self-consciousness place great importance on their appearance, which is positively associated with body dissatisfaction (Chae, 2017).

Authentic Self-Expression

Among the distinct features of SNSs, visual communication facilitates self-expression (Waddell, 2016). One factor that affects users' social media choice is the types of individuals they interact with on the platform. Following brands on social media can act as a mechanism for self-expression, satisfying the alignment between the actual self and the aspirational ideal self (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012), especially when users strive to present an idealized version of themselves online to navigate the complexities of online self-presentation (Hubert, 2018).

Social media serves as a platform for individuals to convey authentic self-expression by disclosing their true selves through interaction with others (Monacis, Griffiths, Limone, & Sinatra, 2021). These findings align research indicating that individuals who express their authentic selves on social media and possess more self-oriented motivations for sharing personal and emotional content (e.g., Seidman, 2014), tend to experience a positive mood and affect in online environments (Bailey et al., 2020; Grieve & Watkinson, 2016; Reinecke & Trepte, 2014).

Authenticity is not reflected in a compulsion to be one's true self, but rather in the free and natural expression of core feelings, motives, and inclinations. This authentic self-expression is embodied in individuals who consistently represent their achieved identity through their behavior, clothing style, career decisions, and the like.

Authentic self-expression is conceptualized as flexible to the extent that it allows individuals to find ways of expression themselves that are consistent with their identity or stem from an integrated sense of self (Vallerand, 2000) while still fulfilling (work) roles that might demand self-regulation and self-presentation. Situations invariably exist in which environmental pressures may inhibit the expression of one's true self (Hinds, & Joinson, 2019; Appel, Grewal, Hadi, & Stephen, 2020; Back, Stopfer, Vazire, Gaddis, Schmukle, Egloff & Gosling, 2010).

Research suggests that individuals on Facebook are more likely to express their actual personalities rather than idealized versions of themselves (Bailey, Matz, Youyou, & Iyengar, 2020; Schreurs & Vandenbosch, 2022). This authentic self-expression fosters perceptions of integrity, enhancing trust among coworkers (Li, 2007; Kim, David, Chen, & Liang, 2023) and leading to positive other-evaluations in the form of dyadic trust (Schilke, Reimann, & Cook, 2021).

From this perspective, this paper is proposed that public self-consciousness plays a crucial mediating role in understanding the relationship between gratification needs and authentic self-expression among Instagram users.

METHODOLOGY

In terms of methodology, this study used a quantitative approach to investigate the authentic self-expression of Instagram users. A questionnaire investigated users' perceptions of the determinants and effects of need fulfillment and public self-consciousness in enhancing authentic self-expression. This perspective proved to be valid and reliable and therefore a viable method for measuring respondents' need for fulfillment, public self-consciousness, and authentic self-expression.

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The target population consists of 450 Instagram users aged 18 to 35 from the Asia-Pacific region, including New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, China, Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Indonesia. A purposive sampling method will be employed to extract the sample size based on the characteristics of the respondents. Characteristics of respondents must be Instagram users: 1. there must be more than one year of users Instagram, if there is less than one year there are no conform to these requirements. 2. frequent self-expose to Instagram. It is essential to ensure that all participants in the study are active Instagram users. This focus allows us to gather relevant insights into their experiences and behaviors on the platform, as their familiarity and engagement with Instagram will significantly influence the validity and applicability of the research findings. By specifically targeting users who regularly interact with Instagram, we can better understand the nuances of self-expression and identity construction within this social media context. The global distribution of Instagram users by age and gender is noted as being equal in the 2018 white paper on the App business. 61% of Instagram users are between the ages of 18 and 35, making them the largest demographic for social media users. Instagram saw an increase in monthly active users from 800 million in September 2017 to one billion in June 2018 (Statista, 2019). Provides clearer references of how to measure the variables involved in this study into measurable indicators. Variables of this paper include Gratifications needs: social needs, motivation needs, communication needs, and needs of recognition, these are the needs of the independent variable.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As shown in Table 1, the demographic profile of the participants was operationalized with nominal measurements of gender, age, race, and educational level. Meanwhile, education background, monthly income, duration of internet usage, duration of using Instagram, number of followers, frequency of using Instagram, duration of Instagram use, and frequency of posts on Instagram. The measurement of demographic variables is in Table 1.

Table 1. The measurement of demographic variables

Variable	Measurement items	Demographic profile	
Gender	<input type="checkbox"/> Male	37.6%	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Female	62.4%	
Age	<input type="checkbox"/> 18-25 years old	16%	
	<input type="checkbox"/> 26-35 years old	57.6%	
	<input type="checkbox"/> 36-45 years old	26.4%	
Races	<input type="checkbox"/> Islam	19.8%	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Christianity	27.3%	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Buddhism	18.9%	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Others	34%	
Educational level	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than high school degree	0	
	<input type="checkbox"/> High school degree	2.4%	
	<input type="checkbox"/> College degree	52.4%	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Advanced graduate (for example: master's, professional, Ph.D., M.D., Ed.D.)	45.2%	
Duration of using Instagram	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 years	11.6%	
	<input type="checkbox"/> 3-4 years	42.4%	
	<input type="checkbox"/> 5-6 years	32.2%	
	<input type="checkbox"/> More than 6 years	13.8%	
The number of followers	<input type="checkbox"/> 100 friends or less	42.2%	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Between 101-300 friends	46.2%	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Between 301-500 friends	11.6%	
	<input type="checkbox"/> 501 friends or more	0	
Frequency of using Instagram	<input type="checkbox"/> Several times a day	14%	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Once in a day	48.7%	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Several times in a month	20.7%	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Once in a month	16.6%	
Duration of Instagram use	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 15 min	34.7%	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Approximately half an hour	41.1%	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Approximately an hour	21.6%	
	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-3	2.6%	
	<input type="checkbox"/> More than 3h		
Duration of post on Instagram	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 times a week	59.6%	
	<input type="checkbox"/> 3-4 times a week	18.4%	
	<input type="checkbox"/> 5-6 times a week	19.3%	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Everyday	2.7%	

The results of this study are based on the purpose of this research to determine the role of public self-consciousness in increasing the relationship between the gratification need dimension and enhancing authentic self-expression. To achieve that objective, the following hypotheses were tested.

Hypothesis 1: There is a mediating effect of public self-consciousness towards the relationship between social needs and authentic self-expression.

Hypothesis 2: There is a mediating effect of public self-consciousness towards the relationship between motivation needs and authentic self-expression.

Hypothesis 3: There is a mediating effect of public self-consciousness towards the relationship between communication needs and authentic self-expression.

Hypothesis 4: There is a mediating effect of public self-consciousness towards the relationship between recognition needs and authentic self-expression.

As indicated in Table 2 and Figure 1, the indirect relationship between the independent variable (social needs), the mediating variable (public self-consciousness), and the dependent variable (authentic self-expression) was not significant ($\beta = 0.013$, $p = 0.952$), hypothesis 1 (H1) is non-acceptable. The implication is that there is no significant relationship between them, this leads to the conclusion that social needs do not affect authentic self-expression through overt self-consciousness. However, previous research (Pearce & Sharp, 1973) indicated that people are most comfortable expressing themselves authentically with trusted people or strangers and least comfortable expressing themselves authentically with casual acquaintances. Past research has shown that people are more willing to express "authentic self-expression" in anonymous online interactions than in face-to-face interactions with strangers (Schlosser, 2020). Thus, the need to socialize does not play a large role in public self-presentation and authentic self-expression. Furthermore, public self-consciousness serves as a mediating factor between communication needs and authentic self-expression. When individuals' communication needs increase, their public self-consciousness also heightens, leading them to pay more attention to how others perceive them. In this context, individuals may adjust their self-expression to align with external expectations rather than staying true to their authentic selves. Thus, public self-consciousness mediates the extent to which communication needs translate into authentic self-expression. Understanding this relationship helps to reveal the complexities of identity construction in social media environments.

Table 2. Mediating effect of public self-consciousness towers gratifications needs and authentic self-expression

Hypothesis	Relationship	Std.beta	p-value	Decision
H1b	SN → PSC → ASE	0.013	0.952	Not support
H1c	MN → PSC → ASE	0.010	0.268	Not support
H1d	CN → PSC → ASE	0.010	0.041	Support
H1e	RN → PSC → ASE	0.009	0.383	Not support

SN, Social needs; MN, Motivation needs; CN, Communication needs; RN, Recognition needs; PSC, Public Self-consciousness; ASE, Authentic Self-expression.

This model (Figure 1) investigates how social needs, communication needs, motivation needs, and recognition needs predict public self-consciousness and, consequently, authentic self-expression on social media. Specifically, it proposes that:

Social needs may heighten public self-consciousness, leading individuals to be more aware of others' perceptions and potentially encouraging more authentic self-expression, particularly in social interactions.

Communication needs drive individuals to focus on their image when interacting with others, influencing their public self-consciousness. A strong need for communication may lead to adapting self-expression to meet others' expectations, potentially limiting authenticity.

Motivation needs influence authentic self-expression by affecting self-consciousness. When individuals use Instagram for entertainment or relaxation, they may express themselves more authentically. However, when motivation is linked to recognition, public self-consciousness may hinder authenticity.

Recognition needs directly influence public self-consciousness, as individuals seeking recognition may be more concerned with others' evaluations. This concern can lead to adjustments in self-expression, affecting authenticity.

Public self-consciousness mediates the relationship between these needs and authentic self-expression. Individuals may adjust their self-presentation based on their perceived audience and the potential for social validation.

The model demonstrates good reliability and validity. The composite reliability (CR) values are all above 0.7, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values are all above 0.5, and most factor loadings are above 0.7. These indicators suggest a good fit and interpretability, implying that the scales used in the study effectively measure the latent variables. Analysing these needs contributes to a better understanding of individual behaviour on social media platforms.

The research results (Table 2) indicate that among the four variables—social needs, motivational needs, communication needs, and recognition needs—only communication needs have a significant mediating effect on authentic self-expression ($p = 0.041 < 0.05$). This suggests that individuals' needs for communication on Instagram first influence their public self-consciousness, which in turn affects their authentic self-expression. This may be because individuals' communication behaviors on social media help them perceive public evaluations and expectations of themselves, leading them to adjust and shape their self-expression to obtain more positive social feedback.

However, social needs, motivational needs, and recognition needs did not show significant mediating effects on authentic self-expression, indicating that these needs may influence individuals' authentic self-expression through other pathways or mechanisms, or that their influence may be relatively weak. For instance, individuals might express themselves directly to satisfy social needs or gain recognition without overly considering public perceptions.

Mediating Effect of Public Self-Consciousness Toward the Relationship Between Gratification Needs and Authentic Self-Expression on Instagram

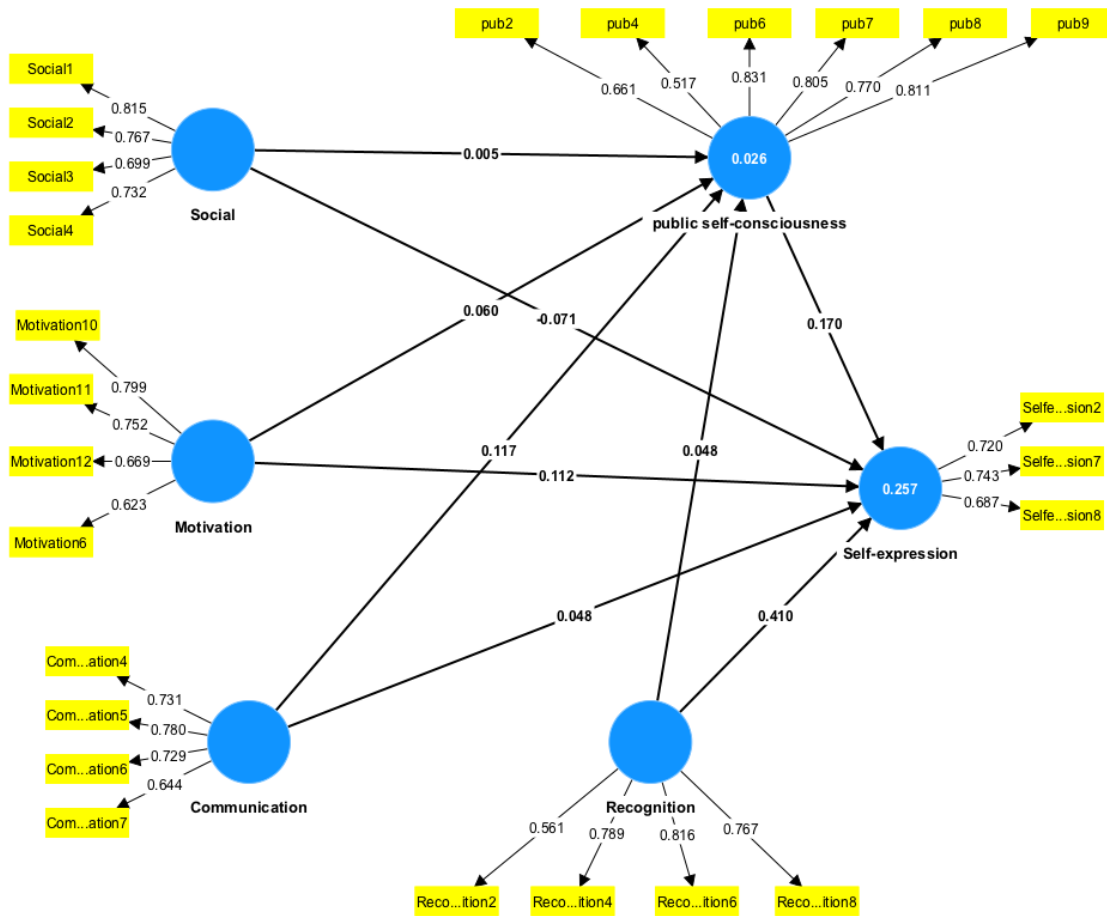


Figure 1. The structural model of mediating variable

In Table 2, the indirect relationship between the independent variable (motivation needs), the mediating variable (public self-consciousness), and the dependent variable (authentic self-expression) is not significant and correlated ($\beta = 0.010$, $p = 0.286$), and hypothesis 2 (H2) non-acceptable. The conclusion that motivation needs have an effect on authentic self-expression through public self-consciousness is based on the implication that the difference between these three was not significant. According to this study, Instagram users are more likely to use a platform that makes users happy, provides fun breaks, and is enjoyable to use, however, people with a high public self-consciousness often don't express their true selves just because the platform meets their needs. Yu and Kim (2020) propose that Individuals with a heightened sense of public self-consciousness, often associated with narcissistic tendencies, are more likely to engage in online self-presentation behaviors, such as posting photos on social networking sites (SNSs). This heightened awareness of how others perceive them drives a stronger desire to curate and control their online image. Similarly, research suggests that individuals with high public self-consciousness are more likely to engage in strategic self-presentation on social media platforms like Facebook to cultivate a favorable and positive self-image (Lee-Won, Shim, Joo, & Park, 2014). However, this conclusion differs from the present study due to the different platforms examined and the focus on how high public self-consciousness may influence the choice to use platforms for authentic self-presentation, an aspect that was not explored in depth by Lee-Won et al. (2014). Refer to Table 2, the indirect relationship between

the independent variable (communication needs), the mediating variable (public self-consciousness), and the dependent variable (authentic self-expression) was significant and positively correlated ($\beta = 0.010$, $p = 0.041$), and hypothesis 3 (H3) is accepted. The need to communicate in this study refers to Instagram users keeping up to date on social media, participating in planned activities, keeping in touch on holidays, and sharing positive experiences online. Obtaining feedback through high-frequency use of Instagram will result in people with high public self-consciousness posting photos, videos, and comments based on the feedback and being able to express their authentic selves.

As indicated in Table 2, the indirect relationship between the independent variable (motivation needs), the mediating variable (public self-consciousness), and the dependent variable (authentic self-expression) is not significant and correlated ($\beta = 0.010$, $p = 0.286$), and hypothesis 4 (H4) non-acceptable. People use different self-presentation strategies for different types of audiences. People with high public consciousness present themselves based on the comments of others, and as previous literature has stated that people often "present themselves positively in a variety of social situations" in order to gain social acceptance, it can be concluded that people with high levels of self-awareness present themselves based on the feedback of others in order to gain acceptance (Dunn, Biesanz, Human, & Finn, 2007, p. 990). Also in this study, more attention was given to authentic self-expression rather than self-presentation strategies.

This finding provides evidence that the role of public self-consciousness as a mediator between the gratification needs and authentic self-expression relationship has given an added value. Moreover, the findings imply that public self-consciousness partially mediates the link between gratification needs and authentic self-expression.

In this study, the moderating variable appears as a partial mediating role, so the beta in Table 2 is relatively low because the mediating variable is not a fully mediating variable it is a partial mediating variable. The implication is that public self-consciousness has an effect on Instagram users' expression of authentic self but the level of significance is not high and without the mediating variable (public self-consciousness), through the use and gratification theory it allows users to achieve authentic self-expression on social media. This shows that users with high public self-consciousness will not be able to express their authentic selves just because they are fulfilled on social media because out of the five needs (personal integration needs, social needs, motivational needs, communication needs, and recognition needs), only the communication needs are significant, and none of the other hypotheses are valid. From this, it results that the mediating variable is only when the communication need is fulfilled high public self-consciousness that users are able to show their authentic self-expression on Instagram.

Thus, the hypothesis of the present study (mediating effect of public self-consciousness on the relationship between the need for gratification and authentic self-expression) is supported. Previous literature has referred to social anxiety for the public when their self-consciousness is high (Buss, 1980), which is due to the fact that they care more about what others think of them. This leads to difficulties with authentic self-expression. Previous research has linked self-consciousness to the use of gratification theory (Morin & Everett, 1990) and linked self-consciousness to self-expression (Pachankis & Bernstein, 2012). The conclusion that can be drawn from this is that in this study, the mediating variable public self-awareness was able to play a supportive role in the use and gratification theory and authentic self-expression. Overall, public self-awareness plays an important role in the fulfilment of needs and authentic self-expression.

CONCLUSION

This research aimed to analyze the role of public self-consciousness as a mediator in the relationship between gratifications needs and authentic self-expression. Uses and gratification theory (UGT) postulates that individuals actively choose to use a medium that gratifies their needs or goals. Consequently, individuals purposively use social media to fulfill specific psychological needs, driving their behavior to seek out particular types and uses of the medium, and the more gratification they derive from it, the more they engage with it (Tylka, Rodgers, Calogero, Thompson, & Harriger, 2023). Over the past two decades, UGT researchers have studied how people use different digital media and have identified five types of gratifications: cognition needs, accessibility, affection, recognition needs, and entertainment (Cheng, Liang, & Leung, 2015; Leung & Wei, 2000; Lev-On, 2012; Phua, Jin & Kim, 2017; Rubin, 2009; Wei & Lo, 2006). While some studies discussed well-being (Huang, 2004; Kim, Lee, & Preis, 2020).

In general, previous studies considered using Uses and gratification theory and authentic self-expression, but these studies were conducted separately. Therefore, to fill this gap, this study aimed to investigate these two variables and explore their link.

This research aimed to examine the role of public self-consciousness in the relationship between the gratification needs and authentic self-expression. The findings suggest that users with high public self-consciousness may not necessarily express themselves authentically simply because their gratification needs are met on social media. Of the five needs examined (personal integration, social, motivational, communication, and recognition), only communication needs were significantly associated with authentic self-expression. This implies that, for individuals with high public self-consciousness, only communication needs are utilized frequently enough to impact authentic self-expression.

This study further explores the relationship between public self-consciousness as a mediating variable between use and gratification theory and authentic self-consciousness expressions. Of the five needs: personal integration needs, social needs, motivational needs, communication needs, and recognition needs, only communication needs were influential on authentic self-expression of people with high public self-consciousness. This suggests that through communication needs, which can be communication skills and communication frequency, can improve authentic self-expression of those who use Instagram. Future research should further explore the complex relationship between these needs and authentic self-expression, and attempt to identify other potential mediating or moderating variables. This will provide a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of individuals' self-expression behaviors.

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