Aims and objectives

Aims
To determine the role of loneliness in the formation of SNS addiction in order to explain SNS addiction as a continuous behavioural process.

Objectives
1. To examine SNS addiction within a behaviourist framework by investigating the relationship between SNS addiction and its antecedents and consequences, based on Skinner's three-term contingency (Skinner, 1974).
2. To argue that individual loneliness serves as both the antecedents and consequences of SNS addiction.
3. To examine the cultural difference between British and Chinese SNS addicts in relation to loneliness.

Methodology

Qualitative semi-structure interviews
- 24 volunteer interview participants who consider themselves have a problem with SNS addiction.
- To explore the behavioural patterns of SNS addiction and to learn from participant's descriptions, in their own language, of SNS addiction and the role of loneliness.
- This qualitative data is missing from the extant researches.

Questionnaire survey
- Measuring SNS addiction and SNS usage
- Measure the level of loneliness.
- A set of non-identifying demographic questions will be created relating to age, gender, nationality, education level and so on.
- The total sample size for the questionnaire survey will be 400 participants (200 from the United Kingdom and 200 from China).
- The age range will be set between 18 and 50, as people who fall into this category will normally have stable school or job responsibilities, as well as an awareness of how to build and maintain their social lives.

Theoretical approach

- The behaviour can be described as a three-term-contingency (Skinner 1938), in which behaviour is triggered by its surrounding stimuli.
- The functional function can be broken down into three parts: stimulus, behavioural response and consequences.
- The function of reinforcing stimulus is contingent on the behavioural response. The discriminating stimulus is the setting condition of the response has previously been reinforced, and which has the potential reinforcement in the future. Therefore, the behaviour is determined by individual's interaction with their current environment rather than individual's intention or motivations.
- The BPM showed that social and physical stimuli in the environment act the main drivers of user addict behaviour, with consequences and learning history also offering some contribution to explain this behaviour.

Framework

Contribution and conclusion

This study’s contribution to the literature is to explore the nature of SNS addiction by examining its formation and provide valid cross-cultural evidence for marketers and policymakers. The results may be interesting for international marketers in understanding the consumer behaviour patterns associated with SNS. Moreover, this study will also contribute to an understanding of consumer well-being, with implications for policymakers. As SNSs have become an unavoidable attribute of modern society, the results of this study may help to reduce the risk of the excessive SNS usage that negatively influences consumer well-being.

Selected references