Examining the Role of Legal Climate on Individual Creativity in Virtual Worlds

Research-in-Progress

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Abstract

Unlike the traditional media, where users are mere passive consumers of creative contents, digital innovations such as virtual worlds (VWs) empower individuals to also produce online creative contents. Such individuals expend considerable time, energy, and creative effort in producing these user generated contents (UGCs). Despite the voluminous production of such creative contents, the motivations for these VW user-creators remain unclear. Few recent studies have highlighted the role of a supportive legal climate in fostering creativity amongst such user-creators. Yet, from a theoretical standpoint, the implications of such a proposition remain empirically untested. In this research-in-progress paper, grounding our arguments in theories on psychological empowerment and creativity, we posit that an empowering legal climate for intellectual property rights management, comprising sets of rights (incentive rights and access rights) influence user creativity. We propose a research model linking legal environment to the psychological empowerment of VW user-creators and their creativity. We plan to test the proposed hypotheses through a survey of VW user-creators. The study, by integrating the role of legal climate on individual creativity in VWs, is expected to make significant contributions to the organizational and information systems literature pertaining to creativity in the VW context. In addition to guiding VW owners in charting appropriate policies for enhancing creativity amongst their users, the study will also help regulators to better formulate laws related to communication policies for fostering creativity in the UGC environment.

Keywords

Creativity, empowering legal climate, virtual worlds, psychological empowerment, user generated contents.