

Impact of Social Media Engagement and Content Characteristics on Fashion Consumption Propensity

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Impact of Social Media Engagement and Content Characteristics on Fashion Consumption Propensity

Min-Sook Park* · Min Kyung Moon** · Yunji Moon***

Abstract

Social media are used as a tool which is suitable for delivering various images emotionally in the area of fashion. How deeply consumers are led by the brands to be engaged in the brands' SNS, how often they visit SNS and gain information, how much empathy they elicit from visitors with their contents and how continuously brands provide up-to-date information are the important factors to raise consumers' fashion consciousness and draw out their fashion consumption to express themselves. Therefore, this study aims to explore the effect of social media engagement and contents characteristics on fashion consumption tendency and purchase intention. In order to verify the research question, study makes analysis centering on the $2 \times 2 \times 2$ MANCOVA model to draw out results of the differences among groups. As a result of analysis, this study verifies the difference between the effect of social media engagement on purchase intention and the effect of interaction of three variables on fashion consumption propensity and purchase intention and summarizes the implications.

Keywords : Social Media Engagement, Fashion Consciousness, Empathy, Continuity, Purchase Intention

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1. Introduction

SNS has been formed around the contents produced by individuals starting from connecting offline networks already formed with online ones (e.g. Cyworld, blogs, etc.). With their expansion of relationships among unspecified multitudes, preferences grew into the 2nd-generation SNS which reinforces networks around contents (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, KakaoTalk, etc.). Along with Pinterest and LinkedIn, Instagram is a front-runner of the 3rd-generation SNS, which is classified as vertical SNS that shares interests centering on specific subjects.

Growing use of SNS such as Instagram is changing the way we acquire information on fashion. As it becomes easy to find out how the latest fashion trends are changing and to see the consumption patterns of people with similar tendencies and as people can find information on various fashion brands in real time, the speed of fashion consumption becomes accelerated and it becomes easier for people to find and use the fashion trends that they need. Especially, with the spread of smart devices which has enabled people to have mobile access, SNS fashion information has come to have an even greater influence on consumers [Voorveld, 2018].

While fashion consumption in the past began by following the fashions of celebrities who were popular in fashion magazines and TV commercials, it is recently changing into sharing and enjoying the philosophies of brands and trends which consumers see through SNS and the consumption patterns of other people with similar lifestyles to theirs found on their SNS. It becomes important to consume fashion that fits the latest trends encountered through SNS and to have con-

sumers' own fashion philosophies and lifestyles. As a result, fashion brands have established their Instagram accounts and are launching marketing activities to deliver promotions which brands want to deliver from time to time, product information, trends such as fashion shows as well as brand philosophies and concepts they pursue, brand stories, designer's life and appearances of the muse.

With rapidly growing number of users worldwide, Instagram has been used by many companies and individuals and has become a trend among young people (Reference). An SNS that conducts communications through sharing photos and videos, Instagram has the philosophy of 'capturing and sharing the moments of the world'. As a vertical SNS that shares only specific interests according to each user's traits and preferences like Pinterest, Path, Foursquare, LinkedIn, etc., It shows strength in the area of fashion for which visual and emotional factors are important as it mostly consists of images and videos which are visual elements. Users of Instagram are mainly women and people in their twenties, and its popularity in the area of fashion is expected to continue thanks to its fun of finding interests by using hashtags, emotional pictures with filters applied and trends of celebrities and fashion people across the world and of sharing emotions.

Looking at the top ranking of Instagram, while stars of the world mostly occupy the page, fashion-related brands take up high rankings in the brand account [Statista, 2018] and there are also a variety of fashion products such as sports brands, luxury brands, brands of accessory goods and SPA brands [Ko et al., 2014]. Like this, SNS is also used as a tool suitable for emotionally communicating various images in the fashion area and, in this process,

how to induce consumers to be engaged in their brands' SNS and keep them coming back and acquiring information, how much empathy they draw out from their contents and how fast and continuously they post and provide the latest information will play an important role in raising consumers' fashion awareness and draw out fashion consumption to express themselves. Preceding Research has been conducted such as studies on motivation for using fashion SNS [Ko et al., 2014] and verification of effects such as impact on participation or purchase [Kim and Ko, 2010].

Therefore, the purpose of study is to analyze fashion consumers' use and consumption of vertical SNS such as Instagram which is gaining popularity among fashion consumers based on visual factors compared to existing text-based SNS such as Facebook and Twitter. This study intends to provide implications for the promotion strategies of fashion products through SNS by investigating the effect of social media engagement and contents characteristics on fashion consumption tendency and purchase intention and to suggest theoretical background how consumer engagement, empathy to contents and continuity of contents are combined and to draw out strategic implications by expanding literature review on the characteristics of existing SNS and consumers.

2. Theoretical Background & Hypothesis

2.1 Fashion Consciousness and Purchase Intention

Individual must frequently reevaluate himself and the meanings attached to the styles that he/she has adopted to remain current. Individuals with high fashion consciousness focus attention on the latest

fashion trends so that they can stay ahead of them, and adopt new fashions or catch up with their social group's changing identities to prevent losing their own. Idiocentric consumers are fashion conscious and satisfied with their lives [Dutta-Bergman and Wells, 2002]. Fashion consciousness is similar but different as fashion leaders. Fashion leaders learn about the latest fashions to express their individuality, whereas fashion consciousness is equivalent to fashion involvement and merely the desire for and adoption of up-to-date styles to maintain one's status in a social network [Goldsmith, Freiden, and Kilsheimer, 1993; Shim and Gehrt, 1996; Walsh, Mitchell, and Hennig-Thurau, 2001].

As social media has been used as a suitable tool to emotionally deliver various images in the fashion area, consumers' method of acquiring information about fashion has changed accordingly. Consumers are continuously checking their fashion senses and sensitivity through SNS and gaining information necessary to maintain their identity. 'Fashion consciousness' is a consumer tendency oriented toward fashion trend [Nirmala and Dewi, 2011] and a level of involvement in fashion or style, and fashion-conscious consumers have a positive attitude toward shopping, pursue diversity and enjoy comparative shopping [Iyer and Eastman, 2010]. As such, fashion brands' SNS has a positive effect of boosting fashion consciousness. As SNS strengthens trendiness of fashion brands, forms a friendly attitude toward brands and produces positive words of mouths, SNS is becoming an essential communication channel for fashion brands.

Recently, as it became possible even to purchase directly from the fashion brands' SNS, positive attitude is formed toward SNS and the brands and purchases occur at the

same time. In this perspective, this study establishes two dependent variables, which are strengthening of fashion consciousness and formation of purchasing intention, focuses on drawing out management strategies which can influence them. Fashion consciousness focuses on how deeply consumers are involved in fashion trends through SNS while purchase intention refers to the possibility of linking consumers' encounter with contents in the fashion brand's SNS to direct purchase afterwards.

2.2 Social Media Engagement

Media researchers suggest that audience engagement with the media context is an important antecedent to important outcomes such as usage, affect, and responses to communication messages [Calder, Malhotra, and Schaedel, 2009]. Engagement is particularly relevant in the case of social media communication. Because Social networking sites (SNSs) are relationship centric and inherently participatory, engagement with SNS pages—including those of a brand—naturally leads to the cultivation of meaningful relationships. For instance, communicating with consumers on SNSs through wall posts enables users to engage with the brand by commenting on the brand, expressing their likes and dislikes, and sharing the content with their social connections.

Social media engagement refers to immersion in media based on media experiences and feelings involved in or connected with media [Yang and Kang, 2009; Takahashi, 2010]. Only when one is engaged, or immersed, in media is one likely to achieve high level of understanding on the information acquired through the media. High level of media

engagement turned out to have a positive effect on advertising involvement, reliability of messages, message attitudes, advertising attitudes and recollections [Wang, 2006]. Engagement was originally introduced as a qualitative concept to judge how deeply consumers understand, are satisfied with, and focus on the information exposed rather than simply meaning existing audience ratings which places value on the number of people exposed because advertisements would not produce communication effects if consumers cannot be immersed in the media since they will not be able to be immersed in the advertisements delivered through the media.

Media engagement is defined as the total sum of motivational experiences of the media and is characterized by the fact that engagement itself is closely connected with an individual's daily life, which causes yet another experience. According to the narrative persuasion effect, the degree of commitment increases the favor of information and the change of belief [Green and Brock, 2000]. Use of social media in which two-way interactions frequently occur in real time is closely related with users' daily lives. Hence, 'the degree to which an individual is engaged in social media in everyday life' may influence the effect of communication through social media. Rather than simple use of social media, engagement in social media and high level of understanding of the contents would be effective in delivering information by fashion brands' SNS. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

- H1: SNS engagement will increase individual's fashion consciousness.
- H2: SNS engagement will increase individual's purchase intention.

2.3 Empathy to Contents

Empathy means feeling even others' joy together with them and true empathy can be formed through the process of recognizing oneself in others and others in oneself. Especially, empathy with others can be expanded as people can see different types of people in an advanced communication environment as social structure becomes more complex and communication technologies develop further, which increases opportunities for contact with others [Escalas and Stern, 2003]. Empathy also plays an important role in SNS where social interactions are actively taking place among users based on the technological characteristics developed. In SNS, people can experience empathy with others by reading and hearing from others in social relations. In SNSs characterized by high level of openness and accessibility, experience of empathy can be further extended.

As spaces which provide conditions to verify identities and where it is free and easy to post and view texts, SNS provides an environment where reciprocal empathy can be easily formed. Especially, it has recently become possible to access messages posted on SNS anytime and anywhere through smartphones, which enhances accessibility. This shows that SNS where posts are opened, shared and become accessible in real time is a medium which provides an environment in which users can have wider experience of mutual empathy than in any other media [Escalas and Stern, 2003]. As higher level of empathy with the photos and videos posted on SNS would boost fashion consciousness and purchase intention, this study proposes following hypotheses:

H3: Empathy to contents created by fashion brand page will increase individual's

fashion consciousness.

H4: Empathy to contents created by fashion brand page will increase purchase intention.

2.4 Continuity of Contents

Recently, as users can make access to messages posted on SNS in real time anytime, anywhere through a smartphone, accessibility to SNS has become even higher. Many fashion brands are uploading their brand stories, fashion trends and information on events through SNS, inducing customers to keep coming back. That is, fashion brands are communicating with consumers without limitation of time, place and media. Unilateral communication in the past which forced customer acceptance has given way to two-way direct communication. Thus, when compared to other media, SNS which offer various postings to be shared and accessed in real time can increase their frequency of user access only when postings are consistently updated, and their effect of information transmission will also be enhanced when appropriate level of information is provided at appropriate frequency.

'Continuity of Contents' is a concept whether SNS contents are continuously posted and the latest posting are continuously updated [Oh and Kim, 2014]. When contents are uploaded each time a user enters SNS and when it is possible for the user to confirm that contents are the continuously posted even on a single visit [Voorveld, 2018], the users can perceive that the SNS have high level of consistency and, as a result, can make a variety of communications on the information they want. Conversely, delayed uploading of information and failure to provide up-to-date information

will of course lead to failure to form fashion consciousness and purchase intention. Hence, this study proposes following hypotheses:

- H5: Continuity of contents created by fashion brand page will increase individual's fashion consciousness.
- H6: Continuity of contents created by fashion brand page will increase individual's purchase intention.

2.5 3-way Interaction of Independent Variables

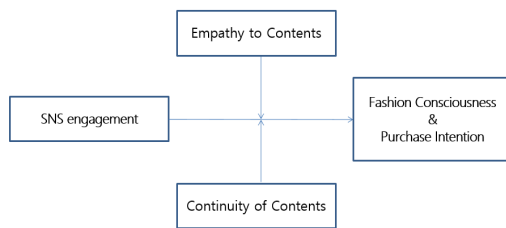
SNS Engagement which means how deeply an individual is engaged in social media in everyday life demonstrates that a fashion brand's information transmission on SNS is truly effective when the individual is socially immersed in and understands its contents in social media rather than that simple use of social media is important [Green and Brock, 2000]. Especially, the effect of information transmission can be expected to be even greater when the users empathize with the contents in highly interactive SNS. In particular, SNS is a medium which enables users to range of empathy experience as recently posted messages on SNS can be accessed anytime, anywhere through smartphones with higher accessibility, which has made postings offered, shared and accessible in real time. Hence, the effect of information transmission will also be enhanced when latest empathy-worthy information is continuously and consistently provided compared with other media [Oh and Kim, 2014].

Therefore, how deeply consumers are immersed in their brands' SNS, how often they visit and gain information, how much empathy they elicit from users with their contents and

how continuously they provide up-to-date information are the factors for brands to consider in order to raise consumers' fashion consciousness and draw out their fashion consumption to express themselves. While Hypotheses 1 to 6 are hypotheses about the independent effects of 3 variables on fashion consciousness and purchase intention, it is necessary to consider the case where these variables are simultaneously reflected in users' recognition in actual SNS. Thus, this study proposes following hypotheses:

- H7: There will be an interaction effect among SNS engagement, empathy to contents, and continuity of contents on individual's fashion consciousness.
- H8: There will be an interaction effect among SNS engagement, empathy to contents, and continuity of contents on individual's purchase intention.

〈Figure 1〉 shows the basic research model of this study. SNS engagement that indicates the engagement of using the social media is an independent variable. Empathy to contents and the continuity of the contents that created by fashion brand pages or accounts are two moderation variables, fashion consciousness and purchase intention are the dependent variables. This study will test the direct relationship between social media engagement and fashion consciousness and status consciousness. Also, the moderating effect to the direct relationship will be tested by two moderation variables. This study will examine the effects of the independent variables on the dependent variables and the interaction effects of the three independent variables.



〈Figure 1〉 Research Model

3. Method

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of SNS engagement, empathy to contents, and continuity of contents on fashion consciousness and purchase intention. SNS engagement is defined as level of immersion in social media themselves [Mollen and Wilson, 2010]. It was measured by items such as 'I cannot do anything else while using Instagram', 'I check Instagram frequently' and 'I use Instagram more than anything when searching for fashion information'.

Empathy to contents is defined the level of empathy about the content uploaded to the fashion brand's SNSs. It was measured items such as 'I well understood the contents', 'I got the meaning of contents', and 'I agree with contents' [Escalas and Stern, 2003]. Continuity of contents is defined the degree of user's perception of whether SNS contents are continuously posted and the latest contents are steadily uploaded. Items such as 'Contents are uploaded continuously', 'The content provides the latest information', 'Contents are provided regularly' were used to measure continuity of contents [Oh and Kim, 2014].

Fashion Consciousness is defined as level of involvement in fashion or style as a consumer orientation toward fashion trend [Nirmala and Dewi, 2011]. It was measured by items such as 'I am more interested in fashion after seeing the contents of the fashion

brand', 'I'm pursuing trends after seeing the contents of the fashion brand', and 'I want to reflect fashion information on me after seeing the contents of the fashion brand' [Park, 2014]. Purchase intention is the possibility of direct connection to the purchase after encountering the content on the SNS of the fashion brand. Items were measured by 'I want to buy the brand product after seeing the contents of the fashion brand' and 'I am willing to directly buy the product on the SNS after seeing the contents of the fashion brand' [Kim and Ko, 2013]. As a covariate, the preferences of the brand are measured and used.

In the questionnaire, respondents answered individual questions about their SNS engagement, fashion consciousness and purchase intention based on their used fashion brand page in Instagram recently. All constructs were measured by a 5-point Likert type scale. Data collected from customers who following main fashion brand pages in Instagram and used to test the hypotheses. Surveys collected from university students who's age is from 20~30 in South Korea. 152 surveys were handed out, and as 12 of the returned questionnaires were imperfect, a total of 140 questionnaires were used for analysis. Respondents consist of 87 males (48.6%) and 91 females (50.8%). The collected data were input in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences(SPSS) program for analysis.

4. Results

This study sought to verify whether users' engagement, combined with characteristics of contents, could affect their fashion consciousness and purchase intention, while contents were uploaded via SNSs of fashion brands. To test research model, this study conducted

2×2×2 MANCOVA taking SNS engagement, empathy to the contents, and continuity of contents as independent variables, fashion consciousness and purchase intention as a dependent variable, and preference as covariate. The preference of the brand also added in the final analysis as a covariate. The result of analysis was as per <Table 1>.

'Hypothesis 1: SNS engagement will increase individual's fashion consciousness' was rejected ($f=3.544$, $p>0.1$) and so only user's engagement with fashion brands couldn't be considered to build fashion consciousness.

'Hypothesis 2: SNS engagement will increase purchase intention' was supported ($f=10.699$, $p<0.01$). Groups with high SNS engagement showed high purchase intention (Mhigh: 2.64 vs. Mlow: 1.89) telling that by merely making users with high engagement use the brand's SNS, engagement could increase their purchase intention.

'Hypothesis 3: Empathy to contents created by fashion brand page will increase individual's fashion consciousness' turned out to be insignificant ($f=3.342$, $p>0.1$). 'Hypothesis 4: Empathy to contents created by fashion brand

page will increase purchase intention', which was a hypothesis relative to purchase intention, was insignificant either as a result of the analysis ($f=2.501$, $p>0.1$). Given these results, high empathy to the contents was not directly related to the increase of individual's fashion consciousness or purchase intention.

'Hypothesis 5: Continuity of contents created by fashion brand page will increase individual's fashion consciousness' was supported ($f=4.231$, $p<0.05$). It tells that in case of high continuity of contents, that is, should contents be often updated, fashion consciousness could increase (Mhigh: 3.16 vs. Mlow: 2.53).

Along the way, 'Hypothesis 6: Continuity of contents created by fashion brand page will increase purchase intention.' was also supported ($f=6.665$, $p<0.05$), telling us should contents be often updated, purchase intention would increase (Mhigh: 2.75 vs. Mlow: 1.85).

Hypothesis 7 and 8 aimed to verify 3-way interaction of independent variables. Hypothesis 7, which meant the result of 3-way interaction could increase fashion consciousness, was supported because a result of the analysis showed a statistically significant difference

<Table 1> Mancova for Perceived Preference fit Related Hypotheses

Dependent Variable		Fashion Consciousness		Purchase Intention	
Source	D.F	M.S.	F-value	M.S.	F-value
A. SNS engagement	1	3.082	3.544	10.699	13.963**
B. Empathy to Contents	1	2.819	3.242	2.510	3.276
C. Continuity of Contents	1	3.678	4.231*	5.107	6.665*
Preference (covariate)	1	0.345	0.397	4.460	5.820*
A×B	1	1.578	1.815	0.067	0.087
A×C	1	1.648	1.896	1.648	1.654
B×C	1	0.705	0.811	1.307	1.705
A×B×C	1	4.108	4.724*	5.068	6.615**
Error	379	0.869		0.766	

* $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$.

($f=4.724$, $p<0.05$). In order to examine the differences between eight groups, this study conducted a post-test using Duncan test (〈Table 2〉, 〈Figure 2〉). Eight groups were divided again into three of a, b, c. a Group with the highest fashion consciousness had high empathy and continuity ($M=3.38$) despite high empathy to the contents ($M=3.50$, $M=3.35$) and low SNS engagement. And c Group with the lowest fashion consciousness had low SNS engagement and low continuity despite high empathy.

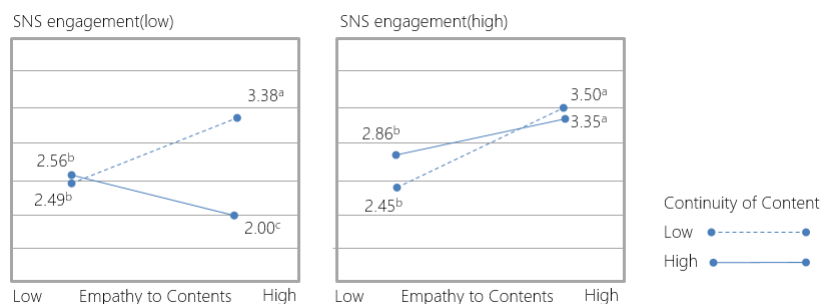
Results will be examined here in detail divided by high and low SNS engagement. In the first place, low SNS engagement had results as follows. Firstly, despite low SNS engagement, high continuity and high empathy caused highest fashion consciousness ($M=3.38$). This tells that consumers with low SNS

engagement, once perceiving that the related brand continued to update empathetic contents, could have high fashion consciousness. (In other words, this suggests that continual management of these two factors of contents might have a significant impact despite user's low SNS engagement). Secondly, unexpectedly, the group with the lowest fashion consciousness had low continuity of contents despite high empathy to the contents ($M=2.00$). This result is against expectation as general one that the case would be if the two characteristics were low. This result tells that the increase of empathy amid low continuity was not likely to boost fashion consciousness, eloquently emphasizing the importance of continuity. Looking at 〈Figure 2〉, if the value of fashion consciousness had high empathy in b Group, the group developed to a Group

〈Table 2〉 Mean and Standard Deviation for Fashion Consciousness

	SNS engagement (low)		SNS engagement (high)		
	Empathy to Contents		Empathy to Contents		
	Low	High	Low	High	
Low Continuity of Content	2.49 ^b (1.049)	2.00 ^c (.816)	2.45 ^b (.858)	3.50 ^a (.548)	2.52 (.947)
High Continuity of Content	2.56 ^b (.726)	3.38 ^a (.885)	2.86 ^b (.690)	3.35 ^a (.935)	3.27 (.930)
	2.46 (1.036)	3.08 (.909)	2.68 (.905)	3.23 (.898)	

Note) The standard deviations are in parentheses. To examine the differences, Duncan test was used.



〈Figure 2〉 3-way Interaction of Independent Variables → Purchase Intention

if equipped with high continuity and it dropped into c Group if equipped with low continuity. That shows us that continuity should be enhanced even if the empathy was high. Thirdly, when we compared between the case with high empathy, low continuity (M=2.00) and the one with low empathy, high continuity (M=2.56), it was statistically verified that should continuity be high, fashion consciousness became higher. This tells us that content that continues to upload even with a bit lower empathy from the standpoint of fashion trends rising from fashion consciousness might have a great effect on involvement with trends.

Next, should SNS engagement be high, there emerged two groups of a and b. There was no difference depending on high or low continuity of contents but depending on empathy to the contents. That is, should SNS

engagement be high, fashion consciousness increased when equipped with high empathy to the contents. This shows that should user's engagement with SNSs of related brands be high, focus on posting contents that can attract empathy is more important than continual updates.

Hypothesis 8, which established that as a result of 3-way interaction, purchase intention will increase purchase intention was supported as it showed a statistically significant difference ($f=6.615$, $p<0.01$). To examine difference among eight groups, the study conducted a post-test using Duncan test (Table 3, Figure 3). Eight groups were divided into three of a, b, c. a Group showed that high SNS engagement should be basically satisfied for the increase of purchase intention. Whether SNS engagement was low or low, purchase inten-

Table 3) Mean and Standard Deviation for Purchase Intention

	SNS engagement (low)		SNS engagement (high)		
	Empathy to Contents		Empathy to Contents		
	Low	High	Low	High	
Low Continuity of Content	1.68 ^c (.827)	1.75 ^c (.957)	1.82 ^c (.795)	3.50 ^a (1.049)	1.85 (.930)
High Continuity of Content	2.00 ^c (1.118)	2.56 ^b (.892)	3.00 ^a (1.155)	3.09 ^a (.900)	2.86 (1.000)
	1.88 (.827)	2.36 (.995)	2.18 (1.090)	3.37 (.944)	

Note) The standard deviations are in parentheses. To examine the differences, Duncan test was used.

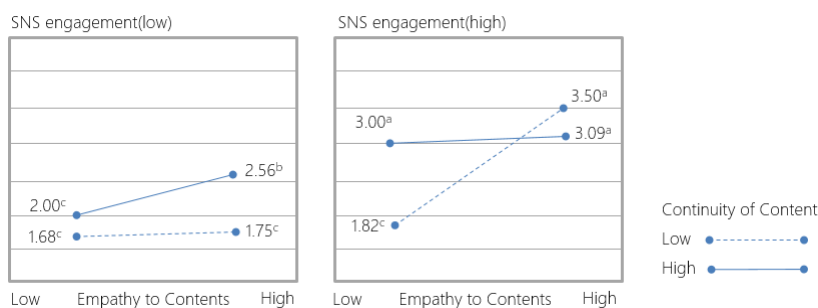


Figure 3) 3-way Interaction of Independent Variables → Fashion Consciousness

tion was lowest when both continuity and empathy were low.

Specific results turned out as follows, divided by low and high SNS engagement. In the event of low SNS engagement, two groups of b, c were divided and should both continuity and empathy be high, purchase intention was highest ($M=2.36$). This was similar to the analysis result of fashion consciousness. In the event of high SNS engagement, two groups of a, b were divided. Should both continuity and empathy be low, purchase intention became lowest ($M=1.82$).

5. Discussion

5.1 Discussions and Implications

In an attempt to seek measures to boost contents uploaded in SNS pages of fashion brands, this study established hypotheses as to the effect of SNS engagement, continuity and empathy on fashion consciousness and conducted analysis. The result of the analysis found the effect of continuity and 3-way interaction in the aspect of fashion consciousness, while there were the effects of SNS engagement, continuity and 3-way interaction of three variables in the aspect of purchase intention.

This study sought to examine the implications of these findings, largely dividing into fashion consciousness and purchase intention as a dependent variable. In the first place, on what should fashion brand pages put emphasis to increase fashion consciousness? Firstly, it's the importance of continuity. Unique and single effect of independent variables on fashion consciousness appeared only in the area of continuity. While there was no single effect of empathy, it suggested that

if fashion brand pages aimed at the boost of fashion consciousness, it needed to proceed strategically, focusing on continuity rather than seeking to boost empathy while publishing contents. The more often refreshing words continue to be updated showing trends, the more positive results it could yield. Especially in the case where trends are important like fashion, consumers are more likely to concentrate on obtaining this sort of information. And consumers who collect information via SNS rather than the existing homepage may always feel that they are connected to brands via SNS. So this can be interpreted as continuous provision of fresh information to them is important. This implication was remarkably expressed as well in the area of low SNS engagement as a result of analysis on 3-way interaction. Normally the case can be assumed where groups with the lowest fashion consciousness have both low empathy and low continuity. But here such groups emerged even with low continuity and high empathy. This result implies that should continuity be low, just to boost empathy is unlikely to increase fashion consciousness, demonstrating the importance of continuity. Compared to groups with high empathy and low continuity when SNS engagement is low, those low empathy and high continuity showed higher fashion consciousness. This tells that the need of increasing continuity when empathy is high. It means that content that continues to upload even with a bit lower empathy from the standpoint of fashion trends rising from fashion consciousness might have a great effect on involvement with trends. These outcomes explain consistently that consumers with low SNS engagement, once perceiving that the related brand continued to update empathetic contents, could have

high fashion consciousness. So this study suggests that it is important for the fashion brands to steadily manage these two factors in a long-term perspective even though there are not so many visitors to the site or activities are slow.

And then the importance of continuity as such is changeable should SNS engagement become high. It's because in this case of high SNS engagement, there is no difference depending on continuity and the outcome is changeable depending on empathy. It shows should user's SNS engagement be high, it's important for the brands to concentrate on posting empathetic contents rather than continuous updates. In conclusion, in order to increase fashion consciousness two-way strategy can be considered such as one for low SNS engagement/continuity and the other for high SNS engagement/empathy.

As a next step, the best strategy for fashion brand pages to increase purchase intention is to secure customers with high SNS engagement. The findings of the study tell that merely SNS engagement can increase purchase intention. This shows the fashion brand's activity to secure users with high SNS engagement in the first place can contribute to sales increase through SNSs. This may be a strategy that can be used to secure customers by beginning fashion brand pages. There's another result showing the importance of this strategy. Though continuity appears to play a greater role than empathy as independent impact of continuity emerges significantly, it's only applicable in the event of high SNS engagement given the result of 3-way interaction. In this case, should either one of empathy and continuity be high, it shows the same result as if both two were high. As a result, this study suggests that the strategy

of securing SNS engagement is most important to increase purchase intention. In the event of low SNS engagement, there is no effect even though either one of empathy and continuity is high and should all of the two be low, the lowest purchase intention emerges without doubt. As a result, the strategy of securing SNS engagement is most important to increase purchase intention and fashion brands can manage SNSs using strategic selection and concentration between empathy and continuity.

5.2 Limitations and Future Research

This study was conducted with a view to drawing measures for fashion brands to set targets to get positive response from consumers while operating SNSs and effectively implement suitable strategy. In this light, the study established fashion consciousness and purchase intention as positive response from consumers. There were other positive responses besides them and the reason these variables were chosen was because they are variables that should be achieved directly through the use of SNS. There are plenty of consumers who use SNS so as to grasp trends and satisfy their fashion senses in a way. They can have much emotional attachments while following brands that may help satisfy their senses though they may not buy brands. These days, consumers are able to directly buy from SNSs and so there have been attempts to supplement online sales through SNS instead of opening a shopping mall. That's why this study concentrated on purchase intention considering it as a variable that should be treated most importantly. If recent trend of direct purchase via SNSs becomes more popular, possibly leading to the diverse linkage

of SNSs, then more dependent variables should be considered in the future.

And the study carried on research by using SNS engagement and content characteristics as control variables that might have a positive effect on positive response as such, and selecting empathy to the contents and continuity of contents. Apart from responses to diverse contents and continuity, important variables can be considered at the same time but empathy and continuity, which provide information actively as important criteria for following, may be the base that plays the original function of SNSs. That's why this study concentrated on these variables. Research in the future can reflect more diverse characteristics of contents. The study particularly examined the characteristics focused on provided contents and the research might be limited to consumers' behavior from a more or less negative perspective. research could be conducted by drawing characteristics of contents from the perspective of actively-participating, and reflecting satisfaction with their own behavior as well as the level of their participation.

Probably because of that, the distribution of responding scores under this study was generally low as one of its limitations. The reason can be explained by the probability that more or less negative evaluation emerged in the area of purchase intention for example as it's now an early stage of purchasing via SNSs. Also the selection of fashion brands by the study might cause deviations in response depending on consumer's preference. Though preferences for brands were reflected as a covariate in the process of the analysis, in fact, there was low response overall. The study expects more diverse results can be drawn if future research select consumers who exper-

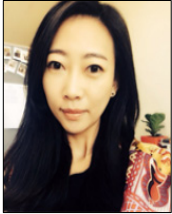
ienced to buy fashion products via SNSs as well as those with a bit higher involvement.

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