The Influence of Korean Instagram Users' Cultural Disposition, Social Capital, and Instagram Usage Propensity on their Evaluation Attributes for Fashion Influencers

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Introduction

For the last 10 years, many young people have taken to social media to share their stories and have become famous for their unique cultural tastes and social networking talents. Thus, they lead the micro-cultural trends and exercise much influence on their viewers. Today's Instagram users tend to selectively compare, choose, and evaluate those power-driven Instagram fashion influencers in terms of their tastes and propensities along with their cultural and social characteristics (Deng et al, 2013). As Instagram has been reported as the most powerful media for Korean Millennials, with more than 10 million active users, this study investigates how Korean Instagram users evaluate fashion influencers. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of fashion consumers' cultural disposition and social capital and Instagram usage propensity on their evaluations for fashion influencers on Instagram.

Literature Reviews

The Instagram Users' two distinct characteristics, which this study attaches importance to users' consumption decision-making, are their cultural disposition and social capital. Cultural disposition is an individual's perspective to see the self in the society. Triandis (2001) categorized individuals' cultural disposition by vertical-collectivism, vertical-individualism, horizontal collectivism, and horizontal individualism. Shavitt et al. (2011) found that horizontal individualism and horizontal collectivism maintain a closed tendency in using SNS. People differ in understanding their ways of consumption and making evaluations on something, as well as being willing to accept a hierarchy within a collective or believing equality between individuals as the ideal. Social capital refers to resources or the value of the resources, such as the cultural, economic and human capital for building and maintaining social networks. Geys & Murdoch (2010) demonstrated there are two forms of social capital people pursue in social networks. People value the "bridging" nature of what links them with diverse influential people. This takes the Bourdieuian explanation of social capital, which could be used practically to gain access to powerful positions through the direct and indirect employment of social connections. The other nature of social networks was named with a "bonding" nature, in which people seek emotional stability while being involved in their ideal social gatherings. The Instagram usage propensity is the consumers' Instagram usage styles and attitudes that correspond to their motivational values and behavioral characteristics. Johnson et al. (2012) pointed out the links between different forms of social identification and the personalities of individuals' influence through their Instagram usage propensity.

Research Method

This study conducted a questionnaire survey of 20 to 30-year-old male and female Instagram users. The questionnaire contains 2 sub-dimensions of Culture Disposition: Vertical Collectivism and Vertical Individualism; 2 sub-dimensions of Social Capital: Connective Social Capital and Bonding Social Capital; 2 sub-dimensions of Instagram usage propensity: Relationship Seeking Propensity and Information Seeking Propensity; 3 sub-dimensions of Fashion Influencer Evaluation Attributes: Professionalism, Attractiveness and Intimacy. A total of 483 replies were submitted and 467 of the replies were used in the final analysis, with 16 dishonest replies omitted. The quantitative data collected through questionnaires were analyzed using reliability analysis using SPSS 18.0 while AMOS 18.0 was used to test the suitability of the proposed research model and the path analysis between the variables.

Results & Discussion

To verify the reliability and validity of measurement variables, a confirmatory factor analysis was performed. As a result of a confirmatory factor analysis, the fitness index was $\chi 2$=639.577, df=341, p=.000, $\chi 2$/df=1.876, GFI=.914, AGFI=.89, NFI=.91, TLI=.947, CFI=.955, RMSEA=.043, which indicated that the overall model was relatively suitable. For Convergent Validity Verification of Measurement Model, Average Variance Extracted; AVE, Composite Reliability; CR, the significance of factor loading was confirmed, factor loading of all measured variables was significant at 1% level. The values of all variables are satisfied the generalized fitness standards(AVE>.500, CR: compound reliability>.700, factor loading>.500) And the convergence validity of the measurement tools was secured. In order to evaluate the reliability of the measuring instrument, the Cronbach's α value was calculated over .60 that indicates internal consistency. To investigate the relationship between Cultural Disposition, Social Capital, Instagram Usage Propensity and Evaluation Attributes, a path analysis was performed. As a result of the analysis of the overall structural model presented in this study, the fitness index was $\chi 2$=795.151, df=357, p=.000, $\chi 2$/df=2.227, GFI=.895, AGFI=.872, NFI=.888, TLI=.925, CFI=.934, RMSEA=.051, which indicated that the overall model was relatively suitable. Vertical Collectivism and Vertical Individualism were found to be related to Relationship Seeking Propensity; Only Vertical Individualism was found to be related to Information Seeking Propensity. Furthermore, Relationship Seeking Propensity was found to be related to Intimacy, and Information Seeking Propensity was related to Professionalism, Intimacy and Attractiveness.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to investigate the influences of social capital and cultural orientation on fashion-influencer-evaluation-attributes of fashion influencers according to individual characteristics of Instagram users. Therefore, it is meaningful to provide a basic data for understanding the characteristics of Instagram users who utilize fashion influencers, for the purpose of market actualization. However, since the personal characteristics of Instagram users in this study are limited to the cultural disposition, social capital, and the usage of Instagram, subsequent studies are required to follow up on Instagram Users' further personal characteristics such as their attachment tendencies and self-exposures. Until then, it is difficult to generalize an exclusive evaluation attributes of fashion influencers.

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