The Effects of Self-Consciousness and News Consumption on Facebook☆

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ABSTRACT

The popularity of social media has led to a variety of communicative behaviors among users. This study targeted Facebook as a representative social medial platform because it has the most subscribers in order to investigate factors that influence Facebook usage. In particular, because a person's behavior is based on how they are perceived by others, self-conscious behavior was examined in the study. Facebook usage and news consumption were examined to ascertain the effects of self-consciousness. An online survey was conducted to examine how private SC and public SC (SCs), affects Facebook usage (profiles and writing posts) and news consumption (clicking "like" and sharing news). 616 participants completed the survey, and results indicated that public SC was positively related to the degree of profile updating and post writing. On the other hand, private SC was positively related to the degree of news sharing. These results suggest that psychological elements significantly predict a user's behavior on Facebook.

☞ keyword : Facebook usage, news consumption on Facebook, private SC, public SC

1. Introduction

Facebook users are still growing steadily. A recent study reported that in 2017, 45.8% of Koreans use SNS in Korea. Among the several SNSs, the most frequently used SNS is Facebook, followed by KaKao Story, Twitter, Naver Band, and Instagram [1].

SNSs, including Facebook, are online media platforms that provide a variety of features for users. People use a SNS with the purposes of information seeking, social relationship & maintenance, contents sharing, self-expression, etc. [2, 3]. Seeking new relationships and maintaining existing relationships are the primary reasons of using SNSs, and while engaging in those activities, users enjoy interacting with others [2]. In addition, people turn to SNSs for gathering information. People rely on Facebook more than traditional news media platforms, and as such, the news is delivered to individuals on SNS networks.

Facebook users follow news accounts on Facebook via the feature of "friend" and when those accounts update their news content, it appears on the friend's Facebook timeline page. Users can clip the news stories that appear on their liked Facebook pages and read them later at their convenience. Besides this way of access the news, a user's Facebook friends can deliver the news using the share feature on Facebook. In other words, on Facebook, users are exposed to news contents through a variety of methods: directly posing the news on their Facebook page, reading news shared from friends, receiving news posts directly from news press' account, or viewing a relayed news story from a friend who has copied and pasted a news link. These diverse and non-linear interactions among users constitute the distinctiveness of the Facebook network; that is, users are exposed to different contents depending on their network composition and contribute to news traffic generation by sharing news articles with friends.

Studies have investigated what kinds of factors can make differences in using Facebook [4-6] and reported that personality makes significant changes [4], attitudes toward Facebook are related [5], and privacy concerns have significant impact on usage [6].

With the background of previous literature, this study assumed self-consciousness to be a significant psychological variable. Self-consciousness, however, has rarely been used to investigate behaviors on Facebook. Given that activities on

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Facebook are connected to one's relations with others, one's self-perception－the perception one has of him- or herself－is expected to be linked to Facebook use. This study examines the effects of self-consciousness on the usages of Facebook. First, this study looks at the effects of different usage on Facebook and second, the study looks at the effects of different uses on news consumption on Facebook.

2. Research Questions

SNSs including Facebook are media platforms where people gather and connect with others in the networks. Facebook users, first and foremost, enjoy connecting with others. Users build interpersonal networks online by establishing links with other users. Users sometimes promote themselves online by showing pretentious behavior. Other users develop cohesive feelings as members of an online group. In other words, they develop a social identity in the online group [7, 8].

A distinctive feature of Facebook is that a user is in constant connection with others once they sign onto to their account. A user's activities are observed by others on the network and the user also is aware that they are being watched by others. While observation is not direct, nor is the user under video surveillance, the impact is still felt and it influences a user's behaviors. This awareness is defined as social presence [2] and the effects of social presence have been studied, with research showing that people prefer media services that allow for greater social presence.

The feeling of being connected with others is not always favored. Some people are concerned about the invasion of privacy, and those people fear their private information could be released or stolen. These people often block others from knowing certain personal details such as their home address [6].

Moreover, some Facebook users, due to the connections with others, show low self-esteem and high contentment. Their general psychological well-being is often compromised [9] and they show a pronounced feeling of envy; As a user is exposed to content others have posted to show off themselves, the user compares himself or herself to them and feel inferior [10].

Because of the presence of others on the network, some people are more likely to engage with Facebook activities. People with high levels of ambivalent attitudes are less likely to use Facebook compared to others with low levels of ambivalent attitudes [3]. People with ambivalent attitudes want to show their feelings but hesitate to show them because they are afraid of embarrassment or being misunderstood. Users with greater ambivalent attitudes are more concerned with how their expression of emotion may affect others, and thus they suppress their emotions online.

Studies on the relationship between personalities and Facebook usage have also produced similar findings [5, 8]. People with high extroversion are likely to engage with information diffusion on Facebook. Moreover, people with high scores on openness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism tend to participate more in information production on Facebook.

In accordance with previous studies, this study assumed that psychological factors related to the consciousness of others can affect the usages of Facebook. This study centered on SC.

SC is the state of being conscious about oneself [10, 11]. Perception of oneself occurs when an individual reflects on who they are and wonders how others see them. Some people see themselves inward, but others look outside at others to know themselves. The number of friends on Facebook [12] a user has and a user's photograph posting behavior [13] are related to an individual's SC level.

This study furthers the investigation of self-perception by examining the effects of SC on a variety of Facebook features.

Facebook provides a number of different functions for its users. The updating of one's status is a main feature. A user may update his or her status at any time on their profile page. Users can write posts to engage in online conversations with others or in messages privately or in groups.

This study conjectures these features on Facebook are related to users' self-perception. With these aspects in mind, Research Question 1 is set as follows:

RQ1. Does self-consciousness influence the ways one uses Facebook?

RQ1a. Does self-consciousness affect one's degree of

profile updating on Facebook?

RQ1b. Does self-consciousness affect one's degree of writing posts on Facebook?

The effects of self-consciousness in relation to news consumption on Facebook are examined in Research Question 2. On Facebook, users watch TV news. The news stories are first aired on TV and then later uploaded online. Online channels to reach audiences are served as alternatives to audiences.

Facebook users are active and selective when it comes to news programs. They watch the news at their convenience. A user's decision to view a particular story depends on serial processes. First, a user obtains information about the news story, second the user monitors others' comments about the story, and finally, the user makes the decision to view the news. A user on Facebook uses a heuristic approach to choose what to view after browsing others' comments. People do not invest a huge effort into decision-making but select haphazardly based on what they are exposed [15].

When people read the news on Facebook, users engage with news stories in different ways. Facebook users may click "like" on a news post or share a news story with their Facebook friends. Clicking "like" is a feature through which the user shows their preference, feelings, sentiments, etc. News sharing is a feature where users relay the news story to friends and in doing so, the user's perspective or stance on an issue is recognized by others.

Taking a simple skim through and/or lurking are the least participatory engagements. Clicking "like" or "dislike" and expressing an emotion are the next levels of engagement. The highest level of engagement is posting a written comment. Posting a written comment is the act of opinion expression and requires a high level of engagement by a user. These types of behaviors represent message diffusing and result in the wide circulation of news online [16].

Users' engagement behaviors on Facebook, specifically, the effects of SC on news consumption on Facebook, are investigated in Research Question 2. Research Question 2 is set as follows:

RQ2. Does SC influence a user's news consumption on Facebook?

RQ2a. Does SC affect a user's degree of clicking "like"

when viewing news on Facebook?

RQ2b. Does SC affect a user's degree of news sharing on Facebook?
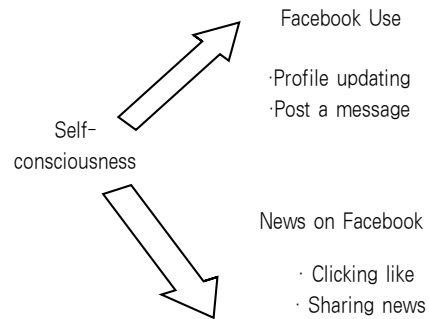
(Figure 1) Impact of self-consciousness on Facebook usage.

3. Research Method

3.1 Measurement

3.1.1 Time to use Facebook

The question, "How long did you use Facebook per day last week?" was asked and participants responded with times in minutes. The mean was 113.351(SD = 117.790) with the minimum time of 1.00 minute to the maximum time of 659 minutes. The distribution of Time to Use Facebook was highly positively skewed so researcher transformed the data to a natural log.

3.1.2 Number of Facebook friends

Participants were requested to log onto their Facebook accounts and check their number of friends (M=131.695, SD= 175.581). Similar to Time to Use Facebook, results were skewed distribution, so values were replaced with a natural log and adjusted to create a normal distribution.

3.1.3 Self-consciousness

The Korean version of SC was used[12] and this scale consisted of 10 questionnaire items on private SC and 10 questionnaire items on public SC. The items measuring

private SC included, "I am always trying to figure myself out", "I reflect about myself a lot", and "I'm often the subject of my own fantasies." The Cronbach's alpha for this construct was calculated to be .71. Items measuring public SC included, "I'm concerned about my style of doing things", "I'm concerned about the way I present myself", and "I'm self-conscious about the way I look". Item responses were on a 4-point Likert scale (0 = not at all, 4 = very much). The Cronbach Alpha value for this construct was .79.

3.1.4 Facebook usage

Two variables were measured to assess users' Facebook usage. One measured the frequency of profile updating and the other measured the frequency of writing posts. The question asked to participants was "How frequently do you update your profile on Facebook (…write a post on Facebook)?" These answers were measured using a 5-point Likert scale.

3.1.5 News consumption on Facebook

To assess how a user is engaged with the news, two constructs were created: Clicking "likes" on a news posting and Sharing news postings. The frequency of Clicking "likes" (Sharing) were also measured using a 5-point Likert scale.

3.2 Data Collection

An online survey was administered. Participants accessed the online survey on a website where it had been uploaded and completed the survey online. During the survey, participants were asked to log onto their Facebook accounts and report the number of friends they have on Facebook.

3.3 Research Participants

A total of 616 respondents completed the entire survey. There were even distributions in sex and age. Overall, there were 317 males (51.5%) and 299 females (48.5%); 151 were in their twenties (24.5%), 154 were in their thirties (25.0%), 159 were in their forties (25.8%), and 152 were in their fifties (24.5%).

4. Results

To test Research Question 1, a hierarchical regression model was created. Sex and age were added first followed by Time to Use Facebook and the Number of Facebook Friends. The next two dimensions of SC were considered in the model to investigate separately the effects of each dimension of SC on the different features of Facebook. The regression model was repeated three times setting the dependent variable each time as one of the three features of Facebook.

The results of Research Question 1 are presented in Table 1. As Table 1 shows, age, time to use Facebook, the number of Facebook friends, and public SC were significant. Sex was found to be marginally significant. The more time Facebook users spend on Facebook, especially users with a large number of friends on Facebook, the more frequently they update their profile. Public SC was also found to be positively associated with the degree of a user's profile updating on Facebook.

(Table 1) Factors affecting Facebook usage: profile

		B(SD)	R2
1st a			.008+
sex(1=man, 2 = women)	-.055	-.111(.082)	
age	.070	.064(.037)+	
2nd b			.046**
sex	-.066	-.135(.081)+	
age	.106	.097(.037)*	
time to use FB	.176	.002(.000)**	
FB friends	.097	.001(.000)*	
3rd c			.049**
sex	-.078	-.159(.079)+	
age	.106	.097(.036)*	
time to use FB	.148	.001(.000)**	
FB friends	.094	.001(.000)*	
Private SC	-.049	-.011(.012)	
Public SC	.254	.066(.013)**	

[a], $F(2,613) = 2.419$, $R^2 = .008$; [b], $F(4,611) = 8.701**$, $R^2 = .054$; [c], $F(6,609) = 11.694**$, $R^2 = .094$
$**p < .01$, $* p < .05$, $+ = < .10$

In regard to a user's degree of writing posts on Facebook, two constructs, namely time to use Facebook and public SC, were found to be significant. The more time users spend on

Facebook, they more likely they are to write posts often. In addition, users with higher public SC tend to write more posts than users with lower public SC (See Table 2).

(Table 2) Factors affecting Facebook usage: posting

		B(SD)	R2
1st a			.001
sex(1=man, 2 = women)	-.034	-.071(.084)	
age	-.002	-.002(.038)	
2nd b			.037**
sex	-.049	-.103(.084)	
age	.029	.027(.038)	
time to use FB	.172**	.002(.000)**	
FB friends	.062	.000(.000)	
3rd c			.024**
sex	-.057	-.119(.084)	
age	.024	.022(.038)	
time to use FB	.151**	.001(.000)	
FB friends	.055	.000(.000)	
Private SC	.064	.015(.012)	
Public SC	.106	.028(.014) *	

[a], $F_{(2,613)}$ =.360, R^2 = .001; [b], $F_{(4,611)}$ = 6.023, R^2 = .038; [c], $F_{(6,609)}$ = 6.653, R^2= .062,
**p < .01, * p <.05, + = < .10

(Table 3) Factors affecting news consumption on Facebook: clicking "like"

		B(SD)	R2
1st a			.000
sex(1=man, 2 = women)	-.003	-.007(.085)	
age	.009	.008(.038)	
2nd b			.027**
sex	-.026	-.055(.085)	
age	.028	.027(.038)	
time to use FB	.171**	.002(.000)	
FB friends	-.013	.000(.000)	
3rd c			.075**
sex	-.040	-.084(.082)	
age	.019	.018(.037)	
time to use FB	.132**	.001(.000)	
FB friends	-.027	.000(.000)	
Private SC	.126*	.030(.012)	
Public SC	.179**	.048(.014)	

[a], $F_{(2,613)}$ = .028, R^2 = .000 ; [b], $F_{(4,611)}$ = 4.326**, R^2 = .028; [c], $F_{(6,609)}$ = 11.639**, R^2 = .103
**p < .01, * p <.05, + = < .10

(Table 4) Factors affecting news consumption on Facebook: sharing

		B(SD)	R2
1st a			.001
sex(1=man, 2 = women)	.023	.049(.085)	
age	.017	.016(.038)	
2nd b			.061**
sex	.001	.002(.084)	
age	.055	.052(.038)	
time to use FB	.231**	.002(.000)	
FB friends	.061	.000(.000)	
3rd c			.059**
sex	-.012	-.025(.081)	
age	.052	.049(.037)	
time to use FB	.198**	.002(.000)	
FB friends	.053	.000(.000)	
Private SC	.012	.003(.012)	
Public SC	.237**	.063(.014)	

[a], $F_{(2,613)}$ = .258, R^2 = .001 ; [b], $F_{(4,611)}$ = 10.016**, R^2 = .062 ; [c], $F_{(6,609)}$ = 13.854**, R^2 = .346,
**p < .01, * p <.05, + = < .10

Research Question 2 was analyzed in the same manner as question 1 and the results are reported in Table 3 and Table 4. Findings showed that a user's degree of clicking "like" was related to greater Time to Use Facebook, higher Public SC and Private SC (see Table 3). Users who spend much time using Facebook and who are both outward and inward conscious tend to click "like" more often. Moreover, news sharing was found to be significantly related to Time Use on Facebook and Public SC (see Table 4).

5. Conclusion

The very nature of Facebook allows for users to use the platform in varying degrees. People use Facebook at their discretion, so the kind of individualization and customization is well known. However, elements underlying this individualization have not yet been thoroughly investigated. This study investigated the effects of two distinct SC psychological factors in order to ascertain the differentiated uses of Facebook by users.

Analysis revealed that demographic variables did not significantly influence users' usage of Facebook features. Second, the amount of time spent on Facebook overall was

associated with the different uses of Facebook features. This finding was neither surprising nor unexpected, but the effects of SC were noteworthy. Public SC was found to be significant and positively influence the number of profile updates as well as post writing. However, private SC did not show significant association except with the frequency of clicking "like".

These findings suggest that the public and private SCs yield differential effects. Facebook services are performed in relation to self-involving activities: i.e., users are cautious of how they appear to others. When a Facebook user updates a profile or posts, the user appears to be mindful of how he or she appears to other users on Facebook. This study found that the user's behavior of clicking "likes" is associated with both private and public SC. When a user clicks "likes", they seem to be assessing themselves both inwardly and outwardly, since they consider how they appear to other users on the Facebook network as well as how they appear to themselves.

Facebook is a media platform on which users connect with others. On Facebook, users are aware of themselves and others. This consciousness, both inwardly and outwardly, influence the way Facebook is used and users' news consumption on Facebook.

While this study points out a number of significant findings, there is the limitation of sample composition. Only Korean Facebook users participated. There is a need for replication studies in other countries. Second, investigations of psychological factors in addition to SC are needed to examine the conjoint effects of these variables.

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