

## Korean Professional Female Golfers' Self-Presentation and Fashion on Instagram

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With the growing number of people using social media, it has become essential for professional athletes to build and promote their personal brands through social media such as Instagram. According to Newberry (2021), Instagram reached over a billion users in 2020, second only to its parent, Facebook, with over 2.7 billion active users every month. Social media allows athletes to keep in touch and connect with their fans.

Social media enables athletes to control their public presence (Lebel & Danylchuk, 2012; Sanderson, 2008) and freely share aspects of their identity to their fans that are not typically showcased in mainstream media reporting (Sanderson, 2011, 2013, 2014). This research focuses on the self-presentation of professional athletes based on Goffman's (1959) self-presentation theory, the idea that people act as performers, expressing their identity through non-verbal and verbal messages. Self-presentation is a safe way to portray a positive image of themselves and avoid giving others undesirable impressions (Goffman, 1959).

With Instagram's unique focus on images, unlike highly structured sites such as Facebook, it has become a prominent tool for both individuals such as professional athletes and corporate marketing companies to use, deliberately integrating "intimacy, access and authenticity with promotion and branding" (Jerslev & Mortensen, 2016, p. 251). By examining young females' personas and self-presentation through fashion on Instagram, Won et al. (2021) categorized and analyzed the motivations for the respondents' self-presentation types. This study examines the Instagram feeds of the world's top seven Korean female golfers to explore important trends in female professional golfers' engagement with social media and fashion (Toffoletti & Thorpe, 2017).

While many studies have been conducted on how athletes use social media for branding and self-presentation (Geurin-Eagleman & Burch, 2016; Shreffler et al., 2016; Smith & Sanderson, 2015), few studies have investigated global top professional female golfers' social media presence in terms of fashion. Therefore, this study aims to examine Korean LPGA Tour golfers' social media usage behavior, focusing on fashion, to develop an understanding of how golfers use this medium for self-presentation to build their relationships with fans and as a marketing tool to build their brands. More specifically, this study aims to answer the following research questions: What are the relationships between the different forms of self-presentation and fashion shown on Instagram by female Korean golfers? What are the relationships between the different fashions shown on Instagram by female Korean golfers and the responses of their online followers (comments and likes)?

The current study used content analysis to collect data from the athletes' Instagram accounts.

The seven Korean female golfers were selected by the ranking of their Instagram followers in the

KLPGA. This study investigated the apparel types of top (e.g., sleeveless, short sleeve, long sleeve), bottom (e.g., shorts, pants, skirts), and headwear (e.g., cap, visor). Athletes' fashion colors (e.g., chromatic, achromatic colors) were collected for headwear, top, bottom, shoes, and gloves. Brand logo on athletes' apparel was examined by its visibility in photos. The number of likes and comments on each image were collected to explore fan engagement on Instagram. Data were collected from April 2021 to November 2021 during the official KLPGA season.

For descriptive statistics, crosstabulation was employed to analyze the frequencies of apparel types, fashion colors, brand logo exposure, likes, and comments among the seven Korean female golfers. For front stage photos, Hyunju Yoo (364K followers, 14 posts, 268,966 likes, 3869 comments) preferred short-sleeved tops; skirts with chromatic colors; and visors, shoes and gloves with achromatic colors. Bomee Lee (235K followers, 14 posts, 227,508 likes, 2860 comments) mostly wore skirts with chromatic colors; and short-sleeved tops, caps, shoes and gloves with achromatic colors. Shinae Ahn (194K followers, 23 posts, 158,496 likes, 1621 comments) mostly chose short-sleeved tops; skirts with chromatic colors; and caps, shoes and gloves with achromatic colors. Haneul Kim (146K followers, 14 posts, 148,360 likes, 3464 comments) preferred long-sleeved tops; skirts with chromatic colors; and caps, shoes and gloves with achromatic colors. Ingee Chun (119K followers, 15 posts, 102,867 likes, 2533 comments) mostly wore skirts with chromatic colors; and short-sleeved tops, visors, shoes and gloves with achromatic colors. Hyunkyung Park (83.7K followers, 20 posts, 122,446 likes, 4942 comments) mostly chose long-sleeved tops; gloves with chromatic colors; and skirts, caps and shoes with achromatic colors. Sunghyun Park (82.6K followers, 8 posts, 38,884 likes, 1358 comments) preferred long-sleeved tops with chromatic colors; and pants, caps, shoes and gloves with achromatic colors. All athletes uploaded the photos with visible brand logos on their apparel. For backstage photos, all seven athletes tended to wear casual apparel styles. Hyunju Yoo (6 posts, 106,786 likes, 1354 comments) mostly wore t-shirts, jeans with achromatic colors, and shoes with chromatic colors. Bomee Lee (18 posts, 270,032 likes, 3157 comments) preferred t-shirts, jeans or skirts with chromatic colors, and shoes with achromatic colors. Shinae Ahn (38 posts, 233,191 likes, 2387 comments) mainly chose jackets, jeans, and shoes with chromatic colors. Haneul Kim (11 posts, 112,200 likes, 1620 comments) mostly wore short-sleeved knit shirts, pants with chromatic colors, and shoes with achromatic colors. Ingee Chun (12 posts, 97,723 likes, 3191 comments) preferred knit jackets or dresses and jeans with achromatic colors. Hyunkyung Park (7 posts, 49,611 likes, 1472 comments) mostly wore crewneck tops, pants with chromatic colors, and shoes with achromatic colors. Sunghyun Park (7 posts, 46,717 likes, 1842 comments) mainly chose hoodies, jeans with chromatic colors, and shoes with chromatic or achromatic colors.

Posted photos with revealing clothing had more likes and comments than others. This result is consistent with previous studies that showcased the existence of gender stereotypes of female and male athletes in social media (Geurin-Eagleman & Burch, 2016; Smith & Sanderson, 2015). High numbers of likes and comments also occurred when players had won games that day. Overall, likes and comments were higher for front-stage photos with visible brand logos. This

finding indicates that sponsorship has an important role in addition to promoting products and services. Future studies can examine gender differences in athletes and social media usage. By exploring female athletes' fashion and self-presentation on social media, this study contributes to the sports social media marketing research by providing theoretical (self-presentation theory) and practical (brand marketing strategies) implications.

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