KOREAN PROFESSIONAL GOLFERS' SELF-PRESENTATION AND FASHION ON INSTAGRAM COMPARISON BETWEEN FEMALE AND MALE

Kim Hahn, Ph.D., Kent State University & Wonyul Bae, Ph.D., Ithaca College

Key words: social media, Instagram, self-presentation, frontstage, backstage

Ever since Se Ri Pak won the 1998 LPGA (Ladies Professional Golf Association) Championship, the popularity of golf as a leisure sport for both women and men has risen exponentially in South Korea. Especially during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, the average age of Korean golfers has become younger, and golf has become one of the most popular contactless sports among millennials, who also enjoy posting content on social media to express their financial power and uniqueness (Han, 2021). This shift in golfers' ages and active social media postings led to the extraordinary growth of Korea's golf market (Han, 2021). This study builds on the phenomenon of South Korean professional golfers' influence on general public golf popularity. Our study focuses on female and male athletic representation and fan engagement on the photograph-based platform Instagram (Toffoletti & Thorpe, 2018). Social media, such as Instagram, enables athletes to freely share aspects of their identity and personal life with their fans that are not typically showcased in mainstream media (Lebel & Danylchuk, 2012; Sanderson, 2014). Based on Goffman's (1959) self-presentation theory (the idea that people act as performers, expressing their identity through non-verbal and verbal messages), this study examines the Instagram feeds of the Korean female and male professional golfers to compare and contrast how athletes' gender and fashion play different roles in professional athletes' self-branding and fan engagement. 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; Toffoletti & Thorpe, 2017), few studies have investigated both female and male professional golfers' social media presence in terms of fashion. Therefore, this study aims to examine Korean female and male professional golfers' social media usage behavior, focusing on fashion to answer the following research questions: What are the differences between female and male Korean professional golfers regarding self-presentation and fashion shown on Instagram (RQ1)? What are the differences between female and male Korean professional golfers regarding the relationships between the different fashions on Instagram and their online followers' responses (comments and likes) (RQ2)?

To examine Instagram usage behavior, we selected the top five Korean female and male professional golfers with the most Instagram followers as the sample for this study. Content analysis methodology was employed to analyze and categorize Instagram posts over 12 months, from January 2022 to December 2022. Previous studies in the context of sports and social media have used the content analysis method extensively (Brown & Billings, 2013; Geurin-Eagleman

& Burch, 2016; Smith & Sanderson, 2015; Zeng et al., 2011; Winand et al., 2019) because it is a systematic and a scientific method to analyze the meaning of communicative content (Krippendorff, 2019). A one-way ANOVA was conducted to measure the significant differences between female and male professional golfers' self-presentations and fashion. Bivariate correlation was used to determine relationships between likes and comments. Postings with photos of golf wear and sportswear/training outfits were coded as frontstage presentations for this study; casual and business wear were initially coded as backstage postings for both female and male golfers, based on previous studies (Geurin-Eagleman & Burch, 2016; Smith & Sanderson, 2015). Additional clothing categories were coded as backstage presentations for female professional golfers.

To answer RQ1, we analyzed the differences between female and male Korean professional golfers regarding self-presentation and fashion shown on Instagram. Out of 230 postings examined, five female professional golfers posted a total of 134 (58.2%) frontstage images, 121 photos (52.6%) wearing golf wear and 13 (5.7%) showing them wearing sportswear/training outfits. Male professional golfers posted 59 images, 40 of which (67.8%) were coded as frontstage images: 36 photos (61%) wearing golf wear and 4 (6.8 %) wearing sportswear/training outfits. For backstage presentations, female professional golfers posted 68 photos (29.6 %) wearing casual clothing and 15 (6.5 %) wearing business wear. Male professional golfers posted 18 photos (30.5%) wearing casual clothing and one (1.6%) wearing business wear. Our initial analysis showed that female professional golfers posted 83 (36.1%) backstage images, and male professional golfers posted 19 (32.2%) backstage images. In their Instagram postings, no other clothing categories were identified for male professional golfers other than golf wear, business outfit, casual clothing, and sportswear/training outfit. Conversely, three other clothing categories, dress, swimsuit, and costume, were identified for female professional golfers. They posted five photos (2.2 %) wearing dresses, five (2.2 %) in swimsuits, and three (1.3%) in traditional Korean costumes. As a result, 13 additional images were added to female professional golfers' back-stage presentations, totaling 96 (41.7%) compared to 19 (32.2%) male professional golfers.

To answer RQ2, we analyzed the relationships between the different fashions shown on Instagram and the responses of professional golfers' online followers (comments and likes) and compared male and female professional golfers. A bivariate correlation revealed that the number of likes and comments were positively correlated, $r(287) = .625$, $p < .001$ for both gender Instagram posts. A one-way ANOVA found no significant differences between female and male professional golfers. However, some interesting results were identified when female professional golfers presented different clothing categories, and the numbers of likes and comments were analyzed using descriptive statics. Despite the small number of female professional golfers' postings (2.2 %, n= 5) of themselves wearing dresses (backstage), these had the highest average number of likes, 12,146.75, compared to the next highest average number of likes, 10,157.14, for

their golf wear (frontstage) postings (52.6%, n= 121). The average number of comments also differed slightly when clothing categories were compared. The highest average number of comments for a dress (2.2 %, n=5) also had the highest number of comments (n=337), and interestingly, three postings with a traditional Korean costume had the next highest average number of comments (n=247). The outfit with casual wear received the highest number of likes (24,883) and comments (436) for female professional golfers. On the contrary, when male professional players posted images wearing sportswear/ training outfits (frontstage), they received the highest average number of likes (n=3,128.75) and comments (n= 84). Those male professional golfers received the next highest average number of likes, 2083.06, for images with casual wear (backstage), close to the second highest number of likes for golf wear (front stage) photos at 2,012.69.

The results from this study suggest several areas of discussion and implications. More than half of both female and male professional golfers' Instagram images were frontstage images, indicating that Korean professional golfers prefer presenting frontstage to backstage on Instagram. Male professional golfers showed a slightly higher percentage of frontstage postings than female professional golfers, confirming the previous study that men are more likely to present themselves frontstage (Trammell & Keshelashvili, 2005), also supporting earlier studies concluding that athletes most often portray their athleticism as their public image (Krane et al., 2010). Our study demonstrated that female professional golfers posted more backstage photos, and additional backstage images such as dresses, swimsuits, and traditional costumes were identified, confirming previous research that female athletes post more about their personal lives in a non-sport setting (Geurin-Eagleman & Burch, 2016; Smith & Sanderson, 2015). Another finding was that both frontstage and backstage images had a positive relationship with the number of likes. This result contradicts a previous study that found a negative relationship between frontage and the number of likes (Hahn et al., 2023). Although Geurin-Eagleman and Clavio (2015) found that backstage presentations are more beneficial for mainstream sports athletes to strengthen relationships with fans by sharing personal aspects of their lives, our study found no difference between frontstage and backstage in terms of fan engagement. The current study provides theoretical and practical implications by exploring athletes' brand image and self-presentation on social media.

Theoretically, our study confirmed that social media, more specifically Instagram, can be used as a new platform to study athletes' self-presentation and to understand current social media usage trends of professional athletes and their fan engagement. This study classifies detailed clothing items posted in Instagram posts. It identifies self-presentations that differ by gender and contributes to expanding the theoretical framework of self-presentation and gender stereotypes within sports social media research. The present study suggests a new insight into brand marketing strategies via social media for both athletes and sponsors. As female professional golfers'' posts with images of fashionable clothes are more likely to increase bonding with fans, sports agencies or agents can consider the potential positive effects of using posts showcasing

specific fashion items as strategic brand marketing and to connect with their fans through brand management (Smith & Sanderson, 2015).

References

Brown, N. A., & Billings, A. C. (2013). Sports fans as crisis communicators on social media websites. *Public Relations Review, 39*(1), 74-81. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2012.09.012

Geurin-Eagleman, A. N., & Burch, L. M. (2016). Communicating via photographs: A gendered analysis of Olympic athletes' visual self-presentation on Instagram. *Sport Management Review, 19* (2016), 133-145. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2015.03.002

Geurin-Eagleman, A. N., & Clavio, G. (2015). Utilizing social media as a marketing communication tool: An examination of mainstream and niche sport athletes' Facebook pages. *International Journal of Sport Management, 16*(2), 316-334.

Goffman, E. (1959). The presentation of self in everyday life. Anchor Books.

Han, K. H. (2021). Effects of golf wear consumers' post-COVID-19 changes of clothing benefits sought on selection criteria and post-purchase satisfaction. International Journal of Costume and Fashion, 21(2), 31-48. https://doi.org/10.7233/ijcf.2021.21.2.031

Hahn, K. H., Bae, W. & Cho, M. (2022). Korean professional female golfers' self-presentation and fashion on Instagram. *International Textile and Apparel Association Annual Conference Proceedings, 79*(1). https://doi.org/10.31274/itaa.15726

Krippendorff, K. (2019). Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology (4th ed.). SAGE.
Krane, V., Ross, S. R., Miller, M., Rowse, J. L., Ganoe, K., Andrzejczyk, J. A., & Lucas, C. B. (2010). Power and focus: Self-representation of female college athletes. *Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise, 2*(2), 175-195. https://doi.org/10.1080/19398441.2010.488026

Lebel, K., & Danylchuk, K. (2014). Facing off on Twitter: A generation Y interpretation of professional athlete profile pictures. *International Journal of Sport Communication, 7*(3), 317-336. https://doi.org/10.1123/IJSC.2014-0004

Sanderson, J. (2008). The blog is serving its purpose: Self-presentation strategies on 38pitches.com. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 13*(4), 912-936. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083- 6101.2008.00424.x

Shreffler, M. B., Hancock, M. G., & Schmidt, S. H. (2016). Self-presentation of female athletes: A content analysis of athlete avatars. *International Journal of Sport Communication, 9*(4), 460-475.

Smith, L. R., & Sanderson, J. (2015). I'm going to Instagram it! An analysis of athlete self-presentation on Instagram. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 59*(2), 342-358. https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2015.1029125

Toffoletti, K., & Thorpe, H. (2018). The athletic labor of femininity: The branding and consumption of global celebrity sportswomen on Instagram. *Journal of Consumer Culture, 18*(2), 298-316. https://doi.org/10.1177/1469540517747068

Trammell, K. D., & Keshelashvili, A. (2005). Examining the new influences: A self-presentation study of A-list blogs. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 82*(4), 968-982. https://doi.org/10.1177/107769900508200413

Winand, M., Belot, M., Merten, S., & Kolyperas, D. (2019). International sport federations' social media communication: A content analysis of FIFA's Twitter account. *International Journal of Sport Communication, 12(*2), 209-233. https://doi.org/10.1123/ijsc.2018-0173

Zeng, G., Go, F., & Kolmer, C. (2011). The impact of international TV media coverage of the Beijing Olympics 2008 on China's media image formation: A media content analysis perspective. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship, 12*(4), 39-56. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSMS-12-04-2011- B004