

# 사용자의 성격에 따른 정보의 통제와 투사 전략: 인상관리를 위한 소셜미디어의 활용\*

## Information Suppression and Projection Strategies Depending on Personality Traits: Using Social media for Impression Management

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### ABSTRACT

*As social media started to work as important communication tools, social media users have tried to manage their image, identity, and impression through social media. Social media service providers have been interested in providing various functions effectively disclosing users' emotion, such as posting, commenting, and sharing content; on the other hand, relatively few efforts have been made to provide social media functions for information suppression. In this study, therefore, we attempt to examine the relationship between Facebook users' personality and impression management behaviors. Personal traits of users including public self-consciousness, positive self-expression, and honest self-expression were considered as independent variables. Impression management behaviors are composed of two variables, which are suppression and projection. The survey was conducted, targeting 230 Facebook users. The research findings show that public self-consciousness and positive self-expression are positively associated with information suppression while both positive and honest self-expression is positively associated with information projection.*

*Keywords: Impression Management, Social media, Information Suppression, Information Projection*

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## 1. Introduction

Social media have been a major ground for social interaction (Kwon and Ko, 2013). Although the names or the formats are somewhat different by the social media types, most activities in social media are based on “friends” (Won et al., 2014). Facebook (FB) is one of the most popular social media in the world, and has become a very significant component of millions of people’s lives (Hall and Pennington, 2013; Ryan and Xenos, 2011).

As social media started to work as important communication tools, social media users have tried to manage their image, identity, and impression through social media (e.g. Kuo et al., 2013; Ma et al., 2013; Tong et al., 2008). Social media allows users to announce their presence to the people who they want to form a relationship with, as well as get feedbacks and impressions of themselves from the people. Nowadays, many universities and companies utilize social media as sources of applicant’s evaluation. Therefore, social media users realize the need to manage their impression on social media, resulting in information projection and suppression behaviors. For these reasons, social media service providers have been interested in providing their users various functions effectively disclosing their emotion, such as posting, commenting, and sharing content; on the other hand, relatively few efforts have been made to provide social media functions for information suppression

(Lang and Barton, 2015). However, according to Goffman’s impression management theory, it is more important to control and manage one’s image in a desirable way than to disclose lots of uncontrollable information even though they are positive (Strano and Queen, 2012).

In this study, therefore, we try to examine the relationship between Facebook users’ personality and impression management behaviors. We chose Facebook as our study context since Facebook is one of the most popular social media and also provides some functions to suppress unwanted information disclosure, such as photo untagging and privacy management. Specifically, our research question is as follows:

Do users’ personality traits related to image showing others, such as public self-consciousness, positive self-expression, and public self-expression, affect their impression management strategies, which are information suppression and information projection behaviors, in Facebook?

In previous studies conducted in social media contexts, several studies have found the factors affecting user’s continuous usage and motive based on the personality traits such as Big Five (Hollenbaugh and Ferris, 2014; Ryan and Xenos, 2011; Wang, 2013; Winter et al., 2014). Especially, Hollenbaugh and Ferris (2014) examined the relationship among personality and motives of Facebook usage and amount, depth, and breadth of self-disclosure. However, attempts to understand the specific user behaviors in

terms of impression management have not been undergone yet on an empirical level. The results of this study could provide guidelines for social media providers who want to develop and implement new functions providing effective and convenient impression management.

## 2. Theoretical Background

### 2.1 Impression Management and Social Media for Impression Management

Impression management is a process in which individuals try to make the image that others have of them in normally face-to-face interaction. Therefore, impression can be regarded as an outcome of self-presentation (Lee et al., 2014). The concept of impression management was firstly suggested by Goffman (1959) which became a fundamental framework afterwards. After Goffman, lots of academic research based on his theory in various context have been conducted.

According to Goffman, people manage “behavioral residues” which could be intentionally or unintentionally created to impress others. In traditional offline contexts, behavioral residues are, of course, displayed in physical spaces; however, as technology improves, many kinds of virtual spaces have used to manage behavioral residues (Tong et al., 2008). In virtual spaces, people can easily safeguard their socially desirable image since both engagement and disengagement from their

behavioral residues and the real selves are much more convenient in those situations (Kuo et al., 2013).

In this regard, social media impression management is a process in which individuals attempt to influence the image in the social media context. Unlike offline context, users can directly create, post, and manage only information they want to, and spend enough time thinking before posting information which could be more effective source for managing their image and impression. As an example, firms are recently utilizing social media as a channel to understand more of the applicants during hiring process. As the social recruiting becomes more active, social media information providers try actively on their impression management to be the firm’s ideal candidate. The firms, information consumer, can grasp the applicant’s normal life style and how they are expressing themselves on social media. Therefore, online impression management through social media is playing an important role between information provider and consumer these days.

The previous studies about impression management and related concepts under social media contexts are as following Table 1: As you can find in Table 1, the effects of personality traits on impression management behaviors have been studied; however, their respective effects on both engagement (projection) and disengagement (suppression) strategies have not been simultaneously explored yet.

<Table 1> Previous Research on Impression Management using Social Media

Research	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Sample
Choi et al. (2014)	Impression management	Continuous usage intention	167 Facebook users
Hall and Pennington (2013)	Profile owners' self-report Observer estimates	Extraversion Agreeableness Conscientiousness Self-monitoring FB honesty	Thirty-five observers were given screen shots of 100 FB targets' profile pages
Kuo et al. (2013)	self-presentation activities (expressive control, privacy control, image control)	Facebook usage	405 Facebook users
Lang and Barton (2015)	Personality Traits from Big 5 (Agreeableness, Conscientiousness)	Information suppression (Untag photo, Remove photo from timeline, Privacy settings, etc.)	Focus group interview of 19 participants 112 Facebook users with a profile
Lee et al. (2014)	Online environment as the 'borderless stage' and 'non-involvement situation'	Non-involvement situation Impression management skills (civil inattention, tagging, non-focused interaction)	In-depth interview with 12 Facebook users
Ma et al. (2013)	Online self-presentation through image improvement	Change of relation, Intention to use	207 social media (Facebook, Twitter, Cyworld, and Metoday) users
Qui et al. (2012)	Real life vs. Facebook	Disclosing positive and negative emotion	Study 1: 185 college students Study 2: 37 college students
Strano and Queen (2012)	Physically unattractive image Misrepresentation Hiding actions from disapproval Disassociation from social group	Information suppression (untagging and requesting deletion on Facebook)	In-depth interview of 30 subjects Surveying for 546 Facebook users
Wang (2013)	Personality traits from Big 5 (Openness, Extraversion, Agreeableness)	Facebook self-disclosure Share Check-in intensity	523 Facebook users in Taiwan
Winter et al. (2014)	Personality traits (extraversion, narcissism, self-efficacy, need to belong, need for popularity)	Information projection (status update)	173 Facebook groups and online forums at a large European university
Won et al. (2014)	Public self-consciousness Private self-consciousness Actual-to-total Friends ratio	Positive self-presentation	College-age Facebook users in the United States (n = 183) and South Korea (n = 137)

## 2.2 User's Personality Traits

Phares (1984) defined personality which is a cognitive psychological perspective as the pattern of characteristic thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that distinguishes one person from another and that persists over time and situation. That is, personality is individual's unique thoughts and behaviors distinguishing from others. Caspi et al. (1990) defined personality as behavioral inclination towards human or environment and overall impression onto other people; hence, personality traits have been frequently adopted as antecedents of one's image and impression making.

Studies on personality have been conducted actively and through the preliminary research focusing on personality and online behavior, it was verified that personality affects social media using behavior. Especially, the relationship between Big Five traits and self-disclosure has been frequently studied (Hollenbaugh and Ferris, 2014; Ryan and Xenos, 2011; Wang, 2013; Winter, et al., 2014).

However, we would like to focus on the personality traits that are related to self-presentation, which are public self-consciousness, positive self-expression, and honest self-expression. Public self-consciousness is a personality trait that focuses on awareness of the self as it's viewed by others (Carver, 1985). This is one of the factors of social media usage behaviors that focus on what others think on me. Self-expression is one of the communication methods to deliver one's life, idea, feeling, or mood to others verbally or non-verbally. Self-expression could be very candid and honest (i.e.

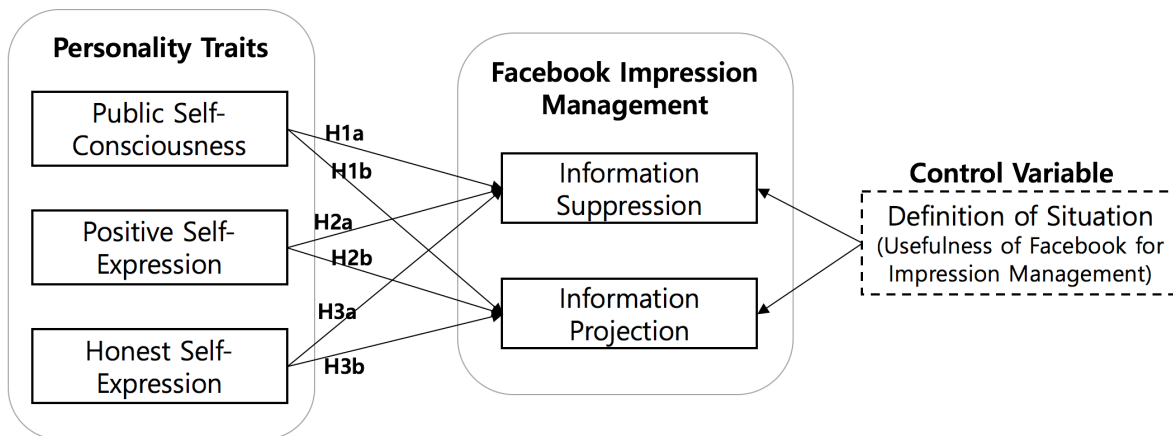
honest self-expression) while sometimes people attempt to express only positive sides about their lives (i.e. positive self-expression) (Kim and Lee, 2011).

## 3. Research Model and Hypotheses

Considering our discussion so far, personal traits of users including public self-consciousness, positive self-expression, and honest self-expression are considered as independent variables. Impression management behaviors are composed of two variables, which are information suppression and information projection based on selective self-presentation (Gonzales and Hancock, 2011). Information suppression means untagging or requesting deletion of undesirable Facebook pictures uploaded and tagged by other users (Lang and Barton, 2015). Information projection includes frequent and regular status, profile updates and posting (Lang and Barton, 2015; Winter, et al., 2014).

### 3.1 Public Self-Consciousness and Impression Management

Unlike private self-consciousness which is related to hidden aspects of the self, not easily accessible to others, public self-consciousness is closely related to self-perceptions from the impressions formed by others' eyes. Public self-consciousness is defined as "awareness of the self as it is viewed by others" (Scheier



<Figure 1> Research Model

and Carver, 1985). People with strong public self-consciousness have higher motivation on self-presentation and tend to express their thoughts and feelings actively to the others (Schouten et al., 2007). Moreover, it was proved that information projection such as bloggers' frequency of postings of messages or photos on their blog has close relationship with public self-consciousness (Shim et al., 2008).

On the other hand, public self-consciousness is also associated with information suppression which means how individuals respond to what others communicate about them, by controlling for information that is not desirable (Lee-Won et al., 2014; Strano and Queen, 2012). Therefore, we hypothesize as follows:

*H1a: Public self-consciousness will have a positive impact on information suppression behavior in Facebook.*

*H1b: Public self-consciousness will have a positive impact on information projection behavior in Facebook.*

### 3.2 Positive versus Honest Self-Expression and Impression Management

There are two representative self-presentation strategies, positive and honest self-expression (Kim and Lee, 2011). Positive self-expression means attempts to reveal only bright and socially desirable parts of one's life (Qiu et al., 2012). In this research context, Facebook users possess positive self-expression personality will do information suppression behavior when they post messages or pictures by self-monitoring the content, and will also untag the pictures they do not want to be tagged and shared with others. However, unlike Face-to-face interaction, positive self-expression does not have to involve self-disguise since social media act a role as physical and emotional buffer (Kim and Lee, 2011). In the world of social media, users who tend to express themselves positively may disclose their information without hesitation.

Considering these arguments, we hypothesize that positive self-expression is positively

associated with information suppression and projection behaviors of Facebook users.

*H2a: Positive self-expression will have a positive impact on information suppression behavior in Facebook.*

*H2b: Positive self-expression will have a positive impact on information projection behavior in Facebook.*

Honest self-expression is a way a person communicates with others in an honest and candid way (Kim and Lee, 2011). Previous studies have empirically proved that persons with honest self-presentation that prefer to unfiltered self-disclosure can bring out Facebook friends' social support, and consequently will result in users' social well-being and support (Kim and Lee, 2011; Lee et al., 2011). Especially in the Facebook context, users can easily express their honest ideas, feelings, and other status towards many friends at the same time, and they can expect empathy and support from many friends by disclosing themselves genuinely.

Along this reasoning, we can assume that honest self-expression is negatively associated with information suppression behavior in social media while it will increase information projection behavior such disclosing and updating user profiles.

*H3a: Honest self-expression will have a negative impact on information suppression behavior in Facebook.*

*H3b: Honest self-expression will have a positive*

*impact on information projection behavior in Facebook.*

### **Control Variable: Definition of Situation**

Definition of situation means that how I will use the environment and the context that I am encountering (Choi and Um, 20016). In this study, definition of situation means usefulness of Facebook for impression management. Unless users perceive Facebook as the means to be able to engage or disengage from their behavioral residues, impression management using Facebook will not be done. Therefore, we controlled this variable's effects as a necessary condition on impression management behaviors.

## **4. Research Methodology**

### **4.1 Development of Measurement Items**

Most research constructs used in this study were measured using survey items with confirmed reliability and validity from previous studies, but they were slightly modified to fit Facebook context, if needed, and they were translated into Korean from English. The control variable, definition of situation was self-developed to reflect usefulness of Facebook for impression management. Table 2 shows the measurement items, and their sources. All of the variables were measured using a 7-point Likert scale.



<Table 2> Measurement Items of Research Constructs

Construct	Measurement items	References
Public Self-Consciousness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I am concerned about the way I look.</li> <li>2. I care a lot about how I present myself to others.</li> <li>3. I usually worry about making a good impression.</li> <li>4. One of the last things I do before I leave my house is looking in the mirror.</li> <li>5. I'm concerned about what other people think of me.</li> </ol>	<p>Scheier and Carver (1985)</p> <p>Lee et al. (2012)</p> <p>Lee-Won et al. (2014)</p>
Positive Self-Expression	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I usually behave and talk in a socially desirable way.</li> <li>2. In social situations, I alter my behavior if I feel that something else is called for.</li> <li>3. I want to show others my positive side only.</li> </ol>	<p>Kim and Lee (2011)</p> <p>Lennox and Wolfe (1984)</p>
Honest Self-Expression	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I tend to talk about myself to others.</li> <li>2. I like to express my idea to others.</li> <li>3. I usually reveal my feelings.</li> <li>4. I am willing to express my real emotion.</li> </ol>	<p>Kim and Lee (2011)</p>
Information Suppression	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I have some pictures that I did not upload to my FB because they may not be good for my image.</li> <li>2. I untag the pictures that I do not look good.</li> <li>3. I ask my FB friends who uploaded a picture that are not good for my reputation to delete it.</li> <li>4. I do not want my FB friends in some groups to know about my life in other groups.</li> <li>5. I sincerely control the accessibility (e.g. public, friends only, etc.) when I post something on my FB.</li> </ol>	<p>Adopted from</p> <p>Lang and Barton (2015)</p> <p>Strano and Queen (2012)</p>
Information Projection	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I frequently update the status in my FB.</li> <li>2. I frequently upload pictures on my FB.</li> <li>3. I regularly update my profile information in my FB.</li> </ol>	<p>Adopted from</p> <p>Lang and Barton (2015)</p> <p>Winter et al. (2014)</p>
Definition of Situation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We know about other people through their FB.</li> <li>2. We can guess other people's feeling and mood through their FB.</li> <li>3. I think FB is the effective means to make impression.</li> <li>4. When I see others' FB, I can guess who they are.</li> </ol>	<p>Self-developed Referring to Choi and Um (2006)</p>



## 4.2 Data Collection and Sample

### Characteristics

In order to validate research model, we conducted a survey toward Facebook users by distributing online questionnaire. An online survey based on Google Docs was conducted; the URL link was sent by e-mail or by instant messenger to 300 Facebook users. We used 230 responses in the analysis. The demographic characteristics of samples are as follows: Male respondents accounted for 55.2%, and the participants in their 20's accounted for 87.8%.

## 5. Analyses and Results

### 5.1 Measurement Model

Using SmartPLS, the factorial validity of measurement model was tested. According to Gefen et al. (2000), if the factor loadings and AVE values are higher than 0.5 and if the composite reliability is higher than 0.7, convergent validity and internal consistency are confirmed. As you can see in Table 4, convergent validity and reliability were ensured.

<Table 3> Demographic Characteristics of Samples

Attributes		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	127	55.2%
	Female	103	44.8%
Age	10s	13	5.7%
	20s	202	87.8%
	30s	15	6.5%
Occupation	Undergraduate Student	150	65.2%
	Graduate Student	30	13.0%
	Employed	45	19.6%
	Others	5	2.2%
Usage Period of Facebook	Less than 1 year	17	7.4%
	1 year - 2 years	76	33.0%
	2 year - 3 years	85	37.0%
	3 year - 4 years	30	13.0%
	4 year- 5 years	12	5.2%
	More than 5 years	10	4.3%
Number of Facebook Friends	Less than 50	21	9.1%
	50 -100	34	14.8%
	100 - 150	44	19.1%
	150 - 200	40	17.4%
	200 -250	26	11.3%
	More than 250	65	28.3%
Average Access to Facebook per Day		5.65 Times	

&lt;Table 4&gt; Convergent Validity and Reliability of Constructs

Construct	Items	Loadings	AVE	C.R.
Public Self-consciousness	psc1	0.763	0.592	0.878
	psc2	0.795		
	psc3	0.862		
	psc4	0.645		
	psc5	0.765		
Positive Self-expression	pse1	0.764	0.504	0.752
	pse2	0.680		
	pse3	0.683		
Honest Self-expression	hse1	0.615	0.668	0.887
	hse2	0.852		
	hse3	0.862		
	hse4	0.908		
Information Suppression	is1	0.666	0.552	0.860
	is2	0.785		
	is3	0.687		
	is4	0.772		
	is5	0.795		
Information Projection	ip1	0.929	0.775	0.911
	ip2	0.918		
	ip3	0.788		
Definition of Situation	dos1	0.836	0.532	0.814
	dos2	0.815		
	dos3	0.721		
	dos4	0.596		

As squared root values of AVE on each variable are higher than correlation coefficient of each factor from above convergent validity

analysis (Table 5), discriminant validity between research constructs was confirmed (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

&lt;Table 5&gt; Discriminant Validity of Latent Variables

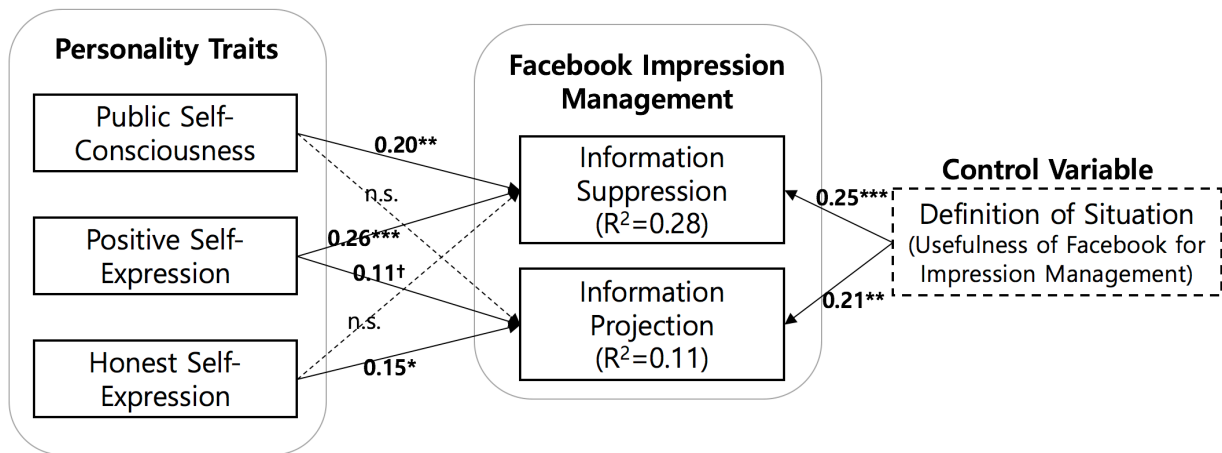
Constructs	PSC	PSE	HSE	IS	IP
Public Self-consciousness	<b>0.769</b>				
Positive Self-expression	0.296	<b>0.710</b>			
Honest Self-expression	0.113	0.197	<b>0.817</b>		
Information Suppression	0.342	0.407	0.150	<b>0.743</b>	
Information Projection	0.118	0.208	0.205	0.497	<b>0.880</b>
Definition of Situation	0.260	0.304	0.132	0.384	0.275

Note: Diagonal values (bold) are squared root value of AVE on each concept.

## 5.2 Structural Model

In order to test suggested hypotheses, path analyses using SmartPLS bootstrapping were conducted. As you can see the result summarized in Figure 2, first, public self-consciousness significantly increases information suppression while it does not associated with information projection behavior. Second, positive self-expression significantly

affects both information suppression and projection behaviors. Third, honest self-expression have a significant positive influence on information projection; however, it shows no relations to information suppression. Lastly, definition of situation, the controlled construct, is positively associated with both information suppression and information projection.



Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ , † $p < 0.1$ , n.s.=not significant at the 5% level

<Figure 2> Hypotheses Testing

## 6. Conclusion

In this study, we explored the effects of personality traits related to self-presentation, which are public self-consciousness, positive self-expression, and honest self-expression, on impression management behaviors, such as information suppression and projection, through Facebook.

Academic implications of this study can be summarized as follows:

First, previous literature have mostly focused on purpose of social media usage in terms of relationship management or entertainment, whereas this study extended the research scope of social media based on impression and image management.

Second, the concept of “impression management” developed in 1950s by Goffman, has been usually applied in offline contexts, or studied in a very conceptual level if applied

in online contexts. However, in this study, impression management theory was successfully integrated to social media environment and proved its validity empirically. Specifically, based on Goffman's theory, people make places as a means to engage or disengage from their "behavioral residues". In this study, we regard social media as a place to manage users' behavioral residues, and examined the effects of personality traits on both engagement strategy (information projection) and disengagement strategy (information suppression) at the same time.

In terms of practical implications, social media providers should consider the followings based on our research findings:

First, among personality traits, self-expression increases information projection behavior (e.g. posting, "Like", and commenting, and sharing) whether their purposes are positive or honest. This implies that social media providers should support various and convenient functions for users to reveal and present information because the users who want to express themselves in social media perceive information projection behaviors such as updating their profiles regularly as an effective way to manage their image. For example, Facebook is now providing the services to update user profile and upload photos from predefined template. From now on, Facebook should motivate user's information projection through customized services and design that the users could update their profile more flexibly and autonomously.

Second, it was proved public self-consciousness and positive self-expression make a significant direct impact on information suppression on social media (e.g. untagging, deletion, and privacy control). These two personality traits are other-oriented than honest self-expression. Therefore, social media providers should consider user's desire to manage his/her image in a positive and socially desirable way when designing and restructuring menus and services. Facebook has steadily attempted to develop features supporting information suppression; however, those features are far less than information projection-related functions. Hence, Facebook should allow users to more actively control and suppress their information; for instance, we can think about the function that users cannot tag their friends in uploading pictures before friend's permission instead of the currently supporting function, untagging or requesting deletion afterwards.

To sum up, in order to make Facebook as an effective means for impression management, Facebook should provide the functions allowing users full control, autonomy, and flexibility for engagement and disengagement strategies at the same time, instead of focusing on engagement (i.e. projection) strategy or developing new functions not considering users' controllability and preferences.

Despite our efforts to conduct the research as rigorous as possible, there are some limitations. First, only three personality traits were included in the research model which results in relatively

low R<sup>2</sup> of dependent variables. Other possible personality constructs such as traditional Big 5 or demographic characteristics such as gender and age should be considered in the future. Second, the samples are mostly composed of Facebook users in their 20s; therefore, the research outcomes cannot be generalized. In subsequent research, samples should be composed of different age groups under the context of other social media rather than Facebook.

Still, we believe this research can contribute academically and practically into social media management as an initiative, but empirical, attempts to understand users' personality traits and their impression management behaviors.

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## 저 자 소 개



### 윤혜정 (Haejung Yun)

이화여자대학교 신산업융합대학 국제사무학과의 조교수로 재직하고 있다. 이화여대를 졸업한 후, 연세대학교 경영대학원에서 경영학 석사학위와 연세대학교 정보대학원에서 정보시스템 박사학위를 취득하였다. 미국 American University의 Kogod School of Business에서 Post-doctoral Researcher와 연세대학교 정보대학원에서 연구교수로 재직한 바 있다. International Journal of Electronic Commerce, Journal of Electronic Commerce Research 등의 국제 학술지 및 지식경영연구, Asia Pacific Journal of Information Systems 등의 국내 학술지에 논문을 게재한 바 있으며, 관심 분야는 서비스경영, 개인정보보호, 모바일 비즈니스 등이다.



### 이한별 (Hanbyeol Lee)

연세대학교 정보대학원에서 지식서비스보안과정 석사를 취득하였다. 주요 관심분야는 ITROI, 정보보호 등이며, 현재 GS ITM에서 인사시스템 운영업무를 담당하고 있다.



### 이중정 (Choong C. Lee)

현재 연세대학교 정보대학원의 교수로 재직 중이다. University of South Carolina에서 MIS를 전공하여 박사학위를 취득한 후, 미국 Salisbury에 있는 메릴랜드 주립대학교의 교수로 재직한 바 있다. MIS Quarterly, Journal of Management Information Systems, Decision Sciences, Communications of ACM 등의 주요 국제 학술지 및 APJIS (경영정보학연구) 등의 국내 학술지에 논문을 게재한 바 있다. 주요 관심연구 분야는 IT Performance, IT Evaluation Measurement, Information Orientation 등이다.