Does SNS as an Information Channel Improve SNS Users' Happiness?

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Abstract

Purpose - This research aims to examine the influence of social capital formed on SNS on SNS users' life satisfaction. This research divides social capital into bridging and bonding social capital based on Social Capital Theory and suggests that each type of social capital will have a positive impact on SNS users' life satisfaction. In addition, this research suggests the self-construal of SNS users as a moderating variable based on Self-Construal Theory.
Research design, data, and methodology - To test the hypotheses presented, an online survey was conducted with adult participants. An online research company was hired to conduct an online survey; survey participants were volunteer adult participants residing in Korea. And data was analyzed using SPSS.
Results - Analysis results showed that the impact of bonding social capital on life satisfaction was not statistically different between SNS users of differing self-construals(independent vs. interdependent self-construal). However, this study also determined that the impact of bridging social capital on life satisfaction was greater for SNS users with an interdependent self-construal as opposed to those with an independent self-construal.
Conclusions - The results of this study expand the scope of available research on social capital formed on SNS and provide practical implications for SNS providers.

Keywords: SNS as an Information Channel, Social Capital, Self-Construal, Life Satisfaction.

JEL Classifications: M1.

1. Introduction

Many people today use diverse forms of SNS such as Facebook, Instagram, and/or Twitter to maintain existing social relationships or create new ones(Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). SNS is an important information channel and is used to distribute comprehensive marketing information (Chen, 2012). With the rise and popularization of SNS, academia has become increasingly interested in studying and explaining the behaviors and thought processes of SNS users. Early research on SNS user behavior was primarily exploratory research that focused largely on one type of SNS such as Facebook or Twitter(e.g., Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010; Liu, 2007; Tong, Van Der Heide, Langwell, & Walther, 2008). Liu(2007), for example, explored the relationship between SNS user tastes and usage patterns by analyzing user profiles on MySpace, while Hamburger and Vinitzky(2010) examined how users' personalities affected their behavior on Facebook. Other some researchers

focused instead on SNS as an online platform for maintaining and/or creating social networks and have tried to pinpoint the antecedents and outcomes of social capital, which is, according to Social Capital Theory, the benefits or support SNS users gain from social networks(e.g., Ellison et al., 2007; Ellison, Lampe, Steinfield, & Vitak, 2010; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2011; Ellison, Vitak, Gray, & Lampe, 2014). Some of these researchers have suggested the amount of SNS use, users' self-esteem(Ellison et al., 2007), the number of users' real-life friends, and users' relationship maintenance behaviors(Ellison et al., 2011) as antecedents of social capital. Other research has shown that social capital on SNS has had a positive impact on SNS information availability(Lampe, Vitak, Gray, & Ellison, 2012), the perceived usefulness of SNS, and the perceived ease of SNS use(Choi & Chung, 2013).

More recently, some researchers have focused on the relationship between social capital on SNS and life satisfaction by examining factors that go beyond user perceptions or behaviors on SNS(e.g., Trepte & Scharkow, 2016). However, since there remains a relative lack of

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empirical research verifying the influence of social capital formed on SNS on users' well-being and/or life satisfaction (Trepte & Scharkow, 2016), more research is needed to establish a causal relationship between social capital and life satisfaction. Studies that have touched briefly on this subject have found that people utilize specific media to satisfy their needs(Basak & Calisir, 2015; Orchard & Fullwood, 2010), and that their greatest need is to improve their own well-being or life satisfaction(Ryan & Deci, 2001).

This research, therefore, aims to expand the scope of available research on SNS and social capital by closely examining the influence of social capital on SNS on users' life satisfaction. Specifically, this research divides social capital into bonding and bridging social capital based on Social Capital Theory, and explores the relationship between each type of social capital and overall life satisfaction. In addition, this research suggests self-construal as a moderating variable between social capital and life satisfaction and proposes that the relationship between social capital and life satisfaction may vary depending on the individual characteristics and/or psychological traits(i.e., self-construal) of the user. According to Self-Construal Theory, people can be divided into those with an independent self-construal and those with an interdependent self-construal, depending on how much they value their relationships with others(Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Since one of the main purposes of SNS is to facilitate social interactions, Self-Construal Theory, which focuses on self-other association, is an apt theoretical framework for understanding related aspects of SNS use. This research proposes that the influence of bonding and bridging social capital on life satisfaction varies according to SNS users' self-construal(i.e., independent self-construal vs. interdependent self-construal). This research is expected to deepen academia's understanding of SNS users and provide practical implications for SNS marketing.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. SNS and social capital

Social Capital Theory has been frequently used to explain social phenomenon in various social sciences. The exact definition of social capital varies somewhat depending on the research scope in which it is used and the perspective of the individual researcher. Some scholars define social capital as a mechanism or foundation for maintaining community and liken social capital to trust, social norms, or citizenship (Fukuyama, 1995; Putnam, 1995), while others regard social capital as resources that individuals can mobilize using a social network(Bourdieu, 1985; Coleman, 1988; Lin, 2002; Portes, 1998). Under this latter definition, social capital is a resource that can be obtained through a social network by

an individual user without the individual owning the resource in question. According to this definition, social capital is the sum of actual and/or potential resources that can be acquired by an individual through social networks, and the amount of resources, or social capital, is mainly influenced by the size of the social network and the amount of resources offered by group members within the same social network(Bourdieu, 1985). This research study adopts the theory of social capital suggested by Bourdieu(1985) and defines social capital as a resource that individuals can obtain through social networks without claiming resource ownership.

In its beginning stages, research on social capital focused on the formation of offline social capital, and some researchers argued that a decline of social capital isolated people from their community and prompted them to enjoy group activities, such as bowling, alone(Putnam, 1995). Recently, many researchers have sought to explain SNS user behavior using Social Capital Theory(e.g., Ellison et al., 2007; Ellison et al., 2010; Ellison et al., 2011; Ellison et al., 2014). In their studies, these researchers have argued that SNS provides an efficient way to form social capital and have suggested different variables regarding the formation of social capital on SNS.

Social capital is divided into bonding and bridging social capital depending on its characteristics. Bonding social capital refers to the emotional or substantial benefits gained from those with strong ties, while bridging social capital refers to emotional or substantial benefits gained from those with weak ties(Williams, 2006). Bonding social capital can be seen as resources acquired from people with similar social backgrounds, and social networks characterized by strong ties are regarded as bonding social capital. Bridging social capital, however, is likely to be gained from people with disparate social backgrounds, and social networks with weak ties are also regarded as bridging social capital(Williams, 2006).

Some previous research studies regarding social capital on SNS have focused primarily on users' perceptions or behaviors relating to SNS and have adopted these factors as primary dependent variables. For instance, several research studies have shown that social capital on SNS has had a positive impact on the perceived usefulness of SNS, ease of SNS use, and satisfaction level with regards to SNS or usage intention(e.g., Choi & Chung, 2013; Lampe et al., 2012). It is important to note, however, that SNS users facilitate the formation of social capital on SNS in order to improve their own happiness or life satisfaction. As a general rule, most people are very interested in finding ways to increase their own happiness. The academic world as well is highly interested in identifying and examining the factors that influence people's health, quality of life, and/or life satisfaction. Some researchers have even argued that people's relatedness with others is the factor that most influences their well-being(Ryan & Deci, 2001). Forming and

maintaining social relationships is a basic human need, and warm and trustworthy relationships have a great influence on improving a person's happiness(Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Loneliness, on the other hand, is a factor that has been proven to have a negative impact on a person's life satisfaction(Lee & Ishii-Kuntz, 1987; Ryan & Deci, 2001). Psychological research on attachment and intimacy has also shown a positive relationship between a person's relatedness with others and their own happiness(Ryan & Deci, 2001). That is, stable and intimate social relationships are a crucial factor in improving a person's subjective well-being.

In addressing this issue, Verduyn, Ybarra, Résibois, Jonides, and Kross(2017) divided SNS usage pattern into passive and active SNS use, and revealed a positive relationship between active SNS use and users' subjective well-being. Valenzuela et al.(2009) also found a positive relationship between the intensity of students' Facebook use and their life satisfaction and positive relationship between the intensity of Facebook use and the building of social capital such as social trust, civic engagement, and political participation. Although these research studies do not directly explore the influence of social capital formed on SNS on life satisfaction, they do imply that social capital formed through intensive Facebook use may be positively related to life satisfaction.

Based on Social Capital Theory and the aforementioned studies, this research divides social capital into bridging social capital and bonding social capital and suggests that each type of social capital plays a role in improving life satisfaction. The impacts of the different types of social capital on life satisfaction are proposed as follows.

<Hypothesis 1> Bridging social capital on SNS has a positive impact on life satisfaction.

<Hypothesis 2> Bonding social capital on SNS has a positive impact on life satisfaction.

2.2. Moderating role of SNS users' self-construals

Self-Construal Theory argues that individuals define themselves in relation to others in one of two ways. Some individuals are more prone to define themselves in relation to others, while other individuals define themselves apart from their relationships with others. This latter type of person is characterized by an independent self-construal while the former is marked by an interdependent self-construal (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). These very different types of self-schemas reveal much about people's cognitive processes and behaviors.

First of all, people with an interdependent self-construal put a greater emphasis on cooperation or harmony with others and tend to make decisions based on others' opinions or social norms(Lalwani & Shavitt, 2009; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Since these types of people see themselves as part of a group, they believe that the goal(s)

of the group or the well-being of other group members will have a crucial impact on their lives(Duclos & Barasch, 2014; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). In contrast, people with an independent self-construal view themselves as being independent from the group and place a greater emphasis on their own perceived uniqueness or individuality(Lalwani & Shavitt, 2009; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). In addition, people with an independent self-construal put more weight on individual achievement as opposed to group goals and are highly likely to cooperate with others when they gain substantial benefits(Duclos & Barasch, 2014). Although Eastern culture promotes an interdependent self-construal and Western culture promotes an independent self-construal, the two different types of self-construal are also influenced by an individual's psychological traits(Agrawaland & Maheswaran, 2005). That is, individuals in a predominantly Eastern culture may be characterized by an independent self-construal and individuals in a predominantly Western culture may be characterized by an interdependent self-construal depending on their unique characteristics. Previous research supports the idea that an individual's self-construal is influenced not only by cultural context but also their own unique traits(Cialdini, Wosinska, Barrett, Butner, & Gornik-Durose, 1999).

Previous research on subjective well-being has also argued that culture is an influencing factor on an individual's life satisfaction(Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003; Ryan & Deci, 2001). That is, predictors of life satisfaction differ depending on the culture(i.e., individualistic cultures vs. collectivistic cultures). This research addresses cultural dimensions by dividing self-construal into interdependent self-construal (collectivistic self-construal) and independent self-construal (individualistic self-construal) and focuses primarily on differences in individuals' psychological traits over differences of cultural nationality. This research further suggests the different types of self-construal as a factor that moderates the influence of social capital formed on SNS on user life satisfaction.

Individuals with an independent self-construal have a propensity to view themselves as separate from others and place a greater importance on expressing their own thoughts and feelings(Singelis, 1994). Individuals with an interdependent self-construal, on the other hand, have a greater propensity to emphasize their relationships with others and believe that they are closely connected to others, and maintaining harmonious relationship with others plays a role in boosting their self-esteem(Singelis, 1994). This latter type of person seeks to understand the thoughts and feelings of others and maintain good relationships with others in various social situations(Singelis, 1994). Also, compared to individuals with an independent self-construal, individuals with an interdependent self-construal are more likely to behave in such a way as to meet the expectations of others in order to achieve connectedness and interdependence with others(Kramer, Spolter-Weisfeld, &

Thakkar, 2007). Since individuals with interdependent self-construal tend to put more weight on their relationships with others, it can logically be deduced that the influence of social capital formed on SNS on life satisfaction would be more pronounced for SNS users with an interdependent self-construal over those characterized by an independent self-construal.

However, this research suggests that the moderating effect of self-construal on life satisfaction will be significant for bridging social capital more so than for bonding social capital. Bridging social capital is a resource derived from weak ties, while bonding social capital is a resource derived from strong ties. Bonding social capital can be gained from relationships of close social distance such as those with friends or family members; these types of relationships are considered one of the most important factors that influence a person's well-being, regardless of culture. Given the nature of the two different types of social capital, it can be inferred that the influence of bridging social capital on life satisfaction would be more pronounced for individuals with an interdependent self-construal(individuals who put more weight on their relationships with others), while the influence of bonding social capital on life satisfaction would be the same for those with both independent and interdependent self-construals.

Previous research on the subject of subjective well-being argues that secure attachments with others have a crucial impact on a person's well-being(e.g., Simpson, 1990; Ryan & Deci, 2001 etc.). Indeed, humans have a strong desire to belong or to form interpersonal attachments and relational bonds, and a lack of such attachments can be detrimental to a person's health or subjective well-being(Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Although the aforementioned research studies do not specifically mention the term "social capital", they argue that the quality of people's relationships with others is one of the greatest factors influencing their happiness. It is interesting to note that many of these studies were published in countries with predominantly individualistic cultures that promote individualism or an independent self-construal. This implies that even in individualistic cultures—which emphasize uniqueness and independence from others—close relationships with others are just as important as they are in collectivistic cultures.

Under these considerations, this research suggests that the influence of bridging social capital on life satisfaction will be more pronounced for SNS users with interdependent self-construal, while the influence of bonding social capital on life satisfaction will be the same for SNS users with both interdependent and independent self-construals.

<Hypothesis 3> Social capital and SNS users' self-construals have a moderating effect on user life satisfaction. Specifically, the positive influence of bridging social capital on SNS user life satisfaction is more significant for SNS users with an

interdependent self-construal compared to those with an independent self-construal. However, the influence of bonding social capital on life satisfaction is not significantly different between users characterized by different types of self-construals.
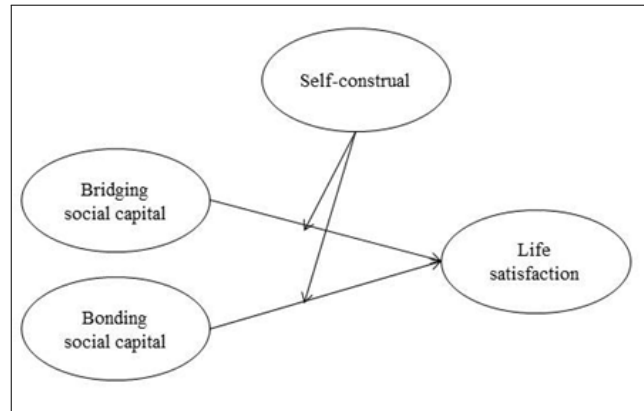
<Figure 1> Research model

3. Methodology

3.1. Survey method

An online research company was hired to conduct an online survey; survey participants were volunteer adult participants residing in Korea. The online research company sent an email to their pool of online participants, and those who were interested in participating in the survey were able to access the online survey by clicking the URL embedded in the email. A total of 174 participants completed the survey – 49.4% of which were male and 50.6% of which were female. The ages of participants who completed the survey ranged from 22 to 49 years old, and the average age was 34.1 years old.

Several previous research studies on SNS conducted surveys using only undergraduate students as participants (e.g., Choi & Chung, 2013; Ellison et al., 2007; Fogel & Nehmad, 2009; Glass, Li, & Pan, 2014; Hargittai, 2007; Hargittai & Hsieh, 2010; Tufekci, 2008). However, this study expanded the sample population to include a wider range of participants—adult SNS users in Korea ranging in age from their 20s to their 40s(refer to Ji, Yi, Rau, Fang, & Ling, 2010). Based on the work of Ji et al.(2010), this sample population is believed to be more representative of SNS users in Korea.

3.2. Data collection procedure

On the first page of the survey, there was an item asking

whether or not the participant was an SNS user; the surveys of those who answered that they did not use SNS were automatically terminated. Participants were asked to indicate which SNS they used most frequently in their daily lives and were then asked to answer the remaining questions based on the SNS they indicated. The most popular SNS was Facebook (45.4%), followed by Instagram (24.1%) and KakaoStory (27%).

To test the hypotheses presented in this study, bonding social capital, bridging social capital, interdependent self-construal, independent self-construal, and life satisfaction were measured. Bonding social capital and bridging social capital were measured using 5 items and 6 items respectively based on the work of Williams(2006). Theoretically, social capital includes both the benefits derived from social networks and social networks themselves. However, Williams(2006) focused on the benefits or resources gained from social networks, not the social networks themselves, and the items developed by Williams (2006) have been widely used for research on social capital formed on SNS(e.g., Ellison et al., 2007; Ellison et al., 2010; Ellison et al., 2011; Ellison et al., 2014). This research also adopted the items developed by Williams(2006) focusing on the benefits derived from social networks.

Self-construal was measured using items developed by Singelis(1994). Interdependent self-construal was measured with 6 items: "It is important for me to maintain harmony within my group"; "I will sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of the group I am in"; "I often have the feeling that my relationships with others are more important than my own accomplishments", etc.. Independent self-construal was measured with 5 items: "I enjoy being unique and different from others in many respects"; "My personal identity, independent of others, is very important to me"; "I prefer to be direct and forthright when dealing with people I've just met", etc. Life satisfaction was measured with 5 items—"In most ways my life is close to my ideal"; "The conditions of my life are excellent"; "I am satisfied with my life." etc.— based on the work of Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985). All items were measured on a 7-point Likert Scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The last page of the survey included items asking participants about their gender, age, and academic background.

4. Results

Data was analyzed using SPSS. Prior to testing the study's hypotheses, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted, and the items loaded on other constructs were eliminated. As seen in <Table 1>, 3 items for bridging social capital, 2 items for interdependent self-construal, and 1 item for independent self-construal were eliminated. The results of a factor analysis of the remaining items were as follows.

<Table 1> Result of factor analysis

	Constructs				
	1	2	3	4	5
Life satisfaction 1	.900				
Life satisfaction 2	.861				
Life satisfaction 3	.856				
Life satisfaction 4	.849				
Life satisfaction 5	.825				
Bonding social capital 1		.867			
Bonding social capital 2		.846			
Bonding social capital 3		.820			
Bonding social capital 4		.805			
Bonding social capital 5		.668			
Bridging social capital 1			.877		
Bridging social capital 2			.777		
Bridging social capital 3			.764		
Independent self 1				.844	
Independent self 2				.817	
Independent self 3				.654	
Independent self 4				.605	
Interdependent self 1					.802
Interdependent self 2					.736
Interdependent self 3					.574
Interdependent self 4					.456
Cronbach Alpha	0.946	0.930	0.863	0.773	0.645

*Verimax rotation

Next, a self-construal index was calculated for all participants. Specifically, the mean of the interdependent self-construal and the mean of the independent self-construal were calculated. Participants with interdependent self-construal scores that were higher than their independent self-construal were categorized as having an interdependent self-construal, and participants with independent self-construal scores that were higher than their interdependent self-construal scores were categorized as having an independent self-construal(dummy coded 0=interdependent self-construal, n=92; 1=independent self-construal, n=79).

Two moderated regression analyses were then run with mean-centered variables. In the first analysis, life satisfaction was regressed with bonding social capital, self-construal, and the interaction term of the two variables. Results showed that bonding social capital had a positive impact on life satisfaction(F(3,170)=15.201, p<0.001; b=.488, t=4.902, p<0.001), while the interaction of bonding social capital and self-construal was found to be insignificant(p>0.9). In the second analysis, life satisfaction was regressed with bridging social capital, self-construal, and the interaction term of the two variables. The results of this second analysis showed that bridging social capital had a positive impact on life

satisfaction(F(3,170)=9.867, p<0.001; b=.643, t=4.574, p<0.001). The interaction between bridging social capital and self-construal was also found to be significant. Specifically, bridging social capital had a greater positive impact on life satisfaction for those with an interdependent self-construal as opposed to those with an independent self-construal (b=-.373, t=-2.121, p<0.01). As seen in <Table 2>, the results of these analyses supported <Hypotheses 1>, <Hypotheses 2>, and <Hypotheses 3>.

Additionally, several tests were run to more specifically determine and define the relationship between social capital and user self-construals. Simple slope tests were conducted for interdependent and independent self-construal in accordance with procedures recommended by Aiken, West, and Reno(1991). The results of the simple slope test for interdependent self-construal showed that both bridging and bonding social capital improved life satisfaction(b=0.345, p<0.05; b=0.349, p<0.05). The results of the simple slope test for independent self-construal showed that bridging social capital did not improve life satisfaction(b=-0.021, p>0.5), while bonding social capital did improve life satisfaction(b=0.487, p<0.05). The results of this latter scenario were similar to those of the test for interdependent self-construal in that they showed a positive relationship between bonding social capital and life satisfaction.

<Table 2> Influence of Social Capital on Life Satisfaction: Results of Moderated Regression Analyses

	Estimate	S.E.	Standardized estimate	t	p-value
(Constant)	-.111	.139		-.794	.428
Bonding social capital(A)	.488	.099	.450	4.902	.000
Self-construal(B)	.207	.190	.074	1.087	.278
A*B	-.002	.149	-.002	-.017	.987
(Constant)	-.194	.145		-1.343	.181
Bridging social capital(A)	.643	.141	.539	4.574	.000
Self-construal(B)	.344	.198	.123	1.740	.084
A*B	-.373	.176	-.250	-2.121	.035

5. Conclusion

5.1. Discussion

This research divided social capital into bridging and bonding social capital based on Social Capital Theory and sought to examine the influence of social capital formed on SNS on SNS users' life satisfaction. This research further aimed to explore how the psychological traits of individual users affected the influence of social capital on SNS users' life satisfaction. Specifically, this research focused on cultural dimensions and used Self-Construal Theory to categorize

individuals into two groups based on their type of self-construal. The results of this study showed that the impact of bonding social capital on life satisfaction was not statistically different between SNS users of differing self-construals(independent vs. interdependent self-construal). However, this study also determined that the impact of bridging social capital on life satisfaction was greater for SNS users with an interdependent self-construal as opposed to those with an independent self-construal.

5.2. Implications

These results have several academic and practical implications. First, this research shows that social capital formed on SNS plays a role in improving life satisfaction—something universally pursued by all human beings—extending beyond SNS users' cognition or behaviors as they relate to SNS. In addition, this research shows that both bonding social capital and bridging social capital improve overall life satisfaction. The results of this study also confirm the widely-held belief that people are social beings who pursue happiness through connectivity to others.

Furthermore, this research shows that the impact of bonding social capital and bridging social capital on life satisfaction depends on the individual user and suggests SNS users' self-construal as a moderating variable. Previous research was aimed at revealing the relationship between the antecedents of social capital(i.e., intensity of Facebook use, the number of actual friends, etc.) and social capital as an outcome variable(e.g., Ellison et al., 2007; Ellison et al., 2014; Steinfield et al., 2008, etc.). Through adopting the SNS users' life satisfaction as an outcome variable, the life satisfaction was revealed to be moderated by SNS users' self-construal. Specifically, individuals with an interdependent self-construal place a greater emphasis on relationships than individuals with an independent self-construal. Also, since relationships and/or connectedness with others positively influence the self-esteem of SNS users with an interdependent self-construal, both bonding and bridging social capital have a positive impact on their life satisfaction. Individuals with an independent self-construal, on the other hand, emphasize separation from others; as such, the influence of social capital on their life satisfaction is not as strong. It is interesting to note that although bridging social capital is a more influencing factor for SNS users with an interdependent self-construal, bonding social capital is equally important for both groups since bonding social capital is derived from close relationships(as opposed to relationships characterized by relatively weak ties).

The results of this study provide the following practical implications for SNS providers. Based on this research, SNS providers should classify SNS users into different categories depending on their characteristics(independent vs. interdependent self-construal) and provide customized services for each category. For example, SNS providers

could provide services that facilitate both strong ties and weak ties to SNS users with interdependent self-construals and focus on providing services that facilitate strong ties to SNS users with independent self-construals. Second, since it can be inferred that SNS users experience a higher satisfaction with SNS when they are able to improve their life satisfaction through the formation of social capital on SNS, SNS providers should focus more on developing ways to allow different kinds of users to effectively maintain their social networks.

5.3. Limitations

Along with its contributions, this research also has several limitations, which provide areas for further study. First, this study used the items developed by Williams(2006) to measure bonding social capital and bridging social capital. Although Williams' scale has been widely used to measure social capital in other research studies in the past(e.g., Ellison et al., 2010; Lampe et al., 2012, etc.), some researchers question the validity of these measurements. For example, Im(2011) has argued that social capital should be measured according to the social support SNS users actually gain under experimental conditions. Appel, Dadlani, Dwyer, Hampton, Kitzie, Matni, and Teodoro(2014) have also challenged the validity of Williams' scale. Williams' scale only measures one aspect of social capital—the perceived benefits derived from a social network, excluding the social network itself. In addition to this concern, Appel et al.(2014) also argued that Williams' scale may lack discriminant validity; this matter requires further investigation.

The results of the factor analysis conducted in this study showed that bonding social capital and bridging social capital were discriminated constructs, which ensured that they could be used to test the hypotheses presented in this study. Yet, despite these results, it cannot be conclusively argued that Williams' scale is valid. Future research could be used to develop other valid items to measure social capital, or the method proposed by Im(2014), a method in which the real social support gained by users through SNS is measured, could be adopted.

Second, this research addresses cultural dimensions by using Self-Construal Theory to focus on individual psychological traits. Future research could account for cultural dimensions by dividing nations into collectivistic and individualistic nations and exploring the relationship between cultural characteristics and social capital formed on SNS. For example, Hofstede(1983) suggested the cultural dimensions of individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance(etc.). These specific dimensions may influence the formation of social capital on SNS differently than the dimensions presented in this body of research and are worthy of further study. Furthermore, this research suggested self-construal as a moderating variable; however, other variables such as

individual users' personalities or other psychological traits could also moderate the influence of social capital on life satisfaction, presenting another topic for future research.

Lastly, this research adopted SNS users' life satisfaction as a key dependent variable. Essentially, consumers try to achieve life satisfaction or happiness by consuming products or services. Also, SNS service providers provide SNS users with a chance to consume contents, and SNS users want to improve life satisfaction by participating in activities such as uploading or downloading contents on SNS. In this regard, life satisfaction is a sufficiently meaningful variable to provide practical implications for SNS providers or marketers. However, in general, marketers tend to know more direct outcome variables such as sales or profits. Thus, outcome variables such as intention to recommend the SNS to other people or intention to use the SNS more often can be adopted for future research.

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