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The Effects of SNS Instagrammable Attributes on User-Generated Content and Purchase Intention

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[Abstract]

This study investigates how Instagrammable attributes, including visual aesthetics, shareability, and self expressiveness, influence user generated content (UGC) and purchase intention among social networking service users. Visual aesthetics did not have a statistically significant effect on UGC ($\beta = -0.141$, $t = -1.067$), leading to the rejection of H1. In contrast, shareability ($\beta = 0.481$, $t = 2.996$) and self expressiveness ($\beta = 0.536$, $t = 4.407$) had significant positive effects on UGC, supporting H2 and H3. All three attributes were positively associated with purchase intention. Visual aesthetics ($\beta = 0.183$, $t = 1.850$), shareability ($\beta = 0.379$, $t = 3.030$), and self expressiveness ($\beta = 0.352$, $t = 3.647$) supported H4, H5, and H6, respectively. UGC also had a significant positive effect on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.104$, $t = 1.750$), supporting H7. These findings suggest that shareability and self expressiveness are more important than visual aesthetics in encouraging users to create content, whereas all three attributes contribute to purchase intention. The theoretical and practical implications of these findings, along with the study limitations, are discussed in the conclusion.

▸ **Key words**: Instagrammable Attributes, Visual Aesthetics, Shareability, Self-Expressiveness, User-Generated Content, Purchase Intention

[요 약]

본 연구는 시각적 미학, 공유 가능성, 자기표현성을 포함한 인스타그래머블 속성이 SNS 이용자의 사용자 생성 콘텐츠(UGC)와 구매의도에 미치는 영향을 분석하였다. 분석 결과, 시각적 미학은 UGC에 통계적으로 유의한 영향을 미치지 않는 것으로 나타나($\beta = -0.141$, $t = -1.067$) H1은 기각되었다. 반면, 공유 가능성($\beta = 0.481$, $t = 2.996$)과 자기표현성($\beta = 0.536$, $t = 4.407$)은 모두 UGC에 유의한 정(+)의 영향을 미치는 것으로 나타나 H2와 H3이 지지되었다. 세 가지 속성은 모두 구매의도와 정(+)의 관계를 보였다. 시각적 미학($\beta = 0.183$, $t = 1.850$), 공유 가능성($\beta = 0.379$, $t = 3.030$), 자기표현성($\beta = 0.352$, $t = 3.647$)은 각각 H4, H5, H6을 지지하였다. 또한 UGC는 구매의도에 유의한 정(+)의 영향을 미치는 것으로 나타나($\beta = 0.104$, $t = 1.750$) H7이 지지되었다. 이러한 결과는 콘텐츠 생성을 유도하는 데 있어 시각적 미학 자체보다는 공유 가능성과 자기표현성이 더욱 중요한 역할을 하며, 세 가지 속성 모두 구매의도 형성에 기여한다는 것을 보여준다. 이러한 연구 결과를 바탕으로 한 이론적 및 실무적 시사점과 연구의 한계는 결론에서 논의하였다.

▸ **주제어**: SNS 인스타그래머블 특성, 시각적미학, 공유가능성, 자기표현성, UGC, 구매의도

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I. Introduction

As Instagram has evolved into one of the world's leading social media platforms, the concept of Instagrammability has attracted increasing attention in tourism, hospitality, and marketing research. The term generally refers to the extent to which a place, product, or experience possesses visual and experiential characteristics that encourage consumers to photograph, share, and engage with content on social media. These characteristics typically include distinctive visual design, aesthetic appeal, memorable settings, and other features that facilitate online sharing [1].

In this study, instagrammable attributes denote the visual aesthetics, shareability, and self-expressiveness of products or experiences presented on social media. Although the term originated from Instagram, these attributes are not limited to the platform itself. Therefore, the study conceptualizes instagrammable attributes as content characteristics that can operate across the social media platforms represented in the sample, rather than as a construct specific to Instagram use [2].

Originally used as an informal expression among social media users, travel bloggers, and content creators, Instagrammability has gradually developed into an established research concept for explaining consumer engagement, UGC, destination attractiveness, and brand visibility [3, 4]. As social media increasingly shapes consumers' information-search and purchase-decision processes, understanding the factors that make products, places, and experiences Instagrammable has become an important issue for both researchers and practitioners.

In the Korean market, the growing popularity of Instagrammable experiences is reflected in the widespread use of the term 'Insta-gamseong' (Instagram sensibility), which describes environments intentionally designed to encourage photography and social media sharing. This trend has influenced the design of cafés, retail flagship stores, pop-up exhibitions, and other experiential consumption spaces, where visual appeal has become a core part of the customer experience. Visually distinctive environments have been linked to greater consumer engagement, more UGC, and stronger brand visibility through online sharing [4, 5].

Despite the rapid adoption of Instagrammable design in practice, empirical research has yet to fully explain which specific attributes of Instagrammability most effectively encourage consumers to create and share content and, ultimately, shape their purchase intentions. Most existing studies treat Instagrammability as a single, unidimensional construct examined mainly in relation to outcomes such as destination image, consumer engagement, and visit intention [3], and rarely distinguish whether content creation and sharing are driven primarily by visual attractiveness, the perceived social value of sharing, or opportunities for self-expression. Addressing this gap, the present study examines the differential effects of three Instagrammable dimensions—visual aesthetics, shareability, and self-expressiveness—on UGC and purchase intention.

These three dimensions appear to reflect conceptually distinct mechanisms. Research on message virality shows that visual appeal and shareability each contribute independently to content diffusion and online sharing behavior [6]. Likewise, extended-self theory holds that consumers often select and share products and experiences to communicate personal identity and symbolic meaning, not merely to convey functional or aesthetic value [7]. Together, these perspectives support treating Instagrammability as a multidimensional construct made up of distinct, complementary attributes rather than a single aesthetic evaluation.

This study conceptualizes Instagrammable attributes as three theoretically distinct dimensions —visual aesthetics, shareability, and self-expressiveness—and examines their individual effects on UGC and purchase intention. UGC is

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further incorporated into the research model both as a behavioral outcome of Instagrammable attributes and as a direct antecedent of purchase intention, providing a more complete picture of how Instagrammable experiences shape consumer behavior.

The empirical analysis focuses on Korean SNS users, a relevant context given the widespread adoption of social media and the prevalence of visually oriented content-sharing. Rather than assuming that all Instagrammable attributes operate similarly, this study tests whether their effects differ across UGC and purchase intention.

The results show that visual aesthetics, shareability, and self-expressiveness play distinct roles in shaping these two outcomes, offering preliminary evidence that the influence of visual aesthetics may weaken in highly saturated social media environments. This extends the Instagrammability literature by highlighting its multidimensional nature and offering new insight into how consumers create content and make purchasing decisions.

II. Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

1. Instagrammable Attributes

As defined in the Introduction, Instagrammability refers to the extent to which a place, product, or experience has visual qualities, such as distinctive design, aesthetic appeal, and memorable settings, that encourage consumers to take photographs, share them, and engage with related content on social media [1]. Rather than simply enhancing the attractiveness of a physical environment, Instagrammable design can stimulate UGC and extend a brand's visibility through consumers' voluntary sharing.

Instagrammable environments have also been linked to electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and brand exposure, as consumers create and circulate visual content across their social networks. In tourism contexts, users often reproduce similar photographic styles and compositions, resulting in a shared visual culture shaped by platform-specific norms and expectations [1]. Likewise, research in hospitality and retail settings indicates that Instagrammable design has become a key experiential marketing strategy for building consumer engagement, online visibility, and favorable behavioral responses beyond the point of consumption.

Drawing on research on visual communication, content sharing, and self-presentation theory, this study distinguishes three dimensions of Instagrammability—visual aesthetics, shareability, and self-expressiveness—each examined in the subsections below.

1.1 Visual Aesthetics

Visual aesthetics refers to consumers' perceptions of the visual attractiveness of an image or environment, including elements such as color harmony, composition, lighting, and overall photogenic appeal. In consumer behavior research, aesthetic judgments are generally regarded as rapid and intuitive evaluations that capture attention and shape initial affective responses before more deliberate cognitive processing occurs.

This perspective has been extended to social media contexts, where visual quality and aesthetic design have been found to significantly influence users' attention, engagement, and interactions with online content [8]. In tourism and hospitality research, visually appealing destinations and environments have likewise been shown to encourage consumers to share their experiences on social media and strengthen favorable behavioral intentions, such as revisiting and recommending [4, 5].

1.2 Shareability

Shareability refers to the extent to which consumers perceive content as worthy of being

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shared with others through their social networks. Unlike visual aesthetics, which primarily attracts attention, shareability reflects the social value and communicative potential of content. Previous research has shown that content perceived as personally meaningful or socially relevant is more likely to be shared than content that is simply visually appealing or professionally produced [9]. Content sharing is thus increasingly understood as a socially motivated behavior through which individuals communicate personal values, experiences, and identities to others, making shareability a key characteristic of effective social media marketing content: it enables brands to stimulate user participation, eWOM, and extend message diffusion beyond their immediate audience [6, 10].

1.3 Self-Expressiveness

Self-expressiveness refers to the extent to which engaging with a product, place, or piece of content enables consumers to communicate or reinforce their desired identity through social media. This concept is grounded in the extended self theory, which suggests that consumers use possessions, experiences, and consumption activities as symbolic resources to construct and express their identities [7].

Within SNS environments, identity-related motivations have consistently been recognized as an important driver of content creation and sharing. Recent research has shown that self-referential and identity-relevant message framing increases consumers' willingness to share content beyond the effects of aesthetic appeal or informational value alone [9]. Accordingly, consumers are more likely to generate and share content when doing so allows them to express personal values, lifestyles, or social identities rather than merely documenting their experiences.

Visual aesthetics, shareability, and self-expressiveness represent three core characteristics of instagrammable content because they capture how consumers perceive, share, and personally appropriate visually oriented SNS content. Visual aesthetics can attract attention and generate affective responses, making content more likely to be noticed and engaged with. Shareability facilitates the transfer of content to one's social network, while self-expressiveness allows consumers to use content to communicate aspects of their identity and social image. These characteristics can therefore encourage UGC creation by increasing consumers' motivation to engage with and reproduce content. Such engagement may also influence purchase intention by enhancing product appeal, social visibility, and personal relevance. Prior research supports these links: instagrammable environments have been shown to stimulate consumer-generated content, while visual aesthetics can influence social commerce intentions and UGC can shape online consumer behavior and purchase intention [1, 11, 12].

2. User-Generated Content

UGC refers to digital content—including photographs, reviews, captions, and short videos—that is created and voluntarily shared by consumers rather than by firms or brands [13, 14]. As social media has become an important marketing channel, UGC has emerged as a central construct in digital marketing research because it serves not only as a source of organic promotion but also as a credible source of information for potential consumers. Compared with firm-generated content, UGC is generally perceived as more authentic and trustworthy, which strengthens its influence on consumers' brand evaluations and behavioral responses [15].

Recent studies further show that UGC shapes consumers' purchase intentions across social commerce and e-commerce contexts: the quantity and perceived quality of UGC enhance consumer trust and perceived value, increasing purchase intention [16]. Similarly, empirical evidence from Southeast Asian e-commerce markets indicates

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that UGC positively influences both consumers' emotional responses and purchase intentions, with emotional responses partially mediating this relationship. Together, these findings position UGC as more than an information source—it is a mechanism through which social media experiences translate into favorable consumer behavior.

In the Korean context, previous studies have likewise demonstrated that content created and shared by influencers and ordinary users on social media platforms such as Instagram and YouTube positively influences consumer engagement and purchase intention. In particular, content characteristics such as professionalism, interactivity, intimacy, and credibility have been identified as important determinants of consumer responses [17]. This study conceptualizes UGC not only as a factor associated with consumer trust but also as a behavioral response to Instagrammable attributes and a direct predictor of purchase intention, providing a more comprehensive understanding of how Instagrammable experiences influence consumer behavior.

3. Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is generally defined as a consumer's willingness to purchase a product or service in the near future and has long been recognized as a reliable predictor of actual purchasing behavior [18]. Consequently, it has been widely adopted as a key outcome variable in social media marketing research. Recent studies suggest that consumers' purchase intentions are influenced by a range of SNS-related factors, including eWOM, influencer-generated content, online reviews, UGC, and interactive social media experiences. Rather than operating solely through direct effects, these stimuli often shape purchase intention by enhancing trust, perceived value, consumer engagement, and emotional responses [19].

Within Instagrammable marketing specifically, prior work has emphasized visually appealing environments and highly shareable content as drivers of purchase intention, generally without separating the contributions of individual dimensions [20]. This study examines visual aesthetics, shareability, and self-expressiveness separately to clarify how each shapes purchase intention.

The “featured product/service” refers to the specific product or service presented in the SNS content encountered by each respondent. Respondents were instructed to recall a product or service they had recently encountered through SNS and to evaluate the content characteristics, their likelihood of generating UGC, and their purchase intention toward that specific offering. Thus, purchase intention was measured with reference to the featured product or service rather than to a general product category or SNS shopping behavior [21].

Building on the literature reviewed above, the study proposes a research model in which three Instagrammable attributes—visual aesthetics, shareability, and self-expressiveness—are conceptualized as exogenous constructs influencing two endogenous variables: UGC and purchase intention, with UGC further hypothesized to directly affect purchase intention. This framework yields seven research hypotheses, presented below.

[H1] Visual aesthetics will have a positive effect on UGC.

[H2] Shareability will have a positive effect on UGC.

[H3] Self-expressiveness will have a positive effect on UGC.

[H4] Visual aesthetics will have a positive effect on purchase intention.

[H5] Shareability will have a positive effect on purchase intention.

[H6] Self-expressiveness will have a positive effect on purchase intention.

[H7] UGC will have a positive effect on purchase intention.

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III. Research Method

1. Research Model and Hypotheses

The proposed research model conceptualizes visual aesthetics, shareability, and self-expressiveness as first-order reflective constructs that directly influence both UGC and purchase intention, with UGC further specified as a direct antecedent of purchase intention. Following the standard two-step approach to structural equation modeling (SEM) in marketing research, all constructs were treated as latent variables and validated through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) before estimating the structural relationships.

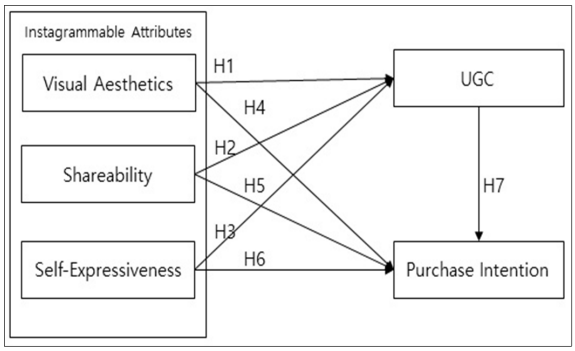


Fig. 1. Research Model

2. Operational Definition of Variables

All measurement items were assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). The measurement scales were adapted from previously validated instruments in the social media marketing and consumer behavior literature, with minor modifications to ensure their suitability for the Instagram context. Table 1 presents the operational definitions and representative sources for each construct.

Table 1. Operational Definitions of Variables

Construct	Operational Definition	Representative Source
Visual Aesthetics	Perceived attractiveness of an SNS image's colour, composition, and lighting	[4, 8]
Shareability	Perceived worth of content for transmission within one's network	[6, 9]
Self-Expressiveness	Degree to which content allows projection of a desired self-image	[7]
UGC	Consumer-created and voluntarily circulated SNS content related to the experience	[13, 14]
Purchase Intention	Self-reported likelihood of purchasing the featured product/service	[15]

3. Data Collection and Sample

Data were collected through a self-administered online questionnaire administered to active SNS users between April 14 and April 29, 2026. To ensure the relevance of the sample, respondents were required to have used Instagram or a comparable image-based SNS at least once during the previous month.

A total of 246 questionnaires were collected, of which 231 were retained for analysis after excluding incomplete responses and cases that failed the attention check, resulting in a valid response rate of 93.9%. Participants were recruited using a combination of convenience and snowball sampling through university communities and SNS-based networks, an approach that is widely adopted in studies of Korean SNS users, particularly those focusing on younger populations.

Data were analyzed using SPSS 25 and Amos 21. SPSS was used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the sample and conduct Pearson correlation analysis. Amos was used to perform confirmatory factor analysis, assess convergent and discriminant validity, and test the hypothesized structural relationships.

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IV. Empirical Analysis

1. Sample Characteristics

Table 2 presents the demographic characteristics of the 231 respondents. Females comprised 65.8% of the sample, while 34.2% were male. Most respondents were aged 18–24 (77.9%), and 80.1% accessed SNS platforms at least five times per day. Instagram was identified as the primary platform by 75.8% of respondents. For the focal product encounter, 75.8% reported Instagram and 24.2% reported other SNS platforms. Thus, although Instagram represented the largest share of the sample, the data covered multiple SNS contexts.

Table 2. Sample Characteristics (N = 231)

Category	Classification	n	%
Gender	Male	79	34.2
	Female	152	65.8
Age	18-24	180	77.9
	25 and above	51	22.1
SNS Use Frequency	5+ times/day	185	80.1
	Fewer than 5 times/day	46	19.9
Primary SNS Platform	Instagram	175	75.8
	Other platforms	56	24.2

2. Reliability and Validity Analysis

CFA was performed on the full measurement model to assess unidimensionality and convergent validity before testing the structural model. The results indicated an acceptable model fit (χ^2 = 220.234, df = 123, $p < 0.001$; GFI = 0.906, RMR = 0.046, TLI = 0.962, CFI = 0.970, RMSEA = 0.059), suggesting that the measurement model fits the data reasonably well. Each construct was initially measured with four items. Based on the confirmatory factor analysis, SH2 and SE2 were removed because of inadequate item-level measurement performance. The final scales retained three items for shareability and three for self-expressiveness, all of which showed satisfactory standardized loadings.

The reliability analysis demonstrated that Cronbach's alpha values for all constructs exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory internal consistency among the measurement items [22]. Composite reliability values likewise exceeded 0.70 for all constructs [23], providing further evidence of the measurement model's reliability.

Convergent validity was further assessed using standardized factor loadings obtained from the confirmatory factor analysis. All standardized factor loadings were greater than 0.50 and were statistically significant at the 0.01 level, providing support for convergent validity [24]. In addition, the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct exceeded the recommended cutoff value of 0.50 [22], further confirming the convergent validity of the measurement model.

Discriminant validity was assessed using the criteria proposed by Kline [25] and Fornell and Larcker [26]. According to Kline [25], discriminant validity is supported when the correlation between any two constructs is below 0.85. In addition, following the Fornell–Larcker criterion, the square root of the AVE for each construct should exceed its correlations with all other constructs [26]. The results satisfied both criteria, indicating that adequate discriminant validity was established for all constructs.

Table 3. Confirmatory Analysis

Construct	Item	Std. Coefficient	S.E.	t-value	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's α	AVE
Visual Aesthetics	VA1	0.819	-	-	0.930	0.896	0.769
	VA2	0.796	0.067	13.551			
	VA3	0.830	0.074	14.342			
	VA4	0.864	0.070	15.124			
Shareability	SH1	0.741	-	-	0.856	0.810	0.665
	SH3	0.772	0.098	10.687			
	SH4	0.797	0.094	10.971			
Self-Expressiveness	SE1	0.793	-	-	0.834	0.829	0.628
	SE3	0.727	0.074	11.095			
	SE4	0.849	0.088	12.869			
UGC	UGC1	0.834	-	-	0.896	0.935	0.682
	UGC2	0.859	0.051	19.908			
	UGC3	0.923	0.064	17.777			
	UGC4	0.890	0.064	16.972			
Purchase Intention	PI1	0.880	-	-	0.938	0.945	0.791
	PI2	0.877	0.059	19.106			
	PI3	0.939	0.052	22.242			
	PI4	0.912	0.054	20.807			
x2=220.234, df=123, p=0.000, GFI=0.906, RMR=0.046, TLI=0.962, CFI=0.970, RMSEA=0.059							

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Table 4. Discriminant Validity Analysis

Construct	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) Visual Aesthetics	**0.877**				
(2) Shareability	0.532**	**0.815**			
(3) Self-Expressiveness	0.493**	0.530**	**0.792**		
(4) UGC	0.287**	0.449**	0.497**	**0.826**	
(5) Purchase Intention	0.487**	0.561**	0.584**	0.465**	**0.889**
**Significant at the 0.01 level (two-sided). The diagonal bold text is the square root of AVE.					

3. Hypothesis Testing

SEM was conducted to examine Hypotheses H1–H7. The results indicated that the structural model provided an acceptable fit to the data (χ^2 = 211.992, df = 122, p < 0.001, χ^2/df = 1.738; GFI = 0.908, RMR = 0.045, TLI = 0.965, CFI = 0.972, RMSEA = 0.057), supporting the adequacy of the overall model for hypothesis testing. Based on the satisfactory model fit, the structural relationships among the latent constructs were examined. Table 5 reports the standardized path coefficients, t-values, and the corresponding hypothesis-testing results.

Three findings are particularly noteworthy. First, visual aesthetics was the only Instagrammable attribute that did not significantly influence UGC, leading to the rejection of H1. Although the estimated path coefficient was negative, the relationship was not statistically significant, suggesting that visual appeal alone may be insufficient to stimulate consumers' content creation behavior. This finding contrasts with the prevailing assumption in the Instagrammable marketing literature that aesthetically appealing content naturally encourages users to generate and share content.

Second, although its effect on UGC was not significant, visual aesthetics still had a significant positive direct effect on purchase intention, indicating that aesthetic appeal may still serve as an important evaluative cue during consumers' purchase decision-making process, even if it does not encourage active content creation. By contrast, both shareability and self-expressiveness exerted significant positive effects on UGC and purchase intention. UGC, in turn, positively influenced purchase intention, providing empirical support for the proposed mediating role of consumer-generated content in the structural model.

Because the hypotheses specified positive relationships, a one tailed test was applied. Accordingly, H4 (t-value = 1.850) and H7 (t-value = 1.750) were supported at the 5% significance level.

Third, these results indicate that UGC does not significantly mediate the relationships between the three content characteristics and purchase intention, although UGC itself significantly affects purchase intention. Thus, the effects of shareability and self-expressiveness appear to operate primarily through direct paths rather than through UGC. This suggests that content emphasizing shareable and self-expressive features may influence purchase intention directly, while the potential mediating role of UGC may require further validation with larger samples or longer observation periods.

Table 6 decomposes the effects of the three content characteristics on purchase intention into direct and indirect effects through UGC using 5,000 bootstrap resamples. Self-expressiveness had the largest total effect (β = 0.378), followed by shareability (β = 0.314) and visual aesthetics (β = 0.128). None of the indirect effects was significant, as the bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals included zero. The indirect effect of visual aesthetics was negative (β = −0.011), consistent with its reversed direct path in the UGC equation.

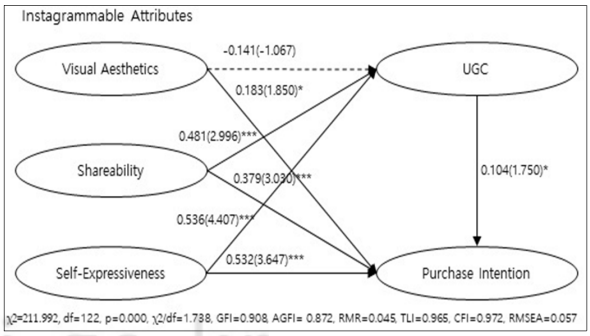


Fig. 2. Path Model

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Table 5. Hypothesis Test Results

Hypothesized path		UGC → Purchase Intention	t-value	Results
H1	Visual Aesthetics → UGC	−0.141	−1.067	Rejected
H2	Shareability → UGC	0.481	2.996***	Supported
H3	Self-Expressiveness → UGC	0.536	4.407***	Supported
H4	Visual Aesthetics → Purchase Intention	0.183	1.850*	Supported
H5	Shareability → Purchase Intention	0.379	3.030***	Supported
H6	Self-Expressiveness → Purchase Intention	0.352	3.647***	Supported
H7	UGC → Purchase Intention	0.104	1.750*	Supported
χ^2 = 211.992, df = 122, p < 0.001, χ^2/df = 1.738; GFI = 0.908, RMR = 0.045, TLI = 0.965, CFI = 0.972, RMSEA = 0.057 *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001				

Table 6. Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects on Purchase Intention

Predictor	Direct effect (β)	Indirect effect via UGC (β)	Total effect (β)	Results	Bootstrap p
Visual Aesthetics	0.139	−0.011	0.128	[−.070, .005]	0.187
Shareability	0.278	0.037	0.314	[−.005, .123]	0.084
Self-Expressiveness	0.326	0.052	0.378	[−.011, .143]	0.097

4. Discussion

The asymmetry identified in Table 5 may reflect a broader change in how frequent SNS users, particularly Korean Generation Z users who regularly encounter highly curated visual content, evaluate the value of content creation. For these users, content may be appealing to view without necessarily being compelling enough to create and share themselves.

Interestingly, the direct effect of visual aesthetics on UGC changed direction after shareability and self-expressiveness were included in the model. Although visual aesthetics was positively correlated with UGC ($r = 0.287$, $p < 0.01$; Table 4), its direct effect became negative and nonsignificant ($\beta = -0.141$, $t = -1.067$; Table 5, H1). Shareability ($\beta = 0.481$, $p < 0.001$) and self expressiveness ($\beta = 0.536$, $p < 0.001$) were both significant predictors of UGC, while their correlations with visual aesthetics were moderate ($r = 0.532$ and 0.493). VIF values ranging from 1.522 to 1.608 also indicate that multicollinearity was not a concern. This pattern is consistent with a suppression effect [27, 28]. Thus, the positive association between visual aesthetics and UGC appears to be largely explained by its shared variance with shareability and self-expressiveness. The findings suggest that visual appeal may support UGC mainly through content that facilitates sharing and self-expression, rather than through visual quality alone.

According to theories of aesthetic processing, visual beauty captures attention rapidly and automatically. However, attracting attention is conceptually distinct from the more deliberate and socially driven decision to create and share one's own content [9]. This phenomenon is consistent with previous research suggesting that repeated circulation of visually similar content on Instagram can contribute to the standardization of a collective visual imaginary [1].

These findings suggest that Instagrammability should be understood not only in terms of aesthetic appeal but also in relation to the threshold required to motivate content creation. A place or product may be visually attractive enough to generate favorable evaluations or purchase intentions, yet still be insufficient to encourage users to capture and share their own experiences. The present results indicate that surpassing this threshold depends more on the extent to which the content enables self-expression and facilitates social sharing than on its visual attractiveness alone. This interpretation is consistent with self-presentation theory, which argues that social media users primarily share content to construct and communicate their identities rather than simply to document aesthetically pleasing experiences [7]. The findings extend this perspective to the marketing of Instagrammable places and products.

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V. Conclusion

1. Theoretical Implications

This study makes three contributions to the literature on Instagrammable marketing. First, it conceptualizes Instagrammability as a multidimensional construct comprising visual aesthetics, shareability, and self-expressiveness, and demonstrates that these dimensions play distinct roles in influencing consumer behavior rather than functioning interchangeably.

Second, it identifies UGC as both a consequence of Instagrammable attributes and a driver of purchase intention, integrating two streams of research—Instagrammable marketing and UGC-based purchase decision research—that have largely evolved independently.

Third, the findings suggest that, in markets where Instagrammable design has become increasingly widespread, visual aesthetics alone may no longer be sufficient to stimulate active content creation, although it continues to influence consumers' purchase evaluations. This pattern provides preliminary evidence of a possible aesthetic fatigue effect, whereby the persuasive value of visual appeal diminishes as aesthetically similar content becomes more prevalent.

Overall, the findings indicate that the effectiveness of Instagrammable marketing depends not only on visual attractiveness but also on the extent to which products or places facilitate social sharing and enable consumers to express their identities through the content they create [15, 22].

2. Practical Implications

The findings offer several practical implications for brand managers, retailers, and space designers. First, investments in visual aesthetics should not be regarded as a stand-alone strategy for stimulating UGC. Instead, Instagrammable environments should be designed to encourage social sharing and facilitate consumers' self-expression. For example, brands may incorporate interactive features, limited-time or exclusive experiences, personalized elements, and participatory activities that enable consumers to express their identities while creating and sharing content. Such features are likely to enhance both the perceived shareability of the experience and consumers' motivation to generate UGC.

Furthermore, since shareability and self expressiveness were the strongest predictors of both UGC and purchase intention, marketing efforts may be more effective when they emphasize opportunities for participation and self expression rather than focusing primarily on further enhancing visual aesthetics. This implication is particularly relevant in the Korean retail and hospitality sectors, where Instagrammable marketing has become increasingly widespread. In highly competitive environments characterized by visually similar spaces and products, creating opportunities for meaningful consumer participation and self-expression may provide a more sustainable source of differentiation than aesthetic refinement alone.

3. Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings of this study. First, the sample consisted primarily of respondents aged 18–24 and was obtained through convenience and snowball sampling. As a result, the generalizability of the findings to older age groups or individuals with lower levels of SNS use may be limited. Future research should validate the proposed model using more diverse samples across different age groups and cultural contexts to examine the robustness and boundary conditions of the observed relationships.

Second, the cross-sectional and self-reported nature of the data limits the ability to establish causal relationships and does not completely eliminate the possibility of common method bias. Future studies employing experimental or longitudinal research designs could provide

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stronger evidence regarding the causal mechanisms linking Instagrammable attributes, UGC, and purchase intention. In particular, manipulating visual aesthetics, shareability, and self-expressiveness independently would allow researchers to examine their distinct effects more rigorously.

Finally, the findings indicate that shareability and self-expressiveness are positively related to UGC and purchase intention within the SNS contexts examined. However, because most respondents encountered the focal product on Instagram, these relationships should not be interpreted as Instagram-specific effects. As platform differences were not examined, the results do not establish whether the observed relationships differ across SNS platforms [29].

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