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# Influence of Korean SNS Branded Webtoons on User Satisfaction and Behavioral Intention

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** This study investigates how SNS branded webtoons distributed through personal Instagram accounts affect user satisfaction, purchase intention, and electronic word of mouth (eWOM). Specifically, it examines how webtoon characteristics such as informativeness, entertainment, diversity, and reliability, and influencer characteristics such as attractiveness, credibility, and expertise, shape user satisfaction and behavioral intentions. **Data and methodology:** An online survey was conducted with 294 Korean Instagram users (119 male, 175 female), mostly aged 20–39 years with experience viewing branded webtoons. 39 measurement items adapted from validated studies were assessed using a 5 point Likert scale. Data were analyzed using SPSS and SmartPLS with structural equation modeling. **Results:** The model showed good fit (SRMR = 0.071;  $R^2 = 0.755$  for satisfaction, 0.427 for purchase intention, 0.455 for eWOM). Informativeness ( $\beta = 0.15, p < 0.05$ ), entertainment ( $\beta = 0.13, p < 0.05$ ), reliability ( $\beta = 0.24, p < 0.001$ ), attractiveness ( $\beta = 0.24, p < 0.001$ ), and expertise ( $\beta = 0.15, p < 0.05$ ) increased satisfaction. Satisfaction influenced purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.65, p < 0.001$ ) and eWOM ( $\beta = 0.28, p < 0.001$ ), and purchase intention affected eWOM ( $\beta = 0.46, p < 0.001$ ). **Conclusions:** Users value informative, reliable, and expertise crafted webtoon content more than influencer credibility or content diversity. The findings extend the Uses and Gratifications theory by showing that cognitive and emotional gratifications jointly drive satisfaction. Enhancing content quality and creator expertise can satisfaction and engagement in SNS-based brand communication.

**Keywords :** Branded Webtoon, Social Media, Content Marketing, Consumer Research, Behavioral Intention

**JEL Classification Code :** C83, D12, M31, M39

## 1. Introduction

The widespread adoption of smart devices has significantly transformed the digital content market. Digital content consumption has become globalized, enabling people to access a wide range of content anytime and anywhere. According to Grand View Research (2024), the global digital content market is projected to reach approximately USD 35.2 billion by 2025, with an expected compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 12.7 percent in the following years. Furthermore, the digital content production market is estimated at USD 32.28 billion in 2024

and is forecasted to grow at an annual rate of 13.9 percent between 2025 and 2030. This rapid industry growth was driven by increased digital leisure activities during the COVID-19 pandemic, when mobility was restricted, and by the proliferation of social networking services (SNS) (De', Pandey, & Pal, 2020).

Along with this expansion of the digital content industry, webtoons have been attracting global attention, especially in Asia. According to MMD Research Institute (2022), 35.6 percent of Japanese users have experienced using comic applications or related services, and this popularity is steadily growing. Webtoons are valued for their features

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optimized for digital environments and their differentiation from traditional print comics (Guo, 2023). In addition, they demonstrate strong scalability of intellectual property (IP), which allows them to expand into dramas, films, and animations through one-source-multi-use (OSMU), thereby generating new industrial value (Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan, 2020). In recent years, beyond commercially serialized webtoons, SNS-based comics distributed free of charge on social media have risen in prominence, with particularly active posting through personal accounts on platforms such as Instagram.

As digital content consumption grows, advertising strategies using SNS have become increasingly important for companies. Unlike traditional mass media advertising, which relies on one-way communication, SNS advertising enables interactive communication between users (Kang & Park, 2016). Platforms such as Instagram and Twitter favor advertising formats that are visually appealing within a short period, leading to the emergence of formats such as “SNS comics” and “branded webtoons.” These forms are highly compatible with everyday SNS usage, creating an environment in which consumers naturally encounter advertising content (Kim, 2021; Lee, 2019).

The SNS advertising market as a whole continues to expand. According to Statista (2023), the global SNS advertising market reached USD 170 billion in 2023 and is expected to exceed USD 260 billion by 2027. The share of mobile advertising is increasing, suggesting that the demand for advertising content adapted to mobile environments, such as branded webtoons, will continue to grow. In this context, branded webtoons disseminated through SNS align with the information-seeking behaviors of younger consumers and serve as an effective means of maximizing advertising effectiveness.

Thus, branded webtoons in SNS advertising are emerging as a new framework that compensates for the limitations of traditional advertising while fostering user-centered, interactive relationships. Clarifying the process by which the structural elements of branded webtoons influence consumer behavior through emotional and cognitive responses is valuable not only for proposing a new theoretical model in academic research but also for providing practical insights for companies in designing advertising strategies.

Building on these considerations, this study empirically examines how the characteristics of SNS branded webtoons, categorized into content and influencer characteristics, influence purchase intention and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) intention through the mediating role of user satisfaction.

## 2. Literature Review and Hypothesis

### 2.1. Use and Gratification Theory

The Uses and Gratification Theory (U&G), proposed by Katz (1974), provides a framework for explaining why people use media, what motives drive such use, and how they derive satisfaction from it. In this theory, “uses” refer to the actions individuals actively take based on their existing interests and needs, while “gratifications” denote the degree of satisfaction that users consciously obtain as a result of such actions (Katz, 1974). Unlike traditional models that view audiences as passive recipients of media, U&G characterizes users as active agents who selectively engage with media to fulfill their needs. In recent years, with the proliferation of smart devices, U&G has become an important theoretical foundation for analyzing the relationship between users’ proactive efforts to satisfy diverse needs and satisfaction derived from the services consumed (Kim, Sung, and Park, 2011).

### 2.2. SNS Branded webtoon

SNS-branded webtoons are a form of brand marketing content that integrates the informational and reliability aspects of advertising, while leveraging the entertainment value and diversity inherent in traditional webtoons (Ryu & Lee, 2014). In South Korea, more than 90 percent of the population uses SNS, and Instagram has become an important advertising channel for companies (Data Reportal, 2022). Through collaborations with influencers, companies produce branded webtoons to deliver product information to followers in a natural and engaging manner (Ryu, 2020). Moreover, SNS advertising webtoons use characters and storytelling to foster a sense of familiarity among readers, thereby enhancing their potential word-of-mouth effects (Jeong, Han, and An, 2013). Diversity is a key characteristic of branded webtoons. By pursuing variety in story development and modes of expression, creators emphasize brand uniqueness and stimulate user interest and engagement (Ryu, 2020). Lee (2019) pointed out that branded webtoons can generate sustained advertising effects even among modern consumers who tend to avoid advertisements. Furthermore, Kim (2021) reported that motives such as convenience and entertainment serve as critical factors supporting continued use. Based on these insights, this study examined the characteristics of SNS advertising webtoons by classifying them into four categories: informativeness, entertainment, diversity, and reliability.

#### 2.2.1. Informativeness

SNS-branded webtoons enhance the effectiveness of information delivery to users by naturally embedding product -or service- related information within the storyline

(Hudson & Hudson, 2006). Unlike traditional one-way advertising, comics allow users to accept information with less resistance. Ryu (2020) points out that the similarity between the atmosphere of the brand and that of the creator increases the credibility of the information, enabling users to gain satisfaction from the acquisition of knowledge even while recognizing the content as advertising. Furthermore, Casaló, Flavián, and Ibáñez-Sánchez. (2018) demonstrated that influencer-generated content on SNS influences users' attitudes and purchase intentions through its informational value. Thus, the informativeness of SNS-branded webtoons is an important factor that leads to purchase intention through user satisfaction. Based on these considerations, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H1a:** Informativeness of SNS-branded webtoons has a positively affects user satisfaction.

### 2.2.2. Entertainment

Entertainment is one of the major characteristics of SNS branded webtoons, functioning as an element through which users experience enjoyment and immersion in the content (Ryu & Lee, 2014). Particularly, storytelling and character portrayal evoke user empathy and allow brand messages to be received without being perceived as overt advertising. Lee (2019) emphasized that the storytelling dimension of branded webtoons is a critical factor in sustaining advertising effectiveness. Kim (2021) further demonstrated that entertainment serves as an intrinsic motivation that supports the continued use of branded webtoons. Moreover, Ducoffe (1996) advertising value model identifies entertainment as a key component that positively influences users' perceived advertising value. Taken together, these findings suggest the following hypothesis:

**H1b:** Entertainment of SNS-branded webtoons positively affects user satisfaction.

### 2.2.3. Diversity

Diversity is an important element of SNS-branded webtoons, because creators often pursue variety in story development and modes of expression when producing advertising-based works (Ryu, 2020). Differentiating products through diverse portrayals highlights brand uniqueness and attracts user interest. Jeong et al. (2013) reported that consistency and diversity in the imagery and storytelling of advertising comics enhanced user trust and increased satisfaction. Furthermore, Kim (2021) demonstrated that convenience and diversity enrich the user experience and contribute to the development of long-term relationships with brands. Thus, diversity should be regarded not merely as a stylistic device but also a strategic

factor that reflects user preferences. Based on these considerations, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H1c:** Diversity of SNS-branded webtoons positively affects user satisfaction.

### 2.2.4. Reliability

Reliability is essential for enhancing the effectiveness of SNS-branded webtoons. The greater the perceived similarity between the atmosphere of the brand and that of the creator, the more likely users are to trust advertising content (Jeong et al., 2013). Lou and Yuan (2019) further demonstrated that the reliability of influencer-generated content on SNS directly influences users' attitudes and purchase intentions. Ryu (2020) noted that advertising comics play a role in building trust by evoking empathy and a sense of familiarity, rather than being perceived solely as promotional material. Reliability, in interaction with informativeness, diversity, and entertainment, ultimately enhances user satisfaction and serves as a critical mediating factor leading to purchase behavior. Based on these considerations, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H1d:** Reliability of SNS-branded webtoons positively affects user satisfaction.

## 2.3. Characteristics of Influencer

An influencer refers to an individual or small group that exerts influence by producing original content and disseminating it to a wide audience through digital platforms such as SNS, where they typically maintain a large number of followers (Han, 2020). In recent years, many companies have actively employed influencer-based marketing, which departs from traditional one-way advertising communication and is characterized by interactive engagement with users. Moreover, influencers can be regarded as ordinary users, and their content is therefore perceived as user-generated advertising that simultaneously functions as a form of product review. Consequently, information recipients are likely to feel as though they are receiving information from acquaintances (Han, 2020). In this context, influencers must build trust through continuous communication with their audiences. Based on these considerations, this study examines influencer characteristics in terms of three factors: attractiveness, credibility, and expertise.

### 2.3.1. Attractiveness

Attractiveness refers to the degree to which a person or entity is perceived as likable or appealing (Dion, 1972). According to Dion (1972), employing advertising models with high attractiveness makes it easier for users to form

positive attitudes toward products or content, thereby increasing satisfaction. Furthermore, the attractiveness of advertising models is not limited to simple visual appeal but is positioned as a factor that exerts a multifaceted influence on the overall image of a product or brand. Lou and Yuan (2019) confirmed that influencer attractiveness in branded content strengthens consumer trust and satisfaction, ultimately influencing purchase behavior. Based on these insights, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H2a:** Influencer attractiveness positively affects user satisfaction.

### 2.3.2. Credibility

Credibility is an indispensable factor that enables users to continue engaging with content or products (Ridings, Gefen, & Arinze, 2002). Influencers build close relationships with their audiences through content, thereby fostering a high level of trust that significantly shapes user attitudes and subsequent behaviors (Kim, Bae, & Lee, 2021). Lou and Yuan (2019) confirmed that the perceived value and credibility of messages in social media brand content enhance consumer trust, which, in turn, leads to purchase intention through user satisfaction. Similarly, Casaló et al. (2018) demonstrated that influencer expertise and credibility on Instagram increase followers' attitudes and satisfaction, ultimately contributing to stronger purchase intention. Based on these insights, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H2b:** Influencer credibility positively affects user satisfaction.

### 2.3.3. Expertise

Expertise refers to the degree to which an audience perceives a message sender as having the ability to make appropriate and accurate judgments in a specific domain or topic (McCracken, 1989). When influencers demonstrate advanced knowledge and understanding of a product or content, users are more likely to trust the information source, which, in turn, strongly influences their behavioral intentions, such as purchase decisions (Yoo, 2018). The effects of expertise have also been confirmed in previous studies. Kim and Choo (2019) found that the perceived expertise of SNS fashion influencers positively affects user satisfaction. Similarly, Yu and Kim (2020) empirically demonstrated that influencer expertise in personal media content enhances user satisfaction, which subsequently leads to purchase intention. Based on these insights, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H2c:** Influencer expertise positively affects user satisfaction.

## 2.4. User Satisfaction

User satisfaction, grounded in Uses and Gratification Theory (U&G) (Katz, 1974), has been extensively examined in prior user studies. According to this theory, media and service users are not passive recipients but rather active agents who deliberately select media and services to fulfill their needs and motives, thereby deriving satisfaction. Consequently, user satisfaction is regarded as a critical variable for understanding attitude formation and subsequent behaviors. Zeng and Kim (2018) revealed that satisfaction derived from users' feelings of affinity and familiarity with beauty influencers significantly influences purchase intention. Kim and Shin (2019) empirically demonstrated that satisfaction gained from service experiences in a preparatory school context positively promoted users' word-of-mouth intention. Based on these insights, the following hypotheses are proposed:

**H3:** User satisfaction positively affects purchase intention.

**H4:** User satisfaction positively affects eWOM intention.

## 2.5. Purchase Intention

Purchase intention refers to an individual's behavioral and proactive intentions regarding the products or services they plan to purchase in the future (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). In other words, it reflects a user's explicit intention, expressed outwardly in relation to purchasing behavior. Maignan and Lukas (1997) found that, when users derive enjoyment and satisfaction from services offered online, their willingness to purchase and frequency of use of products or content increase. Moreover, users who purchase and experience products or services tend to share their evaluations and experiences with others (Chatterjee, 2001). Accordingly, the following hypothesis concerning the correlation with eWOM intention is proposed:

**H5:** Purchase intention positively affects on eWOM intention.

## 2.6. eWOM Intention

Word-of-mouth (WOM) intention refers to individuals communicating their experiences and evaluations of a particular company, product, or service to other users (Walsh & Mitchell, 2010). In the online context, WOM intention specifically denotes user behavior in which personal experiences and opinions are made public and shared with an unspecified number of people (Chatterjee, 2001). Such actions not only reflect user satisfaction and attitudes but also function as an important variable that

influences the purchasing behaviors and decision-making processes of others.

### 3. Research Model and Methodology

#### 3.1. Research Model

The model used in this study, which is based on previous research, is shown in Figure 1.

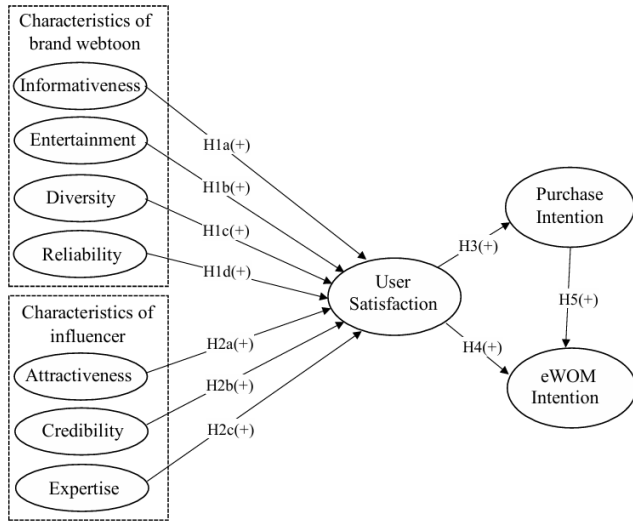


Figure 1: Research Model

#### 3.2. Operational Definition and Measurement

In this study, the operational definition of the variables was examined using four factors representing the characteristics of branded webtoons (informativeness, entertainment, diversity, and reliability) and three factors describing influencer characteristics (attractiveness, credibility, and expertise). Additionally, the study considers user satisfaction, purchase intention, and eWOM intention as dependent variables. The survey measurement items for each variable were adapted from previous studies and modified to fit the context of this study. A total of 39 questionnaire items were assessed using a five-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree). The specific measurement items are listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Operational Definition of Variables

Constructs	Measured items	Reference
Informativeness(IN)	1 This SNS-branded webtoon provides sufficient information.	Lee, Jeong, and Kim. (2020), Choi and
	2 This SNS-branded webtoon provides the necessary	

		information.	Jung. (2018)
	3	This SNS-branded webtoon provides up-to-date information.	
	4	This SNS-branded webtoon provides the information I want to know.	
Entertainment (EN)	1	This SNS-branded webtoon is interesting.	Kim et al. (2018), Lee, Jeong, and Kim. (2020), Oum and Han (2011), Jeon and Kim. (2018), Woo (2019).
	2	This SNS-branded webtoon provides entertainment.	
	3	This SNS-branded webtoon stimulates my curiosity.	
	4	This SNS-branded webtoon is creative.	
Diversity (DI)	1	This SNS-branded webtoon content is diverse in terms of material.	Woo (2019), Nam and Park (2017)
	2	This SNS-branded webtoon content is diverse in format.	
	3	This SNS-branded webtoon content is innovative.	
	4	This SNS-branded webtoon covers trendy topics.	
Reliability (RE)	1	This SNS-branded webtoon content is honest.	Lee, Jeong, and Kim. (2020), Park (2015)
	2	This SNS-branded webtoon content is not contrived.	
	3	The information provided by this SNS-branded webtoon is objective.	
	4	The information provided by this SNS-branded webtoon is reliable.	
	5	The source of the information in this SNS-branded webtoon can be accurately verified.	
Attractiveness(AT)	1	This creator is attractive.	Kim and Choo (2019), Yu and Kim (2020)
	2	This creator has their own taste.	
	3	This creator has good communication skills.	
	4	This creator often evokes a sense of intimacy.	
Credibility (CR)	1	This creator is trustworthy.	Kim and Choo (2019), Yu and Kim (2020)
	2	This creator is credible.	
	3	This creator is honest throughout the content.	
	4	Information obtained from this creator is credible.	
Expertise (EX)	1	This creator appears to be professional in their representation of SNS-branded webtoons.	Kim and Choo (2019), Yu and Kim (2020)
	2	This creator has the ability to present SNS-branded webtoons effectively.	
	3	This creator is competent in presenting SNS-branded webtoons.	
	4	This creator knows a lot about SNS-branded webtoons.	
User Satisfaction (US)	1	I am satisfied with the SNS-branded webtoon.	Woo (2019), Han (2020)
	2	I am more satisfied than I expected before using the SNS-branded webtoon.	
	3	I am generally satisfied with the SNS-branded webtoon.	

	4	I would recommend reading the SNS-branded webtoon to people around me.	
Purchase Intention (PI)	1	I will choose the brand's product featured in this SNS-branded webtoon.	Han(2020), Kang (2018), Kim and Choo (2019)
	2	I am willing to buy the brand's product featured in this SNS-branded webtoon.	
	3	I will continue to purchase the brand's product featured in this SNS-branded webtoon.	
eWOM Intention (EI)	1	I will share this SNS-branded webtoon on my social networking site or blog.	Kang (2018).
	2	I will upload my opinions and experiences about this SNS-branded webtoon to social networking sites and blogs.	
	3	I will share information about this SNS-branded webtoon by posting videos, news, photos, etc., on social networking sites and blogs.	

### 3.3. Data Collection and Analysis Methods

To verify the hypotheses, an online survey was conducted by snowballing method using google form. Users were invited to participate through a survey chat Kakao-Talk and selected using snowball sampling. The main targets of this study were Korean users aged between 10 and over 50 who have experience with SNS-branded webtoons on websites and smartphone applications. The research subjects were SNS-branded webtoons uploaded by Korean personal SNS accounts found on websites and smartphone applications. A total of 412 questionnaires were collected over three days, from March 20, 2023, to March 22, 2023. A total of 294 valid responses were retained after eliminating with a standard deviation of less than 0.5, thus ensuring sufficient variability and discriminative power of the data (DeVellis & Thorpe, 2021). The gender ratio consisted of 119 males and 175 females, with a larger proportion of females. Most respondents between the ages of 10 and over 50 were in their 30s with 131(44.56%), followed by those aged 20 to 29 years, with 121(42.86%), showing a slightly similar distribution. This study utilized SmartPLS4 (v.4.0.9.6) for data analysis, as it is particularly suitable for empirical studies employing predictive models and relatively small sample sizes. The Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach was adopted due to its robustness, minimal sensitivity to identification problems, and flexibility in handling both small and large datasets (Hair et al., 2011). The demographic characteristics are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Demographic Characteristics

Category	Items	Frequency	Percentage
		(N=294)	
Gender	Male	119	40.48

	Female	175	59.52
Age	10-19	8	2.72
	20-29	126	42.86
	30-39	131	44.56
	40-49	26	8.84
	Over 50	3	1.02
Annual Income (KRW)	Less than 20 million won	88	29.93
	20 million to less than 30 million won	69	23.47
	30 million to less than 40 million won	102	34.70
	40 million to less than 50 million won	26	8.84
	50 million to less than 80 million won	8	2.72
80 million to less than 100 million won	1	0.34	

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Measurement Model Testing

#### 4.1.1. Result of Measurement Model Analysis

As shown in Table 3, informativeness<sup>3</sup> (0.695) and reliability<sup>5</sup> (0.609) were excluded because their factor loadings fell just below the recommended threshold of 0.70. Although credibility<sup>3</sup> (0.794) met the minimum requirement for factor loading, it was removed to ensure discriminant validity among the other constructs, and the measurement model was refined accordingly. Subsequently, Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) were assessed. All constructions demonstrated values above 0.70, indicating acceptable internal consistency among the measurement items (Hair, Sarstedt, & Ringle, 2019).

As presented in Table 4, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for all constructs exceeded the recommended levels of 0.50 and 0.70, confirming adequate convergent validity. Moreover, all inter-construct correlation coefficients were lower than the square root of the corresponding AVE, supporting satisfactory discriminant validity. The inner Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values ranged from 1.298 to 2.893, all below the threshold of 4, suggesting no concerns regarding multicollinearity (Hair, Hollingsworth, Randolph, & Chong, 2017). Finally, the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) was 0.071, which is below the recommended threshold of 0.08, indicating an acceptable model fit.

**Table 3:** Result of Measurement Model Analysis

Variables /Scale items	Chronbach's alpha	CR	Loading	Mean	SD	
IN	1	0.741	0.852	0.829	4.112	0.794
	2			0.789	4.024	0.835
	3			-	-	-

	4			0.816	3.912	0.880
EN	1	0.785	0.861	0.821	4.190	0.848
	2			0.808	4.214	0.836
	3			0.709	4.160	0.777
	4			0.779	4.020	0.833
DI	1	0.772	0.854	0.814	4.075	0.834
	2			0.739	4.031	0.901
	3			0.771	4.010	0.819
	4			0.755	4.167	0.801
RE	1	0.827	0.885	0.802	3.796	0.895
	2			0.802	3.796	0.903
	3			0.801	3.718	0.947
	4			0.841	3.874	0.842
	5			-	-	-
AT	1	0.792	0.865	0.835	4.139	0.802
	2			0.747	4.221	0.805
	3			0.745	4.163	0.747
	4			0.809	4.238	0.768
CR	1	0.807	0.886	0.848	3.905	0.844
	2			0.849	3.976	0.797
	3			-	-	-
	4			0.851	3.874	0.821
EX	1	0.721	0.843	0.773	3.976	0.784
	2			-	-	-
	3			0.809	3.912	0.836
	4			0.821	3.874	0.821
US	1	0.829	0.886	0.816	4.167	0.855
	2			0.820	4.105	0.880
	3			0.787	4.092	0.818
	4			0.829	3.861	0.902
PI	1	0.780	0.872	0.861	3.748	0.836
	2			0.780	3.884	0.853
	3			0.858	3.667	0.943
EI	1	0.903	0.939	0.917	3.466	1.142
	2			0.915	3.310	1.150
	3			0.913	3.429	1.195

Note: SD = Standard deviation; IN = Informativeness; EN = Entertainment; DI = Diversity; RE = Reliability; AT = Attractiveness; CR = Credibility; EX = Expertise; US = User satisfaction; PI = Purchase intention; EI = eWOM intention.

**Table 4: Result of Discriminant Validity**

	AVE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	0.658	0.811									
2	0.609	0.635	0.780								

3	0.593	0.651	0.739	0.770							
4	0.659	0.641	0.533	0.624	0.812						
5	0.616	0.599	0.712	0.684	0.509	0.785					
6	0.722	0.628	0.532	0.595	0.774	0.546	0.849				
7	0.642	0.684	0.599	0.639	0.775	0.599	0.828	0.801			
8	0.661	0.719	0.705	0.719	0.731	0.721	0.698	0.751	0.813		
9	0.695	0.559	0.498	0.516	0.691	0.417	0.659	0.672	0.653	0.834	
10	0.837	0.500	0.356	0.462	0.689	0.285	0.608	0.621	0.578	0.641	0.915

Note: 1 = Informativeness; 2 = Entertainment; 3 = Diversity; 4 = Reliability; 5 = Attractiveness; 6 = Credibility; 7 = Expertise; 8 = User satisfaction; 9 = Purchase intention; 10 = eWOM intention.

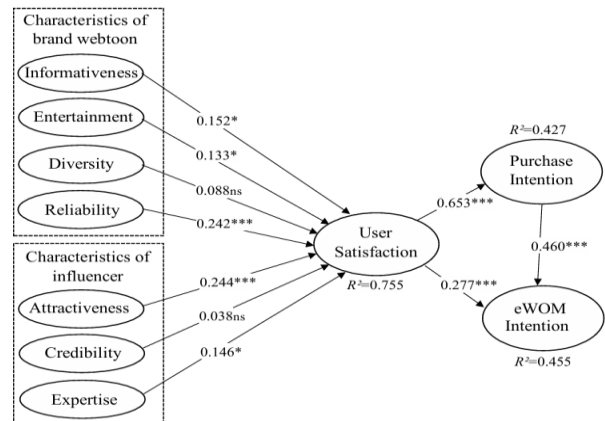
## 4.2. Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

### 4.2.1. Result of Structural Model Testing

The structural model was evaluated using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 samples. The coefficients of determination ( $R^2$ ) values were 0.755 for user satisfaction, 0.427 for purchase intention, and 0.455 for eWOM intention, indicating a relatively good model fit. The  $Q^2$  values obtained through PLS prediction were 0.750 for user satisfaction, 0.424 for purchase intention, and 0.451 for eWOM intention. As all values were greater than zero, the results suggest a strong predictive relevance of the exogenous latent variables.

Regarding the effect size ( $f^2$ ), all factors had values ranging from 0.021 to 0.223. However, the  $f^2$  values for reliability (0.016) and diversity (0.007) were not significant in the structural model analysis.

As shown in Table 5, the results of hypothesis testing indicate that eight hypotheses were supported, where two hypotheses (H1c and H2b) were not supported. Specifically, diversity ( $p = 0.120 > 0.05$ ) and credibility ( $p = 0.563 > 0.05$ ) did not have statistically significant effects on user satisfaction.



Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; \* $p < 0.05$ ; ns = non-significant

**Figure 2: Result of Structural Model Testing**

**Table 5:** Results of Hypothesis Testing by Path Analysis

H	Path	$\beta$	Sample Mean	SD	t	p
H1a	IN → US	0.152	0.147	0.064	2.397	*
H1b	EN → US	0.133	0.133	0.054	2.446	*
H1c	DI → US	0.088	0.087	0.056	1.556	ns
H1d	RE → US	0.242	0.244	0.058	4.198	***
H2a	AT → US	0.244	0.247	0.052	4.687	***
H2b	CR → US	0.038	0.039	0.066	0.579	ns
H2c	EX → US	0.146	0.145	0.067	2.188	*
H3	US → PI	0.653	0.651	0.041	15.871	***
H4	US → EI	0.277	0.277	0.055	5.005	***
H5	PI → EI	0.460	0.462	0.055	8.336	***
			$R^2$		$Q^2$	
User satisfaction			0.755(75.5%)		0.750	
Purchase intention			0.427(42.7%)		0.424	
eWOM intention			0.455(45.5%)		0.451	

Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; \* $p < 0.05$ ; ns=non-significant  
 IN=Informativeness; EN=Entertainment; DI=Diversity; RE=Reliability; AT=Attractiveness; CR=Credibility; EX=Expertise; US=User satisfaction; PI=Purchase intention; EI=eWOM intention.

### 4.3. Result of Mediation Effect

A mediation analysis was conducted to examine the indirect effects of each independent variable on purchase intention and eWOM intention, with user satisfaction as the mediating variable. The results showed that all factors, except diversity and reliability, had significant indirect effects on both purchase intention and eWOM intention when mediated by user satisfaction. These two factors were excluded because the hypotheses were not supported. The results of the mediation analysis are shown in Table 6.

**Table 6:** Results of Mediation Effect

Path	$\beta$	SD	t	p	Result
IN → US → PI	0.099	0.042	2.381	0.017	Supported
EN → US → PI	0.087	0.035	2.455	0.014	Supported
RE → US → PI	0.158	0.039	4.050	0.000	Supported
AT → US → PI	0.160	0.034	4.646	0.000	Supported
EX → US → PI	0.095	0.045	2.118	0.034	Supported
IN → US → EI	0.042	0.020	2.123	0.034	Supported
EN → US → EI	0.037	0.017	2.167	0.030	Supported
RE → US → EI	0.067	0.022	3.064	0.002	Supported
AT → US → EI	0.068	0.018	3.842	0.000	Supported
EX → US → EI	0.040	0.021	1.964	0.050	Supported
US → PI → EI	0.301	0.043	6.932	0.000	Supported
IN → US → PI → EI	0.046	0.020	2.263	0.024	Supported

EN → US → PI → EI	0.040	0.017	2.324	0.020	Supported
RE → US → PI → EI	0.073	0.020	3.715	0.000	Supported
AT → US → PI → EI	0.073	0.019	3.774	0.000	Supported
EX → US → PI → EI	0.044	0.022	1.986	0.047	Supported

Note: IN=Informativeness; EN=Entertainment; RE=Reliability; AT=Attractiveness; EX=Expertise; US=User satisfaction; PI=Purchase intention; EI=eWOM intention.

## 5. Discussion

Based on the analysis, several key conclusions can be drawn. First, informativeness, entertainment, and reliability in SNS branded webtoons were shown to significantly affect user satisfaction. This indicates that such content serves not only as advertising but also as a source of information and enjoyment, while reliable messages help cultivate positive brand intention. In contrast, diversity did not show a significant effect. This suggests that the genres and formats of many SNS branded webtoons remain limited or follow repetitive patterns, making it difficult for users to perceive diversity. In other words, when the primary purpose of the content is to deliver a corporate message, it may not be sufficient to increase user satisfaction unless unique narratives or creative variations in format are provided.

Second, influencer characteristics of attractiveness and expertise were shown to significantly affect user satisfaction. This implies that users experience higher levels of satisfaction when influencers who create or promote branded webtoons are perceived as visually appealing or knowledgeable about the product. This result supports the argument by Yoo (2018) that expertise plays an important role in positive user perceptions of brands and products through content. In contrast, credibility did not show a significant effect on user satisfaction. This suggests that because the promotional intent of branded webtoons is explicit, consumers may perceive influencer messages as commercial content, which can diminish their sense of credibility. Therefore, users appear to rely more on criteria such as visual appeal or expertise-based explanations rather than on influencer credibility.

Third, user satisfaction positively influenced both purchase and eWOM intentions. Satisfied users are more likely to develop favorable product perceptions, make purchases, and share recommendations with others.

Finally, purchase intention positively affects eWOM intention, indicating that willingness to purchase often extends to willingness to promote, thereby reinforcing the long-term marketing value of branded webtoons.

## 6. Implication

### 6.1. Theoretical Implications

This study provides several theoretical contributions by establishing a data-driven explanation of how user satisfaction mediates the effects of SNS branded webtoon characteristics and influencer attributes on behavioral intentions. The empirical results show that reliability ( $\beta = .24$ ) and attractiveness ( $\beta = .24$ ) exerted the strongest influence on satisfaction, followed by expertise ( $\beta = .15$ ) and informativeness ( $\beta = .15$ ), while entertainment ( $\beta = .13$ ) had a moderate effect. These findings indicate that users' evaluations of branded content are shaped more by cognitive credibility and emotional affinity than by message diversity or perceived influencer credibility.

Theoretically, this study extends the application of Uses and Gratifications framework to the field of SNS-based brand communication. It demonstrates how both informational satisfaction, represented by reliability, informativeness and expertise, and affective satisfaction, represented by attractiveness and entertainment, jointly promote satisfaction and behavioral intentions. By empirically confirming the mediating role of satisfaction, the study bridges digital storytelling, influencer marketing, and consumer behavior theories within an integrated structural model. It also introduces a refined understanding of branded webtoons as hybrid media that function simultaneously as entertainment and persuasive communication, thereby advancing academic discussions on narrative advertising and transmedia marketing.

### 6.2. Practical Implications

This study provides practical implications for developing marketing strategies that utilize SNS branded webtoons and influencers. First, characteristics of SNS branded webtoons such as informativeness, entertainment, and reliability have a positive effect on user satisfaction. In particular, given the results for reliability ( $\beta = 0.24$ ) and informativeness ( $\beta = 0.15$ ), it is important to ensure accuracy of information and consistency in narrative delivery when creating content. To achieve this, it may be helpful to embed brand messages naturally within the episode or incorporate fact based information such as product usage examples or problem solving scenarios. In addition, to enhance user entertainment ( $\beta = 0.13$ ), it is effective to design emotionally engaging storylines and visually appealing elements, while also creating structures that allow interaction through comments or event based participation.

Second, influencer characteristics of attractiveness and expertise positively influence user satisfaction. Therefore, this suggests that influencers featured in branded webtoons should be selected not merely for their celebrity status but

for their relevance to the product or service and for the professional image they convey. Given that attractiveness ( $\beta = 0.24$ ) and expertise ( $\beta = 0.15$ ) had significant effects on user satisfaction, it would be effective to enhance expertise by having influencers appear directly in webtoons to provide professional explanations, tips, or demonstrate real product usage experiences. In contrast, since credibility did not show a significant effect, it is more effective to highlight the influencer's visual appeal or to suggest messages that focus on professional storytelling.

Third, user satisfaction has a positive effect on purchase and eWOM intention. This indicates that a satisfactory branded webtoon experience serves as a key factor in driving active consumer intentions. Considering that user satisfaction influences purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.65$ ) and eWOM intention ( $\beta = 0.28$ ), it is effective to deepen user satisfaction or interest by reinforcing product benefits through follow up webtoon episodes. In addition, providing shareable features such as highlight panels or short clips can help satisfied users disseminate the content more easily, thereby strengthening eWOM intention.

Finally, purchase intention has a positive effect on eWOM intention ( $\beta = 0.46$ ). Therefore, marketers should continue to strengthen user satisfaction even after uploading branded webtoons through influencers by maintaining ongoing touchpoints, such as follow up events or the distribution of limited edition merchandise related to the product.

### 6.3. Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. First, users' varying familiarity with and interest in the SNS-branded advertising webtoons examined may have influenced their survey responses, limiting data consistency. Future research should control for prior exposure by selecting a consistently branded webtoon or standardizing variables such as advertising duration.

Second, while the webtoon market continues to expand and branded webtoons are increasingly used as marketing tools, this study focuses only on Korean users. Future studies should adopt cross-cultural approaches, as cultural backgrounds and media environments may shape user attitudes and behavioral intentions.

Finally, branded webtoons are heavily affected by SNS platform characteristics and algorithms. Future research should analyze platform-specific influences to develop more refined and tailored digital marketing strategies.

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