THE AUTHENTICITY OF FASHION YOUTUBER'S APOLOGY VIDEOS FOR A PAID ADVERTISEMENT AND VIEWER'S REACTION

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"Paid advertisement controversy", which is not disclosing the paid advertisements while producing contents with sponsorship, has become a recent issue. Controversy arose in various YouTube contents such as hauls and mukbangs, and many YouTubers tried to calm the controversy down by posting apology videos. This apology strategy is the best action a company or organization can take in a crisis situation (Benoit, 1995), and today's famous celebrities or influencers are also taking an apology strategy in order to overcome the situation. On the other hand, viewers' reaction to YouTuber's apology on "paid advertisement controversy" is somewhat negative. Cha (2020), who examined the relationship between words based on viewers' comments, suggested the need for authentic apology posts of YouTubers.

Although the apology strategy has been identified as an effective way to persuade the public in several previous studies, viewers' reactions to YouTubers' apology posts are mostly negative. In order to prevent the negative emotions of viewers caused by the paid advertisement controversy from leading to negative word of mouth and behavior, it is necessary to consider the authentic apology posts that viewers can accept. The purpose of this study was to analyze the contents of the post by studying the contents by fashion YouTuber's apology videos, examine the response of emotions expressed on the comments of the video, and examine what authentic apology posts viewers have accepted.

Regarding the authenticity of SNS posts, Choi and Lee (2013) referred to truth, honesty, reliability, and purity; and Kim and Choo (2019) referred to honesty and expertise as sub-categories. In an apology post, honesty relates to the degree to which unaffected honesty is perceived, and expertise refers to whether a specific solution to the problem is presented. In addition, with regard to social media apology posts by famous sports players, Lee and Kim (2014) revealed that when the integrity, suitability, and restoration of the posts was highly evaluated, and were perceived as posts with high authenticity. In YouTuber's apology post, suitability that relates to the message and communication method appropriate to the situation were perceived effective. In order to determine whether an apology post is being effectively accepted by viewers, it is necessary to examine the emotional reactions of viewers. According to Choi and Lin (2009), consumers experience various emotions such as relief, contempt, surprise, and worry in addition to anger and sympathy during these controversies. Grappi et al. (2013) confirmed that consumers experience contempt, anger, and disgust due to corporate's irresponsible behavior, and this sentiment leads to negative word of mouth and boycotting the company. In order to consider the effective role of the apology post, it is necessary to understand the sentiment of the viewers.

In this study, we looked at the cases of 'Han Hye Yeon' of the YouTube channel 'SuSS TV' and 'Kang Min Kyeong' of the YouTube channel 'Kyang Min Kyeong' as 'fashion YouTuber's paid advertisement controversy' instance. This study analyzed their contents and viewers' comments of the post. On the same date on July 17, 2020, the two fashion YouTubers posted an apology post, a video by Han Hye Yeon and an apology text by Kang Min Kyeong. We examined the authenticity of the post based on honesty, suitability, and expertise by referring to previous studies (Kim & Choo, 2019; Lee & Kim, 2014). Next, we looked at the reaction of viewers through the comments of the post. A total of 25,475 comments were posted on Han Hye Yeon's apology video, and a total of 2,339 comments were posted on Kang Min Kyeong's (as of May 18, 2021). Based on previous studies (Choi & Lin, 2009; Grappi et al., 2013), viewer emotions such as anger, sympathy, contempt, and worry were categorized; furthermore, viewer's perception on the authenticity of the apology post was inspected.

As a result, Han's apology video was 2 minutes and 34 seconds (115 words) long. Han apologized for not specifying the sponsored product and mentioned that she will mark it as a paid advertisement in the future, and that she will take the criticism from viewers. She produced and posted an apology post at the appropriate time; however, her honesty and expertise are evaluated to be low because the cause of the problem or the solution was not specifically mentioned. On the other hand, Kang's apology was a 652 words paragraph, referring to the specific problem that caused the controversy. She pointed out why she was apologizing. She also mentioned the product she was a back-advertising, stating her future management plans in relation to the revenue structure on her YouTube channel. She admitted for being wrong, and asked for forgiveness from her viewers. The fact that she was truthful about the problem, specifically mentions the controversy, and suggested a solution resulted in honesty, suitability, and expertise being were all highly evaluated.

When analyzing the responses of viewers to the apology post, Han's viewers showed displeasure to immoral behaviors of fashion YouTubers and showed contempt for inappropriate behavior. In addition, some showed feeling of pleasure such as "I feel refreshed", showing viewers were feeling pleasure as they watched the anger and contempt in the comments on Han's apology post. Coombs and Holladay (2005) noted that when a company is punished for its controversy, consumers' pleasure increases. Viewers were feeling the pleasure of seeing the comments of anger and contempt for Han's apology video.

On the other hand, comments on Kang's apology showed sympathy and worry rather than anger and contempt. In the comments on Kang's apology, there were more evaluations of the authenticity of the apology rather than the expression of emotions. In the preceding study, honesty was mentioned as an important factor among the subcategories of authenticity. When a fashion YouTuber's apology post reveals their honesty to admit fault, it can be perceived positively by viewers. On the other hand, in her apology video, Han appeared to be wearing a

black top against a black wall. Viewers was it as a typical apology post and did not felt the authenticity. She was also criticized for complaining emotionally, without recognizing the exact problem with proper respect, and viewers preferred the rational apology post over the emotional one.

Regarding the recent paid advertisement controversy, fashion YouTubers try to alleviate negative perceptions of viewers through an apology post, but the post is not perceived as authentic, the negative perception of viewers could be amplified. It can be seen that viewers can recognize authenticity and positively accept the apology post when it shows honesty and expertise that directly mentions the issue that caused the controversy, rather than that the ones only appeals to emotions. This study is significant in that it expanded the field of study by qualitative content analysis and comment analysis based on specific cases. In subsequent studies, this study suggests conducting a quantitative study based on these results and consider the general principle of authenticity of apology posts. In a follow-up study, it is necessary to examine how an apology post affects the relationship between YouTubers and viewers by examining how the relationship between fashion YouTubers and viewers changed before and after the paid advertisement controversy.

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