

## The Effects of Short-Form Content Characteristics on Subscription Intention through User Commitment

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**ABSTRACT :** This study was conducted to examine the mediating effect of user commitment on the relationship between short-form content characteristics and subscription intention. The study subjects were 245 adults who live in Seoul and Gyeonggi-do, South Korea. An online survey was administered to the research subjects. The collected data were analyzed using the SPSS 29.0 program. The results of the study are three fold. first, Short-form content characteristics, subscription intention, and user commitment were all found to be positively correlated. Second, among the sub-factors of short-form contents characteristics, playfulness, interactivity, and familiarity were found to have a significant positive effect on subscription intention. Third, user commitment was found to mediate the relationship between short-form content characteristics and subscription intention. Through the results of this study, it is discussed to increase the commitment of short-form content users.

**Keywords -** Short-form content characteristics, Subscription intention, User commitment, Mediation effect

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background

Recently, the new media market has been experiencing constant development, driven by advancements in mobile devices and internet technology. This development is closely intertwined with the evolving lifestyles of people, particularly the younger generation's increasing utilization of social media platforms. As a whole, media users are becoming more actively engaged with various forms of media. In the era of mobile technology, there has been a shift in media consumption from text and images to video content, offering users a more immersive and captivating experience. Notably, we are currently witnessing the emergence of a new era of social media that focuses on delivering shorter yet more impactful video content, reflecting the changing preferences of users [1] (Liu, 2019).

Simultaneously, with the development of mobile media platforms, the content and format of video content have also undergone significant changes. Previously, computer-based long-form content required a substantial amount of time to consume. However, with the emergence of short-form content, users now have the freedom to actively choose the context in which they engage with the content, without being restricted by time or location limitations imposed by the device used. This shift signifies a change in the acceptance context of content in the digital environment, which is becoming increasingly user-centered and led by the receiver rather than the sender.

TikTok, in particular, is a rapidly emerging short-form video platform among the new media platforms. It primarily targets the younger generation and can be seen as a platform that celebrates self-expression and playfulness. When TikTok was first launched, it gained popularity as a platform for people to showcase their dance moves or express themselves through short videos lasting 15 to 30 seconds. Users have the freedom to select their own music and apply special effects, allowing them to create their own unique masterpieces. With just a smartphone and an editing application, users can easily produce high-quality videos at little to no cost. Furthermore, in an era where individual media is expanding rapidly, platforms such as YouTube, Afreeca TV,

and TikTok have emerged, providing a convenient environment for video production and easy sharing. These platforms have lowered the barriers to media production and uploading activities [2] (Park, 2017). The success of TikTok has demonstrated the potential of short-form content, leading other media platforms to show interest in this format as well. For instance, YouTube launched a service called 'YouTube Shorts', and Instagram introduced 'Reels', a feature that gathers and showcases short-form videos in a single category. This movement has presented an opportunity for short-form content to gain recognition among Koreans. In response, YouTube and Instagram have launched their own short-form video services. YouTube implemented the 'YouTube Shorts' feature, allowing users to create and share videos within a short time frame, which are then curated and displayed in a dedicated category. Similarly, Instagram introduced the 'Reels' feature, enabling users to share and explore short videos. These initiatives have played a pivotal role in establishing short-form content among Koreans and have further piqued the interest of media platforms in this format.

This trend indicates that the demand for short-form content among Koreans is increasing in tandem with the changes in the media industry. There is a growing inclination among users to consume entertaining and diverse content within a short span of time, leading media platforms to launch services that cater to this demand for short-form content. These shifts are reshaping the way the public consumes media content, offering opportunities to discover and enjoy a wider range of short-form content. Consequently, exploring the factors that predict users' intention to subscribe to short-form content can provide valuable insights into their motivations for media consumption. By analyzing why users prefer short-form videos and identifying the elements that capture their attention and drive subscriptions, media producers and marketers can develop more effective content strategies. This, in turn, can enhance the competitiveness of the media industry and contribute to the development of successful business models by delivering more personalized content to users.

## 1.2 Research Question

This study raises the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship among short-form content characteristics, subscription intention, and user commitment?
2. What is the effect of short-form content characteristics on subscription intention?
3. What is the mediating effect of user commitment on the relationship between short-form content characteristics and subscription intention?

## II. LITERATURE

### 2.1 Short-form content characteristics

With the increasing number of short-form content users, such as TikTok, influential users who have amassed a large following by producing high-quality content have emerged. These influencers wield significant influence on social media platforms, and the content they create has a direct impact on the consumption behavior of their followers [3] (Yu & Kim, 2020). Short-form content is characterized by its brevity, allowing users to enjoy it effortlessly and reducing the psychological burden on users. The entertainment value of short-form content has been found to influence consumer purchasing behavior [4] (Yoon & Yang, 2023). Additionally, variables such as playfulness, interactivity, content diversity, customized systems, and convenience have been identified as predictors of users' intention to continue using short-form content [5] (Kim, 2022). Therefore, the objective of this study is to examine the relationship between the characteristics of short-form content and subscription intention.

### 2.2 Subscription intention

Continuous use intention, a concept commonly used in the field of marketing to denote the intention to continue using products and services, can be considered analogous to channel subscription intention when applied to YouTube, referring to the extent to which users intend to subscribe to and engage with a particular channel over time [6] (Woo, 2021). This holds significant importance for creators of short-form content, as their earnings are often tied to the number of subscribers they have. The characteristics of short video content have been identified as influential factors in shaping consumers' purchase intentions [7] (Yang et al., 2019). Consequently, subscription intention has become a topic of great interest among researchers. While most studies have focused on content characteristics and purchase intention [8] (Lin, Chen & Zhang, 2022), it is worth exploring how high subscription intention can impact users' continued purchase intentions through sustained exposure to content. Therefore, the objective of this study is to examine the relationship between the characteristics of short-form content and subscription intention.

### 2.3 User Commitment

If users find the mobile app beneficial for their work and enjoyable and easy to use, their usage rate and focus on the app will significantly increase, leading to a state of deep user commitment [9] (Cho, 2015). Essentially, the pleasure or utility that users naturally experience while embracing information technology fosters stronger user commitment in that technology. This suggests that the more people derive pleasure from a specific behavior, the more immersed they become in it. This concept can be elucidated by the theoretical background [10] (Teo et al., 1999). In this context, user commitment alludes to the phenomenon of wholeheartedly engaging in an activity with a seamless and comfortable mindset when concentrating on something [27] (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). When experiencing this state of user commitment, individuals become deeply absorbed in their tasks, finding the experience itself enjoyable and compelling, thus prompting them to continue the activity [11] (Noh, 2015). User commitment within the media environment significantly influences attitudes toward the medium and the intention to use it. When users reach a state of profound user commitment, they perceive high value in their actions. This is because, during the experience of user commitment, they positively evaluate the process itself and engage in exploratory behavior [12] (Park, Lee, 2013). Consequently, this study aims to explore the correlation between short-form content characteristics and user commitment.

## III. METHOD

### 3.1 Study Design

The conceptual framework of this study is shown below:



Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

### 3.2 Participants

The subjects of this study were 245 adults residing in Seoul and Gyeonggi-do, South Korea. Among the subjects, 41.7% were in their 30s, 52.8% were married, and 59.4% were employed in a company. Approximately 48.5% of the subjects reported watching short-form content for 2 hours per week.

### 3.3 Instrument

Short-form Content Characteristics were composed of four items each for entertaining, information, interaction, and familiarity. These items were based on the research conducted by [13] Liu & Arnett(2000), [14] Yoo(2010), [15] Zhang et al.(2014), [16] Li(2022), [17] Niu(2017). The measurement was done using a 5-point Likert scale, resulting in a total of 15 items. The reliability, as assessed by Cronbach's alpha, was found to be .91.

Subscription Intention consisted of four items, which were based on the research conducted by [18] Kim & Shin (2017), [19] Kim & Yang (2019), and [20] Wang et al.(2023). The measurement was done using a 4-point Likert scale. The reliability, as assessed by Cronbach's alpha, was found to be .89.

User Commitment consisted of four items, which were based on the research conducted by [21] Hoffman & Novak (1996) and [22] Park (2013). The measurement was done using a 4-point Likert scale. The reliability, as assessed by Cronbach's alpha, was found to be .92.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using SPSS 29.0, following a fourfold data analysis process. Firstly, the reliability coefficient of the measurement variables was calculated. Secondly, frequency analysis was conducted to identify the demographic characteristics of the research subjects. Thirdly, correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationships between short-form content characteristics, subscription intention, and user commitment. Fourthly, multiple regression analysis was carried out to determine the effect of short-form content characteristics on user commitment. Lastly, to confirm the mediating effect of user commitment in the relationship between short-form content characteristics and subscription intention, a 3-step mediating regression analysis was performed, following the approach proposed by [23] Baron & Kenny (1986).

## IV. RESULT

### 4.1 Relationship between short-form content characteristics, subscription intention, and user commitment

A significant positive correlation was observed between short-form content characteristics and user commitment ( $r=.47, p<.001$ ), short-form content characteristics and subscription intention ( $r=.42, p<.001$ ), as well as user commitment and subscription intention ( $r=.56, p<.001$ ). These findings indicate that higher levels of short-form content characteristics and user commitment are associated with higher subscription intention. The correlation between the factors is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Correlation analysis result**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>1. Short-form content characteristics</b>	1						
<b>2. Entertaining</b>	.41***	1					
<b>3. Information</b>	.18*	.35***	1				
<b>4. Interaction</b>	.14*	.22***	.33***	1			
<b>5. Familiarity</b>	.61***	.61***	.35***	.61***	1		
<b>6. User commitment</b>	.47***	.57***	.12*	.27***	.54***	1	
<b>7. Subscription intention</b>	.42***	.43***	.13*	.22***	.43***	.56***	1
<i>M</i>	3.49	3.01	3.29	3.51	3.72	3.12	3.09
<i>SD</i>	.57	.85	.70	.63	.38	.76	.62

### 2. Effect of short-form content characteristics on subscription intention

The impact of short-form content characteristics on subscription intention is presented in Table 2. Specifically, the short-form content characteristics of entertaining ( $\beta=.372, p<.001$ ), interaction ( $\beta=.231, p<.001$ ), and familiarity ( $\beta=.245, p<.01$ ) were found to have a significant positive effect on subscription intention.

**Table 2. Result of multiple regression analysis of short-form content characteristics and subscription intention**

Sub-Factors	Subscription Intention	
	$\beta$	<i>t</i>
<b>Entertaining</b>	.372	5.367***
<b>Information</b>	.028	.503
<b>Interaction</b>	.231	3.779***
<b>Familiarity</b>	.245	3.273**
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.311	
$\Delta R^2$	.296	
<i>F(p)</i>	27.057(.000)	

### 3. Meditating effects of user commitment

Table 3 presents the results of a mediating regression analysis conducted to confirm the process by which short-form content characteristics affect subscription intention through user commitment. intention.

**Table 3. Result of the mediating effects of user commitment**

Step				<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>F(p)</i>
<b>1</b>	SC	→	UC	1.512	.082	.540	12.942***	.219	167.45***
<b>2</b>	SC	→	SI	.686	.097	.322	6.821***	.311	48.71***
<b>3</b>	SC	→	SI	.153	.075	.128	2.642*	.476	173.06***
	UC			.629	.050	.569	8.450***		

Note. SC: Short-form content characteristics, UC: user commitment, SI: subscription intention

In step 1, short-form content characteristics ( $\beta=.540, p<.001$ ) exhibited a significant positive effect on user commitment ( $F=167.45, p<.05$ ). The explanatory power of short-form content characteristics on subscription intention was 21.9% ( $R^2=.219$ ). Moving to step 2, short-form content characteristics ( $\beta=.322, p<.001$ ) continued to have a significant positive effect on subscription intention ( $F=48.71, p<.001$ ). The explanatory power of short-form content characteristics on subscription intention increased to 31.1% ( $R^2=.311$ ). Finally, in step 3, both short-form content characteristics ( $\beta=.128, p<.05$ ) and user commitment ( $\beta=.569, p<.001$ ) demonstrated significant positive effects on subscription intention ( $F=173.06, p<.001$ ). Consequently, it was confirmed that user commitment partially mediated the relationship between short-form content characteristics and subscription

## V. CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to verify the mediating effect of user commitment on the relationship of short-form content characteristics and subscription intention of adult. The results of this study are summarized in this section.

First, it was found that there was a significant positive correlation between short-form content characteristics, user commitment, and subscription intention. These research results can be seen in the same context as [24] Yang et al.'s(2022) study, which demonstrated that longer video durations on YouTube were associated with lower view counts. Additionally, the results of [25] Sharabati et al.'s (2022) study, which showed a significant positive correlation between TikTok user satisfaction and continued intention, also support the findings of this study. In other words, these findings suggest that short-form content providers should take into consideration the characteristics of their content as well as user commitment in order to enhance user subscription intentions.

Second, among the short-form content characteristics, entertaining, interaction, and familiarity were found to have a significant positive effect on subscription intention. This finding aligns with the results of [26] Yoon & Yang's (2023) study, which demonstrated the influence of short-form content characteristics on consumer behavior. Essentially, when short-form content incorporates elements that are entertaining, encourage interaction with other users, and provide a familiar user experience, it cultivates the intention for users to continue using and subscribing to the content. Effectively leveraging these characteristics can foster mutually beneficial outcomes for both short-form content creators and users.

Third, the mediating effect of user commitment was confirmed in the relationship between short-form content characteristics and subscription intention. User commitment refers to the willingness to invest more time and effort into a specific platform. Therefore, when user commitment is high, it enables greater content consumption and increased interaction. This characteristic has a positive impact on increasing subscription intention for short-form content.

The findings of this study hold significant implications for short-form content creators and marketers. The discovery that content characteristics enhance user commitment, which in turn contributes to increased subscription intent, provides valuable insights into content strategy development and platform utilization. This understanding can help retain users on the platform, encourage more content consumption, and ultimately attract a larger base of subscribers.

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