Endorsement Effectiveness of Different Social Media Influencers: The Moderating Effect of Brand Competence and Warmth

Shengnan Ren,[a]* Sahar Karimi,[b] Alberto Bravo Velázquez,[a] Jianfeng Cai[a]

[a] Management School, Northwestern Polytechnical University, Youyi Campus, 127 West Youyi Road, Beilin District, Xi'an, China

[b] Management School, University of Liverpool, L69 7ZX, Liverpool, United Kingdom

Abstract

This research introduces a novel classification for social media influencers, namely informers and entertainers, and examines the impact of influencer type on engagement and online sales. Our findings suggest that endorsements by influencers who take on an entertainer role attract more engagement (number of views, likes, and comments) than endorsements by influencers who are informers. Furthermore, drawing on an influencer–brand congruency theory, the moderating effect of brand stereotypes is examined. We show that informers (vs. entertainers) generate more online sales when endorsing competent brands. Contrarily, when endorsing warm and warm-competent brands, there is no significant difference between the two types of influencers. This study reaffirms the importance of identifying and selecting "fitting" influencers for brands and informs advertisers about the way brand stereotypes moderate the effectiveness of influencer marketing.

Keywords:

Influencer marketing, social media influencer, brand endorsement, consumer engagement, brand stereotypes

1. Introduction

In recent years, social media has become a powerful communication channel. This has led to the emergence of social media influencers (SMIs)—a new form of celebrity—that are gaining great fame and influence (Khamis et al., 2016). Unlike traditional influencers, who gain fame through their participation in offline activities, such as movies, politics, or sports, SMIs gain fame by regularly generating and uploading original content on social media platforms (Wiedmann & von Mettenheim, 2021; Ye et al., 2021). Marketers are increasingly embracing SMIs as a part of their social media marketing strategy (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). SMI endorsement tends to be more effective than traditional celebrity endorsement (Schouten et al., 2020) by being more cost-effective, generating higher user engagement, and capitalizing on the power and influence of SMIs over consumers (Ahmadi & Ieamsom, 2022; Hollebeek & Macky, 2019; Pulizzi, 2013; Trusov et al., 2009).

Influencer marketing enables companies to leverage influencers' resources (e.g., followers, fame) and tap into their strong bonds with their followers (Leung et al., 2022). Sharing similar interests with their followers and their niche expertise enhances influencers' perceived credibility, giving them additional influence over their followers (Belanche et al., 2021a). The trust that influencers create among their audience, together with their large numbers of followers, makes SMI's brand endorsements particularly attractive to advertisers (Campbell & Grimm, 2018). Therefore, it is not surprising that influencers play an increasingly important role in marketing. The global market value of influencer marketing has more than doubled from 2019 to 2021, reaching 13.8 billion U.S. dollars (Statista, 2021).

At the same time, companies struggle to locate suitable and fitting influencers. This is due to the growing number of SMIs, their different interests and expertise, and most importantly, unavailability of performance data on their endorsements (Kim et al., 2020). Cooperation with an unsuited SMI can seriously damage the brand image and sales (Backaler, 2018; Breves et al., 2019). Identifying suitable SMIs requires insight into their differences and knowledge of how such differences affect their performance. The dominant classification based on the number of followers (Brown, 2019; Campbell & Farrell, 2020) provides the basis for SMI segmentations; However, a more in-depth understanding of their characteristics is needed.

In this research, we first present a SMI classification based on their adopted role and identity in online platforms. This novel classification suggests that influencers tend to be informers or entertainers. *Informers* enact an expert role and offer useful and utilitarian information to their audience, whereas *entertainers* connect to their audience by offering entertainment and sharing emotions. We then demonstrate the effectiveness of this classification as a predictor of influencer marketing performance.

We use the congruence theory to examine whether informers and entertainers are a better fit for different brands. Endorser–product congruency has been previously used to identify suitable SMIs for different products (Breves et al., 2019; Chang et al., 2019; Shan, 2020) to enhance the credibility of advertising (Martínez-López, et al. 2020) or improve advertising recognition and effectiveness (Kim & Kim, 2021; Schouten et al., 2020). This paper expands the influencer marketing literature by showing that, along with the product, the congruence between the brand and influencer is also crucial. More importantly, it introduces a new SMI–brand congruency schema based on the new SMI classification (informers vs. entertainers) and two brand dimensions, *warmth* and *competence*. Brands' warmth and competence are important determinants of consumer

3

behavioral responses (Aaker et al., 2012; Ivens et al., 2015) and purchase intention (Aaker et al., 2010; Fournier & Alvarez, 2011). They are included as moderating variables that affect SMI performance.

We contribute to marketing literature by focusing on the actual performance of different types of influencers and identifying the right SMI fit for different brands. Research on influencer marketing has largely examined the relationship between followers and SMIs, focusing on followers' attitudes towards SMIs (Belanche et al., 2021a), their perceived credibility and the trustworthiness of the influencer (Belanche, Casaló, Flavián, & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2021a; Martínez-López et al., 2020), their stickiness (Hu, Min, Han, & Liu, 2020), and inspirational connection to the SMIs (Ki et al., 2022). Current studies show that influencers affect behavioral intentions, such as purchase intention (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020) or product search intention (Belanche et al., 2020; Martínez-López et al., 2020). However, research on the followers' actual behaviors and SMIs' performance measures is scarce (see Tafesse & Wood, 2021). Emphasis on actual outcomes gained from SMI's endorsement helps brands identify influencers whose positioning can lead to high return on investments (Leung et al., 2022). We, therefore, explore the actual performance of informers and entertainers on social media platforms.

Hence, two studies were conducted using data from TikTok. Research has explored influencers' impact on consumers' responses and behaviors on different platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube (Casaló et al., 2020; Gentina et al., 2021; Jin & Phua, 2014; Lee & Theokary, 2021; Mallipeddi et al., 2021; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). TikTok is one of the world's fastest-growing social media networks that has become a key platform for influencer marketing (Haenlein et al., 2020). It has a large and growing user base and its influence on users has gradually expanded (Wang et al., 2019). A recent survey shows, 87% of influencers generate higher audience

engagement on TikTok than on other social media platforms; this has important implications for influencers and brands (El-Qudsi, 2022). Limited research exists on TikTok, regarding influencer marketing and brand strategy. We address this issue by exploring influencers' performance on TikTok.

Our findings contribute to the literature by providing a novel classification of influencers and showing its usefulness in predicting brand endorsement performance. Our results demonstrate that endorsements by entertainers generate greater number of views, likes and comments, compared to endorsements by informers. Furthermore, the congruence between the SMI and brand can partially explain the different outcomes of endorsements in terms of online sales.

2. Theoretical framework

Influencers are most commonly classified based on their numbers of followers and size of their network (Brown & Fiorella, 2013). Campbell and Farrell (2020) divided them into celebrity, mega, macro, micro, and nano-influencers. Classifications based on the number of followers are often used as a starting point in the search for an influencer. However, solely relying on the follower count is misleading (Ansari et al., 2019) because it only represents the extend of an influencer's reach. Evidence indicates, a high number of followers does not always translate into true influence (Kay et al., 2020; Park et al., 2021; Romero et al., 2011). Having many followers may create the perception that the influencer is mainly seeking commercial collaborations and thus is not authentic (De Veirman et al., 2017). Classifications based on the number of followers help firms select an SMI with an extensive reach (higher number of followers) or choose one who is perceived to be authentic (lower number of followers) (Kay et al., 2020; Park et al., 2021). However, they

neglect the influencers' distinct identities and the nature of their social roles in relation to their audience.

Influencers' performance is affected by their distinct identities, characteristics, and personal image they actively shape through self-promotions and management of self-generated content on social platforms (Hu et al., 2020; Leung et al., 2022). They emphasize self-branding and embody certain identities and characteristics (Li, 2021). We propose that the performance of SMIs is rooted in their enacted characteristics and the extent to which they play an informer or entertainer role. Accordingly, two groups of SMIs are introduced: entertainers and informers. We propose that entertainer/informer classification has important managerial relevance and can determine consumers' behaviors toward SMI's endorsements, i.e., the engagement level and generated online sales.

The first category of SMIs adopts an *entertainer* role on social media. They rely on entertaining and creating emotional connections with their audience. Entertainers offer hedonic value that is experiential, fun, and playful (Scarpi, 2012). They connect with their audience on a personal level and create hedonic attachments between their followers and endorsed brands (Lin et al., 2018). These hedonic experiences and emotional attachments in followers can encourage engagement and increase their interaction intentions (Akdim et al., 2022; Casaló et al., 2017; Dhar & Wertenbroch, 2000).

Whereas, endorsers who adopt an *informer* role create informational content. They are frequently perceived as experts, increasing the likelihood of consumers being persuaded and convinced by their messages (Amos et al., 2008; Ohanian, 1990). Informers often include technical information in their posts that can be useful to the viewers. They offer utilitarian value to their audience, which

is outcome-driven and rational (Scarpi, 2012) through functional information, essential to a purchase decision. Therefore, they motivate purchase intentions in consumers (Lin et al., 2018). Informers are regarded as opinion leaders or market mavens (Feick & Price, 1987) who have a broad knowledge of the market and different products and actively share their knowledge to inform other consumers.

Due to the diverse effects of entertainers and informers on consumers' interactions, engagement, and information need satisfaction, we expect them to achieve different performance-related outcomes. Research on the effect of SMIs on actual performance measures is scarce. Some recent studies have examined engagement as a measure of influencer marketing (Hughes et al., 2019; Tafesse & Wood, 2021). We explore the performance of SMIs both in terms of the level of social media engagement and online sales generated by brand endorsements (Fig. 1). We show that influencer type is an important determinant of SMI performance.

Furthermore, it is crucial to understand the role of different types of SMIs and their performance in different contexts. Certain influencers may create better results for certain brands. Therefore, when engaging with influencer marketing, marketers need to work with those influencers who are suitable for and fit with a specific brand to achieve better outcomes. Advertisers cannot presume that celebrity endorsements always lead to successful marketing communications (Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018). Congruence theory is used to examine the effect of different types of influencers on different brands. This theory has been used in the traditional marketing context to investigate the endorser–brand relationship (Till & Busler, 2000; Kamins et al., 2013; Kamins, 1990). It is also valuable in understanding the relationship between SMIs and brands (Belanche et al., 2021b; Breves et al., 2019), because followers positively value the fit between the influencer and the characteristics of the promoted brands (Belanche et al., 2020).

Our research first investigates the performance of brand endorsements by different types of SMIs (informers and entertainers) in terms of engagement. It then draws on SMI–brand congruence theory to show the interaction effect of SMI type and brand stereotype (i.e., competent and warm) on online sales. Fig. 1 presents the theoretical framework of this study.
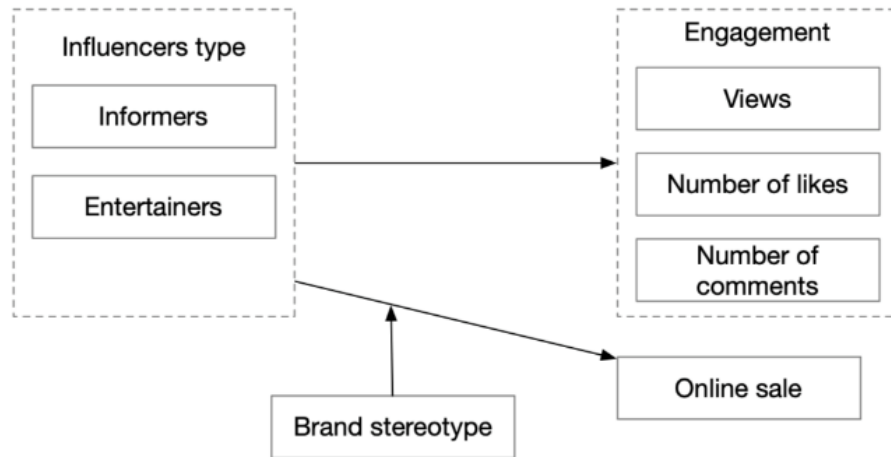

Figure 1. Theoretical framework

2.1 Impact of different social media influencers on engagement

Research in social media has distinguished between informative and entertaining content (Bellman et al., 2011; Meire et al., 2019; Moldovan et al., 2019; Rietveld et al., 2020; Smink et al., 2019). Building on this literature, we propose that SMIs strategically take on an informer or entertainer role which can affect followers in diverse ways. More specifically, we explore the effect of this SMI classification—informers and entertainers—on social media engagement (i.e., the number of views, likes, and comments).

The number of views, likes, and comments are indicators of consumer engagement behavior on social media (Dolan et al., 2019) and engagement with influencers (Lou et al., 2019). Advertisers and marketers use them as measures of online engagement that can assess the effectiveness of online marketing (Alhabash et al., 2015). Engagement on social media has a substantial impact on the success of online campaigns (Shehu et al., 2016). It influences the spread and impact of brand ads (Motoki et al., 2020) and the behavior of consumers (Pentina et al., 2018). Therefore, understanding how influencer marketing can generate higher engagement is crucial.

As previously mentioned, entertainers connect to their audience through entertainment, emotions, and personal connection. We expect them to have higher engagement on social media than informers. Their higher level of engagement can be explained in two ways.

Firstly, to increase engagement, entertainers use emotion-eliciting strategies that create emotional responses in followers. Entertainers communicate humor and feelings by creating exciting content such as story-based videos, life anecdotes, or videos about their relationships with others. They use emotional, humorous, sharp, or funny content to enhance the followers' acquired emotional value (Hu et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2017). By this approach, entertainers aim to trigger emotional responses and strong reactions in their audience, which could prompt discussions and engagement. Based on the emotional contagion theory (ECT) (Barsade, 2002; Hatfield et al., 1992), displaying stronger emotions, e.g., as entertainers do, evokes stronger emotions in the viewer (Hatfield et al., 1992; Wild et al., 2001). For instance, expressing positive emotions arouses a corresponding positive emotional state in others (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2006). Similarly, entertainers' emotions, excitement, enthusiasm, and passion could have a contagious effect (Lee & Theokary, 2021). Viewers unconsciously mimic and synchronize with certain emotions projected by the influencers, converge emotionally and experience the emotion themselves (Hatfield et al., 1992). These

aroused emotions in followers can contribute to higher engagement, e.g., more views (Lee & Theokary, 2021; Rietveld et al., 2020; Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013), as emotions are an influential driver of engaging with and sharing content (Kang et al., 2020; Berger & Milkman, 2012) and increase online interaction intention (Casaló et al. 2021). Emotions that consumers experience prompt them to engage with and spread entertainers' endorsements on social media platforms. (Akpinar & Berger, 2017). Therefore, we expect endorsements by entertainers to receive higher engagement compared to those of informers.

The second reason for higher engagement of entertainers is due to the evoked feeling of identity similarity in followers. Entertainers produce more content related to their personal life, routines and experiences which can easily evoke the feeling of identity similarity in followers. This is because, followers feel that they know the entertainer well, hence identify with the influencer (Hu et al., 2020). Entertainers can create stronger connections with their audience due to their closeness and similarities (Casaló et al., 2017). Identification creates strong involvements with the media persona (Brown, 2015) and therefore can increase engagement on social media. Engagement behaviors are more likely to occur among people who share similar qualities (Jin & Phua, 2014). When social media users share interests and personal characteristics with the influencers, their para-social relationship is reinforced, boosting their engagement (Yuan & Lou, 2020). Therefore, entertainers' endorsements are expected to receive more engagement than informers.

The second type of influencer we propose in this study —the informers— try to portrait themselves as subject experts. They provide useful, utilitarian, and practical information to their audiences, and are perceived as opinion leaders in specific areas, such as healthy living, travel, food, fashion, and the like (Hu et al., 2020). Informers may, occasionally, include entertaining features, but the

usefulness and informativeness of information is always the core of their relationship to their audience. Due to their expertise in a subject area, informers tend to build a perception of credibility (Belanche et al., 2021a), which has been associated with greater purchase intention (Schouten et al., 2020; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Informers are valuable in their own right by being more trusted by consumers compared to other SMIs (Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018), increasing the perceived reliability of advertising due to its informativeness (Janssens & De Pelsmacker, 2005; Moldovan et al., 2019), making viewers more likely to agree with conveyed messages (Biswas et al., 2013; Maddux & Rogers, 1980) and creating a positive attitude towards the content (Taylor et al., 2011). However, consumers are more likely to stop watching their informative content (Elpers et al., 2003) and are less likely to disseminate it (Cruz & Fill, 2008). Informers are less likely to generate engagement compared to entertainers. As the utilitarian relation between followers and informers means that followers seek outcome-driven and rational objectives (Scarpi, 2012) to achieve their individual needs. These experts offer information about the attributes or benefits of a brand designed to encourage evaluation of objective information (Chandy et al., 2001) rather than social responses such as likes or comments. Consumers use informers for personal goals such as pre-purchase information search (Lin et al., 2018). This goal-oriented nature of interaction with informers suggests that their engagement performance on social media is lower as viewer's focus is on their personal objective to learn about a product. This leads to the generation of less social media engagement by informers' followers. Therefore, we suggest that entertainers' endorsements attract higher engagement in terms of the numbers of views, likes, and comments than informers' endorsements. We formulate the following hypotheses:

> **H1**: Endorsements by entertainer influencers are more likely to attract a greater number of views than endorsements by informer influencers.

H2: Endorsements by entertainer influencers are more likely to receive a greater number of likes than endorsements by informer influencers.

H3: Endorsements by entertainer influencers are more likely to receive a greater number of comments than endorsements by informer influencers.

2.2 Congruency of SMIs with brands

People relate to brands in the same way they relate to people (Fournier, 1998; Kervyn et al., 2012). According to the stereotype content model of Fiske (2002), warmth and competence are two primary dimensions of the intergroup functions of stereotypes, as well as two universal dimensions of social cognition (Cuddy et al., 2007; Kervyn et al., 2012). These two dimensions together account, almost entirely, for how people characterize their perception of a person or in fact a brand (Chang et al., 2019). Although definitions of these dimensions vary, warmth judgments typically include perceptions of generosity, kindness, honesty, sincerity, helpfulness, trustworthiness, and thoughtfulness. People infer warmth from their perception of others' motives (Fiske et al., 2007; Kervyn et al., 2022). In contrast, competence judgments include confidence, effectiveness, intelligence, capability, skillfulness, and competitiveness (Aaker et al., 2010).

Kervyn et al. (2012) applied this model to branding and created a brand stereotype framework. According to this framework, brand perception is a cognitive shortcut that corresponds to a stereotype, because brands tend to be anthropomorphized with which consumers establish a relationship (Kervyn et al., 2022). Consumers evaluate the perceived intentions of brands, which are reflected by the warmth dimension, and its abilities, which are reflected by the competence dimension. That is, the warmth dimension refers to consumers' perception of the brand intention, whereas the competence dimension reflects consumers' perception of the brand's capability to

carry out its intentions. The warmth and competence dimensions impact attitudes toward the brand and behavioral intentions (Ivens et al., 2015), emotional and behavioral responses (Aaker et al., 2012; Aaker et al., 2010), and purchase intentions (Bennett & Hill, 2012; Kolbl et al., 2019). Using this bidimensional approach to brands as a basis, brands are mostly divided into either warm or competent (Aaker et al., 2012; Aaker et al., 2010; Bernritter et al., 2016; Chang et al., 2019; Ivens et al., 2015; MacInnis, 2012). However, a brand can also be perceived as warm and competent simultaneously (MacInnis, 2012). This type of brand, which we refer to as a warm–competent brand, could generate higher willingness to buy, brand admiration, engagement, connection, and loyalty in consumers (Aaker et al., 2012; Portal et al., 2018).

We apply these brand stereotypes to examine the SMIs fit and the effectiveness of SMI brand endorsements. Studies on endorser–product/brand interaction are predominantly rooted in congruent theory or consistency theory (Friedman & Friedman, 1979). It refers to the degree to which celebrities are matched with the products that they represent. A higher degree of congruency between the characteristics of the spokespersons (e.g. celebrities or influencers) and products leads to higher perception of spokesperson's attractiveness and credibility (Kamins & Gupta, 1994), enhances attitude towards advertising (Paul & Bhakar, 2018) and purchase intention (Till Brian & Busler, 1998). Whereas, incongruency between influencers and products increases their awareness of paid communication. This will lead to negative attitude toward influencers, deteriorate perceptions of the influencer's credibility, and hamper behaviors such as following, imitating or recommending the influencers (Belanche et al., 2021a).

In the context of influencer marketing, SMI-brand congruency can explain consumers' responses to the influencer's post because followers establish a perception of the fit between the advertised object and the influencer; this affects consumers' consequent behavior (Belanche et al., 2021b)

and the effectiveness of the message (Kim & Kim, 2021). In fact, the importance of endorser-brand fit might be more pronounced in the case of influencers as they associate themselves with and represent a particular product category; therefore, the association between the brand and influencer could be more readily established (Schouten et al., 2020). Furthermore, a mismatch between the brand and the influencer could adversely affect followers as it undermines influencer credibility and highlights the commercial intent of the post (Breves et al., 2019). Previous research shows that when an influencer's image is consistent with the endorsed brand or product, the followers respond better to the message (Martínez-López et al., 2020). Such congruence enhances attitude toward the ad (Schouten et al., 2020), improves product attitude, and decreases followers' recognition of the advertising content (Kim & Kim, 2021), which can have a positive effect on purchase intention. This study contributes to this line of literature and investigates the impact of SMI-brand congruence on generated online sales.

The positive impact of SMI endorsements on sales and purchase intentions is well established (Jin & Phua, 2014; Lee & Thorson, 2008; Wang et al., 2013; Zhang & Mao, 2016; Zhang et al., 2018). By utilizing the SMI–brand congruency we show in which conditions SMI endorsements generate higher sales. SMI–brand congruency can explain the extent of online sales generated by influencers by minimizing recognition of the promotional content (Kim & Kim, 2021), improving the credibility and attitude of consumers (Kamins & Gupta, 1994; Paul & Bhakar, 2018), and increasing purchase intension.

Due to the expert and skillful image that they project to the audience, informers are congruent with competent brands. Whereas entertainers are better matched with warm brands because of their projected image of being entertaining and amicable. We expect that when the endorsed brand is perceived as competent, informers are a better match because they are characterized as being

knowledgeable experts; this influencer–brand congruency leads to greater online sales (H4). Similarly, when the endorsed brand is perceived as warm, entertainers, who emotionally connect to their audience, are closely associated with the warmth dimension; the congruency of influencer–brand relationship generates a higher rate of online sales (H5). Finally, when the endorsed brand is perceived as being competent and warm at the same time, informers and entertainers generate similar levels of online sales because they both are congruent with the brand to the same extent. Hence, we formulate the following hypotheses:

H4: Endorsements by informer influencers are more likely to generate more online sales than entertainer influencers, when endorsing competent brands.

H5: Endorsements by entertainer influencers are more likely to generate more online sales than informer influencers, when endorsing warm brands.

H6: There is no significant difference in online sales generated by endorsements of informer influencers and entertainer influencers, when endorsing a warm–competent brand.

The majority of studies have investigated the effect of SMI brand endorsement on product sales by measuring the purchase intention. However, this research is one of the few that uses actual purchase behavior by using real-time online sales data.

3. Methodology

3.1 Study 1: SMIs classification and engagement

In this study, we tested whether endorsements by entertainers receive more engagement on social media than informers. For this purpose, data was collected from China because China is the global

leader in influencer marketing and its total market size is expected to reach US$1,035 billion by 2025(Retail in Asia, 2021).

3.1.1 Data collection

Data was collected from Xingtu, an online data analytics platform that gathers and monitors real-time data exclusively from TikTok. TikTok is one of the most important platforms for influencer marketing (Haenlein et al., 2020). Xingtu provides detailed information on SMIs to assist companies in developing their influencer marketing strategies. It monitors TikTok influencers' posts, and measures indicators, such as the number of views and likes. Using actual behavioral data of consumers on digital platforms rather than data on behavioral intentions offers valuable insights that are more tangible to marketing practitioners (Karimi, 2021; Wang et al., 2012).

With the purpose of examining the impact of SMI types on engagement (H1 and H2), we selected a sample of 232 influencers. We selected the influencers with the greatest numbers of followers in three areas: beauty, gastronomy, and lifestyle. We chose these areas because they are popular among users and cover most of the influencers on TikTok. From each category, we selected the influencers with the greatest numbers of followers: 77 influencers from the beauty category, 76 from the gastronomy category, and 79 from the lifestyle category (see Table 1). For each influencer, the number of views and likes were gathered. The data was collected in August 2021.

Table 1. Influencers' gender and sector

Influencers' gender	Male	Female	Unknown
	141	90	1
Influencers' area	Beauty	Gastronomy	Lifestyle
	77	76	79

3.1.2 Coding of influencers

In order to classify the influencers as informers or entertainers, two coders watched all videos posted by each influencer in the sample within the last three months. They independently examined the dominant role adopted by each influencer. An influencer was classified as an informer when they dominantly provided product or service reviews, sharing how-to knowledge, advice, or factual information regarding a specific matter. The main goal of these influencers is educating, sharing knowledge, and helping others. Examples of this type of influencer is Wangyu Luo (骆王宇) who provides makeup and skin care tutorials (Fig. 2). On the other hand, an influencer was classified as an entertainer when the posts shared life or personal experiences, provided humorous content, or included story, narrative, or drama telling. An example is Aunt Seven (七阿姨) who shared emotional content in the form of short stories about her relationships with friends. To do so, the two coders recorded the total number of posts by each influencer during the three-month period and calculated the number of informational and entertaining posts for each influencer. They then grouped each of the influencers into informer or entertainer. When 60% or more of the posts were categorized as informational, the influencer was classified as an informer. Similarly, when 60% or more of the posts watched were categorized as entertaining, the influencer was classified as an entertainer. Thirteen influencers were removed from the sample because they had not posted any videos during the study's time period. Additionally, other 24 cases were removed because the classification provided by the two coders was inconsistent. Finally, we obtained a final sample of 195 influencers: 88 informers and 107 entertainers.

Figure 2. TikTok profiles of the influencers Wangyu Luo (left) and Aunt Seven (right)
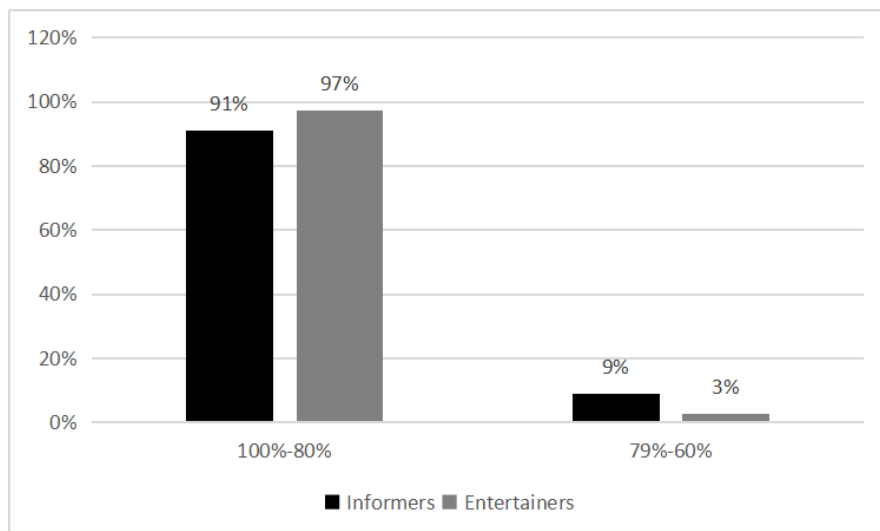

Figure 3. Percentages of informational and entertaining contents during a period of 90 days

Influencers tend to be consistent in their role and the type of content they create. As Fig. 3 shows, 91% informers (80 out of 88) had over 80% of their posts being informational, and only eight informers (9%) in our sample had between 60% to 79% informational posts. Similarly, 105 of 107 entertainers (97%) had over 80% entertaining posts, and only 3% had between 60% to 79% entertaining content. This shows that informers rarely create entertaining content and that entertainers hardly post informational content. Hence, there is a clear distinction in the adopted roles by SMIs. This gives us further confidence in the proposed classification.

3.1.3 Data analysis and results

Once all influencers were classified, we collected the number of views and likes of each video posted during the period chosen for this study. Following that, we calculated the mean of the number of views and the number of likes for each influencer individually. Then, two one-way analysis of variance (ANOVAs) tests were conducted to test whether entertainers generate more views (H1) and likes (H2) in comparison to informers. Results showed a significant difference between the endorsements by the two types of influencers in terms of the number of views (p=0.000, F=15.862) and likes (p=0.000, F=18.178). The comparison showed that the difference between endorsements by informers and entertainers was significant and that entertainers' endorsements attracted more views ($M_{informers}$=1,524,492, $M_{entertainers}$= 5,292,821) and likes ($M_{informers}$=100,844, $M_{entertainers}$= 248,112) than informers, which supports H1 and H2 respectively (Table 2).

Table 2. Generation of views and likes of informers and entertainers

				Sum of squares (000,000)	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Number of views	Between groups	(Combined)		685692454277431	1	685692454277431	15.862	0.000
		Linear term	Unweighted	685692454277432	1	685692454277432	15.862	0.000
			Weighted	685692454277431	1	685692454277431	15.862	0.000
Number of likes	Between Groups	(Combined)		1047256195232	1	1047256195232	18.178	0.00
		Linear term	Unweighted	1047256195232	1	1047256195232	18.178	0.00
			Weighted	1047256195232	1	1047256195232	18.178	0.00
								0.00

3.2 Study 2: SMIs, engagement and online sales—the moderating role of brand type

In this study, we test whether entertainers receive higher levels of engagement (i.e., likes and comments), in comparison to informers (H2 and H3), using a different dataset. Furthermore, we examine the effect of influencer–brand congruency on online sales. For this purpose, the interaction effect of brand characteristics (i.e., competent, warm, and warm–competent brands) and influencer type on online sales is examined.

3.2.1 Data collection

In this study, data was collected from another online data analytics platform called Delidou (Delidou, 2021), which gathers and monitors real-time data from TikTok. Similar to Xingtu (XINGTU, 2021), Delidou is a third-party influencer analytic platform that provides companies with data about SMIs as well as the products and brands they have previously endorsed.

The data was collected from SMIs on TikTok in China, including their endorsed brands, the number of likes and comments generated for each endorsement post, as well as the number of

online sales achieved by the endorsement purchase link during the first seven days after the endorsement was posted. These SMIs were selected from the beauty, gastronomy, and lifestyle areas, and all had more than 100,000 followers. Then, we collected the names of the brands endorsed by each SMIs during a period of three months (between December 2019 and February 2020). This led to a set of brands from which we selected 27 that are widely recognized in China—17 beauty brands and 10 gastronomy-related brands. We found that there were 15 influencers whose names appeared more than once because they endorsed more than one brand from our brand list; thirteen influencers endorsed two brands, and two influencers endorsed three brands from the list. In those cases, each endorsement was treated as an individual case, regardless of whether the endorsing influencer was the same. The final sample included 250 cases of influencers endorsing well-known brands.

3.2.2 Coding of influencers

After having collected the data, to establish and validate the accuracy of the SMI type, the same two coders as in Study 1—the author and a research assistant—classified the influencers. The 250 influencers were classified according to the same criteria and procedure used in Study 1, resulting in 109 entertainers and 107 informers. The remaining 34 influencers could not be classified owing to unclear results, thus were removed from the sample.

To measure the competence and warmth dimensions of the brands, an online survey was administered to 110 respondents. Eight participants were removed from the sample because their answers were incomplete or extreme. Participants were students from various universities in China and were recruited through the social media network WeChat in exchange for a monetary compensation. The scale for the competence and warmth dimensions of the brand was adopted

from Aaker et al. (2010) and Bernritter et al. (2016). The reliability of the scale was tested, resulting in a Cronbach's alpha of 0.900 for the warmth dimension and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.899 for the competence dimension. Participants evaluated the brands included in our sample on a seven-point Likert scale, from 1 ("not at all") to 7 ("very much"), ["To what extent do you believe Brand X is a _____ brand?"]. The blank was filled in with the scale attributes, which included three attributes relating to the competence dimension of brands (competent, effective, and efficient), as well as three attributes relating to the warmth dimension (warm, kind, and generous). The validity of the scales used in this study has been well established in previous research. As mentioned previously, these brands are all widely recognized in China. Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics for the variables.

Subsequently, to establish the brand type, we followed Aaker et al. (2010) and used a t-test. Among the 27 selected brands, 9 brands were perceived as warm: Mama Selection, Mihoo, Joocyee, Febreze, Littledream Garden, Three Squirrels, Liziqi, Usmile, and Perfect Dairy; 11 brands were perceived as competent: Pramy, L'Oréal Paris, Maybelline, WIS, Ready to Cook, Vaseline, RedEarth, Wu LiangYe, Joyoung, Lamian Shuo, and Kiehl's; and 7 brands were perceived as warm–competent: Florasis, OSM, Nature Edition, Bestore, Junlebao, Honi Life, and YiLi.

The engagement measures, i.e. the number of likes and comments, were directly collected from TikTok. Regarding the online sales achieved by the brand endorsements, we obtained the number of times that the audience purchased the endorsed brand using the link provided by the SMI and divided this number by the number of followers of the SMI. This is important to eliminate the effect of size as larger SMIs tend to achieve a higher number of online sales than small SMIs.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for variables

Variables	N	M	SD	Median	Maximum	Minimum
Likes	216	214,114.32	757,023.97	48000	7500000	1073
Comments	216	3,166.44	8,972.75	721.5	102000	9
Number of followers	216	68,353,122.68	680,968,956.56	2338000	9500000000	33000
Sales per followers	216	0.039	0.13	0.007362742	1.427745	0,000000168
Entertainers	109					
Informers	107					
Warm brands	9					
Competent brands	11					
Warm–competent brands	7					

Table 4. Tests of between-subject effects (the analysis was dependent on the data of a Log-

transformed normal distribution)

Source	Dependent variable	Type III sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Brand stereotype	Number of likes (LOG)	1.814	2	0.907	1.534	0.218
	Number of comments (LOG)	1.686	2	0.843	1.642	0.196
	Number of sales per follower (SQRT)	0.260	2	0.130	0.192	0.825
Influencer types	Number of likes (LOG)	9.428	1	9.428	15.948	0.000
	Number of comments (LOG)	2.331	1	2.331	4.542	0.034
	Number of sales per follower (SQRT)	4.125	1	4.125	6.100	0.014
Brand stereotype*Influencer type	Number of likes (LOG)	0.378	2	0.189	0.319	0.727
	Number of comments (LOG)	614.749	2	307.375	0.191	0.827
	Number of sales per follower (SQRT)	0.133	2	0.066	3.191	0.043

3.2.3 Data analysis and results

To do data analysis, we applied a logarithmic transformation to the collected data related to the

number of likes and comments to reduce the skewness of the distributions. Additionally, square

root calculations were applied to the sales per follower to diminish the skewness of the

distributions while avoiding negative values in the results. Thereafter, multivariate analysis was conducted to test the interaction between the SMI and the brand types, and the dependent variables. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) test showed the effect of the brand type and SMI type on the number of likes(LOG) (Table 4). The influencer type has a significant effect on the number of likes(LOG) $(F_{(1,215)}=15.948, p=0.000<0.05)$. As we applied transformation in the data, the original results are shown inside the parenthesis. The mean of $Likes_{entertainers}$(LOG) is 4.8084 (64327.99), which is statistically higher than $Likes_{informers}$(LOG)=4.3567 (22735), thus supporting H2 (Fig. 4); it confirms the results obtained in Study 1. Similarly, the influencer type has a significant effect on the number of comments(LOG) $(F_{(1,215)}=4.543, p=0.034<0.05)$. The mean of the number of $Comments_{entertainers}$(LOG) is 2.9992(998.16) is statistically higher than the mean of the number of $Comments_{informers}$(LOG) = 2.7806(603.39). Therefore, H3 is supported (Fig. 4). This shows that endorsements by entertainers receive a higher level of social media engagement than informers.
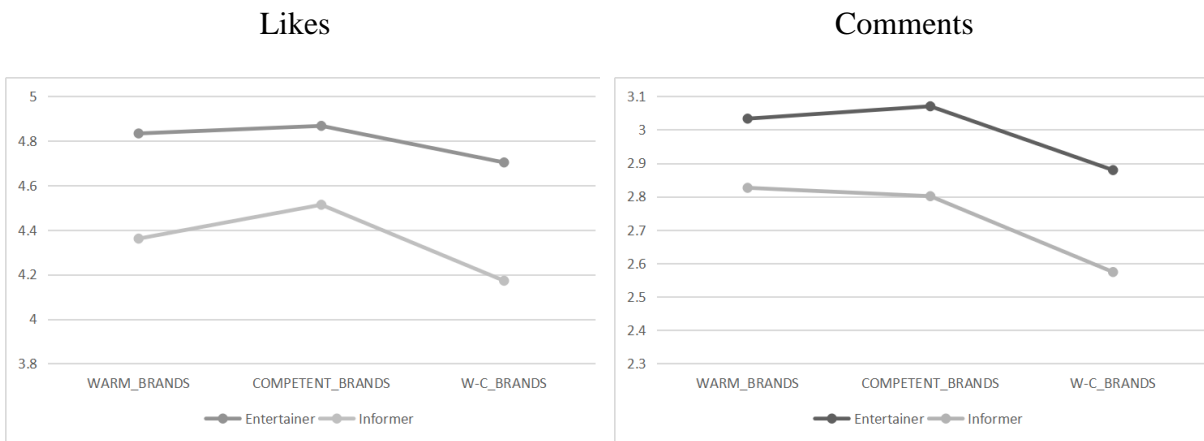

Figure 4. Generation of likes and comments for informers' and entertainers' brand endorsement (estimated marginal means)

The results also revealed that SMI and brand types have a significant interaction effect on the sales per follower (SQRT) [$F_{(1,215)}=3.191$, $p=0.043$] (Fig. 5). When endorsing competent brands, informers generate more online sales than entertainers ($M_{entertainers}$, competent brand=0.082 (0.00672); $M_{informers}$, competent brand=0.202 (0.0408), $P=0.001<0.005$), which supports H4. However, when endorsing warm brands, the differences are not statistically significant: ($M_{entertainers}$, warm brand=0.136 (0.01849); $M_{informers}$, warm brand=0.140 (0.01965), $P=0.901$). Therefore, H5 must be rejected. Furthermore, the results showed that when endorsing warm–competent brands, the difference between entertainers and informers in terms of online sales was not significant ($M_{entertainers}$, competent brand=0.109 (0.01188); $M_{informers}$, competent brand=-0.137 (0.01876), $P=0.472$), which supports H6.
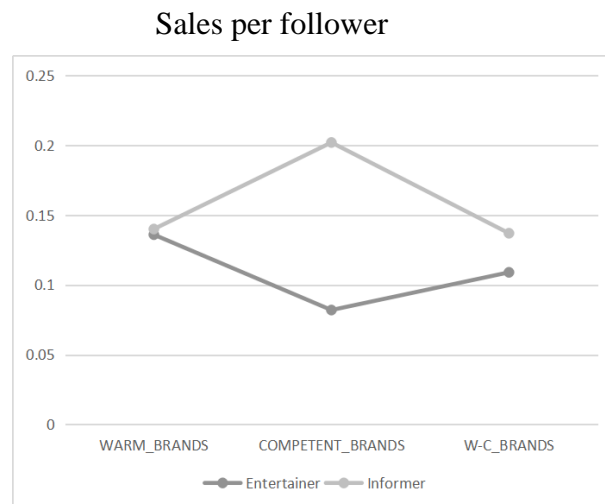

Figure 5 Generation of online sales for informers' and entertainers' brand endorsement (estimated marginal means)

4. Conclusions and Discussions

Influencer marketing has attracted substantial attention in recent years. The closeness of the SMIs to social media users makes them valuable to marketers. Therefore, an increasing number of brands

are aiming to identify suitable influencers to endorse their brands, expand their presence on social media, and attract the interest of consumers in an increasingly interconnected world. However, substantial room remains for research on the effectiveness of influencer marketing and how brands can better select their endorsers to achieve the desired goals. This research examines the determinants of influencer marketing performance. Hence, we introduced a novel classification of SMIs, grouping influencers into informers or entertainers. Using this classification as a foundation, this research demonstrates that informers and entertainers have a diverse impact on the level of engagement with brand endorsements, i.e., the number of views, likes, and comments. We then examine how SMI classification congruency with brands can affect online sales. Two studies were conducted using real market data, collected from two online data analytics platforms, making our findings relevant and tangible for marketing managers.

Our results confirm that endorsements by entertainers attract more views, likes, and comments than those of informers. Based on the emotional contagion theory (ECT), entertainers who connect to their audience through emotions would evoke stronger emotional responses in their viewers. Evoked emotions motivate followers to view the entertainer more (Lee & Theokary, 2021) and share their content (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013). Consistent with previous research, our results confirmed that the identity of influencers (Hu et al., 2020) and emotional responses created by entertainers affect consumer engagement (Rietveld et al., 2020).

Our research partially validates the expected impact of SMI–brand congruency on online sales. Based on the extant research on congruency in influencer marketing (Breves et al., 2019; Shan, 2020), we tested the effect of influencer-brand congruency on online sales. This relationship holds when informers endorse competent brands because their image as experts is congruent with the competent dimension of a brand. When endorsers represent their identities as experts, as informers

do, they are perceived as more credible and persuasive in conveying the advertising message (Breves et al., 2019; Munnukka et al., 2016), which generates additional online sales. This finding extends previous research that show the impact of competence on purchase intentions (Crisafulli et al., 2022) by demonstrating that influencer-brand congruency in terms of competence is the key driver of online sales.

Additionally, as expected, informers and entertainers showed no significant difference in generating online sales when endorsing a warm–competent brand because both are congruent with the brand to the same extent. Moreover, when endorsing warm brands, no significant difference was found between informers and entertainers. This could be because competence is only related to functional value while warmth in brands is associated with both emotional and functional values (Kolbl et al., 2020). This explains why informer (functional) and entertainer (emotional) do not differ when the endorsed brand is perceived as warm, as they both fit with one aspect of the warm brand. An alternative explanation could be that warmth is associated with collaborative and public intentions, such as engagement that helps followers signal their own identity (Bernritter et al., 2016) rather than private behavior such as purchases. In other words, although the congruency in terms of warmth can enhance perception of the warmth of the endorsement, it may not translate into additional sales. Finally, consumers prioritize warmth (vs. competence) when creating an impression about a new brand. Therefore, amplified warmth perception due to the congruency of influencer-brand may not be as relevant to well-known brands used in this research.

4.1 Theoretical contributions

This research contributes to the literature in three main ways. First, it introduces a new classification of influencers based on the role they enact on social media platforms to connect with their audience, dividing SMIs into informers and entertainers. Extant literature has mainly classified influencers based on the number of followers (Brown, 2013; Campbell & Farrell 2020), which may not always translate into true influence (Kay et al., 2020; Park et al., 2021; Romero et al., 2011). Our classification considers the roles and distinct identities that influencers represent on social media. Furthermore, our results validate this novel classification and illustrate the diverse impacts of entertainers and informers on consumer behavior.

Second, our research contributes to the literature on influencer marketing by empirically showing that when endorsing brands, the type of influencer is related to the engagement level, such as the number of views, likes, and comments. This complements previous research that has identified other factors affecting online engagement and interaction, such as content features (Akpinar & Berger, 2017), creativity and emotions (Casaló et al., 2021), the number of followers or the content's volume (Tafesse & Wood, 2021). Our research shows that entertainers are associated with greater consumer engagement on social media compared to informers.

Third, our study builds on current influencer marketing literature and congruence theory to show that influencer-brand congruency can partially explain the importance of a suitable influencer marketing strategy. Its significance only holds in the context of competent and warm-competent brand endorsements. In the case of warm brands, the differences between influencers are not substantial. This finding differs from previous studies stating that influencer-product congruency is effective in all contexts (Belanche et al., 2021b; Schouten et al., 2020). This could be because

influencers highly integrate with certain product categories in consumers' minds. Consumers do not separate influencers from the product category they are experts in and see them as truly connected. Therefore, influencer-product congruency will always matter, and incongruency is detrimental in all settings. However, this is not the same for influencer-brand integration, as consumers distinguish between the brand and influencers, making congruency more context-specific. Influencer-brand congruency only enhances sales in the case of competency.

In addition to these contributions, our results are based on real online sales data, which can provide practical guidance for marketers regarding brand positioning strategies and influencer marketing on social media.

4.2 Managerial implications

Our results will help managers and marketers working on influencer marketing strategies to make better choices when choosing a suitable influencer for their brands. Selecting a suitable influencer is vital; an inappropriate endorser can easily fail the influencer campaigns. Understanding the interaction between the SMI and the brand stereotypes and focusing on SMIs' roles and identities on social media rather than their followers' size, can provide marketers with an improved influencer marketing approach.

This research provides a practical framework to inform brands on which influencers they should cooperate with to generate improved results. Depending on the purpose of the influencer marketing campaign, marketers should choose different influencers. When the endorsement's goal is to increase engagement, i.e., the number of views, likes, and comments, entertainers generate better outcomes than informers. Therefore, to promote a brand, particularly in its early stages,

entertainers are a better choice as they generate more engagement, reaching a greater audience. When marketers' intentions are to boost online sales, managers should consider the congruency between influencers and their brands' stereotypes. When consumers perceive a brand competent, informers (vs. entertainers) generate more online sales. They can enhance the image of functionality and credibility projected by competent brands and create an impression of trustworthiness in customers, leading to greater online sales. When the brand is perceived as warm or warm–competent, our results suggest that entertainers and informers generate similar online sales. However, entertainers may be a better choice; although they may not enhance sales, they could reduce the advertising recognition of the endorsement (as a result of congruency) and minimize the possible advertising disclosure's negative effect. These results provide advertisers with useful information to make effective decisions when selecting a suitable SMI for their brand endorsements.

4.3 Limitations and further research

This research has a number of limitations, which may lead to new research directions. We examined the effect of the SMI classification (informer vs. entertainer) on brand engagement and online sales; the impact of this SMI classification on other performance measures should also be examined. Future research could explore the role of informers and entertainers in shaping brand-related outcomes such as brand awareness, brand loyalty and love. Our results reveal no statistical difference between informers and entertainers when endorsing warm brands. Future research should explore why endorsements of warm brands by entertainers (vs. informers) do not generate more online sales. We have proposed several probable explanations, such as the combined

emotional and functional value of the warmth dimension, its relevance to creating an impression of new brands rather than known ones, and its association with public behavior rather than purchase that is private. However, empirical evidence is required to reveal the underlying reason for this finding. Our sample showed a clear distinction between the role adopted by influencers (informer or entertainer). However, some influencers might adopt both roles in different situations. Future research can identify such influencers and examine their performance. Uncovering the underlying motives for adopting these roles and the way informers and entertainers reinforce their identities and engage in self-enhancement could also elucidate SMIs' strategies. TikTok, as the fastest-growing social media platform favored by influencers, is increasingly used by brands to create engagement and drive sales. However, studies investigating TikTok are scarce than on other social media networks such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, or Twitter. However, owing to the short video format of the content on TikTok and the widespread new trends that TikTok users have introduced, this platform should attract interest from researchers and advertisers more than ever before. We encourage further research on influencer marketing using TikTok; for instance, the impact of different message characteristics, such as the video duration; or influencer characteristics, such as gender, on the effectiveness of the brand endorsement. Furthermore, the data was collected from China, and further research addressing the impact of our novel SMI classification and the moderating role of brand stereotypes within other cultural contexts is encouraged.

References

Aaker, J. L., Garbinsky, E. N., & Vohs, K. D. (2012). Cultivating admiration in brands: Warmth, competence, and landing in the "golden quadrant". *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 22(2), 191-194. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2011.11.012.

Aaker, J. L., Vohs, K. D., & Mogilner, C. (2010). Nonprofits are seen as warm and for-profits as competent: Firm stereotypes matter. *Journal of Consumer Research,* 37(2), 224-237. https://doi.org/10.1086/651566.

Ahmadi, A., & Ieamsom, S. (2022). Influencer fit post vs celebrity fit post: which one engages Instagram users more? *Spanish Journal of Marketing - ESIC,* 26(1), 98-116. https://doi.org/10.1108/SJME-12-2020-0217.

Akdim, K., Casaló, L. V., & Flavián, C. (2022). The role of utilitarian and hedonic aspects in the continuance intention to use social mobile apps. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services,* 66, 102888. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2021.102888.

Akpinar, E., & Berger, J. (2017). Valuable virality. *Journal of Marketing Research, 54*(2), 318-330. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmr.13.0350.

Alhabash, S., McAlister, A. R., Lou, C., & Hagerstrom, A. (2015). From clicks to behaviors: The mediating effect of intentions to like, share, and comment on the relationship between message evaluations and offline behavioral intentions. *Journal of Interactive Advertising,* 15(2), 82-96. https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2015.1071677.

Amos, C., Holmes, G., & Strutton, D. (2008). Exploring the relationship between celebrity endorser effects and advertising effectiveness. *International Journal of Advertising,* 27(2), 209-234. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2008.11073052.

Ansari, S., Tahir, M., & Bukhari, S. (2019). A graph based approach for effective influencer marketing. *International Journal of Data Mining & Knowledge Management Process,* 9, 21-37. https://doi.org/10.5121/ijdkp.2019.9402.

Backaler, J. (2018). *Digital influence: Unleash the power of influencer marketing to accelerate your global business.* Palgrave Macmillan.

Barsade, S. G. (2002). The ripple effect: Emotional contagion and its influence on group Behavior. *Administrative Science Quarterly,* 47(4), 644-675. https://doi.org/10.2307/3094912.

Belanche, D., Casaló, L. V., Flavián, M., & Ibáñez-Sánchez, S. (2021a). Building influencers' credibility on Instagram: Effects on followers' attitudes and behavioral responses toward the influencer. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services,* 61, 102585. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2021.102585.

Belanche, D., Casaló, L. V., Flavián, M., & Ibáñez-Sánchez, S. (2021b). Understanding influencer marketing: The role of congruence between influencers, products and consumers. *Journal of Business Research,* 132, 186-195. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.03.067.

Belanche, D., Flavián, M., & Ibáñez-Sánchez, S. (2020). Followers' reactions to influencers' Instagram posts. *Spanish Journal of Marketing - ESIC,* 24(1), 37-54. https://doi.org/10.1108/SJME-11-2019-0100.

Bellman, S., Potter, R. F., Treleaven-Hassard, S., Robinson, J. A., & Varan, D. (2011). The effectiveness of branded mobile phone apps. *Journal of Interactive Marketing,* 25(4), 191-200. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2011.06.001.

Bennett, A., & Hill, R. (2012). The universality of warmth and competence: A response to brands as intentional agents. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 22,* 199–204. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2011.10.005.

Berger, J., & Milkman, K. L. (2012). What makes online content viral? *Journal of Marketing Research,* 49(2), 192-205. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmr.10.0353.

Bernritter, S. F., Verlegh, P. W. J., & Smit, E. G. (2016). Why nonprofits are easier to endorse on social media: The roles of warmth and brand symbolism. *Journal of Interactive Marketing, 33,* 27-42. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2015.10.002.

Biswas, D., Biswas, A., & Das, N. (2013). The differential effects of celebrity and expert endorsements on consumer risk perceptions. The role of consumer knowledge, perceived congruency, and product technology orientation. *Journal of Advertising, 35,* 17-31. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2006.10639231.

Breves, P. L., Liebers, N., Abt, M., & Kunze, A. (2019). The perceived fit between Instagram influencers and the endorsed brand. *Journal of Advertising Research,* 59(4), 440. https://doi.org/10.2501/JAR-2019-030.

Brown, D. (2019). *6 types of influencers (mega, macro, micro, advocates, referrers, loyalists).* Retrieved from https://senseimarketing.com/6-types-of-influencers/. Accessed October 2, 2022

Brown, W. J. (2015). Examining four processes of audience involvement with media personae: Transportation, parasocial interaction, identification, and worship. *Communication Theory,* 25(3), 259-283. https://doi.org/10.1111/comt.12053.

Brown, D., & Fiorella, S. (2013). *Influence marketing: How to create, manage, and measure brand influencers in social media marketing.* Pearson Education.

Campbell, C., & Farrell, J. R. (2020). More than meets the eye: The functional components underlying influencer marketing. *Business Horizons,* 63(4), 469-479. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2020.03.003.

Campbell, C., & Grimm, P. E. (2018). The challenges native advertising poses: Exploring potential federal trade commission responses and identifying research needs. *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 38(1), 110-123. https://doi.org/10.1177/0743915618818576.

Casaló, L. V., Flavián, C., & Ibáñez-Sánchez, S. (2017). Understanding consumer interaction on Instagram: The role of satisfaction, hedonism, and content characteristics. *Cyberpsychology Behavior and Social Networking*, 20(6), 369-375. https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2016.0360.

Casaló, L. V., Flavián, C., & Ibáñez-Sánchez, S. (2020). Influencers on Instagram: Antecedents and consequences of opinion leadership. *Journal of Business Research, 117,* 510-519. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.07.005.

Casaló, L. V., Flavián, C., & Ibáñez-Sánchez, S. (2021). Be creative, my friend! Engaging users on Instagram by promoting positive emotions. *Journal of Business Research, 130,* 416-425. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.02.014.

Chandy, R. K., Tellis, G. J., Macinnis, D. J., & Thaivanich, P. (2001). What to say when: advertising appeals in evolving markets. *Journal of Marketing Research, 38(4)*, 399-414. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkr.38.4.399.18908.

Chang, Y., Li, Y., Yan, J., & Kumar, V. (2019). Getting more likes: The impact of narrative person and brand image on customer–brand interactions. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 47(6)*, 1027-1045. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-019-00632-2.

Crisafulli, B., Quamina, L. T., & Singh, J. (2022). Competence is power: How digital influencers impact buying decisions in B2B markets. *Industrial Marketing Management,* 104, 384-399. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2022.05.006.

Cruz, D., & Fill, C. (2008). Evaluating viral marketing: isolating the key criteria. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning,* 26(7), 743-758. https://doi.org/10.1108/02634500810916690.

Cuddy, A., Fiske, S., & Glick, P. (2007). The BIAS map: Behaviors from intergroup affect and stereotypes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 92, 631-648. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.92.4.631.

De Veirman, M., Cauberghe, V., & Hudders, L. (2017). Marketing through Instagram influencers: the impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude. *International Journal of Advertising,* 36, 1-31. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2017.1348035.

Delidou. (2021). *DELIDOU.COM.* Retrieved from https://www.delidou.com/. Accessed October 2, 2022

Dhar, R., & Wertenbroch, K. (2000). Consumer choice between hedonic and utilitarian goods. *Journal of Marketing Research,* 37(1), 60-71. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkr.37.1.60.18718.

Dolan, R., Conduit, J., Frethey-Bentham, C., Fahy, J., & Goodman, S. (2019). Social media engagement behavior. *European Journal of Marketing,* 53(10), 2213-2243. https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-03-2017-0182.

El-Qudsi, I. (2022). *Influencer marketing: 10 things to keep in mind as we enter 2022.* Retrieved from https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/413991. Accessed October 2, 2022

Elpers, J. L. C. M. W., Wedel, M., & Pieters, R. G. M. (2003). Why do consumers stop viewing television commercials? Two experiments on the influence of moment-to-moment entertainment and information value. *Journal of Marketing Research,* 40(4), 437-453. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkr.40.4.437.19393.

Feick, L. F., & Price, L. L. (1987). The market maven: A diffuser of marketplace information. *Journal of Marketing,* 51(1), 83-97. https://doi.org/10.1177/002224298705100107.

Fiske, S. T., Cuddy, A. J. C., & Glick, P. (2007). Universal dimensions of social cognition: Warmth and competence. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences,* 11(2), 77-83. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2006.11.005.

Fiske, S. T. C., Amy J. C.; Glick, Peter; Xu, Jun. (2002). A model of (often mixed) stereotype content: Competence and warmth respectively follow from perceived status and competition. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 82(6), 878-902. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.82.6.878.

Fournier, S. (1998). Consumers and their brands: Developing relationship theory in consumer research. *Journal of Consumer Research,* 24(4), 343-373. https://doi.org/10.1086/209515.

Fournier, S., & Alvarez, C. (2011). Brands as relationship partners: Warmth, competence, and in-Between. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 22.* https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1962508.

Friedman, H. H., & Friedman, L. (1979). Endorser effectiveness by product type. *Journal of Advertising Research,* 19(5), 63-71.

Gentina, E., Chen, R., & Yang, Z. (2021). Development of theory of mind on online social networks: Evidence from Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat. *Journal of Business Research, 124,* 652-666. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.03.001.

Haenlein, M., Anadol, E., Farnsworth, T., Hugo, H., Hunichen, J., & Welte, D. (2020). Navigating the new era of influencer marketing: How to be successful on Instagram, TikTok, & Co. *California Management Review, 63(1)*, 5-25. https://doi.org/10.1177/0008125620958166.

Hatfield, E., Cacioppo, J. T., & Rapson, R. L. (1992). Primitive emotional contagion. In In M. S. Clark (Ed.), *Emotion and social behavior* (pp. 151-177). Sage Publications, Inc.

Hennig-Thurau, T., Groth, M., Paul, M., & Gremler, D. D. (2006). Are all smiles created equal? How emotional contagion and emotional labor affect service relationships. *Journal of Marketing, 70(3)*, 58-73. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.70.3.058.

Hollebeek, L., & Macky, K. (2019). Digital content marketing's role in fostering consumer engagement, trust, and value: Framework, fundamental propositions, and implications. *Journal of Interactive Marketing, 45,* 27-41. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2018.07.003.

Hu, L., Min, Q., Han, S., & Liu, Z. (2020). Understanding followers' stickiness to digital influencers: The effect of psychological responses. *International Journal of Information Management, 54,* 102169. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2020.102169.

Hughes, C., Swaminathan, V., & Brooks, G. (2019). Driving brand engagement through online social influencers: An empirical investigation of sponsored blogging campaigns. *Journal of Marketing, 83(5)*, 78-96. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022242919854374.

Ivens, B. S., Leischnig, A., Muller, B., & Valta, K. (2015). On the role of brand stereotypes in shaping consumer response toward brands: An empirical examination of direct and mediating effects of warmth and competence. *Psychology & Marketing, 32(8)*, 808-820. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20820.

Janssens, W., & De Pelsmacker, P. (2005). Advertising for new and existing brands: The impact of media context and type of advertisement. *Journal of Marketing Communications,* 11(2*)*, 113-128. https://doi.org/10.1080/1352726042000306847.

Jin, S.-A. A., & Phua, J. (2014). Following celebrities' tweets about brands: The impact of Twitter-based electronic word-of-mouth on consumers' source credibility perception, buying intention, and social identification with celebrities. *Journal of Advertising,* 43(2), 181-195. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2013.827606.

Kamins, M., Brand, M., Hoeke, S., & Moe, J. (2013). Two-sided versus one-sided celebrity endorsements: The impact on advertising effectiveness and credibility. *Journal of Advertising,* 18, 4-10. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.1989.10673146.

Kamins, M. A. (1990). An investigation into the "match-up" hypothesis in celebrity advertising: When beauty may be only skin deep. *Journal of Advertising,* 19(1), 4-13. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.1990.10673175.

Kamins, M. A., & Gupta, K. (1994). Congruence between spokesperson and product type: A matchup hypothesis perspective. *Psychology & Marketing,* 11(6), 569-586. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.4220110605.

Kang, J.-A., Hong, S., & Hubbard, G. T. (2020). The role of storytelling in advertising: Consumer emotion, narrative engagement level, and word-of-mouth intention. *Journal of consumer behaviour,* 19(1), 47-56. https://doi.org/10.1002/cb.1793.

Karimi, S. (2021). Cross-visiting behaviour of online consumers across retailers' and comparison sites, a macro-study. *Information Systems Frontiers,* 23(3), 531-542. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10796-019-09967-1.

Kay, S., Mulcahy, R., & Parkinson, J. (2020). When less is more: The impact of macro and micro social media influencers' disclosure. *Journal of Marketing Management, 36,* 1-31. https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2020.1718740.

Kervyn, N., Fiske, S. T., & Malone, C. (2012). Brands as intentional agents framework: How perceived intentions and ability can map brand perception. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 22*(2), 166-176. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2011.09.006.

Kervyn, N., Fiske, S. T., & Malone, C. (2022). Social perception of brands: Warmth and competence define images of both brands and social groups. *Consumer Psychology Review, 5*(1), 51-68. https://doi.org/10.1002/arcp.1074.

Khamis, S., Ang, L., & Welling, R. (2016). Self-branding, 'micro-celebrity' and the rise of social media influencers. *Celebrity Studies, 8,* 1-18. https://doi.org/10.1080/19392397.2016.1218292.

Ki, C.-W., Park, S., & Kim, Y.-K. (2022). Investigating the mechanism through which consumers are "inspired by" social media influencers and "inspired to" adopt influencers' exemplars as social defaults. *Journal of Business Research, 144,* 264-277. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2022.01.071.

Kim, D. Y., & Kim, H.-Y. (2021). Influencer advertising on social media: The multiple inference model on influencer-product congruence and sponsorship disclosure. *Journal of Business Research, 130,* 405-415. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.02.020.

Kim, S., Jiang, J.-Y., Nakada, M., Han, J., & Wang, W. (2020). Multimodal post attentive profiling for influencer marketing. *Proceedings of The Web Conference 2020,* Taipei, Taiwan. https://doi.org/10.1145/3366423.3380052.

Kolbl, Ž., Arslanagic-Kalajdzic, M., & Diamantopoulos, A. (2019). Stereotyping global brands: Is warmth more important than competence? *Journal of Business Research, 104,* 614-621. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.12.060.

Lee, J.-G., & Thorson, E. (2008). The impact of celebrity–product incongruence on the effectiveness of product endorsement. *Journal of Advertising Research,* 48(3), 433. https://doi.org/10.2501/S0021849908080446.

Lee, M. T., & Theokary, C. (2021). The superstar social media influencer: Exploiting linguistic style and emotional contagion over content? *Journal of Business Research,* 132, 860-871. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.11.014.

Leung, F. F., Gu, F. F., & Palmatier, R. W. (2022). Online influencer marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science,* 50(2), 226-251. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-021-00829-4.

Li, M. (2021). Influence for social good: Exploring the roles of influencer identity and comment section in Instagram-based LGBTQ-centric corporate social responsibility advertising. *International Journal of Advertising,* 41, 1-38. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2021.1884399.

Lin, H.-C., Bruning, P. F., & Swarna, H. (2018). Using online opinion leaders to promote the hedonic and utilitarian value of products and services. *Business Horizons,* 61(3), 431-442. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2018.01.010.

Lou, C., Tan, S.-S., & Chen, X. (2019). Investigating consumer engagement with influencer- vs. brand-promoted ads: The roles of source and disclosure. *Journal of Interactive Advertising,* 19(3), 169-186. https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2019.1667928.

MacInnis, D. J. (2012). "Brands as intentional agents": Questions and extensions. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 22(2), 195-198. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2011.10.004.

Maddux, J. E., & Rogers, R. W. (1980). Effects of source expertness, physical attractiveness, and supporting arguments on persuasion: A case of brains over beauty. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 39(2), 235-244. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.39.2.235.

Mallipeddi, R. R., Kumar, S., Sriskandarajah, C., & Zhu, Y. (2021). A framework for analyzing influencer marketing in social networks: Selection and scheduling of influencers. *Management Science,* 68(1), 75-104. https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.2020.3899.

Martínez-López, F. J., Anaya-Sánchez, R., Fernández Giordano, M., & Lopez-Lopez, D. (2020). Behind influencer marketing: key marketing decisions and their effects on followers' responses. *Journal of Marketing Management,* 36(7-8), 579-607. https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2020.1738525.

Meire, M., Hewett, K., Ballings, M., Kumar, V., & Van den Poel, D. (2019). The role of marketer-generated content in customer engagement marketing. *Journal of Marketing,* 83(6), 21-42. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022242919873903.

Moldovan, S., Steinhart, Y., & Lehmann, D. R. (2019). Propagators, creativity, and informativeness: What helps ads go viral. *Journal of Interactive Marketing,* 47, 102-114.https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2019.02.004.

Motoki, K., Suzuki, S., Kawashima, R., & Sugiura, M. (2020). A combination of self-reported data and social-related neural measures forecasts viral marketing success on social media. *Journal of Interactive Marketing,* 52, 99-117. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2020.06.003.

Munnukka, J., Uusitalo, O., & Toivonen, H.-M. (2016). Credibility of a peer endorser and advertising effectiveness. *Journal of Consumer Marketing,* 33, 182-192. https://doi.org/10.1108/JCM-11-2014-1221.

Ohanian, R. (1990). Construction and validation of a scale to measure celebrity endorsers' perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. *Journal of Advertising,* 19(3), 39-52. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.1990.10673191.

Park, J., Lee, J. M., Xiong, V. Y., Septianto, F., & Seo, Y. (2021). David and Goliath: When and why micro-influencers are more persuasive than mega-influencers. *Journal of Advertising,* 50(5), 584-602. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2021.1980470.

Paul, J., & Bhakar, S. (2018). Does elebrity image congruence influences brand attitude and purchase intention? *Journal of Promotion Management,* 24(2), 153-177. https://doi.org/10.1080/10496491.2017.1360826.

Pentina, I., Guilloux, V., & Micu, A. C. (2018). Exploring social media engagement behaviors in the context of luxury brands. *Journal of Advertising,* 47(1), 55-69. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2017.1405756.

Portal, S., Abratt, R., & Bendixen, M. (2018). Building a human brand: Brand anthropomorphism unravelled. *Business Horizons*, 61(3), 367-374. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2018.01.003.

Pulizzi, J. (2013). *Epic content marketing: How to tell a different story, break through the clutter, and win more customers by marketing less.* McGraw-Hill Education.

Retail in Asia, (2021). *What is China's new influencer economy?* Retrieved from https://retailinasia.com/in-trends/greater-china/china/what-is-chinas-new-influencer-economy/. Accessed October 2, 2022

Rietveld, B., Dolen, W., Mazloom, M., & Worring, M. (2020). What you feel, is what you like influence of message appeals on customer engagement on instagram. *Journal of Interactive Marketing,* 49, 20-53. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2019.06.003.

Romero, D. M., Galuba, W., Asur, S., & Huberman, B. A. (2011). Influence and passivity in social media. In G. D. Hofmann, D. Malerba, & M. Vazirgiannis (Eds.), *Machine learning and knowledge discovery in databases* (pp. 18-33). Springer.

Scarpi, D. (2012). Work and fun on the internet: The effects of utilitarianism and hedonism online. *Journal of Interactive Marketing,* 26(1), 53-67. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2011.08.00.1

Schouten, A. P., Janssen, L., & Verspaget, M. (2020). Celebrity vs. influencer endorsements in advertising: the role of identification, credibility, and product-endorser fit. *International Journal of Advertising,* 39(2), 258-281. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2019.1634898.

Shan, Y., Chen, K.-J., Lin, J.-S.. (2020). When social media influencers endorse brands: the effects of self-influencer congruence, parasocial identification, and perceived endorser motive. *International Journal of Advertising,* 39(5), 590-610. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2019.1678322.

Shehu, E., Bijmolt, T. H. A., & Clement, M. (2016). Effects of likeability dynamics on consumers' intention to share online video advertisements. *Journal of Interactive Marketing, 35,* 27-43. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2016.01.001.

Smink, A. R., Frowijn, S., van Reijmersdal, E. A., van Noort, G., & Neijens, P. C. (2019). Try online before you buy: How does shopping with augmented reality affect brand responses and personal data disclosure. *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications*, 35, 100854. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.elerap.2019.100854.

Sokolova, K., & Kefi, H. (2020). Instagram and YouTube bloggers promote it, why should I buy? How credibility and parasocial interaction influence purchase intentions. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services,* 53, 101742. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.01.011.

Statista. (2021). *Influencer marketing market size worldwide from 2016 to 2021*. Retrieved from https://www.statista.com/statistics/1092819/global-influencer-market-size/. Accessed October 2, 2022

Stieglitz, S., & Dang-Xuan, L. (2013). Emotions and information diffusion in social media—sentiment of microblogs and sharing behavior. *Journal of Management Information Systems*, 29(4), 217-248. https://doi.org/10.2753/MIS0742-1222290408.

Tafesse, W., & Wood, B. P. (2021). Followers' engagement with instagram influencers: The role of influencers' content and engagement strategy. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 58, 102303. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2020.102303.

Taylor, D. G., Lewin, J. E., & Strutton, D. (2011). Friends, fans, and followers: Do ads work on social networks? *Journal of Advertising Research,* 51(1), 258. https://doi.org/10.2501/JAR-51-1-258-275.

Till, B. D., & Busler, M. (2000). The match-up hypothesis: Physical attractiveness, expertise, and the role of fit on brand attitude, purchase intent and brand beliefs. *Journal of Advertising,* 29(3), 1-13. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2000.10673613.

Till Brian, D., & Busler, M. (1998). Matching products with endorsers: attractiveness versus expertise. *Journal of Consumer Marketing,* 15(6), 576-586. https://doi.org/10.1108/07363769810241445.

Trusov, M., Bucklin, R. E., & Pauwels, K. (2009). Effects of word-of-mouth versus traditional marketing: Findings from an Internet social networking site. *Journal of Marketing,* 73(5), 90-102. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.73.5.90.

Wang, J., Xiao, N., & Rao, H. R. (2012). An exploration of risk information search via a search engine: Queries and clicks in healthcare and information security. *Decision Support Systems,* 52(2), 395-405. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dss.2011.09.006.

Wang, J. S., Cheng, Y. F., & Chu, Y. L. (2013). Effect of celebrity endorsements on consumer purchase intentions: Advertising effect and advertising appeal as mediators. *Human Factors and Ergonomics in Manufacturing & Service Industries, 23,* 357-367. https://doi.org/10.1002/hfm.20336.

Wang, L., Fang, F., Yuan, X., Luo, Z., Liu, Y., Wan, B., & Zhao, Y. (2017, July). Urban function zoning using geotagged photos and openstreetmap. Conference paper presentation at the 2017 IEEE International Geoscience and Remote Sensing Symposium (IGARSS),

Wang, S. W., & Scheinbaum, A. C. (2018). Enhancing brand credibility via celebrity endorsement. *Journal of Advertising Research,* 58(1), 16. https://doi.org/10.2501/JAR-2017-042.

Wang, Y., Gu, T., & Wang, S. (2019, May). *Causes and Characteristics of Short Video Platform Internet Community Taking the TikTok Short Video Application as an Example.* Conference paper presentation at the 2019 IEEE International Conference on Consumer Electronics - Taiwan (ICCE-TW),

Wiedmann, K.-P., & von Mettenheim, W. (2021). Attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise – social influencers' winning formula? *Journal of Product & Brand Management,* 30(5), 707-725. https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-06-2019-2442.

Wild, B., Erb, M., & Bartels, M. (2001). Are emotions contagious? Evoked emotions while viewing emotionally expressive faces: Quality, quantity, time course and gender differences. *Psychiatry Research,* 102(2), 109-124. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0165-1781(01)00225-6.

XINGTU. (2021). *XINGTU.CN.* Retrieved from https://www.xingtu.cn/landing-page/adplatform?aadvid=1645880933314568. Accessed October 2, 2022

Ye, G., Hudders, L., De Jans, S., & De Veirman, M. (2021). The value of influencer marketing for business: A bibliometric analysis and managerial implications. *Journal of Advertising*, 50(2), 160-178. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2020.1857888.

Yuan, S., & Lou, C. (2020). How social media influencers foster relationships with followers: The roles of source credibility and fairness in parasocial relationship and product interest. *Journal of Interactive Advertising,* 20(2), 133-147. https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2020.1769514.

Zhang, J., & Mao, E. (2016). From online motivations to ad clicks and to behavioral intentions: An empirical study of consumer response to social media advertising. *Psychology & Marketing,* 33(3), 155-164. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20862.

Zhang, Y. L., Yan; and Goh, Kim Huat. (2018, June). Impact of Online Influencer Endorsement on Product Sales: Quantifying Value of Online Influencer. Conference paper presentation at the PACIS 2018 PROCEEDINGS