Exploring and Clustering the Influence of Social Media Influencers

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Abstract

Industry practitioners and academic researchers have accorded social media influencer marketing considerable attention. Marketing professionals must identify potential social media influencers as endorsers. A well-known social media influencer is not always a good endorser. The popularity of social media influencers does not imply their influence on their followers. In this paper, we present a survey of the influence power of social media influencers based on their followers' attitudes toward trustworthiness, expertise, likability, social attractiveness, physical attractiveness, opinion leadership, enjoyability, similarity, interactivity, identification, fitness, originality, informativeness, entertainment, and self-serving. We gathered 4,919 responses to a user survey regarding the influence of Taiwan's leading social media influencers. Based on the survey results, we categorized social media influencers into five groups: high-impact influencers, knowledge influencers, entertainers, content creators, and product promoters.

Keywords: Social media influencers, Social media, Product endorsing, Influence marketing.

INTRODUCTION

Self-media enabled by social media and video-sharing platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, among others, is flourishing. (Borchers, 2019; Vrontis et al., 2021). No longer is mass media the only place to find suitable brand endorsers for marketing purposes. Self-media enables users to gain followers and influence via their content creation. Consequently, an increasing number of brands and advertisers are willing to allocate a portion of their marketing budget to social media influencer marketing (Schouten et al., 2020).

Celebrity endorsements aim to obtain marketing contracts by leveraging the public's recognition of celebrities (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016). Influencer marketing on social networks relies primarily on influencers with a substantial following who create content to attract followers to exert influence.

The foundation of social media influence marketing is the large number of followers social media influencers acquire through daily content creation. Companies promote brands and products to followers via social media influencers to achieve marketing effects. The followers of social media influencers are the source of their influence. Literature suggests that young people are more influenced by social media influencers than by traditional ones (Piehler et al., 2022; Schouten et al., 2020).

In marketing, selecting the ideal influencer for product endorsement is essential. Yerasani et al. (2020) emphasized that selecting appropriate influencers with limited time and resources to maximize their influence is a topic worthy of study. Influencers with more followers may have a wider scope of influence. Therefore, social media influencers attract and accumulate followers through their efforts. Market researchers usually evaluate the influence of social media influencers through objective data analysis, such as the number of exposures, interactions, views, reach, or fans of posts, etc. However, these objective numbers might be manipulated, and an influencer's followers are not equal to their influence. It is more important to understand how followers subjectively evaluate social media influencers based on their content (Hudders et al., 2021).

Numerous variables, including source credibility (Pornpitakpan, 2004), trustworthiness (Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018), likability (Fleck et al., 2012), attractiveness (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Rubin & McHugh, 1987), and many others, influence the persuasive power of celebrity and social media endorsements (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).

In addition to factors about endorsers' characteristics, the parasocial relationship between endorsers and the audience may also influence the persuasive power of social media. Early notions of parasocial relationships were considered unrealistic and illusory (Horton & Richard Wohl, 1956). However, with the advancement of internet

technology and social media, cyberspace-based parasocial relationships now have distinct definitions. Scholars believe that followers of social media influencers develop and establish a parasocial relationship (Brown, 2015). These parasocial interactions foster closeness, have varied from friendship to affection, and are considered parasocial relationships (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Social media influencers' posts and content creation result in engaging interactions with their followers (Casaló et al., 2018). When followers discover that their self-perception matches that of the social media influencer, they are more likely to accept advertisements and persuasive messages from social media influencers and purchase the endorsed products (Choi & Rifon, 2012; Lou & Yuan, 2019).

The informative value of endorsement messages would also affect the endorsement effect (Vrontis et al., 2021). For their audiences, social media influencers produce content that is both educational and entertaining. Influencers on social media shape their position as opinion leaders through the content they produce. These influencers are considered intelligent decision-makers. As a result, followers would accept the delivered messages from social media influencers and purchase the endorsed products.

Based on the preceding discussion, the current study contends that the persuasive effect of social media influencer marketing significantly differs from that of traditional celebrity endorsers. This study measures followers' attitudes toward social media influencers and uses survey results to categorize social media influencers.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Social Media Influencer
In the Internet era, social media influencers are a new independent third-party group that can influence audiences' perceptions through their creations on various social media platforms (Freberg et al., 2011). Social media influencers are opinion leaders who can communicate with a large, unidentified audience (Gräve, 2017). Additionally, they are regarded as dependable market leaders in the social commerce sector (De Veirman et al., 2017). As long as these opinion leaders have sufficient influence over their followers, they cannot be easily disregarded (Jin et al., 2019). Due to the rapid growth of social media, a large number of social media influencers have emerged. It first flourished as a platform for blogging, hence the name blogger. Then, various social platform influencers with titles like Vlogger, YouTuber, and Instafamous emerged (Borchers, 2019). It has been extensively discussed that social media influencers are a growing trend whose influence should not be underestimated. Due to the sincerity of the information, social media influencers' content is viewed as having greater credibility, authenticity, and dependability than conventional celebrity endorsement advertising (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). The opinions of social media influencers on products

are considered genuinely influential.

Reach and impact are the two fundamental dimensions defining social media influencers' influence. Reach is a distinct audience composed of numerous followers. Impact denotes the capacity to influence the decision-making processes of others, indicating that social media influencers must retain crucial opinion leadership potential (Hudders et al., 2021). Social media influencers are typically experts, and as a result, they impact their followers (Lin et al., 2018). Both reach and impact are essential characteristics of social media influencers.

Because the number of followers indicates the influencer's reach, it is the most common classification method (De Veirman et al., 2019). For example, Campbell and Farrell (2020) divided social media influencers based on the number of followers. The impact is also crucial when selecting social media influencers to promote or introduce a product to consumers. Few studies have provided an in-depth analysis of social media influencers' impact. Influencers on social media derive their persuasive power from the evaluations of their followers. Therefore, social media influencers should be categorized and analyzed from their followers' perspectives to understand how influencers affect followers' marketing decisions.

Influencer Marketing

Social media influencers have become a great channel for brands to communicate with consumers (Gillin, 2008). Although the traditional celebrity endorsement strategy is still effective, social media influencer marketing can provide a new approach for brands to reach out to (Jin et al., 2019; Talavera, 2022).

However, social media users who share content are not equivalent to social media influencers (Kozinets et al., 2010). Influencers on social media are more persuasive and committed to establishing long-term, meaningful relationships with their followers. Influencer marketing is new; no influencer marketing strategy applies to all brands. Before allocating a budget to influencer marketing, brands should invest in understanding how influencers cultivate long-lasting, meaningful relationships with their followers. It is essential to determine the suitability of opinion leaders and to choose the appropriate opinion leaders for influencer marketing (Ye et al., 2021).

Social Media Influencer Endorsement

Brands employ social media influencers to promote or introduce consumers to their products, services, brands, concepts, and opinions (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). Social media influencers regularly engage in these activities. Choosing the appropriate influencer is a crucial factor affecting the effectiveness of influencer marketing endorsements, and the number of influencer followers may be one of several criteria a

brand considers. Each social media influencer has unique endorsement effects in a variety of fields.

Marketers employ social media influencers to promote various products and services. According to a bibliometric analysis conducted by Ye et al. (2021), fashion, luxury, beauty, travel, food, games, health, toy unboxing, and other topics are discussed frequently in social media influencer endorsement research. Breves et al. (2019) advocated that choosing an appropriate influencer can boost the influencer's reputation and consumers' attitudes toward the brand. Additionally, consumers' purchase intentions increase.

METHOD

The current study uses the condensed version of the social media influence scale developed by Wang et al. (2023) to conduct an empirical investigation (Table 1). The social media influence scale consists of fifteen items to measure followers' attitudes toward social media influencers: Trustworthiness, expertise, likability, social attractiveness, physical attractiveness, opinion leadership, enjoyability, similarity, interactivity, identification, fitness, originality, informativeness, entertainment, and self-serving. These fifteen items can be grouped into four dimensions: Influencer characteristics, the relationship between social media influencers and their followers, creative content, and self-serving motivations. The influencer characteristics focus on the influencers and include seven items: trustworthiness, expertise, likability, social attractiveness, physical attractiveness, opinion leadership, and enjoyment. Four items comprise the relationship between social media influencers and their followers: similarity, interactivity, identification, and fitness. The dimension of creative content refers to how followers evaluate the content produced by influencers, which consists of three items: informativeness, entertainment, and originality. One item on the self-serving motivation dimension measures social media influencers' profit motive and self-serving nature.

Table 1 *Items of the Social Media Influence Scale*

Variables	Items
Influencer characteristic	
Trustworthiness	I think "the influencer" is trustworthy.
Expertise	I think "the influencer" is very knowledgeable.
Likability	I think "the influencer" is popular.
Social attractiveness	I want to associate with "the influencer."
Physical attractiveness	I think "the influencer" looks good.
Opinion leadership	I think the opinion of "the influencer" will affect me.
Enjoyability	I think "the influencer" is humorous.
Relationship between influencers and followers	
Similarity	I think "the influencer" behaves like me.
Interactivity	The influencer often interacts with fans.
Identification	I sometimes want to be more like " the influencer. "
Fitness	I think the content of "the influencer" matches my personality.
Creative contents	
Originality	I think the content of "the influencer" is creative.
Informativeness	I think the content of "the influencer" is useful.
Entertainment	I think the content of " the influencer " is interesting.
Self-serving motivations	
Self-serving	I think "the influencer" is only concerned with self-interest.

This study's questionnaire consists of four sections. The first section contains information about the respondent's gender, age, occupation, level of education, etc. The second section is a 15-item condensed social media influence scale version. The third section addresses social media platform usage patterns. The fourth section addresses the impact of social media influencers on endorsements. The Aware-Interest-Desire-Action (AIDA) model is implemented in this section. Respondents were asked if they were aware of the product, were interested in it, and had purchased it after seeing social media influencers endorse it. This section contains three separate items. The questionnaire contains 24 questions in total.

The current study employs an online questionnaire survey to collect information regarding followers' perceptions of social media influencers they have followed. The data was collected from November 25, 2021, to February 15, 2022. Respondents who are familiar with numerous social media influencers can complete multiple

questionnaires. However, respondents can only complete the questionnaire once per social media influencer. An incentive lottery was offered to increase response rates.

This study investigated subjects' attitudes toward Taiwan's top 100 social media influencers. KOL Radar and Digital Times provided the top 100 list (https://www.bnext.com.tw/topic/575). This study utilized this list of the top 100 social media influencers as its base. However, less than thirty respondents were collected for three top 100 social media influencers. Thus, the analysis included the remaining 97 notable top social media influencers.

RESULTS

Demographic

This research received 4,919 responses. The male-to-female ratio is roughly 6:4. (3083:1790). Most respondents were between the ages of 19 and 24 (35.94 percent; 1,768), followed by those between the ages of 31 and 40. (22.4 percent). There were 2,248 students or 45.70 percent. A bachelor's degree was the most common level of education (62.07 percent, n=3053). The percentages of individuals who followed influencers on YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram were 69.79% (n=3433), 34.2% (n=1693), and 27.04% (n=1330), respectively.

Grouping

This study categorized 97 social media influencers into five groups using K-mean cluster analysis. This study used ANOVA and post hoc testing to confirm group differences and characteristics after clustering. According to the ANOVA, all fifteen dimensions differed significantly between the five groups.

This study identified five groups based on the theories and ANOVA results: high-impact influencers, knowledge influencers, entertainers, content creators, and product promoters. The ANOVA analysis and post hoc test results are presented in Table 2, and Figure 1 compares the five groups' average scores across all dimensions.

Table 2 *ANOVA Analysis and Post Hoc Test Results*

	Post hoc test	1. Content Creators	2. Product promoters	3. Knowledge influencers	4. Entertainers	5. High-impact influencers	F-value P-value
No. of Social Media Influencers		25	11	27	15	19	
Trustworthiness	2<1<4, 3<5	3.52 (SD=0.16)	3.15 (SD=0.23)	3.75 (SD=0.19)	3.76 (SD=0.18)	4.1 (SD=0.12)	58.846 p<.001***
Expertise	2<4, 1<3<5	3.37 (SD=0.20)	2.99 (SD=0.18)	3.77 (SD=0.25)	3.37 (SD=0.26)	3.93 (SD=0.26)	40.246 p<.001***
Likability	2<1, 3<4, 5	3.77 (SD=0.23)	3.5 (SD=0.20)	3.82 (SD=0.19)	4.3 (SD=0.20)	4.31 (SD=0.15)	49.786 p<.001***
Social attractiveness	2<1<3<4<5	3.29 (SD=0.20)	2.99 (SD=0.25)	3.52 (SD=0.18)	3.76 (SD=0.15)	3.92 (SD=0.13)	62.796 p<.001***
Physical attractiveness	1, 3<4, 5; 2<5	3.24 (SD=0.27)	3.44 (SD=0.33)	3.41 (SD=0.36)	3.69 (SD=0.45)	3.8 (SD=0.33)	8.816 p<.001***
Leadership	2<1<4<3, 5	3.18 (SD=0.13)	2.84 (SD=0.18)	3.57 (SD=0.22)	3.36 (SD=0.21)	3.66 (SD=0.22)	43.490 p<.001***
Enjoyability	2<1, 3<5, 4	3.74 (SD=0.22)	3.43 (SD=0.18)	3.76 (SD=0.20)	4.25 (SD=0.22)	4.19 (SD=0.25)	37.921 p<.001***
Similarity	2<5, 4, 1<3; 1<5; 2<1<5; 2<4<3	2.93 (SD=0.23)	2.51 (SD=0.14)	3.26 (SD=0.24)	3.04 (SD=0.22)	3.16 (SD=0.17)	27.250 p<.001***
Interactivity	2<3, 1<4, 5	3.7 (SD=0.26)	3.47 (SD=0.23)	3.66 (SD=0.25)	3.87 (SD=0.25)	3.92 (SD=0.19)	8.063 p<.001***
Identification	2<4, 1<3, 5	2.95 (SD=0.22)	2.57 (SD=0.18)	3.34 (SD=0.28)	3.06 (SD=0.23)	3.33 (SD=0.20)	29.130 p<.001***
Fitness	2<1<4<3, 5	3 (SD=0.25)	2.65 (SD=0.19)	3.39 (SD=0.24)	3.23 (SD=0.21)	3.4 (SD=0.18)	30.921 p<.001***
Originality	2<3, 1<4, 5	3.69 (SD=0.21)	3.41 (SD=0.19)	3.76 (SD=0.17)	4.14 (SD=0.29)	4.15 (SD=0.20)	34.317 p<.001***
Informativeness	2<1, 4<3, 5	3.49 (SD=0.16)	3.05 (SD=0.18)	3.86 (SD=0.26)	3.47 (SD=0.19)	3.93 (SD=0.26)	39.887 p<.001***
Entertainment	2<3, 1<4, 5	3.85 (SD=0.19)	3.53 (SD=0.13)	3.91 (SD=0.21)	4.3 (SD=0.22)	4.34 (SD=0.19)	44.340 p<.001***
Self-serving	5<4<3, 1, 2; 3<2	2.83 (SD=0.20)	2.9 (SD=0.25)	2.75 (SD=0.23)	2.55 (SD=0.19)	2.28 (SD=0.20)	24.618 p<.001***

Note. Post hoc test: LSD test. *** p<.001

Figure 1 *Attitudes to Social Media Influencers*
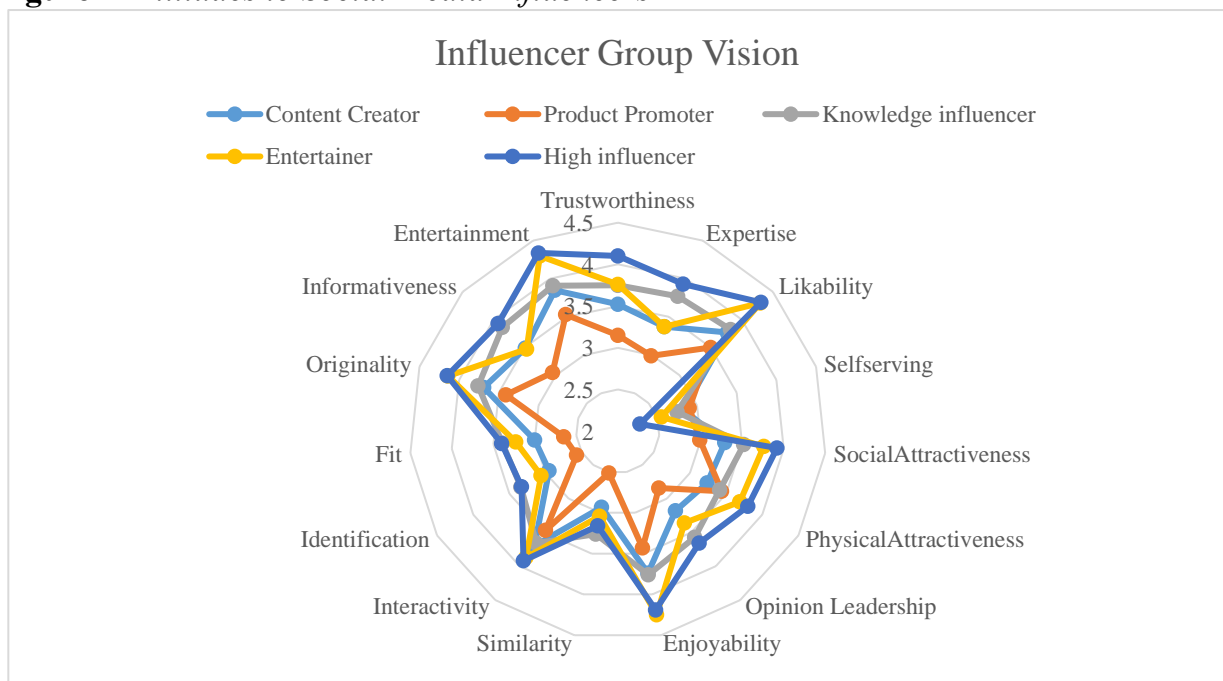
Content Creators

There are 25 influencers in the content creator group. This is the second-largest group of the five groups of influencers. The post hoc test revealed that the content creators are neither dominant nor inferior in all groups. Instead, all dimensions of content creators' developments were balanced.

On the influence characteristics dimensions, the average degree of opinion leadership, social attractiveness, trustworthiness, and enjoyability scores are 3.18, 3.29, 3.52, and 3.74, which are relatively low and only higher than the product promoter group. The average degree of self-serving is 2.83, slightly lower than the product promoter group. Thus, followers believe content creators and endorser influencers do not attract them as opinion leaders, and they were more purposefully working in marketing to be self-serving. The physical attractiveness score is the lowest of the five groups, and the originality and entertainment scores were relatively higher. This means that the creative content created by these social media influencers might be more attractive than the influencers themselves.

In this study, most content creator influencers attract followers through commenting on current events, expressing life, creating topics, unboxing articles and life diaries, and sharing personal opinions. Influencers in the group of content creators do not emphasize experts or knowledge sharing, nor do they use performances as dramatic entertainment. Instead, it focuses on specific subjects (travel, video games, food, etc.) and employs a series of content to attract interested followers. Accordingly, this research named it the content creator. Figure 2 shows respondents' attitudes toward content creators.

Figure 2 *Attitudes to Content Creators*
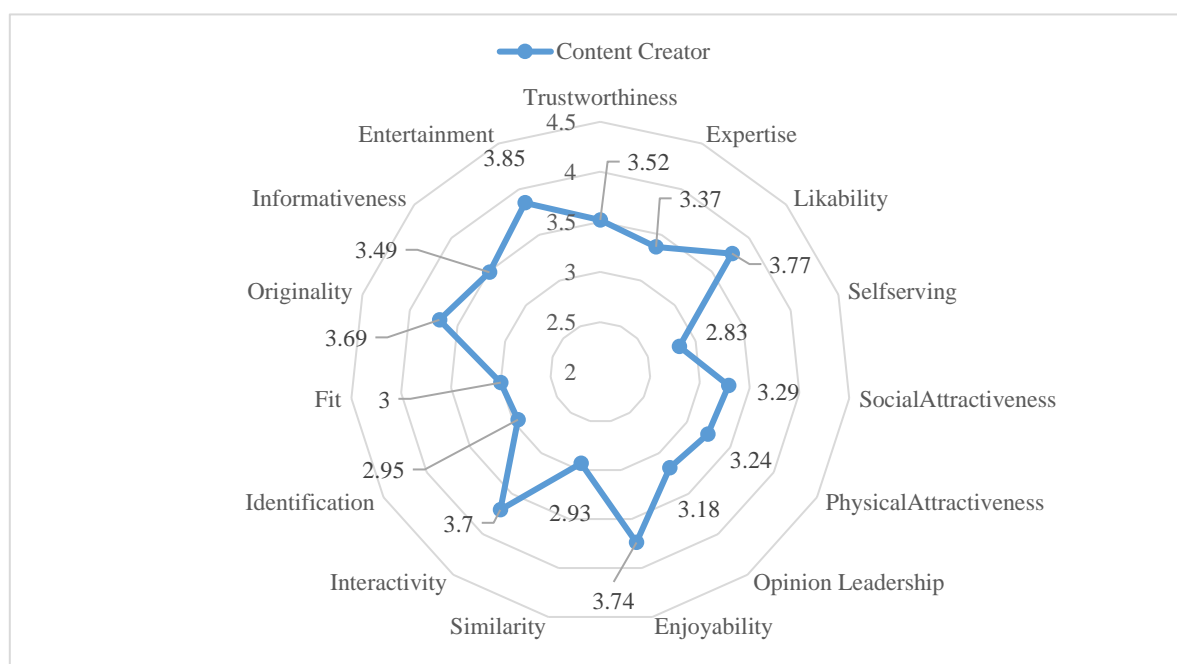
Product Promoters

There are 11 influencers in the product promoter group, the smallest group size. This group scores lowest in most dimensions but higher in physical attractiveness and self-serving dimensions. The self-serving aspect indicates how much influencers prioritize their interests over those of their followers. This group of influencers frequently incorporates various products into their content for self-benefit. They usually show off their endorsement content with a predominantly spectacular physical appearance. Thus, the current analysis identifies this group as the product promoter group. The average scores for trustworthiness (3.15), expertise (2.99), likeability (3.5), social attractiveness (2.99), opinion leadership (2.84), and enjoyability (3.43) are the lowest among the five groups. The average self-serving score is 2.9, considerably higher than those for high-impact influencers, knowledge influencers, and entertainers. The average physical attractiveness is 3.44, which is substantially higher than the average physical attractiveness of content creators (3.24) and knowledge influencers (3.41), but slightly lower than entertainers (but not significantly different). Figure 3 shows respondents' attitudes toward product promoters.

Figure 3 *Attitudes to Product Promoters*
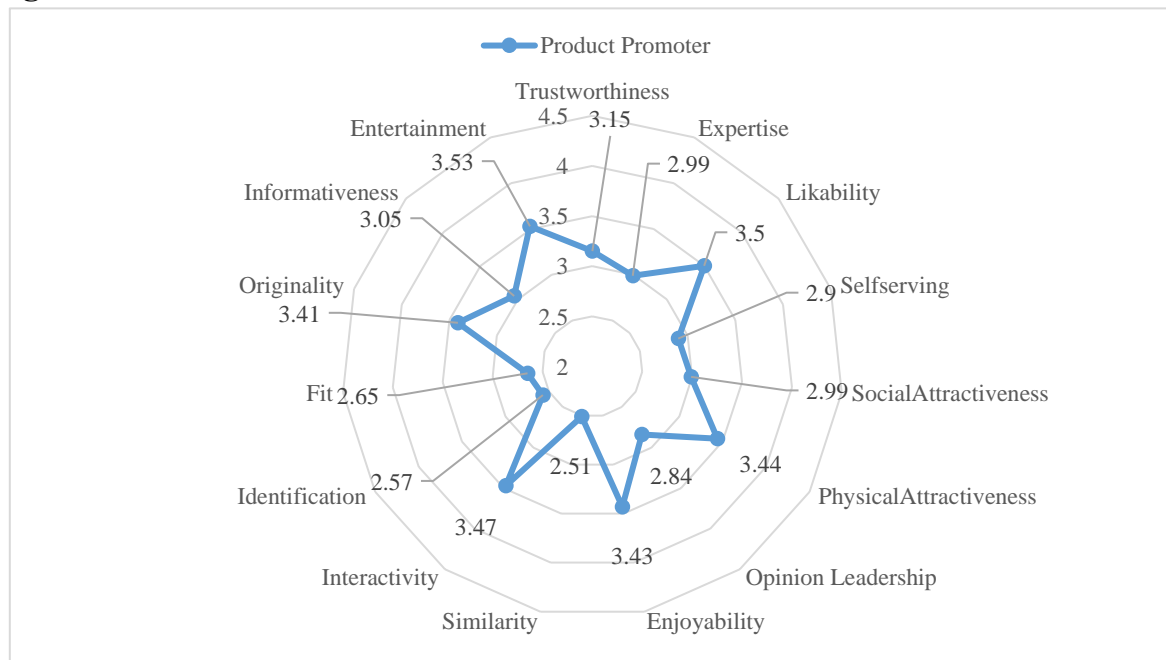
Knowledge Influencers

The knowledge influencer group consists of 27 influencers and is the largest group of the five. The ability of knowledge influencers to draw followers through expert content distinguishes them. Due to the professional characteristics of influencers, this group has high levels of informativeness, opinion leadership, expertise, identification, and fitness. However, they perform poorly in likability, entertainment, and enjoyment. Therefore, this group of influencers employs professional expertise as the foundation of their content dissemination, and their high level of professionalism attracts the identification and trust of their followers. Professional topics are sometimes difficult to comprehend, making it challenging to appeal to popular topics or pursue entertaining effects. This group is named knowledge influencers.

Based on the results of the post hoc test, the average score of knowledge influencers for opinion leadership is 3.57, which is much higher than that of product promoters, content creators, and entertainers and only slightly lower than high-impact influencers (3.66), but not enough to be considered a significant difference. The trustworthiness score (3.75) is significantly higher than that of product promoters. The average score for expertise was 3.77, significantly lower than high-impact influencers and significantly higher than the content creator, entertainer, and product promoter groups.

According to the dimension of the relationship between influencers and followers, influencers who transmit knowledge attract followers' identification (average

score of 3.34) with their knowledge profession, significantly higher than those of product promoters, content creators, and entertainers. The average score for fitness is 3.39, which is also significantly higher than the scores for content creators, product promoters, and entertainers.

Regarding content creation value, its informativeness score is 3.86 points (the same as a high-impact influencer), and it is significantly higher than that of the content creator, product promoter, and entertainer. However, its entertainment score is significantly lower than high-impact influencers and entertainers. Thus, this group can be regarded as providing professional knowledge to attract followers. Figure 4 shows respondents' attitudes to knowledge influencers.

Figure 4 *Attitudes to Knowledge Influencers*
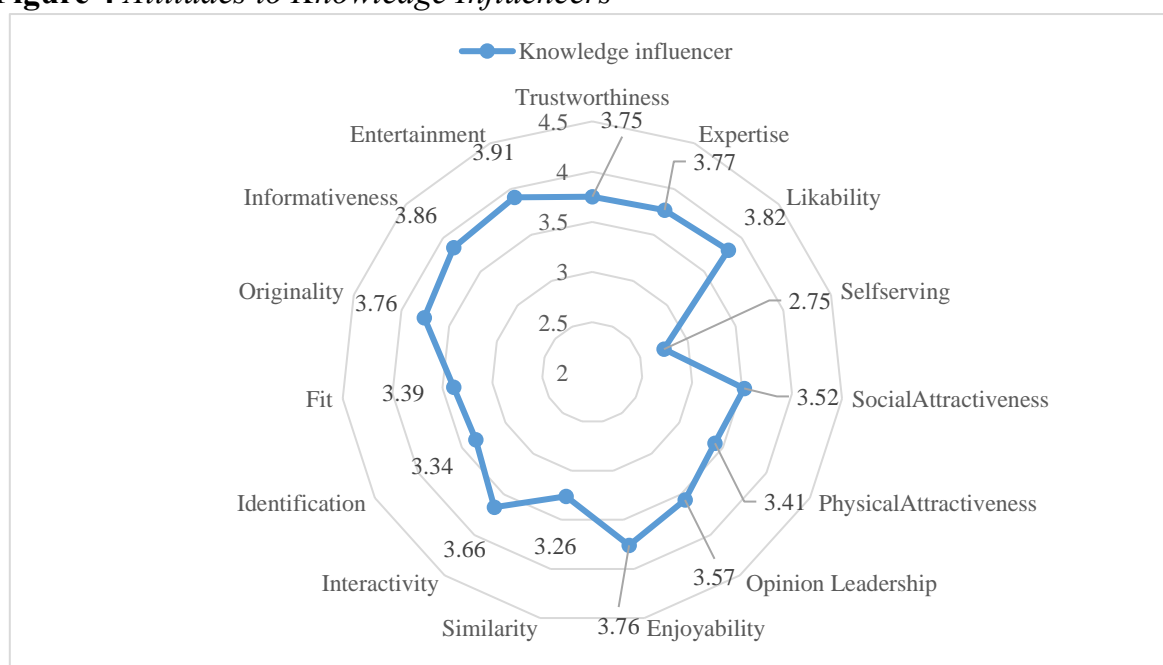

Entertainers

There are 15 influencers within the entertainer group. The distinguishing feature of an entertainer is his or her ability to amuse and attract followers through comedy, demonstrations, and performances. This group is named for influencers' high likability, enjoyability, and interactivity and their content's high originality and entertainment value.

According to the post-hoc test results, the average score for an influencer's likability is 4.3, much higher than those of product promoters, knowledge influencers, and content creators and slightly lower than the score for high-impact influencers (4.31). However, it has yet to reach the level where it is significantly different. The average score of enjoyability is 4.25, which is the highest among the five groups.

Regarding the relationship between influencers and followers, the average score for interactivity is 3.87, which is significantly higher than the scores for the content creator, knowledge influencer, and product promoter and slightly lower than the score for the high-impact influencer (3.92) but has not reached the significantly different level.

Regarding content created by social media influencers, the average score for originality is 4.14, significantly higher than that of product promoters, knowledge influencers, and content creators and slightly lower than high-impact influencers (4.15) but does not reach a significantly different level. The average informativeness score (3.47) is significantly lower than that of knowledge and high-impact influencers but higher than that of product promoters and content creators. The average entertainment score (4.3) is significantly higher than the product promoter, knowledge influencer, and content creator, with the same level of high-impact influencer (4.3). Figure 5 shows all dimensions of the entertainer group.

Figure 5 *Attitudes to Entertainers*
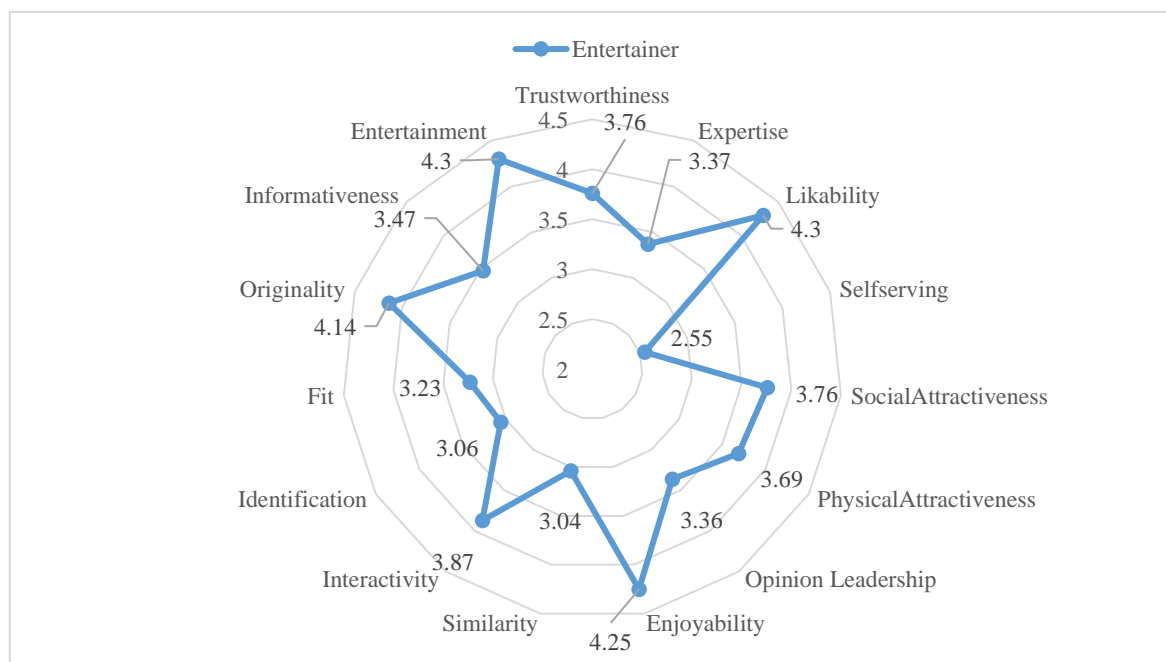
High-impact influencer

The high-impact influencer group has almost the highest impact in all dimensions and only the lowest score in the self-serving dimension. The high-impact influencer group does not get the highest similarity and enjoyability scores among the five groups. However, no significant difference was found between the high-impact influencer and highest-score groups in the similarity and enjoyability dimensions. Thus, this group is named the high-impact group. Figure 6 shows respondents' attitudes toward high-impact influencers.

Figure 6 *Attitudes to High-Impact Influencers*
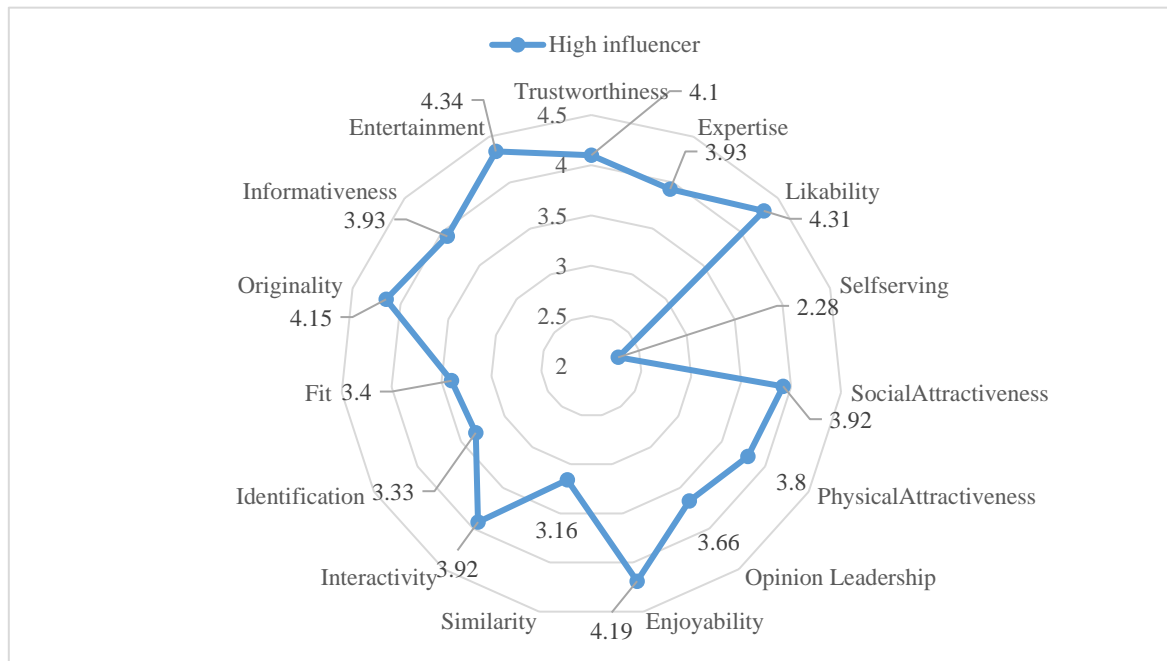
After stating the features of the five groups, the following provided the endorsement effect of the AIDA model among the five groups.

Product Endorsement Effect

This section further compares the endorsement effect of the five social influencer groups from the Awareness-Interest-Desire-Action (AIDA) model. We measure followers' self-reported awareness of the endorsed product, interest in the endorsed product, and desire to adopt the product (purchase). Figure 3 shows the results of the AIDA model.

Table 3 *Endorsement Effect by Awareness, Interest, and Purchase*

		Awareness		Interest		Purchase	
		Samples	**Percentage**	**Samples**	**Percentage**	**Samples**	**Percentage**
All respondents (n=4919)	Yes	2,374	48%	1,837	37%	911	19%
	No	2,545	52%	3,082	63%	4,008	71%
Followers of content creators (n=1202)	Yes	511	43%	380	32%	205	17%
	No	691	57%	822	68%	977	83%
Followers of product promoters (n=399)	Yes	137	34%	105	12%	47	7%
	No	262	66%	294	88%	352	93%
Followers of knowledge influencers (n=1015)	Yes	481	47%	412	40%	232	23%
	No	534	53%	603	60%	783	77%
Followers of entertainers (n=800)	Yes	408	51%	301	38%	133	17%
	No	392	49%	499	62%	667	83%
Followers of high-impact influencers (n=1503)	Yes	837	56%	639	43%	294	20%
	No	666	44%	864	57%	1209	80%

Note. The original scale is a Likert-type scale, and we convert it into a dichotomy. In the column 'Yes,' respondents who fill in agree or strongly agree are considered to have known about the product's existence, be interested in the product, and have purchased the product. In the column 'No,' respondents fill in normal, disagree, or strongly disagree if they know about the existence of the endorsed product, are interested in the product, or have purchased it.

Based on the survey results, social media influencers can help introduce products to consumers and promote product sales. 48% of followers reported that they knew about new products due to the introduction of social media influence. 37% of followers said they were interested in the product that a social media influencer endorses or introduces. 19% of followers reported purchasing products social media influencers endorse or introduce. Accordingly, social media influencer marketing is a feasible marketing communication method.

Table 4 *AIDA Post hoc test results in five groups*

	Post hoc test results (LSD test)	1. Content Creator (n=1202)	2. Product promoter (n=399)	3. Knowledge influencer (n=1015)	4. Entertainer (n=800)	5. High-impact influencer (n=1503)	F-value P-value
Awareness	2<1<4, 3<5	3.19 (SD=1.02)	2.87 (SD=0.20)	3.38 (SD=0.92)	3.42 (SD=1.02)	3.52 (SD=1.04)	42.683 p<.001
Interest	2<1<4<3, 5	3.01 (SD=1.03)	2.78 (SD=0.20)	3.26 (SD=0.95)	3.19 (SD=1.05)	3.33 (SD=1.03)	33.076 p<.001
Action	2<1, 4, 5<3	2.47 (SD=1.08)	2.31 (SD=0.29)	2.74 (SD=1.06)	2.49 (SD=1.14)	2.54 (SD=1.18)	14.604 p<.001

According to the post hoc test results (Table 4), high-impact influencers have the best effect on making followers aware of and attracting users interested in the product. Knowledge influencers have the best impact on persuading followers to take purchase action. Although endorsements frequently introduce and endorse products to followers, the endorsement effect of the product promoter group is not good enough. The product promoters get the lowest average score in all awareness, interest, and action dimensions.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In recent years, social media influencer marketing has become a popular area of study because of the rise of social media. Influencer marketing has become a popular choice in business because it works. Industry practitioners usually distinguish social media influencers by their number of followers. However, the most famous and popular influencers are only sometimes the most suitable endorsers to deliver product messages and promote sales. Few academic studies focus on analyzing the influence of social media influencers from the dimensions of influencer characteristics, followers and influencers relationships, content creation, and self-serving.

This study used a survey questionnaire to determine how followers felt about social media influencers. Based on survey results, we divided the top influencers into five groups: content creators, product promoters, knowledge influencers, entertainers, and high-impact influencers.

Content Creators

Content creators create lots of content to accumulate followers. Nevertheless, followers' attitudes toward content creators are only at a low or middle level. Content creators are good at inserting product information into their content; however, content creators' endorsement effect is also low.

Product Promoters

Product promoters frequently endorse or introduce new products to their followers. However, followers think they are self-serving and hold the lowest attitude toward product promoters in almost all dimensions. Although they frequently endorse or introduce new products to followers, the endorsement effect is the lowest among the five social media influencer groups. The primary reason behind this may be the self-serving motivations of these social media influencers. Most followers consider influencers in the product promoter group to be self-serving.

Knowledge Influencers

Knowledge influencers are considered influencers with expertise in a professional field. They are good at sharing professional information and knowledge with their followers. Some of them have doctoral degrees or have expertise in the area. They usually share contents that have an extremely high level of informativeness. The endorsed or introduced products are typically professional and mainly related to the created content. As a result, followers are easily persuaded to act. Followers consider knowledge influencers with high credibility, expertise, identification, and fitness levels. The endorsement effect of knowledge influencers is highest in the purchase action. Most followers reported that knowledge influencers persuaded them to take purchase action. The primary reason behind this is the expertise of knowledge influencers. The suggestion of knowledge from influencers helps followers make a final purchase decision.

Entertainer

Some social media influencers are known for their enjoyability and humor. They are good at storytelling and create highly entertaining and exciting content for their followers. They usually place products in content as product placement. They also make exciting and vivid videos. Some entertainers present products vividly to make product endorsements more interesting.

Entertainers provide funny comedy, demonstrations, and performances to followers. Followers consider entertainer influencers to have high likability, enjoyability, and interactivity. The content entertainers create also evaluated as having high originality and entertainment value. The endorsement effect of the entertainers is at the middle level among the five social media influencer groups.

High-Impact Influencer

The current study found that some influencers are considered high-impact influencers. Followers hold the most positive attitudes toward these high-impact

influencers, and their self-serving is the lowest among the five groups. The high-impact influencers also have the highest endorsement effect in the awareness and interest stages. The endorsement effect for the purchase action stage of high-impact influencers is in second place. It can be observed that high-impact influencers will usually handle product endorsements carefully and keep endorsement content relative to original creation and sharing.

Choosing Appropriate Endorsers

Choosing appropriate endorsers is a crucial decision for social media influence marketing. The product endorsement may have a positive outcome if selected by a proper endorser. It is not only about the number of followers that social media influencers have; it is also related to the followers' attitude toward influencers. Influencers can persuade followers only if followers positively approach social media influencers.

The current study demonstrates how to investigate followers' attitudes toward social media influencers. The present study also shows how to cluster social media influencers into different groups based on their followers' attitudes. Industry practitioners can use the same procedure to evaluate potential social media influencers to choose a suitable endorser for their product endorsement activities.

Academic researchers can also use the same approach to investigate the factors that affect how followers feel about social media influencers. The current study reports that some influencers are considered high-impact influencers. Future studies may focus on why followers hold such a positive attitude toward these social media influencers. By contrast, some social media influencers are considered endorsers, and most followers evaluate them with the lowest attitude score. Future studies may focus on why followers are negative toward these social media platforms.

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