

Connection between Influencer Characteristics and Purchase Intention:

The Mediating Role of Consumer Engagement

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Abstract

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With the growth of various social media websites in the past decade, a novel profession, online influencer, emerged and bloomed from numerous social media platforms. The question of could specific characteristics of online influencers further trigger consumer purchase intention arose. This research aims to clarify the connection between specific influencer characteristics and consumer purchase intention with the help of consumer engagement. In addition, consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence, congruence between the brand image and the influencer's image, and Hofstede's six dimensions of cultural values were also incorporated as moderated variables further to test the link between influencer characteristics and purchase intention. Two conducted studies revealed that influencer expertise, trustworthiness, and likability positively influence purchase intention and are mediated by online consumer engagement. Moreover, we concluded from the results that people who are highly susceptible to both normative and informative influence were more likely to exhibit consumer engagement behavior with online influencers based on their expertise and trustworthiness than those who are not as influenced by others. The findings may provide some new insights for both consumer behavior research and brands and influencers who needed to bring their career to the next level.

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1 Introduction

The question of what triggers consumer's purchase intention has been asked repeatedly in the past decades by numerous marketing researchers. As social animals, consumers have intentions to communicate with each other. Further, consumers tend to seek and give opinions to each other during communications (Bertrandias & Goldsmith, 2006). Rogers and Cartano (1962) suggested that consumers often seek to reinforce their opinions through "consensual validation" with certain others before making buying decisions. Hence, this leads to the study of opinion leaders and opinion leaders. Opinion leaders are individuals who have a significant amount of influence on other people's decision-making (Rogers & Cartano, 1962). Among many dimensions of opinion leaderships proposed by Myers & Robertson (1972), influencers are now widely discussed and used in consumer behavior research. With the upsurge of social media users, online influencers gained platforms to attract more followers, who may or may not be potential consumers.

In addition, according to Influencer Marketing Survey Results, 2019 Industry Benchmarks (2021), 89 % of marketers say influencer marketing ROI is as good or better than other marketing channels. Thus, the need for influencer-related research is pressing. Previous studies had discovered that certain traits of influencers could trigger corresponding effects on consumer behaviors (Botelho, 2019; Chu & Kamal, 2008; Guadagno et al., 2013; Lou et al., 2019; Reichelt et al., 2014; Uzunoğlu & Kilp, 2014; Xiao et al., 2018; Zhang & Watts, 2008). However, to our knowledge, few researchers covered the influencer's characteristics with online consumer engagement and purchase

intention. Although there is evidence that consumer engagement is linked to purchase intention (Bellman et al., 2011; Chen, 2017; Husnain & Toor, 2017; Sashi, 2012), few researchers have looked at the consumer engagement's possible intermediate role between online influencer characteristics and purchase intention has not been closely inspected. As a preliminary attempt to fill the theoretical gap, this research aims to better interpret the relationship between influencer expertise, trustworthiness, and likability, and purchase intention, with the possible mediating role of consumer engagement.

Additionally, we introduced some factors which serve as proposed moderators further to depict the connection between influencer characteristics and purchase intention. The two dimensions of consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence, normative and informative influence, were selected as moderators in the reasoning of past research had observed their impact on consumer behaviors and decision-making processes (Bearden et al., 1989; Burnkrant and Cousineau, 1975; Cheng et al., 2013; Chu & Kim, 2011; Sadachar et al., 2016). Furthermore, after reviewing the related literature, we proposed congruence between the brand image and influencer's image as for another moderator on the link between influencer expertise, trustworthiness, and likability and consumer engagement, since empirical studies had discovered the level of congruence between brand image and endorser's image could impact consumer behaviors (Choi & Rifon, 2012; Islam et al., 2018; Kamins & Gupta, 1994; McCormick, 2016; Phua et al., 2018). Lastly, noticing past studies (Hofstede, 2002; Schwartz, 2006) had concluded that national culture often serves as an influential factor when studying

the reasoning rooted in human behaviors differentially on a country basis, this study examined the moderating effect of Hofstede's six dimensions cultural values on different relationships between proposed variables.

In conclusion, the objectives of this research include : (1) Clarify the relationship between influencer expertise, trustworthiness, and likability, and purchase intention, with the possible intermediate role of consumer engagement; (2) Interpret the moderating effect of the two dimensions of consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence and congruence between the brand image and the influencer's image on the connection between influencer characteristics and consumer engagement; (3) Illustrate the impact of Hofstede's six dimensions of cultural values on links between variables to be tested. The following section provides a substantial review of previous literature to achieve these goals, further supporting the hypotheses proposed by this research.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Opinion Leadership

Traditionally, an opinion leader refers to individuals from whom others seek advice and information (Rogers & Cartano, 1962) and are likely to influence others' decision-making process, even their attitudes and behaviors to some extent (Godey et al., 2016). Furthermore, Casaló et al. (2018) proposed that an opinion leader should possess at least one of the following characteristics:

- an expert on certain types of products or services
- a vigorous member in one or more than one brand communities

-
- a decision-maker who always make wise purchase decisions

The conventional way of viewing opinion leaders as people who have higher social or economic status than other people is outdated because with the rise of social media and users of SNS almost everyone has the chance and resources to become an online opinion leader or as online influencers, according to one the dimensions of opinion leaderships proposed by Rogers and Cartano (1962). Social media influencers are people who act as independent third-party apart from brands and consumers and shape specific audiences (as in followers) with their attitudes through all kinds of SNS platforms (Freberg, 2010). In addition, compared with influencers who have already gained attention before using social media (e.g., singers, actors, or celebrities), do people regarded as opinion leaders by their peers indeed influence their followers? (Iyengar, Van den Bulte, & Valente, 2011).

The Internet makes it possible for the influencer's range to extend worldwide. Swant (2016) found that people trust online influencers who were ordinary persons before using social media the same way they trust their friends. Influencer marketing research, derived from traditional opinion leadership research, has become vital when brands need to figure out consumers' purchase deciding process (Engel et al., 1990; Flynn et al., 1996; Rogers, 1983). Moreover, generation Z comprises over 60 % of Instagram users, influencer marketing and influencer-related have gained more attention than ever before in the recent decade (Green, 2019). Fontein (2019) reported that generation Z tends to put money on "what they believe in," referring to the importance of trustworthiness when influencers influence consumer purchasing decisions. Past

research focusing on opinion leadership include the topics of the characteristic and motivations of opinion leaders and their personal attributes (Chan & Misra, 1990; Gentina et al., 2014; Goldsmith & Clark, 2008; Park, 2013) and topics related to trust effectiveness (Chan & Misra, 1990; Jin et al., 2019; Kim & Tran, 2013). Although opinion leadership and influencer marketing-related have been studied intensively in the past decades, most research overlooked the valuable theme that influencers' attributes impact consumers' purchase intention and other variables that could influence one's buying decision-making process. This research will focus on a few intriguing features of online influencers and elaborate on their relationships with consumer engagement and purchase intention.

2.2 Features of Online Influencers

In the opinion leader-related studies, there is a theory called: “The Two-Step Flow of Communication” (Lazarsfeld et al., 1948). The theory explained how information is diffused in society: people who are active media users, as in opinion leaders, collect, interpret, and diffuse the meaning of media messages to less-active media consumers. During the dissemination, because opinion leaders are human beings, information will inevitably be personally biased by the opinion leader who dispersed it. This fact further caught some attention from research areas, both in the marketing and sociology fields (Katz, 1957; Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1970; Weimann, 1994). In addition, Katz and Lazarsfeld (1970) summarized some characteristics of opinion leaders; one of them is “personification of values” (Aleahmad et al., 2016), which is in line with the case of information were personally biased. De Veirman et al. (2017) suggested that the amount of information consumers received from online influencers of products is more than

that from the brands themselves. The logic is simple: brands often show the image of un-interactable, colossal, and a bit user-unfriendly.

Online influencers, on the other hand, are attainable and willing to share information; especially influencers who are not traditional celebrities are closer to consumers on a social level. Online influencers, acting as a third party between brands and consumers, could influence followers' behavior and attitude towards a brand based on their social media contents (Uzunoğlu & Kilp, 2014). Will some characteristics of influencers have an impact on consumer engagement and purchase intention? This paper seeks to answer this question.

2.2.1 Expertise

Decision-makers from all kinds of professions are gradually accepting that influencers serve as a vital component in the current marketing environment and start to promote strategies that can use influencers' effect on consumers. Katz (1957) proposed three common characteristics of opinion leaders: first is the leader's values and traits; second is his or her competence or expertise towards the area he or she is leading; and the last one is his or her social position (Valente & Pumpuang, 2007). Although the last attribute, social position of an opinion leader, is not restricted to online influencers now, since many famous influencers are ordinary people before their influencer career, the expertise of an influencer is still considered a crucial feature by both consumers and brands. Li & Du (2011) suggest that the expertise of an online blogger is one of the most critical determinants of a blogger's popularity. Van Eck et al. (2011) agreed that if a consumer assumes an influencer's expertise is qualified to promote certain types of products, his or her purchase intention will likely be influenced by the influencer (Lyons & Henderson, 2005). The reason why consumers value

influencers' expertise probably lies in the: why people follow influencers on the internet? Usually speaking, people turn to influencers on the internet to seek information; at this point, the role of an influencer is an information carrier, and followers are information seekers. Rapanos (2019) suggested that social influence impacts people in two ways: popularity and expertise.

Expertise is considered an information-driven component when discussing the characteristics of social influence. Built on the seminal model of social influence introduced by DeGroot (1974), people constantly seek and communicate information with others and weighting the credibility of the information obtained from others. Rapanos (2019) stated that the degree to which a person could influence others could be calculated through his or her expertise level. Rowley et al. (2017) found that when people seek information on the internet, characteristics influence their judgments; the expertise level behind the information is one of the domain characteristics. The information-dispersion-seeking process resembles the process of traditional selling-buying behavior. Sharma (1990) proposed that salesperson expertise could affect consumers' attitude change and purchase intention. In supporting the finding, Goff (1994) stated that salesperson's information dispersion and persuasion tend to influence consumers' decision-making process.

Expertise serves as an essential component of an influencer's credibility. Reichelt et al. (2014), Chu & Kamal (2008), Zhang & Watts (2008) found that consumers' behavior can be influenced by opinion leaders' credibility and the information they share. If the information source is considered credible, the influence on consumer behavior will be more substantial. The finding is in line with Cheung et al. (2009) on eWOM, which is effective if the frequency of use is higher for a consumer. Although expertise and credibility are crucial in influencing consumers' behavior, Steffes &

Burgee (2009) suggest that consumers tend to have difficulties when assessing the credibility of eWOM comments.

On the other hand, influencers' expertise is easier to be perceived by followers than eWOM comments. According to Ohanian (1990) and Rebelo (2017), influencers' expertise is defined as followers' regarding the influencers' content or influencers themselves as experts, knowledgeable, and qualified towards the product or brand they are promoting. Based on prior literature and findings, the current research assumes influencers' expertise is an essential characteristic that can affect consumer behavior.

2.2.2 Likability

The original definition for the term likability refers to the preference for one to others showed in social interactions. Past research has treated likability and physical attractiveness as the same construct (Maddux & Rogers, 1980). This paper follows the definition of likability as attracted by the communicators' charisma/persona (DeSarbo & Harshman, 1985), or the degree of friendliness/approachability of the communicator in the eyes of beholders (Giffin, 1967), which organized and proposed by Xiao et al. (2018). Likability was studied through different subject areas: Teven (2008) found that political candidates' perceived credibility is positively related to his or her likability; Brodsky et al. (2009) proposed that eye witnesses' likability could influence juror's perceived credibility towards the eyewitnesses' testimony; Reysen (2005) suggested that likability is instead a conscious factor that influences human beings on the behavioral level; Fleck et al. (2012) proposed that consumers' likability towards a brand's advertisement is positively related to consumers' purchase intention and attitude towards the brand.

As for influencer marketing, an online influencer's likability is often reflected by

the number of followers or followers' perceived friendliness towards the influencer, as in whether the influencer is attainable or not for a regular follower. Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) reveal the general assumption that social-media influencers are perceived to be more credible and authentic than are regular celebrities. Since online influencers are ordinary people before they started their journey as opinion leaders online, the assumption seems reasonable as traditional celebrities (actors or fashion leaders) tend to reveal the image of distancing, but influencers are "closer" to followers. DeVirman et al. (2017) found that the number of followers is positively affected by the influencer's likability through followers' perceived popularity. Further, the study suggests that a proportionally very high or very low number of followers will weaken the influence. Guadagno et al. (2013) state that personal characteristics such as likability will affect how targeted followers are influenced by the influencer who possesses that characteristic. Further, Roskos-Ewoldsen et al. (2002) found a relationship between information source likability and the persuasiveness of information. The study proposes that if an individual likes the source of information, there is a high possibility that he or she will perceive the information as persuasive and reliable.

2.2.3 Trustworthiness

Trust has been studied repeatedly in many different subjects such as marketing, communication, and sociology (Cowles, 1997; Fisher et al., 2010). Moorman et al. (1993) further defined trust as "a willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence" (Xiao et al., 2018) on a marketing research level. Further, trustworthiness refers to how honest, reliable the source is perceived to be (Ohanian, 1990). The degree to which audiences perceive the source to be dependable is also

associated with trust (Jin et al., 2018). In addition, Cacioppo & Petty (1984) suggest that trustworthiness serves as a positive enhancing factor in influencing behaviors. Wei et al. (2017) argue that highly trusted and trustworthy individuals are more inclined to be considered leaders since trustworthiness is often recognized as one of the most important characteristics for leaders to construct and maintain a long-term and healthy relationship with followers. Influencers should build their image as someone who can verify and elaborate on the transmitted information to accomplish the goal of being perceived as trustworthy (Labrecque, 2014). Brinol & Petty (2009) found that information received from a source that is similar to a recipient or will reduce the examination and suspicion of the credibility of the information. Therefore, Xiao et al. (2018) state that influencers are more trustworthy than traditional celebrities when promoting the same brand since influencers are perceived as more similar to regular audiences and have a higher likelihood of interacting with followers. Jin (2018) supports these findings by suggesting that consumers respond to Facebook users more frequently than traditional celebrities, especially when the posts show demographic and attitudinal features about the user himself or herself. Past research had studied the relationship between influencer trustworthiness and different variables (Botelho, 2019; Lou et al., 2019; Xiao et al., 2018); this research will collaborate with other two features to figure out their influence on different dimensions of consumer purchase behavior.

2.3 Consumer Engagement

Schultz and Peltier (2013) proposed that consumer engagement may refer to a large set of relations concerning brands and consumers: brand loyalty, relationship marketing, concentric marketing, marketing orientation, customer relationship management, and social networks. To better identify the aspects of the study, consumer

engagement was further defined and constructed into consumer study context by Hollebeek et al. (2014), suggesting that consumer engagement is “a consumer’s positively valenced brand-related cognitive, emotional, and behavioral activity during or related to focal consumer/brand interactions” (Barger & Schultz, 2016; Hollebeek, 2011).

Social media serves as more than an advertising channel; they constitute a powerful relationship-building and consumer engagement tool, as suggested by Tsai & Men (2017). In this research, under the background of influencer marketing, consumer engagement will be seen as followers’ interactions with the influencers on social media websites, such as expressions of agreement, ratings, comments, and shares (Barger & Labrecque, 2013). According to Husnain & Toor (2017), social media has the impact of converting consumer’s emotions towards brands or products to engagement and further encourage communication and interactions with one another. Past research (Harmeling et al., 2017, Pansari & Kumar, 2017, Hughes & Brooks, 2019) has suggested potential factors that may influence consumer engagement, including emotionality, direct firm actions, and product involvement. This research will focus on the potential impact of selected influencer characteristics (likeability, expertise, and trustworthiness) on consumer engagement. As a factor, proposed variables may influence, but consumer engagement might also serve as a mediator that influences other factors.

Barhemmati and Ahmad (2015) found there is an emotional tie between brand and consumer, and brands tend to utilize the allegiance as the core of relationship marketing strategies, which entice consumers into buying products and services from brands that they feel have a connection to them. Chen (2017) supported the finding that the development of online brand-consumer relationships depends on consumer’s positive

consumer engagement (as in a consumer's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement in an organization) on social media. Husnain and Toor (2017) add that highly engaged consumers tend to bring more revenue to brands as they spend more money, and their frequency of purchase is also high compared with regular consumers. The reason for this lies in online consumer engagement activities. Dolan et al. (2016) state that online consumer engagement, such as commenting, rating, retweeting, and chatting, fulfilled consumer needs of online communication experience, including information, entertainment, remuneration, and socialization.

Past research has studied consumer engagement on purchase intention, both online and offline (Bellman et al., 2011; Chen, 2017; Husnain & Toor, 2017; Sashi, 2012). Some indicated there is a relationship between consumer engagement and purchase intention. Chen (2017) found evidence that consumer engagement stimulated purchase intention in general but not on intention to purchase via WeChat, the most influential mobile social networking (SNS) application in China (Bonhomme, 2015). In supporting the finding, Husnain and Toor (2017) stated that consumer engagement is a crucial factor in affecting purchase intention among consumers. Further, as Lin (2007) indicates, the fulfillment likely leads to consumers' satisfaction, trust, and (reciprocal) commitment to brands. Building on the studies as mentioned above, we formulate two hypotheses as follows:

H1: Influencers' characteristics a) expertise, b) likability, and c) trustworthiness have positive impacts on consumer engagement (CE).

H2: Consumer engagement (CE) mediates the relationship between influencer characteristics and purchase intention (PI).

2.4 Consumer Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence

When making decisions, people tend to be influenced by others. Marketing research and psychological studies state that interpersonal influence is an essential determinant of one's behavior (Abrams, 1994; Kropp et al., 2005; Lascau, 1995; Terry & Hogg, 1996). Although under the same influence, the way people cope with it is different (McGuire, 1968). Observing this fact, Bearden et al. (1990) proposed the concept of consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence and its measurement. Bearden et al. (1989) identified two dimensions of interpersonal influence: normative and informational influences. According to Burnkrant and Cousineau (1975), normative influence affects attitudes, norms, and values since the dimension refer to accommodating others. As for informational influence, the aspect stands for "the tendency to accept information from knowledgeable others and be guided in the product, brand, and store search" (Chu & Kim, 2011; Deutsch & Gerard 1955).

Bearden et al. (1989) further proposed that different consumers' reliance on honest opinions of others in purchase vary and further affects purchase and consumption behaviors. Influencers can entice interpersonal influence through two dimensions. First, followers can be influenced by influencer's comments and posts which display their attitudes towards all sorts of things, and thus might have the intention to be "live more like him/her." Influencers share information about products or brands, which they get through various channels to the followers who are shorted with information sources. Previous research has found that these two dimensions of interpersonal influence can positively impact consumer decision-making process as the conspicuousness of the product, service heterogeneity, product evaluations, and brand selections (Bearden et al., 1989; Burnkrant & Cousineau, 1975). Chu and Kim (2011) further recorded consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence was significantly associated with

social media users' engagement in eWOM. Khare (2014) suggested that individuals' susceptibility to interpersonal influence in one situation would define his/her ability to get influenced in a range of different situations (Batra et al., 2001; Bearden et al., 1989). Cheng et al. (2013) found that people who are highly susceptible to interpersonal influence were more likely to exhibit impulse purchase behavior than those who are not as influenced by others. Although past research has studied consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence on various variables, results revealed differently. For example, Sadachar et al. (2016) posited that consumer susceptibility would positively influence consumers' environmentally responsible behavior, but the results showed that normative values negatively influenced general environmentally responsible behavior, and informative values had no influence. Therefore, the need for examining consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence's effect under influencer marketing is pressing.

H3: Consumer susceptibility to a) normative and b) informative influence will enhance the effect of influencers' characteristics of 1) expertise, 2) trustworthiness, and 3) likability on CE.

2.5 Six Dimensions of Cultural Values

Hofstede (1980) proposes the theory of cultural values. He defines *culture* as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another” (Hofstede et al., 2010; Kim & Kim, 2016). Further elaborating the theory, Hofstede & Bond (1988) proposed six dimensions of national culture: individualism versus collectivism (IDV), power distance index (PDI), masculinity versus femininity (MAS), uncertainty avoidance index (UAI), long- versus short-term orientation, and indulgence versus restraint (IVR). Past studies (Hofstede, 2002;

Schwartz, 2006) concluded that national culture serves as an influential factor when studying the reasoning rooted in human behaviors differentially on a country basis.

2.5.1 Individualism versus Collectivism (IDV)

The first proposed dimension, individualism versus collectivism (IDV), has long been considered a defining element of culture (Blodgett et al., 2008). Dholakia et al. (2010) argue that consumer behaviors, one aspect of human behaviors, are also influenced by cultural values and complex and varying psychological processes. Recent research has analyzed consumer behavior in the e-commerce environment (An & Kim, 2008; Kim, 2005; Ganguly et al., 2010; Sinkovics et al., 2007; Sohaib & Kang, 2015; Teo & Liu, 2007; Yoon, 2009). Sohaib and Kang (2014) suggest that there are differences in the representation of functional and hedonic aspects on the B2C websites of Australia (IDV index: 90) and Pakistan (IDV index: 14), indicating consumer shopping behavior through e-commerce channel is indeed influenced by cultural values, precisely the aspect of individualism and collectivism. As for the relationship between cultural values and social media commerce studies, Hepple and Dennison (2018) found through their quantitative research conducted to test the difference between Chinese and British online fashion consumers that national culture significantly influences social commerce engagement. Chinese participants were greatly influenced by their social group when shopping online.

As we take into consideration previous studies, this study conducts an inference concerning the moderating role IDV plays in the proposed conceptual model: according

to Murali, Laroche & Pons (2005) and Doran (2002), consumers from a collectivist culture tend to turn to others for advice when making purchase decisions. Individualists are inclined to rely on their judgment, prioritize their own experiences and expertise when buying products. Yamawaki (2017) found no definite result on whether collectivist millennials follow more luxury brands on social media for purchase decision guidance than individualist millennials.

On the other hand, Esterhuizen (2018) found no moderation effect of cultural values on consumer trust, researching the impact of culture on trust and purchase intention in social commerce shopping behavior.

H4: The effect of consumer engagement (CE) on purchase intention (PI) will be more pronounced among individuals from collectivist cultural background (versus individualist cultural background).

2.5.2 Power Distance (PDI)

Power distance (PDI) refers to "the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally" (Hofstede et al., 1991). Pezzuti et al. (2021) suggested, based on past research (Hofstede et al., 2010; Inkeles, 1960; Lenski, 1966), a consumer who lives in an environment where PDI is relatively higher than other countries tend to be sensitive to their sense of power as well as the power of others. In addition, Pornpitakpan and Francis (2000) stated that people who live in a high level of power distance cultural background rely more on the information provided by high-status position people than people who live in a low power distance cultural background do. The study also suggested that Dawar et al. (1996) found that consumers from high

power distance countries "show a greater tendency to seek product information from personal sources rather than impersonal sources." Through the studies, Pornpitakpan and Francis (2000) showed that cultural values, specifically PDI and IDV, moderate the effect of source expertise and argument strength on persuasion. According to De Mooij (2019), consumers from China (PDI: 80, views as high ranking) tend to value social interactions with brands than consumers from low power distance countries. Furthermore, Tsai and Men (2017) revealed that Chinese consumers demonstrated more robust engagement than their American counterparts (USA PDI: 40, a relatively low ranking comparing with China). Stehr and Grundmann (2011) suggested that experts are viewed as persons with social respect and trust because of their professional skills or experiences, as in expertise. Previous studies about the impact of cultural values on consumer behavior could be generalized to influencer marketing (Chen, 2017; Hughes & Brooks, 2019; Kim & Kim, 2016; Pornpitakpan & Francis, 2000). Based on past research, this study thus proposes the hypothesis concerning influencer expertise, online consumer engagement, and power distance:

H5: The effect of influencer expertise on consumer engagement (CE) will be more pronounced among individuals from a high (versus low) power distance culture.

2.5.3 Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS)

Hofstede (2011) defined masculinity and femininity as "the distribution of values between the genders which is another fundamental issue for any society, to which a range of solutions can be found." Further, the study illustrates that the basic meaning of this aspect of cultural values is related to the division of emotional roles between women and men generalized to society and country levels. Additionally, MAS further elaborates "the dominant gender role patterns in the vast majority of both traditional

and modern societies, such as the patterns of male assertiveness and female nurturance" (Hofstede, 2001; Hollebeek, 2018; Yoo et al., 2011). Masculinity refers to society's preference for achievement, heroism, decisiveness, and material rewards for success, making society more competitive. In contrast, femininity represents a preference for collaboration, humility, caring for the weak, and quality of life, as society is more inclined to consensus. Hollebeek (2018) proposed that the degree to which an individual interacts with brands, as in consumer engagement, depends on the individual's gender trait, defined as masculine or feminine. Hur and Kim (2017) concluded that individuals who exhibit masculine features tend to focus more on activities that bring personal interests than the activities' ethics (Chang & Ding, 1995).

On the other hand, individuals who exhibit feminine features pay more attention to others' needs and are people-oriented. Lieven & Hildebrand (2016) found that country and cultural features are influenced by brand gender characteristics (also masculine or feminine). Since influencers can be considered as brands, recently, the brand gender characteristics could be taken to influencer level research. Machado et al. (2019) thus studied the influence of brand gender characteristics on consumer engagement on Facebook and found that gender features continue to influence consumers' responses to brands significantly. Influencers' likability refers to "the communicators' charisma/persona (DeSarbo & Harshman, 1985) or the degree of friendliness/approachability of the communicator in the eyes of beholders (Giffin, 1967)" (Xiao et al., 2018). Because the traits of a feminine society are caring, helping, and people-oriented, this study thus proposes the following hypothesis:

H6: The effect of influencer likability on consumer engagement (CE) will be more pronounced among individuals from feminine cultures (versus masculine cultures).

2.5.4 *Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI)*

Hofstede (2011) describes uncertainty avoidance as "a society's tolerance for ambiguity, related to the level of stress in a society in the face of an unknown future." In societies that score high in uncertainty avoidance, people try to make life as predictable and controllable as possible. According to Lim et al. (2004), people from a high level of uncertainty avoidance cultures tend to "have a lower tolerance for uncertainty, higher needs for structure, and a stronger faith in institutions than people from a low level of uncertainty avoidance cultures." Park (1993) and Keil et al. (2000) suggested that society's level of uncertainty avoidance influences people's willingness to accept uncertainty. Lim et al. (2004) further found that consumers from high UAI countries accept online shopping more accessible when trustworthy institutes such as governments played a part in the whole buying process. South Korea (UAI: 85) is one of the most uncertainty avoidance countries in the world). After the government implemented several initiatives to promote electronic commerce, Internet shopping activities were drastically increased. In traditional selling-buying relations, the trust serves as the cornerstone of the whole process.

As for online shopping, since the seller and buyer do not meet face to face to finish the whole process, trust seems more crucial than the original approach. Chong et al. (2003) state that trust can be conceptualized as a subject probability. People make decisions based on specific and qualitative evaluations, as well as their emotional preferences. The study referenced Gambetta (1988) in suggesting trust is more of selecting the path that best avoids risk. In the buying-selling relations, consumers seek proof of the seller's credibility by assessing the seller's abilities and motivations to provide the specified goods/services and their capabilities. Since uncertainty avoidance is described as a society's tolerance of the uncertain future and the capability to deal

with risk, the impact of uncertainty avoidance on trust in consumer behavior has been observed through past research. Ndubisi et al. (2012) showed that trust in consumer loyalty is more significant in Turkey, a high uncertainty avoidance culture, than in Malaysia. Hwang & Lee (2012) found that uncertainty avoidance moderates the relationship between subjective norms and online trust's integrity and ability dimensions. Al Kailani & Kumar (2011) suggested that individuals from cultures that show high uncertainty avoidance are less likely to show a willingness to buy over the internet as a way of avoiding risks. Shiu et al. (2015) illustrated a direct effect of uncertainty avoidance on trust and on the level of engagement of a website: people with high uncertainty avoidance do not necessarily express less trust in or have fewer positive attitudes toward a public information website. Based on past research, Hudson et al. (2016) concluded that "risk or uncertainty concern will play a role in consumers' evaluation of their social media interaction with a humanized brand." The study suggests that consumer interaction with brand accounts on SNS is a risk reduction for particular consumers. Online influencers' SNS accounts serve as a platform for both influencers to provide information and express their characteristics and for consumers to gain information on the products they might be interested in and understand the influencer. Through providing and gaining information, it can be predicted that uncertainty will be reduced. Hudson et al. (2016) showed the prediction by conducting cross-cultural studies among three countries, the U.K., U.S., and France. The result shows that people with high uncertainty avoidance, such as the French, will particularly appreciate the high social media interaction with an anthropomorphized brand. From previous research, this study thus hypothesizes:

H7: The effect of influencer trustworthiness on consumer engagement (CE) will be more pronounced among individuals from a high (versus low) uncertainty avoidance culture (UAI).

2.5.5 Long- versus Short-Term Orientation

This dimension is related to the choice of focus for people's efforts: the future or the present and past (Hofstede et al., 1991). Individuals in short-term orientation cultures expect to see quick outcomes, while long-term orientation cultures prefer long-term goals. A high index of long-term orientation cultures suggests that these people are pragmatic and believe that truth depends very much on situation, context, and time. Pookulangara and Koesler (2011), based on Dwyer et al. (2005), suggested that consumers from short term orientation cultures will be more likely to be under the materialist consumption pressures, which under the online influencer marketing can be expressed as "keeping up with trends and influencers on SNS," compared to consumers from long term orientation cultures. The finding of short-term orientation cultures' people as "trend catchers" is in line with Hofstede et al. (2010) in stating that individuals from short term orientation cultures tend to purchase unnecessary products because they do not want to be inferior to people around them. Bouhlel et al. (2011) further replenished that consumers who come from long-term orientation cultures are more inclined to support brands who put some effort into legal and ethical responsibilities. Long/short-term orientation also affects consumer engagement, proposed by previous research. Mazaheri et al. (2011) state that Chinese (long term orientation index: 87, showing very pragmatic) consumers explains a higher association of consumer attitude toward a brand's website with consumer attitude to the brand's service among Chinese than Canadian consumers. Chen (2018) thus presumed that compared to consumers

from short-term orientation cultures, consumers from long-term oriented cultures tend to engage more with brands on social media to cultivate a "nice relationship" with brands. Trust can be seen as a crucial determinant to maintain a consumer-buyer relationship in long-term orientation societies and short-term orientation societies. Ganesan (1994) proposed that trust influences a buying-selling relationship in a long-term perspective. Hallikainen and Laukkanen (2018) concluded that individuals from long-term orientation cultures rely more on trust than those from short-term orientation cultures. Furthermore, according to Harris and Dibben (1999), consumers from long-term orientation cultures tend to engage with the exchange partners for their identifications before they do business with them. Because long-term orientation societies aim for future returns and steady efforts for a long time, it is reasonable to postulate that the extent to which consumers' buying behavior in such an environment may be influenced more than in short-term orientation cultures.

H8: The effect of influencer trustworthiness on consumer engagement (CE) will be more pronounced among individuals from high (versus low) long term orientation cultures.

2.5.6 Indulgence versus Restraint (IVR)

Indulgence stands for a society that allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human desires related to enjoying life and having fun (Hofstede, 2011). This dimension is also known as "happiness research" and a relatively new dimension since it was the last one added to Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Hofstede et al., 2010). People from high indulgence cultures are optimistic, see freedom of speech as necessary, and tend to focus on personal happiness and the importance of leisure. On the contrary, high restraint individuals are pessimistic, tend to show more controlled and rigid

behavior, and freedom of speech is not a primary concern. Indulgence versus restraint is focused more on the emotional differences of different cultures than the other five dimensions and the aspects not covered by the other five dimensions (Hofstede, 2011). Evidence shows that different cultures influence how individuals construe contexts and produce emotional responses to the contextual stimulus (Davis et al., 2008).

Wen et al. (2018) found that positive emotions, mainly pleasure, and pride, lead to intention to create eWOM, and indulgence is one antecedent of creating positive emotions. Ruiz-Equihua et al. (2020) suggested that culture, especially IVR, influences online review valence on hotel booking intentions. Moreover, the results indicate that people in restrained countries are more persuaded by external information when encountering unfamiliar services and seem to take more account of negative information. On the contrary, indulgent countries show higher booking intentions than restrained countries, regardless of the valence of the online review.

Consumers' general willingness to engage in WOM shows cross-cultural differences (Pizam et al., 1997). Individuals within indulgent cultures will feel and remember more positive emotions and use online channels more for WOM than restrained individuals (Anlaş, 2019). The network platform and its interactive function provide a place for like-minded people to communicate and create commercial or social values through the web (Yin et al., 2019). Influencers' SNS serves as a platform for followers to interact with each other and the influencer himself or herself. Since indulgent cultures value freedom of speech more than restrained cultures, individuals from tolerant societies might likely engage with online influencers through SNS channels more than individuals from restrained societies.

H9: The effect of consumer engagement (CE) on purchase intention (PI) will be more pronounced among individuals from indulgent cultural background (IVR) (versus restrained cultural background).

2.6 Congruence between the Brand Image and Influencer's Image

Byrne et al. (1967) establish that similarity is the most potent antecedent to form an interpersonal relationship. As influencers show their personalities on their social media homepages, followers are drawn by similar values, attitudes, beliefs, and aspirations. Over time, an influencer could build his or her image through the posts he or she shared. Since the boom of influencer marketing proved that brands were collaborating with influencers works, more and more brands are showing the inclination to promote products via online influencer campaigns. A successful collaboration campaign can be seen as "the brand's values and the influencer's aligned" (Barker, 2021). Godey et al. (2016) suggest that social media influencers' marketing campaigns tend to result in a positive brand image connecting to consumers' perceived brand image. Considering that influencers are a new brand themselves (Weinswig, 2016), making a perfect match of brand image with influencer image is crucial for composing a successful influencer marketing campaign. Dobni and Zinkhan (1990) refined the definition of brand image as "a subjective concept because consumers' perception towards the brand formed it." Kamins and Gupta (1994) proposed the "product match-up hypothesis," which suggests that a good match-up between the spokespersons' images and product images should lead to a more positive perception of the advertisement, the spokesperson, and the product than a poor match-up would. The finding was further supported by various studies such as Choi and Rifon (2012) and McCormick (2016). According to Shore et al. (2016), congruent opinions between the

message source, influencers, and recipients (their followers) are solid attractors for consumers.

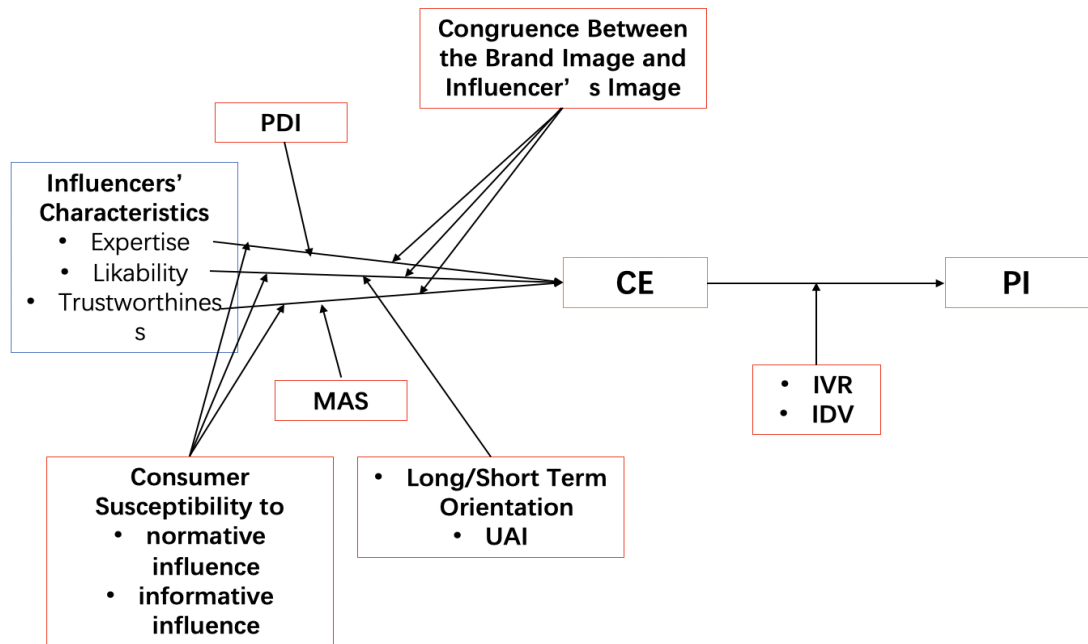
Rice et al. (2012) suggest that when the level of spokesperson involvement in the marketing campaign is high, it will moderate the adverse effects of multiple endorsements on brand evaluation by consumers. The result could be generalized to influencer marketing. Labrecque et al. (2013) found that information shared on social media was more effective on the influence of consumer behavior and purchase intention. The finding supported Godey et al. (2016) on marketing campaigns utilizing social media influencers, resulting in a positive brand image connecting to consumers' perceived brand image. Congruence, or match-ups influence on consumer behavior have been studied. Williams (2011) empirically shows that the congruence between product image and consumers' perceived self-image can induce consumers to purchase products. Choi and Rifon (2012) suggested that when a consumer's ideal self-image matched with the spokesperson's self-image, their purchase intention would likely increase. Phua et al. (2018) found that a high degree of congruency between a celebrity endorser and a product can significantly entice consumer's impulse to engage with the brand through the construction of eWOM. Islam et al. (2018) also found evidence of congruence's influence on consumer engagement through their studies resulting in the congruity of consumer self-brand image and value increasing consumer's engagement of their level of participation in online brand communities. Based on past research of the effect of congruence on consumer behavior, this thesis thus proposes the following hypothesis and takes it to the influencer marketing field:

H10: A high degree of congruence between the influencer and the brand being endorsed enhances the effect of influencers' characteristics, such as: a) expertise, b) likability, and c) trustworthiness on CE.

2.7 Purchase Intention

Spears and Singh (2004) define *purchase intention* as "an individual's conscious plan to make an effort to purchase a brand." Since it is characterized as a "conscious behavior," purchase intention can be influenced by many variables through the whole decision process. Kotler and Armstrong (2010) divided the consumer's decision-making process into five stages: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior. Influencer marketing affects each stage through different actions. Influencers' postings or brand campaigns could trigger consumer's need recognition through influencers. As for the information part, the influencer serves as an "information disperser" in contrast to the consumer's role as an "information seeker." Information distributed by influencers can be personalized or characterized. Thus, it tends to impact consumer's purchase intention differently. After some essential information collection, consumers may evaluate different influencers' words to make the final purchase decision. Then, after the actual product usage, the consumer generates his or her own user experience. By comparing influencers words and own experience, consumers will form a list of "reliable influencers" for future use when one needs to go through these stages again. The main research question is to figure out the relationship between influencers' specific characteristics and consumer's purchase intention, with the mediating role of consumer engagement and other factors as moderators. The overall conceptual framework is presented in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework



3 Research Methodology and Results

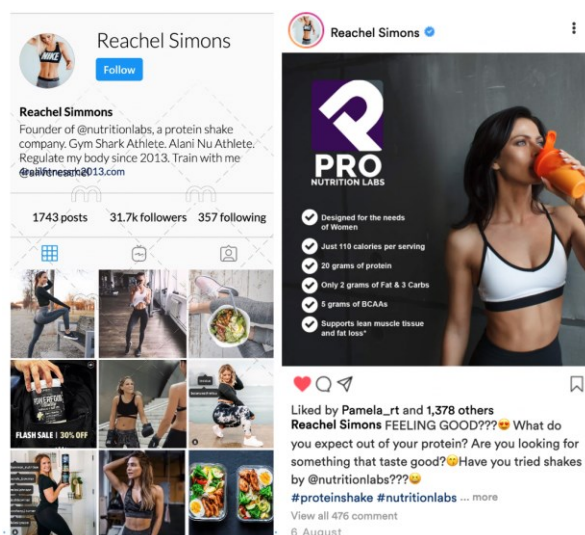
This study looks at how different features of online influencers (expertise, trustworthiness, and likability) could affect consumer engagement; and, further impact consumers' purchase intention, with the additional influence from different cultural dimensions and other variables. To validate the theoretical framework and hypotheses developed, two online questionnaires with different visual stimulus were developed. To better analyze the mediation and moderation effects, this research split the model into two parts. *Study 1* mainly concentrated on the mediation effect of consumer engagement (CE) on the relationship between influencers' characteristics (expertise, trustworthiness, and likability) and purchase intention (PI), and on the moderation effect of consumer susceptibility to normative and informative influences on influencers' characteristics (expertise, trustworthiness and likability). *Study 2* will be focused on the moderating effect of cultural values and congruence between the brand image on different relationships between the variables to be tested.

3.1 Study 1

3.1.1 Study Design

Study 1 aims to validate the impact of online influencers' three characteristics on consumer engagement and the mediating effect of the three proposed characteristics on purchase intention through consumer engagement. An online self-reported questionnaire with visual stimuli was designed on Qualtrics and launched on Amazon's Mechanical Turk platform (MTurk). The participants were asked to select the number of influencers they follow on social media websites as the study's covariate to further analysis. After the number selection, participants were presented with a mock Instagram homepage of an online influencer and the product the influencer promoted as visual stimuli in order to record the participants' self-report responses (Please refer to Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1 Mock Homepage for Study 1



3.1.2 Participants and Sampling

A total of 201 responses were received, 1 response was incomplete. As a result, 200 responses remained for further analysis. The demographic information of *Study 1*

is summarized in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Sample Demographics

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	129	64.5%
	Female	70	35%
	Prefer not to Say	1	0.5%
	Total	200	100%
Age	18 - 24	36	18%
	25-34	111	55.5%
	35-44	32	16%
	Over 45	21	10.5%

Table 3.1 Sample Demographics (Continued)

		Frequency	Percentage
Total		200	100%
Ethnicity	White	109	54.5%
	Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin	36	18%
	Black or African American	7	3.5%
	Asian	44	22%
	Other ethnicity	4	2%
	Total	200	100%
Monthly Income Level	Less than \$500 USD	12	6%
	\$500 USD – 999 USD	37	18.5%
	\$1000 USD – 1499 USD	47	23.5%

\$1500 USD – 1999 USD	40	20%
\$2000 USD - \$2499 USD	28	14%
More than \$2500 USD	36	18%
Total	200	100%

3.1.3 Measurements

For the purpose of testing the effect of influencer’s attributes on purchase intention, this study adopted measurement scales from established previous studies. All of the questions regarding influencers’ characteristics to be assessed applied the 7 point Likert scale, with 1 = “strongly disagree” and 7 = “strongly agree”. Expertise scale used the scale by Ohanian (1990) to measure expertise of online influencers, with 3 items (e.g., “I feel the influencer knows a lot about the product”) adopted from Munnukka et al. (2016). Trustworthiness scale used the scale by Ohanian (1990), with 3 items (e.g., “I feel the influencer is honest) adopted from Munnukka et al. (2016). As for likability, the measurement scale used the scale by Reysen (2005) to measure likability, with 3 items from Xiao et al. (2018) (e.g., “I feel the influencer is friendly”). Consumer engagement (CE) scale was adopted from Muntinga et al. (2011) to measure consumer engagement with influencers’ social media websites, and 3 items were from Tsai & Men (2013) (e.g., “If I see an influencer posted the content that interested me, I will give a like/share with other people/comment the post.”). For purchase intention (PI), the 3 items were from Hung et al., (2011) (e.g., “I have strong possibility to purchase the product promoted by this influencer”). Finally, for consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influences, this study adopted items from Chu & Kim (2011) for both normative (e.g., “When buying products, I generally purchase those products that I think influencers will approve of”), and informative dimension (e.g., “If I have little

experience with a product, I often check influencers' social media homepages for the information of the product"). The overall reliability test result of the items used in *Study 1* are summarized in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Reliability Test Result for Study 1

Constructs	Citation	Used Items	Cronbach's α
Expertise	Munnukka et al. (2016)	3	0.907
Trustworthiness	Munnukka et al. (2016)	3	0.917
Likability	Xiao et al. (2018)	3	0.816
CE	Tsai and Men (2013)	3	0.933
PI	Hung et al. (2011)	3	0.964

Table 3.2 Reliability Test Result for Study 1 (Continued)

Consumer			
Susceptibility to Normative Influence	Chu and Kim (2011)	3	0.915
Consumer			
Susceptibility to Informative Influence	Chu and Kim (2011)	3	0.939

3.1.4 Results and Data Analysis

First, this study performed Pearson regression tests in order to validate the relationships between influencer's characteristics and CE. As predicted, expertise showed positive significant impact on CE ($B = 0.389, p < 0.01$), so were the impacts of trustworthiness ($B = 0.611, p < 0.01$) and likability ($B = 0.565, p < 0.01$) on CE. Hence, H1a, H1b and H1c were all supported. The more expertise, trustworthiness, and

likability showed by an influencer, the more likely that consumer will interact with the influencer. Then, the study further conducted several mediation analyses to test whether consumer engagement (CE) would mediate the relationship between influencer's characteristics (expertise, trustworthiness, and likability) and purchase intention (PI). As recommended by Hayes (2017), this study examined confidence intervals (CI) using 5,000 bootstrap iterations. The results indicate the indirect effect of expertise on PI through CE was significant ($B = 0.48$, 95% CI = [0.29, 0.68]), as well the indirect effect of trustworthiness ($B = 0.70$, 95% CI = [0.53, 0.90]) and likability ($B = 0.85$, 95% CI = [0.66, 1.03]) through CE. Therefore, H2 was supported. To conclude, the higher the frequency of a consumer interaction with an influencer, the higher the possibility that the consumer will buy the products promoted by the influencer. Tables 3.3 and 3.4 showed the detailed analyses results about the variables.

Table 3.3 Relationships between Influencer's Characteristics and CE

Predictors	Expertise		Trustworthiness		Likability	
	B	Sig.	B	Sig.	B	Sig.
CE	0.389**	0.000	0.611**	0.000	0.565**	0.000

NOTE. **Significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed).

Table 3.4 The Mediating Effect of CE on Relationship between Influencer's Characteristics and PI with Bootstrapping

Effect Type	Effect	Boot SE	Bootstrap 95%CI	
			BootLLCI	BootULCI
Expertise → CE →PI	0.48	0.10	0.29	0.68
Trustworthiness → CE →PI	0.70	0.10	0.53	0.90
Likability → CE →PI	0.85	0.09	0.66	1.03

Note. CE = Consumer Engagement, PI = Purchase Intention

Second, this study tested moderated mediation effect of consumer susceptibility to normative and informative influences on the relationship between influencers' characteristics (expertise, trustworthiness, and likability) and CE. This study expected that the moderated mediation will be significant, as in the relationship between influencer's characteristics and CE will be enhanced by consumer susceptibility to normative and informative influences level. In order to validate the predicted enhancement, this study performed 5,000 bootstrap iterations once again. The analyzed results coincided with prediction on some levels. The moderated mediation effect was significant for consumer susceptibility to normative influence on the relationship between influencer's expertise level ($B = 0.11$, 95% CI = [0.03, 0.19]) and CE. Also, the moderated mediation effect of consumer susceptibility to normative influence on the relationship between influencer's trustworthiness level was significant, too ($B = 0.08$, 95% CI = [0.0004, 0.1496]). As for consumer susceptibility to influence's moderated mediation on the relationship between influencer's characteristics and CE, the results indicated significant moderating effect on both expertise ($B = 0.10$, 95% CI = [0.01, 0.19]) and trustworthiness ($B = 0.11$, 95% CI = [0.04, 0.19]). However, there's no significant moderating effect showed for normative dimension ($B = -0.01$, 95% CI

= [-0.11, 0.06]) and informative dimension (B = -0.004, 95% CI = [-0.09, 0.06]) of consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence on the relationship between influencer’s likability and CE. In conclude, people who are highly susceptible to both normative and informative influence were more likely to exhibit consumer engagement behavior with online influencers based on their expertise and trustworthiness than those who are not as influenced by others. Hence, H3a₁, H3a₂, H3b₁, and H3b₂ were all supported. Tables 3.5 and 3.6 showed the detailed results for the significant moderated mediation between variables.

Table 3.5 The Moderated Mediation Effect of Consumer Susceptibility to Normative Influences on Relationship between Influencer’s Characteristics and CE with Bootstrapping

Consumer Susceptibility to Normative Influence				
Effect Type	Effect	Boot SE	Bootstrap 95%CI	
			BootLLCI	BootULCI
Expertise → CE	0.11	0.04	0.03	0.19
Trustworthiness → CE	0.08	0.04	0.0004	0.1496
Likability → CE	-0.01	0.04	-0.11	0.06

Table 3.6 The Moderated Mediation Effect of Consumer Susceptibility to Informative Influences on Relationship between Influencer’s Characteristics and CE with Bootstrapping

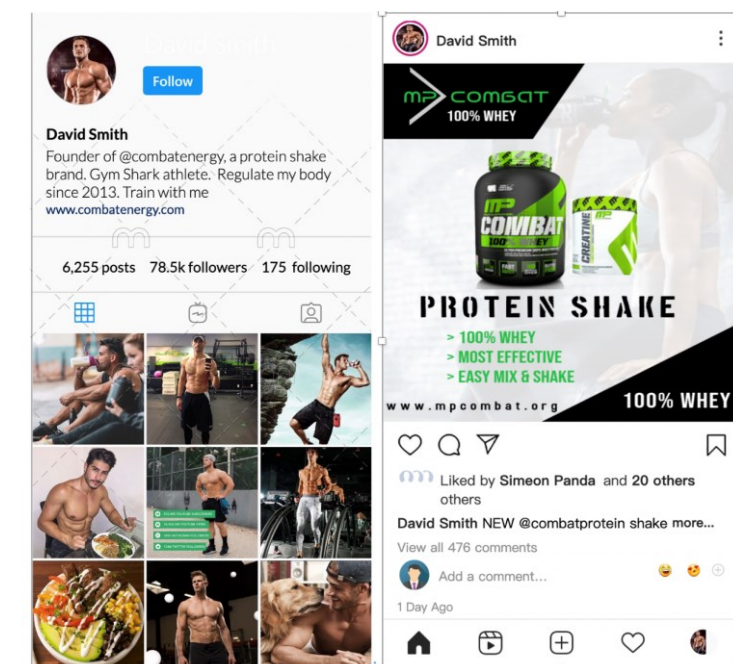
Consumer Susceptibility to Informative Influence				
Effect Type	Effect	Boot SE	Bootstrap 95%CI	
			BootLLCI	BootULCI
Expertise → CE	0.10	0.05	0.01	0.19
Trustworthiness → CE	0.11	0.04	0.04	0.19
Likability → CE	-0.004	0.04	-0.09	0.06

3.2 Study 2

3.2.1 Study Design

Study 2 mainly focused on the moderating effect of cultural values, congruence between the brand image on different relationships between variables to be tested and whether the significant effects seen in *study 1* could be replicated or not. Just as *Study 1*, this study also distributed an online self-reported questionnaire with visual stimuli through Qualtrics and launched on Amazon’s Mechanical Turk platform (MTurk). The participants were asked to select the number of influencers they followed on social media websites as the study’s covariate to further analysis. After the number selection, participants were presented with a mock Instagram homepage of an online influencer and the product the influencer promoted as visual stimuli in order to record the participants’ self-report responses. To avoid response bias, *Study 2* applied a different fake influencer homepage and product as stimuli. Figure 3.2 showed the actual graphic stimuli used in the test.

Figure 3.2 Mock Homepage for Study 2



3.2.2 Participants and Sampling

A total of 200 responses were received, none of the responses were incomplete. As a result, 200 responses remained for further analysis. Table 3.7 showed the demographic information of *Study 2*.

Table 3.7 Sample Demographics

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	149	74.5%
	Female	50	25%
	Prefer not to Say	1	0.5%
	Total	200	100%
Age	18 - 24	17	8.5%
	25-34	100	50%
	35-44	52	26%

	Over 45	31	15.5%
	Total	200	100%
Ethnicity	White	137	68.5%
	Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin	15	7.5%
	Black or African American	14	7%
	Asian	29	14.5%
	Other ethnicity	5	2.5%
	Total	200	100%
Monthly Income Level	Less than \$500 USD	10	5%
	\$500 USD – 999 USD	28	14%
	\$1000 USD – 1499 USD	41	20.5%
	\$1500 USD – 1999 USD	32	16%
	\$2000 USD - \$2499 USD	34	17%
	More than \$2500 USD	55	27.5%
	Total	200	100%

3.2.3 Measurements

Study 2 also adopted measurement scales from former studies to test the variables assessed in study 1. Apart from the variables tested in *Study 1*, *Study 2* tested the moderated mediation of congruence between the brand image and influencer’s image and six dimensions of culture values on relationships between variables. Just as study 1, all of the questions of study 2 regarding variables to be assessed applied the 7 point Likert scale, with 1 = “strongly disagree” and 7 = “strongly agree”. Congruence between the brand image and influencer’s image’s scale and items were adopted from Choi and Rifon (2012) to measure consumer perceived congruence between the

influencer and the brand they promoted (e.g., “please select how compatible you feel is this influencer to the brand”, 1 = Extremely not compatible, 7 = Extremely compatible). As for cultural values, this study adopted the measure scale and items from Yoo et al. (2011) with the 7-point Likert-type scales, anchored by (1) “strongly disagree” and (7) “strongly agree”. As for individual-level indulgence dimension, this study applied the scale and items from Heydari et al. (2021). Table 3.8 showed the overall reliability test result of the items used in *Study 2*.

Table 3.8 Reliability Test Result for Study 2

Constructs	Citation	Used Items	Cronbach's α
Congruence Between the Brand Image and Influencer's Image	Choi and Rifon (2012)	4	0.853
Individualism versus Collectivism (IDV)	Yoo et al. (2011)	6	0.939
Power Distance (PDI)	Yoo et al. (2011)	5	0.935
Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS)	Yoo et al. (2011)	4	0.905
Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI)	Yoo et al. (2011)	5	0.880
Long- versus Short- Term Orientation	Yoo et al. (2011)	5	0.794
Indulgence versus Restraint (IVR)	Ali et al. (2021)	6	0.929

3.2.4 Results and Data Analysis

Since the two purposes of *Study 2* are to test whether the significant effects observed in *Study 1* could be replicated, and the moderated mediation of cultural values and congruence of the brand image and influencer's image on relationships between variables could be significant or not, the analysis of the results from *Study 2* will be presented into two parts.

First, this study performed Pearson regression tests in order to validate the relationships between influencer's characteristics and CE just as *Study 1*. As predicted, expertise indeed again showed positive significant impact on CE ($B = 0.362, p < 0.01$), so as the impact of trustworthiness ($B = 0.682, p < 0.01$), and likability ($B = 0.691, p < 0.01$) on CE. Hence, H1a, H1b and H1c were all supported in *Study 2*. Then, a powerful bootstrapping method was proposed to test whether consumer engagement (CE) would mediate the relationship between influencer's characteristics (expertise, trustworthiness, and likability) and purchase intention (PI) just as the results observed from *Study 1*. The results indicate the indirect effect of expertise on PI through CE was indeed significant ($B = 0.45, 95\% CI = [0.31, 0.61]$), as well the indirect effect of trustworthiness ($B = 0.76, 95\% CI = [0.64, 0.90]$), and likability ($B = 0.95, 95\% CI = [0.81, 1.12]$) through CE. Therefore, H2 was supported again in study 2. In conclude, the significant effects of influencer's characteristics on CE and the mediating effect of CE observed in *Study 1* were replicated in *Study 2* as well. Tables 3.9 and 3.10 showed the detailed analyses results about the variables.

Table 3.9 Relationships between Influencer’s Characteristics and CE

Predictors	Expertise		Trustworthiness		Likability	
	B	Sig.	B	Sig.	B	Sig.
CE	0.362**	0.000	0.682**	0.000	0.691**	0.000

NOTE. **Significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed).

Table 3.10 The Mediating Effect of CE on Relationship between Influencer’s Characteristics and PI with Bootstrapping

Effect Type	Effect	Boot SE	Bootstrap 95%CI	
			BootLLCI	BootULCI
Expertise → CE →PI	0.45	0.08	0.31	0.61
Trustworthiness → CE →PI	0.76	0.07	0.64	0.90
Likability → CE →PI	0.95	0.08	0.81	1.12

Note. CE = Consumer Engagement, PI = Purchase Intention

As for the moderated mediation effect of consumer susceptibility to normative and informative influences on the relationship between influencers’ characteristics (expertise, trustworthiness, and likability) and CE, *Study 2* results replicated that of *Study 1* and observed new significant moderated mediation effect about the two dimensions of consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence on the relationship between influencer’s likability and CE. The moderating effect of consumer susceptibility to normative influence on the relationships between the three proposed influencer’s characteristics and CE was found significant based on 5,000 bootstrap iterations. The results showed that the moderated mediation effect on expertise (B = 0.06, 95% CI = [0.01, 0.11]), trustworthiness (B = 0.09, 95% CI = [0.04, 0.13]), and likability (B = 0.06, 95% CI = [0.01, 0.11]) were all significant. Further, for the

moderating effect of consumer susceptibility to informative influence on the relationships between the three proposed influencer’s characteristics and CE, the 5,000 bootstrap iterations also showed significant moderated mediation outcomes. The relationships between expertise (B =0.12, 95% CI = [0.05, 0.16]), trustworthiness (B = 0.12, 95% CI = [0.07, 0.17]), and likability (B = 0.12, 95% CI = [0.06, 0.16]) and CE were all significantly moderated by consumer susceptibility to informative influence. In conclude, people who are highly susceptible to both normative and informative influence were more likely to exhibit consumer engagement behavior with online influencers based on their expertise, trustworthiness, and likability than those who are not as influenced by others. Hence, H3a₁, H3a₂, H3a₃, H3b₁, H3b₂, and H3b₃ were all supported. The results of study 2 reproduced the results of study 1 on most of the significant relationships. Tables 3.11 and 3.12 showed the detailed results for the significant moderated mediation between variables.

Table 3.11 The Moderated Mediation Effect of Consumer Susceptibility to Normative Influences on Relationship between Influencer’s Characteristics and CE with Bootstrapping

Consumer Susceptibility to Normative Influence				
Effect Type	Effect	Boot SE	Bootstrap 95%CI	
			BootLLCI	BootULCI
Expertise → CE	0.06	0.03	0.01	0.11
Trustworthiness → CE	0.09	0.02	0.04	0.13
Likability → CE	0.06	0.03	0.01	0.11

Table 3.12 The Moderated Mediation Effect of Consumer Susceptibility to Informative Influences on Relationship between Influencer’s Characteristics and CE with Bootstrapping

Consumer Susceptibility to Informative Influence				
Effect Type	Effect	Boot SE	Bootstrap 95%CI	
			BootLLCI	BootULCI
Expertise → CE	0.12	0.03	0.05	0.16
Trustworthiness → CE	0.12	0.03	0.07	0.17
Likability → CE	0.12	0.03	0.06	0.16

Study 2 also assessed the moderated mediation effect of congruence between the brand image and influencer’s image on the relationships between influencer’s characteristics and CE. The result showed that the moderated mediation only was significant on the relationship between expertise and CE ($B = -0.21$, 95% CI = [-0.36, -0.08]). On the other hand, the effect of trustworthiness ($B = -0.08$, 95% CI = [-0.25, 0.07]) and likability ($B = -0.11$, 95% CI = [-0.39, 0.10]) on CE were not significant. These results indicate that a high degree of congruence between the brand image and influencer’s image will instead diminish the effect of influencer’s expertise on CE. Thus, H10a, H10b and H10c were not supported. Table 3.13 showed the detailed results.

Table 3.13 The Moderated Mediation Effect of Congruence between the Brand Image and Influencer’s Image on Relationship between Influencer’s Characteristics and CE with Bootstrapping

Consumer Susceptibility to Informative Influence				
Effect Type	Effect	Boot SE	Bootstrap 95%CI	
			BootLLCI	BootULCI
Expertise → CE	-0.21	0.07	-0.36	-0.08
Trustworthiness → CE	-0.08	0.08	-0.25	0.07
Likability → CE	-0.11	0.13	-0.39	0.10

Second, *study 2* tested the moderating effect of cultural values on different relationships between variables. The first effect to be tested was the moderated mediation of PDI on relationship between expertise and CE. 5,000 resample bootstrap analyses were applied to exam the moderating effect of cultural values on proposed variables. The results showed that there’s no significant moderating effect of PDI on the effect between expertise and CE ($B = -0.02$, 95% CI = $[-0.11, 0.06]$). As for Long/short term Orientation’s effect on likability to CE, the result also appeared there’s no significant effect observed ($B = 0.19$, 95% CI = $[-0.06, 0.34]$). UAI’s moderating effect on relationship between likability and CE was not significant ($B = -0.06$, 95% CI = $[-0.19, 0.10]$), too. Same as the results showed above, MAS’s moderating effect on relationship between trustworthiness and CE was not significant ($B = 0.03$, 95% CI = $[-0.03, 0.10]$). Further, there’s no significant moderating effect of IVR on the effect between CE and PI ($B = 0.0025$, 95% CI = $[-0.0231, 0.0229]$). Finally, the results showed that there’s no significant moderating effect of IDV on the effect between CE

and PI (B = -0.01, 95% CI = [-0.03, 0.01]). In conclude, H4, H5, H6, H7, H8 and H9 were not supported. Table 3.14 showed the detailed total results.

Table 3.14 The Moderated Mediation Effect of Culture Values on Different Relationships between Variables with Bootstrapping

Consumer Susceptibility to Informative Influence					
Culture Value	Effect Type	Effect	Boot SE	Bootstrap 95%CI	
				BootLLCI	BootULCI
PDI	Expertise →	-0.02	0.04	-0.11	0.06
	CE				
Long/short term Orientation	Likability →	0.19	0.07	-0.06	0.34
	CE				
UAI	Likability →	0.03	0.07	-0.19	0.10
	CE				
MAS	Trustworthin ess → CE	0.03	0.03	-0.03	0.10
IVR	CE →PI	0.0025	0.0117	-0.0231	0.0229
IDV	CE →PI	-0.01	0.01	-0.03	0.01

Table 3.15 Summary of supported and rejected hypotheses

Hypotheses	Descriptive	Result
H1	Influencers' characteristics a) expertise, b) likability, and c) trustworthiness have positive impacts on consumer engagement (CE).	Supported
H2	Consumer engagement (CE) mediates the relationship between influencer characteristics and purchase intention (PI).	Supported
H3	Consumer susceptibility to a) normative and b) informative influence will enhance the effect of influencers' characteristics of 1) expertise, 2) trustworthiness, and 3) likability on CE.	Supported
H4	The effect of consumer engagement (CE) on purchase intention (PI) will be more pronounced among individuals from collectivist cultural background (versus individualist cultural background).	Rejected
H5	The effect of influencer expertise on consumer engagement (CE) will be more pronounced among individuals from a high (versus low) power distance culture.	Rejected

Table 3.15 Summary of supported and rejected hypotheses (Continued)

<p>H6</p>	<p>The effect of influencer likability on consumer engagement (CE) will be more pronounced among individuals from feminine cultures (versus masculine cultures).</p>	<p>Rejected</p>
<p>H7</p>	<p>The effect of influencer trustworthiness on consumer engagement (CE) will be more pronounced among individuals from a high (versus low) uncertainty avoidance culture (UAI).</p>	<p>Rejected</p>
<p>H8</p>	<p>The effect of influencer trustworthiness on consumer engagement (CE) will be more pronounced among individuals from high (versus low) long term orientation cultures.</p>	<p>Rejected</p>
<p>H9</p>	<p>The effect of consumer engagement (CE) on purchase intention (PI) will be more pronounced among individuals from indulgent cultural background (IVR) (versus restrained cultural background).</p>	<p>Rejected</p>
<p>H10</p>	<p>A high degree of congruence between the influencer and the brand being endorsed enhances the effect of influencers' characteristics, such as: a) expertise, b) likability, and c) trustworthiness on CE.</p>	<p>Rejected</p>

4 Discussion

Influencer study is a relatively new research area that emerged with the prosperity of influencer marketing in the past decade. Previous research focused on online influencers had studied the logic behind why people follow influencers on social media websites (Katz, 1957; Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1970; Weimann, 1994) and how some traits of influencers affect consumer behaviors (Chu & Kamal 2008; Reichelt et al., 2014; Xiao et al., 2018; Zhang & Watts, 2008). This study took a step further based on the past research in proposing online consumer engagement as a mediating role between influencer's characteristics and consumer purchase intention. The results collected from the designed two studies showed that influencer's expertise, trustworthiness, and likability positively impact consumer engagement (H1a, H1b, and H1c). Further, consumer engagement's intermediate role between influencer's expertise, trustworthiness and likability, and purchase intention was confirmed. The results suggested a significant indirect effect of the proposed characteristics on purchase intention through consumer engagement (H3). In line with previous research which suggested source credibility could affect consumer purchase intention positively (Botelho, 2019; Guadagno et al., 2013; Lou et al., 2019; Xiao et al., 2018), we further clarified the relationship between influencer expertise, trustworthiness, and likability's relationship between purchase intention. We elaborated the connection by adding consumer engagement as an intermediary factor to validate further preceding studies, which indicating consumer engagement positively affects purchase intention (Bellman et al., 2011; Chen, 2017; Husnain & Toor, 2017; Sashi, 2012).

In addition, being a moderator in the conceptual framework, consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence was found to enhance the influencer's expertise and trustworthiness on online consumer engagement and further trigger the increase of purchase intention. In other words, based on the results of both studies, this research observed that people who are highly susceptible to both normative and informative influence were more likely to exhibit consumer engagement behavior with online influencers based on their expertise and trustworthiness than those who are not as influenced by others (H3a1, H3a2, H3b1, and H3b2). Additionally, in *Study 2*, the results suggested that besides the connection of influencer's expertise and trustworthiness and consumer engagement, likability was also reinforced by the moderating effect of consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence, both normative and informative (H3b2, and H3b3). Our finding coincided with previous research suggesting that people who are highly susceptible to interpersonal influence are more likely to exhibit impulse purchase behavior than those who are not influenced by others (Cheng et al., 2013). Thus, both dimensions of consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence positively impact the consumer decision-making process and are significantly associated with SNS users' engagement in eWOM (Bearden et al., 1989; Burnkrant and Cousineau, 1975; Chu & Kim 2011).

This study also examined the moderating role of congruence between the brand image and influencer's image on the relationships between influencer's characteristics and consumer engagement in the second study. Since the result indicated the only negative influence of the moderated mediation effect was significant on the relationship

between expertise and consumer engagement, this research concluded that a high degree of congruence between the brand image and influencer's image would diminish the influencer's effect's expertise on consumer engagement. Hence, H10a, H10b, and H10c were not supported. However, this result was not in line with previous studies that observed that a high degree of congruency between a celebrity endorser and a product could significantly entice consumers' impulse to engage with the brand (Choi & Rifon, 2012; Phua et al., 2018).

Previous research suggests that the congruity of consumer self-brand image and value could increase consumer's engagement of their level of participation in online brand communities (Islam et al., 2018). One possible reason for the diminishing effect and non-significant effects observed could be that the two visual stimuli used in both studies were mocked fitness-related brands, products, and influencers. As a result, participants may encounter difficulties relating the brands to the endorsers.

From *Study 2*, we found that all the moderating effects of cultural values on proposed relationships were non-significant (H4, H5, H6, H7, H8, and H9 were not supported). Thus, we concluded that the impact of influencer's expertise, trustworthiness, and likability on purchase intention mediated by consumer engagement showed no difference in individuals from various cultural backgrounds. In other words, the influence was not affected by cultural values. It is an impact validated on a universal level. The findings were in line with Esterhuizen (2018) in suggesting that there is no moderation effect of cultural values on consumer trust in researching the impact of culture on trust and purchase intention in social commerce shopping

behavior. In addition, Lam et al. (2009) also found that uncertainty avoidance and masculinity versus femininity had no impact on consumer engagement of eWOM. The reasoning behind the non-significant moderating effect of cultural values could be that many kinds of contemporary cultures were composed of different fragments of original cultural values, and these primate cultural dimensions may not separate them.

Moreover, another reason could be that the two conducted studies did not control participants' past behavior and personality, resulting in changes depending on the consumption environment and the type of product provided in the visual stimuli. Since the studies were both conducted in one language and past research showed that language differences played an important part in moderating the effect of the participating level of online consumer engagement under different cultural backgrounds (Pezzuti, 2021), the same reasoning could explain the non-significant moderating effect.

5 Managerial Implications

This research has provided some practical implications for marketers and brand managers. First, this study confirmed the positive impact of specific online influencer's characteristics on consumer purchase intention, with the intermediate role of online consumer engagement. Hence, for future online influencers who intend to operate better their social media contents and brands that require forthcoming collaborations with influencers to enhance the effects of online marketing campaigns, the findings provided excellent advice for influencers to display their characteristics to attract followers and

for brands to locate influencers to collaborate with to achieve optimal marketing campaign effects. The study also provided new thinking for B2C operating procedures in suggesting influencers could now serve as a third party between brands and consumers and should be considered a vital transitional role between the two and paid more attention.

Second, by inspecting the moderating role of consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence on the relationship between influencer's characteristics and consumer engagement, the findings illustrated that followers' who were highly influenced by others would engage more with the influencer when the influencer's expertise, trustworthiness, and likability levels were demonstrated clearly through the posted contents. For influencers who needed more followers and active engagement, this study offered a way for them to present themselves better to attract potential followers.

Lastly, although cultural backgrounds vary the effect of online influencer marketing campaigns, we found that the positive effect of influencer's expertise, trustworthiness, and likability on purchase intention was global-wised. Thus, for influencers who were worried about getting non-ideal reciprocation from followers from different cultural backgrounds, there is no need to create different versions of content just to suit different cultures better.

6 Limitations and Future Research

Despite the progress made, this study inevitably has some limitations. First, this study only used mock homepages of Instagram; future studies could focus on influencers from different social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, and TikTok. Especially TikTok, the most recent and popular social media app currently, attracts approximately 60% of users from Gen Z (Mueller, 2021) and has an expanding market for influencer campaigns. In addition, future study could also investigate whether the level of influencer expertise, likability and trustworthiness are dependent on contexts: product domain and online platforms, as well as on follower characteristics.

Second, we only inspected the participants' feedback based on the influencer's visual stimuli; other cueing procedures such as video cues. According to Smith (2021), 62% of marketers find Facebook to be the most important social media channel for their business, and 59.3% of marketers find that video advertisements drive more clicks than image advertisements, which only 29.6% of marketers find marketers reported effective.

Third, the study only adopted one type of influencer and product: the fitness type. Future research could inspect more types of products and influencers for better external validity, such as beauty or lifestyle types. The demographics information collected from both studies showed that the number of male participants was more than female participants. Since beauty influencers than male consumers may attract female

consumers, it would be worthy of discovering the influence of beauty type influencers on consumer behaviors from different genders.

Lastly, future studies could incorporate more characteristics of influencers to study their effect on consumer behaviors. For example, in addition to expertise, trustworthiness, and likability, Xiao et al. (2018) inspected heuristic-systematic factors' influence on brand attitude, including homophily, interactivity, and more. As influencer marketing and social media marketing continue booming, the need for more possibilities of different traits of influencers' impact on consumer behaviors awaits to be discovered.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

I am completing my M.Sc in Marketing at the John Molson School of Business and would appreciate if you would take ten (10) minutes of your time to complete this survey. The goal is to understand which factors associated to social media influencers affect the purchase intention of their promoted products. All answers are anonymous and used for statistical analysis purposes only.

The analysis of the aggregate results will be anonymous. They will also help me complete my thesis requirements.

Thanks for the collaboration!

1. How many online influencers do you follow on social media?

0

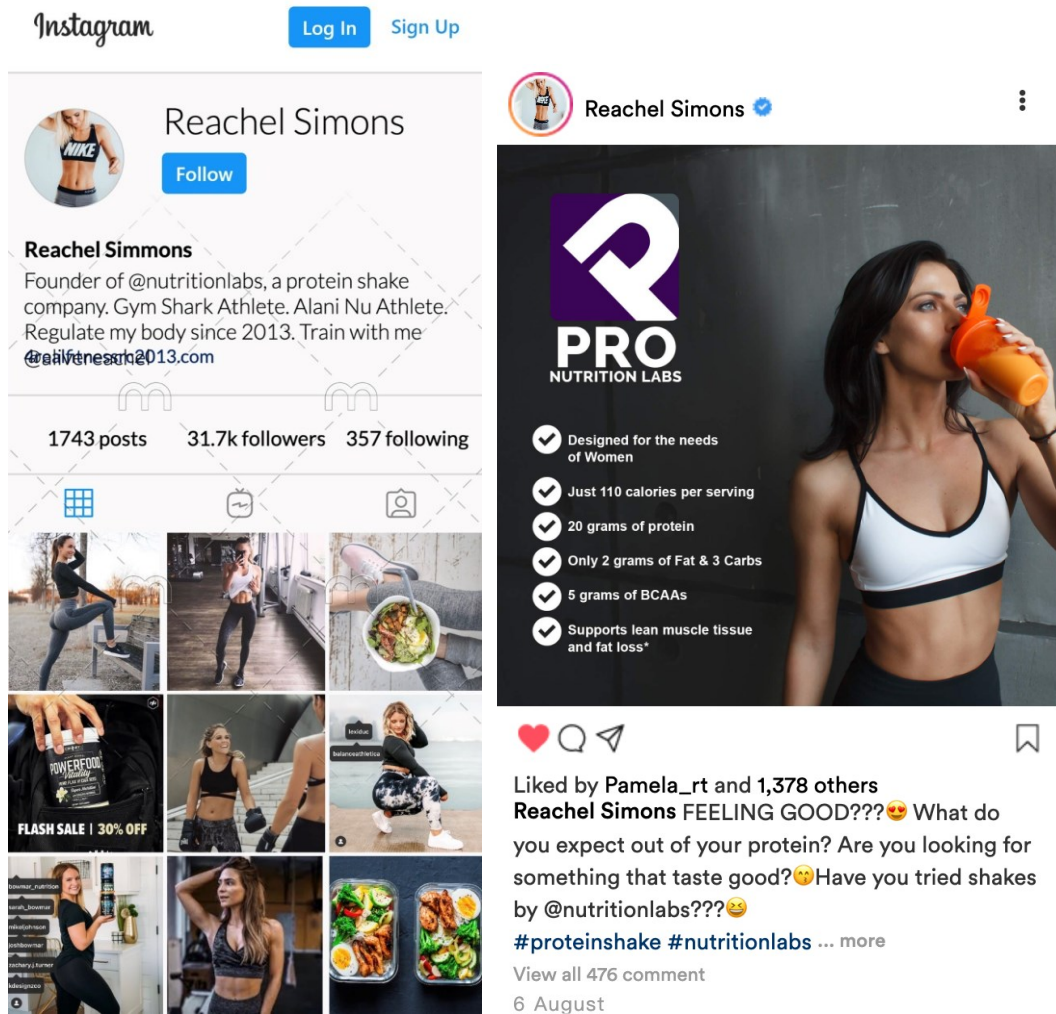
1 - 9

10 - 49

50 - 100

over 100

2. Here is an Instagram influencer's homepage and her promoted product:



On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: I personally think that the influencer knows a lot about the product. (expertise, scale: Ohanian (1990), items: Munnukka et al., (2016)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

3. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: I personally think that the influencer is competent to make assertions about the product. (expertise, scale: Ohanian (1990), items: Munnukka et al., (2016)

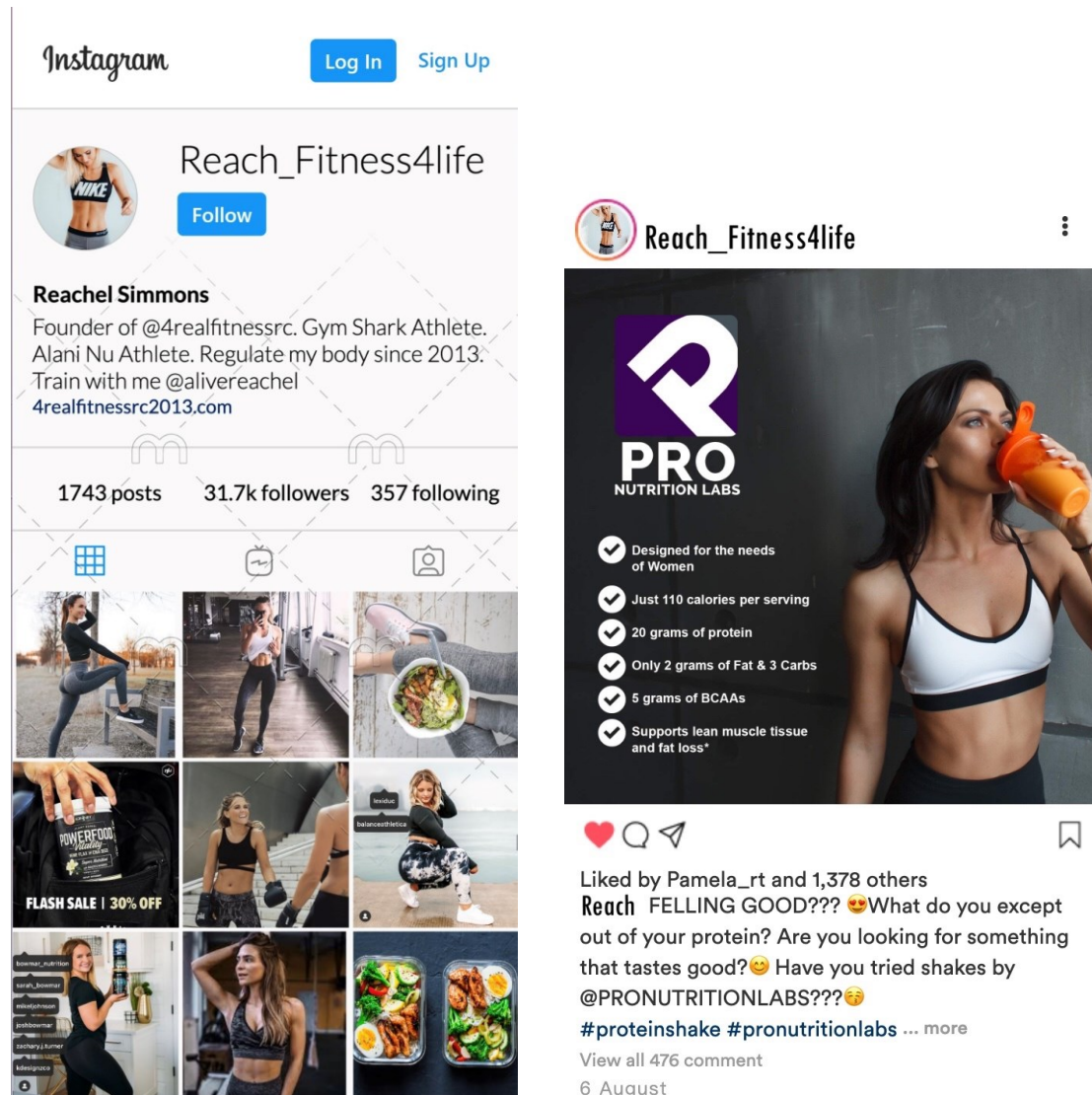
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

4. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: I consider the influencer an expert on the

product. (expertise, scale: Ohanian (1990), items: Munnukka et al., (2016)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

5. Here is an Instagram influencer’s homepage and her promoted product:



On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: I feel the influencer is honest. (trustworthiness, scale: Ohanian (1990), items: Munnukka et al., (2016)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

6. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: I consider the influencer trustworthy. (trustworthiness, scale: Ohanian (1990), items: Munnukka et al., (2016)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

7. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: I feel the influencer is truthful. (trustworthiness, scale: Ohanian (1990), items: Munnukka et al., (2016)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8. Here is an Instagram influencer’s homepage and her promoted product:

The image shows two parts of an Instagram profile. On the left is the profile page for 'Reach_Fitness4life', which includes a profile picture of a woman in a Nike sports bra, a 'Follow' button, and a bio for Rachel Simmons, founder of @4realfitnessrc. Below the bio are statistics: 1743 posts, 31.7k followers, and 357 following. On the right is a post for 'PRO NUTRITION LABS' featuring a woman drinking from an orange shaker. The post includes a list of product benefits: 'Designed for the needs of Women', 'Just 110 calories per serving', '20 grams of protein', 'Only 2 grams of Fat & 3 Carbs', '5 grams of BCAAs', and 'Supports lean muscle tissue and fat loss*'. The post has received 1,378 likes and a comment from Pamela_rt.

On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: I feel the influencer is friendly. (likability, scale: Reysen (2005), items: Xiao et al., (2018)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

9. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: I feel the influencer is likable. (likability, scale: Reysen (2005), items: Xiao et al., (2018)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

10. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: I feel the influencer is approachable. (likability, scale: Reysen (2005), items: Xiao et al., (2018)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

11. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: When buying products, I generally purchase those products that I think influencers will approve of. (CSII normative, scale: Bearden et al., (1989), items: Chu & Kim, (2011)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

12. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: I rarely purchase the latest trending products until I am sure my favorite online influencer approve of them. (CSII normative, scale: Bearden et al., (1989), items: Chu & Kim, (2011)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

13. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: I achieve a sense of belonging by purchasing the same products and brands that influencers purchase. (CSII normative, scale: Bearden et al., (1989), items: Chu & Kim, (2011)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

13. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: If I have little experience with a product, I often check influencers’ SNS platforms for the information of the product. (CSII informative, scale: Bearden et al., (1989), items: Chu & Kim, (2011)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

14. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: I often consult online influencers to help choose the best alternative available. (CSII informative, scale: Bearden et al., (1989), items: Chu & Kim, (2011)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

15. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: I frequently gather information from online influencers about a product before I buy. (CSII informative, scale: Bearden et al., (1989), items: Chu & Kim, (2011)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

16. Here is an Instagram influencer’s homepage and her promoted product:

The image shows two parts of an Instagram profile. On the left is the profile page for 'Reach_Fitness4life', which includes the name 'Reachel Simmons', her bio as the founder of @4realfitnessrc, and statistics such as 1743 posts, 31.7k followers, and 357 following. On the right is a post for 'PRO NUTRITION LABS' featuring a woman drinking a protein shake. The post includes a list of product benefits: 'Designed for the needs of Women', 'Just 110 calories per serving', '20 grams of protein', 'Only 2 grams of Fat & 3 Carbs', '5 grams of BCAAs', and 'Supports lean muscle tissue and fat loss*'. The post also shows engagement metrics like 'Liked by Pamela_rt and 1,378 others' and the text 'Reach FELLING GOOD???'.

On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “completely relevant” and 7 being “completely irrelevant”, How relevant is this influencer to the brand? (Congruence Between the Brand Image and Influencer’s Image scale: Silvera & Austad, (2004), items: Kim & Kim, (2020)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

17. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “perfect match” and 7 being “worst match”, How good is the match between the Influencer and this brand? (Congruence Between the Brand Image and Influencer’s Image scale: Silvera & Austad, (2004), items: Kim & Kim, (2020)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

18. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “extremely likable” and 7 being “extremely not likable”, How do you feel about the product that was posted by the influencer? (Congruence Between the Brand Image and Influencer’s Image scale: Silvera & Austad, (2004), items: Kim & Kim, (2020)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

19. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: If I see an influencer posted the content that interested me, I will give a like to the post. (consumer engagement, scale: Muntinga et al., (2011) items: Tsai & Men, (2013)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

20. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: If I see an influencer posted the content that interested me, I will share the post with other people. (consumer engagement, scale: Muntinga et al., (2011) items: Tsai & Men, (2013)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

21. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: If I see an influencer posted the content that interested me, I will leave a comment under the post. (consumer engagement, scale: Muntinga et al., (2011) items: Tsai & Men, (2013)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

22. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: I would buy this product/brand rather than any other brands available if my favorite influencer promoted it. (purchase intention, scale: Shukla et al., (2010) items: Jalilvand & Samiei, (2012)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

23. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: I am willing to recommend others to buy this product/brand if my favorite influencer promoted it. (purchase intention, scale: Shukla et al., (2010) items: Jalilvand & Samiei, (2012)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

24. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: I intend to purchase this product/brand in the future if my favorite influencer promoted it. (purchase intention, scale: Shukla et al., (2010) items: Jalilvand & Samiei, (2012)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

25. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: One should enjoy complete sexual freedom without restriction. (Indulgence vs restraint, scale: Ali Heydari, Michel Laroche, Michèle Paulin, & Marie-Odile Richard, items: Ali Heydari, Michel Laroche, Michèle Paulin, & Marie-Odile Richard)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

26. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: Feelings and desires related to casual sex should be gratified freely. (Indulgence vs restraint, scale: Ali Heydari, Michel Laroche, Michèle Paulin, & Marie-Odile Richard, items: Ali Heydari, Michel Laroche, Michèle Paulin, & Marie-Odile Richard)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

27. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: There should not be any limits on individuals’ enjoyment. (Indulgence vs restraint, scale: Ali Heydari, Michel Laroche, Michèle Paulin, & Marie-Odile Richard, items: Ali Heydari, Michel Laroche, Michèle Paulin, & Marie-Odile Richard)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

28. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: Societies should value relatively free gratification of desires and feelings. (Indulgence vs restraint, scale: Ali Heydari, Michel Laroche, Michèle Paulin, & Marie-Odile Richard, items: Ali Heydari, Michel Laroche, Michèle Paulin, & Marie-Odile Richard)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

29. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: Desires, especially with respect to sensual pleasure should not be suppressed. (Indulgence vs restraint, scale: Ali Heydari, Michel Laroche, Michèle Paulin, & Marie-Odile Richard, items: Ali Heydari, Michel Laroche, Michèle Paulin, & Marie-Odile Richard)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

30. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: Gratification of desires should not be delayed. (Indulgence vs restraint, scale: Ali Heydari, Michel Laroche, Michèle Paulin, & Marie-Odile Richard, items: Ali Heydari, Michel Laroche, Michèle Paulin, & Marie-Odile Richard)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

31. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: People in higher positions should make most decisions without consulting people in lower positions. (Power distance, scale: Yoo et al., (2011) items: Yoo et al., (2011)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

32. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: People in higher positions should not ask the opinions of people in lower positions too frequently. (Power distance, scale: Yoo et al., (2011) items: Yoo et al., (2011)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

33. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: People in higher positions should avoid social interactions with people in lower positions. (Power distance, scale: Yoo et al., (2011) items: Yoo et al., (2011)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

34. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: People in lower positions should not disagree with decisions made by people in higher positions. (Power distance, scale: Yoo et al., (2011) items: Yoo et al., (2011)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

35. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: People in higher positions should not delegate important task to people in lower positions. (Power distance, scale: Yoo et al., (2011) items: Yoo et al., (2011)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

36. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: It is important to have instructions spelled out in detail so that I always know what I am expected to do. (Uncertainty avoidance, scale: Yoo et al., (2011) items: Yoo et al., (2011)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

37. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: It is important to closely follow instructions and procedures. (Uncertainty avoidance, scale: Yoo et al., (2011) items: Yoo et al.,

(2011)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

38. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: Rules and regulations are important because they inform me as to what is expected of me. (Uncertainty avoidance, scale: Yoo et al., (2011) items: Yoo et al., (2011)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

39. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: Standardized work procedures are helpful. (Uncertainty avoidance, scale: Yoo et al., (2011) items: Yoo et al., (2011)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

40. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: Instructions for operations are important. (Uncertainty avoidance, scale: Yoo et al., (2011) items: Yoo et al., (2011)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

41. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: Individuals should sacrifice self-interest for the group. (Collectivism/ Individualism, scale: Yoo et al., (2011) items: Yoo et al., (2011)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

42. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: Individuals should stick with the group even through difficulties. (Collectivism/ Individualism, scale: Yoo et al., (2011) items: Yoo et al., (2011)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

43. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”,

please consider the following statement: Group welfare is more important than individual rewards. (Collectivism/ Individualism, scale: Yoo et al., (2011) items: Yoo et al., (2011)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

44. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: Group success is more important than individual’s success. (Collectivism/ Individualism, scale: Yoo et al., (2011) items: Yoo et al., (2011)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

45. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: Individuals should only pursue their goals after considering the welfare of the group. (Collectivism/ Individualism, scale: Yoo et al., (2011) items: Yoo et al., (2011)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

46. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: Group loyalty should be encouraged even if individual goals suffer. (Collectivism/ Individualism, scale: Yoo et al., (2011) items: Yoo et al., (2011)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

47. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, how closely do you associate with the following quality? Careful management of money (Thrift). (Long-term orientation, scale: Yoo et al., (2011) items: Yoo et al., (2011)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

48. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, how closely do you associate with the following quality? Going on resolutely in spite of opposition (Persistence). (Long-term orientation, scale: Yoo et al., (2011) items: Yoo et al., (2011)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

49. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, how closely do you associate with the following quality? Personal steadiness and stability. (Long-term orientation, scale: Yoo et al., (2011) items: Yoo et al., (2011)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

50. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, how closely do you associate with the following quality? Long-term planning. (Long-term orientation, scale: Yoo et al., (2011) items: Yoo et al., (2011)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

51. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, how closely do you associate with the following quality? Giving up today’s fun for success in the future. (Long-term orientation, scale: Yoo et al., (2011) items: Yoo et al., (2011)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

52. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: It is more important for men to have a professional carrier than it is for a woman. (Masculinity/ Femininity, scale: Yoo et al., (2011) items: Yoo et al., (2011)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

53. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: Men usually solve problems with logical analysis, woman usually solve problems with Intuition. (Masculinity/ Femininity, scale: Yoo et al., (2011) items: Yoo et al., (2011)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

54. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: Solving difficult problems usually requires an active, forcible approach, which is typical of men. (Masculinity/ Femininity, scale: Yoo

et al., (2011) items: Yoo et al., (2011)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

55. On a scale of 1-7, for 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, please consider the following statement: There are some jobs that a man can always do better than a woman. (Masculinity/ Femininity, scale: Yoo et al., (2011) items: Yoo et al., (2011)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

56. Please select your gender:

Female

Male

Prefer not to say

57. Please select your age:

< 18

18 – 24

25 – 34

35 – 44

≥ 45

58. Please indicate your ethnic origin below:

59. Please select your monthly individual income level:

< 500\$

500\$ - 999\$

1000\$ - 1499\$

1500\$ – 1999\$

2000\$ – 2499\$

≥ 2500\$