

Social Media Influencers - Current Dynamics and Future

Benhui Ren^{1,2}, Rosita Binti Mohd Tajuddin^{1*}, Shaliza Binti Mohd Shariff¹, Binyao Ning³, Rosmini Omar³, Jing Deng¹

¹College of creative Arts, University Technology MARA, Shah Alam, Malaysia;

²Faculty of Arts and Media, Wanbo Institute of Science & Technology, Hefei, China;

³Azman Hashim International Business School, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

*Corresponding Author

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ABSTRACT

Social media influencers have emerged as a highly salient topic of discussion. Given their crucial role in consumer decision-making, this paper aims to illuminate the concept and key characteristics of social media influencers and unveil future prospects for researchers and practitioners. Although there is a consensus regarding the role of social media influencers, the understanding and categorization of social media influencers in the contemporary business landscape warrant further deliberation. As recent studies have mostly focused on the structure of social media influencers from a broad perspective, we advocate shifting the research paradigm towards synthesizing the dimensions of “engagement style” and “level of expertise” in order to take into account the unique characteristics and thematic focus of influencers. By transcending traditional metrics, this paper seeks to provide more insights and nuances about social media influencers and marketing strategy. Future research should further explore the behavioral patterns of social media influencers in the evolving legal and regulatory environment, evaluate the impact of regulation on their communicative efficacy and behavior, and investigate how the emergence of virtual influencers changes consumers' emulative behavior and responsiveness to digital marketing channels.

Keywords: Social Media Influencers, Categories of Social Media Influencers, Legal Regulation, Virtual Influencers, Marketing Practice

SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER

In the wake of rapid Internet technology development, social media has garnered widespread attention in recent years, deeply integrating into people's daily lives and precipitating profound transformations in lifestyles, as well as instigating significant changes in business and marketing (Lim et al., 2017). Since the early 2000s, social media has gained prominence, attracting numerous individuals and organizations to this emergent platform (Xiang et al., 2022). These individuals have swiftly evolved into "social media influencers" due to their unique professional appeal or industry influence and become pivotal. From the early days of blogging to the dominance of social media giants, the impact of these influencers online is growing rapidly (Pelletier et al., 2020). Functioning as information purveyors and two-way communication bridges between audiences, they present and transmit value through social media, an Internet channel enabling real-time or asynchronous interaction with various audiences.

The conceptual evolution of social media influencers has undergone a significant transition from traditional media theories to a combination of online and social media paradigms. Theoretically, frameworks like the

two-step process theory, social identity theory, and six degrees of separation theory have offered strong support for the concept of social media influencers (Ryan et al., 2014). During the traditional media era, influencers mainly relied on theories from communication and social psychology, emerging as a new type of third-party advocates shaping public attitudes and behaviors via conventional media platforms (Freberg et al., 2011). However, with the rapid expansion of the Internet, especially social media, the role of influencers has undergone a profound change. It can be argued that social media influencers have prevailed decisively in the crucial competition for the attention and preferences of online consumers (Ryan et al., 2014).

Building upon these theoretical foundations, we can observe that in this digital age, they are recognized as digital opinion leaders, they wield substantial social influence over their follower networks due to the extensive audiences they have cultivated on social media, including avatars (Schouten et al., 2021). Influencers contribute to reshaping the consumer experience by collaborating with brands to co-create engaging content, rendering the brand image more authentic and approachable (Lou & Yuan, 2019). In contrast to past epochs when scholars and market researchers predominantly scrutinized basic product drivers such as price and quality, and the role of advertisements, social media influencers have emerged as a pivotal factor in shaping consumer perceptions and steering purchasing decisions (Barari et al., 2021; Chylinski et al., 2020; Jung et al., 2021). Their presence significantly augments brand visibility on social media, providing consumers with a personalized, diverse, and emotionally resonant shopping experience (Rachmad, Y. E., 2024).

In the contemporary landscape, these influencers leverage online platforms not only for information dissemination but also to extend their influence through content production, interaction, and a robust social network presence (Borchers, 2019). Through the sharing of personal narratives, experiences, and opinions in various formats such as text, pictures, and videos, they have cultivated expansive social networks (Chua et al., 2012). Social media influencers function as credible entities, and impact audience purchasing decisions and consumption behaviors (Carter, 2016). This shift extends to various aspects of real life, such as cultural attitudes and brand perceptions (Zhou et al., 2021).

While the impact of social media influencers has been largely positive for brands and marketers, their growing influence also presents new challenges. Nevertheless, how to effectively identify and manage them, ensure the truthfulness and reliability of the information they disseminate, and minimize potential negative impacts are issues that need to be urgently addressed (Enke, N., & Borchers, N., 2021; Dwivedi et al., 2021). Therefore, a comprehensive exploration of the concept, characteristics, categorization, challenges, and future directions of social media influencers is essential for brands and marketers to formulate adaptive strategies.

As such, this perspective aims to contribute to the understanding of social media influencers by offering a comprehensive analysis. By elucidating their evolution, their impact, and the challenges they pose, we can better understand the complex roles these digital influencers play in today's marketing landscape and prepare the field for the future. Additionally, by exploring the opportunities and challenges associated with social media influencers, this analysis provides valuable insights for brands, marketers, and researchers to more effectively address the digital marketing ecosystem.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS

The existing literature posits that social media influencers exhibit diverse characteristics, primarily professionalism, interactivity, attractiveness, and credibility (Dwyer et al., 1987; Gaski & Nevin, 1985) (see Figure 1). This section will discuss these key characteristics and their impact on influencer effectiveness.

Researchers emphasize the significance of perceived expertise and credibility as drivers of communicators' credibility (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Expertise allows influencers to furnish valuable information to their audience, playing a pivotal role in influencing consumer perceptions and trust in influencer content (Lee & Thorson, 2008; Till & Busler, 1998). Closely related to expertise is the critical element of trust. Agostino, Arnaboldi, and Calissano (2019) highlight how information source credibility, derived from psychology (Hudders et al., 2021; McCroskey & Young, 1981), empowers influencers to directly influence the purchasing

decisions of a broad audience. Followers perceive influencers as reliable sources of information, capable of establishing a Psychological Consumer Relationship (PSI) with them (Sakib et al., 2020). Influencers use tools and perceived authenticity to engage large audiences and expand social reach (Kay et al., 2020). They employ charisma to empathize with followers and construct a distinctive and relevant brand image with elements like sex appeal and posing (Janssen et al., 2022) and build intimacy with followers (Abidin & Thompson, 2012). Another crucial characteristic of successful social media influencers is interactivity. As shown by scholars such as Jun and Yi (2020), interactivity is essential for building meaningful connections with followers. Through actively interacting with the audience, responding to comments, and participating in topic discussions, they build meaningful connections and a sense of community (Hudders et al., 2021).

These key characteristics of social media influencers have contributed significantly to their rapid rise and effectiveness in the digital marketing domain. In recent years, the ascent of social media influencers has been meteoric, akin to emerging stars ascending swiftly in the night sky (Lim et al., 2017). Leveraging their unique blend of expertise, credibility, and interactivity, these influencers have demonstrated a range of positive impacts on brand marketing and consumer engagement. From a positive perspective, influencers are acknowledged for playing a crucial role in advancing brand promotion, increasing product sales, fostering social interaction, and providing users with valuable content and information (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Zak & Hasprova, 2020). In this burgeoning domain, research by Taillon et al. (2020) and Mac-Ozigbo (2021) highlights the significant impact of social media influencers in stimulating purchase intention, emphasizing dimensions like credibility, attractiveness, and product fit. Additionally, influencers are acknowledged for fostering trust in advertising and elevating overall brand awareness.

Although the positive impacts of social media influencers are significant, it is crucial to also consider potential drawbacks and ethical concerns that have emerged alongside their growing influence. As this trend continues to expand, researchers and industry professionals have begun to scrutinize the potential negative impacts of social media influencers. Recent research by Rizqi and Riorini (2022), underscores the positive influence of social media influencers on individual self-concept and loyalty development. However, as this trend continues to grow, concerns about potential negative impacts come to the fore. De Veirman et al. (2019) focus on influencer marketing targeting children, providing a thorough analysis of its potential effects on adolescents. Nafi & Ahmed (2019) provide a review of the tourism industry, discussing the ethical considerations and business orientations of influencers, raising profound concerns. De Jans et al. (2022) noted that influencers primarily market unhealthy products that pose potential health risks and have a significant negative impact on children's eating behavior. Furthermore, misleading content, false advertising, and excessive commercialization have been identified as root causes of negative impacts on audiences.



Figure 1. Social Media Influencers Key Characteristics

Adopted from (Dwyer, Schurr, & Oh, 1987; Gaski & Nevin, 1985 ; Zakari et al., 2019 ; Hayek et al., 2022).

CATEGORIES OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS

As the landscape of social media influencers continues to evolve, scholars emphasize the crucial importance of recognizing the underlying distinctions between different types of influencers (Vrontis et al., 2021). Previous classification methods, such as those based on size, domain, and collaboration, have certain effects but also have limitations. 1.) Classification based on size may overly focus on the number of followers while neglecting the professional ability and interaction style of influencers (Gómez, 2019); 2.) Classification based on domain, such as beauty bloggers, fitness experts, travel bloggers, etc. (Ouvrein et al., 2021), may limit the comprehensive understanding of cross-domain influencers; 3.) Classification based on collaboration, which categorizes according to the mode and frequency of cooperation with brands, such as long-term cooperation and temporary cooperation, etc. (Karagür et al., 2022), may fail to accurately reflect the essential characteristics of influencers.

Table 1. Social Media Influencer categorization

Types	Description	Reference
Celebrity Influencer	Public figures with large social media fans influence audience perceptions and behaviors through endorsements and promotions.	(Szakal, 2022)
	The ability to build intimacy and authenticity with followers, influencing consumer attitudes and purchase intentions by name recognition, appeal, expertise, and fit with the product, enhancing brand credibility, equity, and reputation.	(Siska Abianti & Lilik Wahyudi, 2023)
	Often used to convey a positive brand image and shape consumer response, especially when the celebrity's image aligns with the consumer's self-image or brand personality.	(McCormick, 2016)
Experts Influencer	An expert is an individual with specialized knowledge or skills in a particular field who can shape consumer opinions and decisions with specialized knowledge, and whose endorsements are more effective than non-celebrity endorsements in shaping perceptions and reducing risk perceptions.	(Deshbhag & Mohan, 2020)
	They are respected for their proficiency, sought after for their insights, and recognized for their influence, power, and innovative resources.	(Wu et al., 2022)
	Influencers are specialized, focusing on specific segments or product categories such as fashion, food, fitness and health, and gaming.	(Schouten et al., 2021)
Opinion Leader	When a person becomes an expert in a particular field, his or her opinion is important to many people.	(Lin et al., 2018)
	Influencers may be opinion leaders in their area of expertise, not necessarily in other areas.	(Carter, 2016)
	Their influence is linked to self-branding and the cultivation of “micro-celebrity” status, which has become prominent with the rise of social media influencers.	(Khamis et al., 2017)
Brand Ambassador	Individuals hired to represent and promote a brand, who work with a specific brand for a long period and consistently promote a product or service, are considered experts in their field.	(Febrian & Fadly, 2021)

	They personify the brand identity and value, and promote the product or service with personal characteristics such as attractiveness, credibility, and affinity, which directly affect the brand’s reputation and endorsement effect	(Hayek et al., 2022; Zakari et al., 2019)
	Actively engage in building brand loyalty, fostering brand image, enhancing brand reputation and influencing purchase decisions in the celebrity-worshipping niche consumer segment.	(Ade Syilvianita, 2023; Lim et al., 2023; Putri Sabella et al., 2022)

Putting the above perspectives together, we could identify four categorizations of social media influencers (Table 1). Celebrity influencers are public figures with many fans, who influence the audience through endorsements and promotions, can enhance the credibility of the brand, and often convey a positive brand image (McCormick, 2016; Siska Abianti & Lilik Wahyudi, 2023; Szakal, 2022). Experts’ influencers have professional knowledge in specific fields, can influence consumers' decisions, and are respected for their professional abilities (Deshbhag & Mohan, 2020; Khamis et al., 2017; Wu et al., 2022). Opinion leaders focus on specific market segments, and their opinions are important after becoming experts, and their influence is related to self-branding and the status of "micro-celebrity"(Carter, 2016; Khamis et al., 2017; Lin et al., 2018). Brand ambassadors are employed by the brand, promote through long-term cooperation, embody the brand value with personal traits, and participate in the establishment of brand loyalty (Ade Syilvianita, 2023; Hayek et al., 2022; Putri Sabella et al., 2022; Sautner et al., 2023; Zakari et al., 2019).

The descriptions of different types of influencers in Table 1 reflect the differences in their professional knowledge and skills. For example, expert influencers are indicated as individuals with professional knowledge or skills in a specific field (Deshbhag & Mohan, 2020), and their professional capabilities give them an advantage in influencing consumers' opinions and decisions (Schouten et al., 2021); while Celebrity Influencers mainly rely on their popularity and attractiveness, and their professional level is relatively low (Szakal, 2022). Therefore, based on the depth and specialization of expertise, which extends from "generalist" to "expert," summarized as the“expertise level ”dimension.

In Table1, it is mentioned that opinion leaders influence consumers by sharing opinions and experiences(Lin et al., 2018), and brand ambassadors actively interact with the brand and consumers, indicating that they have strong interactivity(Hayek et al., 2022; Zakari et al., 2019); while the posts of celebrity Influencers focus more on displaying their image and lifestyle, and less on deep interaction, which reflects their tendency towards information dissemination(Siska Abianti & Lilik Wahyudi, 2023). Compared with other types of influencers, expert Influencers may focus more on influencing consumers’ decisions with knowledge and information rather than establishing close connections through frequent interactions (Deshbhag & Mohan, 2020). Thus, the division based on the manner and degree of interaction between the influencer and the audience, from "informative" to "interactive," can be summarized as the engagement style dimension.

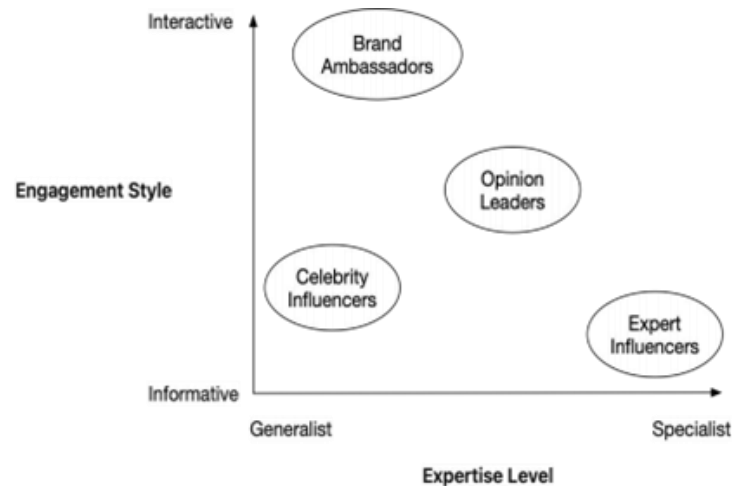


Figure 2. Social Media Influencers Category

Based on the above principles, two matching dimensions of "engagement style" and "level of expertise" can be obtained (Figure 2). Through in-depth discussion and logical sorting, this paper tries to go beyond traditional indicators and categorize social media influencers into the following four categories: celebrity influencers, expert influencers, opinion leaders, and brand ambassadors.

Such classification and description provide a clear framework for us to understand the characteristics and roles of social media influencers, which helps brands and enterprises to more accurately identify and cultivate social media influencers that align with their brand positioning and product attributes. Through the strategic selection and cultivation process, brands and companies can more effectively exert the powerful influence of social media influencers, to achieve the dual goals of brand communication and product sales.

SHORT CASES OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS

Each type of influencer categorized based on this study fits the two-dimensional model described above. Through the following brief case studies, we can gain a more profound perception of the distinctions between the various types of influencers in terms of their level of expertise, engagement, and performance in social media to substantiate the categorization.

Overview

The realm of social media influencers has witnessed a significant transformation over the past few years (Lee et al., 2022). Many brands and businesses rely on them for marketing and promotion. While leveraging their influence, there is a growing emphasis on ethical and responsible practices. The following section will outline four short cases of social media influencers' implementation in the industry. By exploring these aspects, the aim is to support the categories of social media influencers, their challenges, and how they overcome them, paving the way for future research and solutions.

Case 1 - Celebrity Influencers: The Kardashian Family

Kim Kardashian and her family are prominent in the fashion world (Lorenz, T., 2023). In the West, celebrity culture thrives and social media drives fashion trends, enabling them to be influential. They've expanded into multiple businesses leveraging their fame (Sng et al., 2021), yet face controversy over sensationalism and ethical issues (Yılmaz, O. C., & Derman, G. S., 2023). In contrast, some Asian cultures prioritize celebrities' moral and social responsibility, making consumers more selective about products endorsed by those with moral concerns.

Case 2 - Expert Influencers: Elon Musk

Elon Musk, leading innovative enterprises like Tesla and SpaceX, shares analyses and viewpoints on technological trends on Twitter (Khan, M., 2021). With his professional expertise, he guides the public to gain a deeper understanding of technology and holds significant influence in the field of science and technology. He can shape consumers' perceptions and attitudes toward technology (Ante, L., 2023).

Case 3 - Opinion Leaders: Li Ziqi

Li Ziqi has quickly emerged as a notable food opinion leader by showcasing Chinese cultural charm through a food culture theme and integrating traditional and modern elements (Liang, L., 2022), while also embodying personal qualities like tenacity, independence, and love for family and traditions (Wang, T., 2020). Her videos have distinct receptions: in Western cultures, they offer an exotic allure evoking wanderlust, and in other Asian countries, they resonate with shared cultural values. However, she has faced team management challenges such as divisions and strained partnerships, which have hampered her work and somewhat tarnished her image and reputation (Fang, M.T., 2021).

Case 4 - Brand Ambassadors: Selena Gomez, David Beckham, and JEOL Embiid

Brand ambassadors Selena Gomez and David Beckham have, via their dignified images, secured consumer trust for endorsed brands (Ouvrein et al., 2018; Palmer, C., 2021), actively projecting brand values and concepts, conveying a positive image, fostering trust and respect, and boosting popularity and reputation, especially among the youth (Huggard, E., & Cope, J., 2020). However, globally, their influence is affected by consumers' values and aesthetics in different cultures; for instance, their represented fashion and lifestyle have varying communication impacts and consumer responses in Western and Asian markets due to cultural differences in fashion and consumption (e.g., trends and habits). Notably, Under Armour's tie-up with NBA star Embiid suffered reputational harm from alleged racial discrimination remarks despite the brand's actions (Peavy, A. C., 2023).

When examining the cases within the two dimensions, influencers face a strategic choice: focus narrowly on one area of influence or take a broader view with multiple stakeholders, and prioritize individual goals or consider wider social impact. These cases have important implications for brands. They remind brands to be careful in choosing endorsers and to set up sound crisis management. They also show how influencers overcome challenges, laying groundwork for further research. Evaluating influencers requires a multifaceted approach. Brands should consider popularity, reach, alignment with brand values, ability to handle challenges, and cultural resonance. Brands also should be ready for potential crises and understand the social and cultural implications of working with influencers. The evaluation helps brands make smarter decisions and better use influencers in modern marketing.

CHALLENGES FOR SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS

Within the framework of the categorization, we are afforded a glimpse into the underlying logic and mechanisms guiding social media influencers as they consistently opt to leverage their following to incubate both their brands and contribute to the real economy. However, there is no such thing as a smooth path for any career trajectory, with social media influencers being no exception.

Social media influencers face acute market saturation and competition (Abidin, 2016; Nguyen, 2018). The boom of platforms and users has ballooned content producers, causing imbalances that hurt job prospects and the economy. Unfair distribution and monopolies also hinder new influencers (Cong & Li, 2023). Cultural market traits complicate things. In emerging markets, rich diversity and fast-changing trends favor local influencers, as they can tap local cultures easily, while international ones may struggle to adapt. In mature markets, stable cultures mean stiffer competition; influencers need constant innovation to beat aesthetic fatigue. To tackle these, influencers must boost content quality and creativity (Cooke et al., 2022) and build solid audiences and brand partnerships for lasting competitiveness (Pearson, 2016).

Furthermore, social media influencers are tasked with striking a delicate balance between authenticity and commerciality. While publishing branded content constitutes a core activity, excessive promotion risks undermining authenticity and eroding trust with its audience (Hudders et al., 2021). Role models like Sofia Beauty demonstrate how blending personal stories with endorsements can meet brand needs and maintain trust (Jorge et al., 2018), fostering long-term brand ties and fair rewards (Lin et al., 2018). However, influencers struggle with branding and loyalty-building due to complex purchase influencers (Jun & Yi, 2020; Singh et al., 2020), pushing brands to choose suitable partners (Haenlein et al., 2020). Culturally, consumer sensitivity to promotions varies widely. In Scandinavian cultures, consumers dislike overt commercial pushes, so influencers must subtly incorporate brand messages into lifestyle content. In contrast, many Asian and Middle Eastern cultures welcome celebrity-brand collabs, allowing influencers to be more direct. Clearly, influencers must adapt strategies to cultural nuances for a balance of authenticity and commercial success.

Social media influencers face knotty ethical and legal challenges, under intense scrutiny for their public acts (Lou, 2022). Regionally, the rules diverge: the US FTC demands clear marketing disclosure, the EU focuses on data protection and consumer rights, and China regulates internet ads and live sales strictly. These

differences sway influencers' strategies. Yet, enforcement is patchy. Some influencers skimp on disclosure, sparking trust issues among consumers and hurting the industry (Evans et al., 2017). Moreover, influencers grapple with a myriad of ethical dilemmas, including cyber harassment and verbal violence, underscoring the imperative of a robust legal framework and code of ethics to ensure the sustainability and credibility of the influencer marketing ecosystem (Breves et al., 2021). To fix this, stricter reviews, like pre- and post-checks by platforms, and harsher penalties, such as hefty fines, are needed. Going forward, regulatory trends will reshape influencers. As data privacy gains traction globally, they'll have to shift to more compliant marketing, ditching broad data collection for consent-based, anonymized methods.

Influencer endorsements have a considerable impact and are a major investment in marketing. However, not achieving the expected results brings the dual risks of financial loss and brand image damage (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016; Erdogan, 1999). Marketers often lament the lack of clarity regarding the benefits derived from marketing campaigns, necessitating meticulous evaluation of return on investment (ROI) to ascertain effective resource utilization (Brennan, 2019). This requires examination of traditional metrics like fan growth and brand exposure, along with careful consideration of direct and measurable business metrics including sales conversion rates, customer acquisition costs, and long-term customer value (Bendle et al., 2020). However, influencers' control over these metrics and the prevalence of fake followers underscores the imperative of discerning marketing ROI in social media influencer strategies (Hudders et al., 2021).

FURTHER RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Still, at the nascent stage of the discussion, there are gaps in our comprehension, presenting an opportunity for future researchers to reexamine and rethink social media influencers.

One area of focus pertains to the amalgamation of sponsored and non-sponsored content by social media influencers, which forms native advertisements, a subject that has garnered considerable regulatory and academic attention (Campbell & Grimm, 2019). Recent policies mandate influencers to disclose sponsorship when employing native advertising (Kay et al., 2020), reflecting efforts by leading digital marketing entities such as the United Kingdom to regulate influencer behavior and enhance information transparency, thus bolstering ad recognition (Boerman, 2020). Nonetheless, despite existing recommendations and legislation, there is a lack of empirical data clarifying the impact of disclosure on consumer behavior, highlighting a perceptual gap between academia and industry practices (Audrezet et al., 2020). Given the nascent and evolving legal and regulatory landscape in social media, future research should focus on clarifying influencers' behavioral patterns and trends within this framework and assessing how regulations affect their communicative efficacy and conduct.

Another significant development is the deep integration of online social media platforms with offline activities, providing social media influencers with multiple dimensions for branding and marketing communications (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014). This integration facilitates the convergence of online and offline user interactions and consumer experiences, empowering influencers to leverage their online influence for offline promotions or events, thereby stimulating economic activity (Sinclair Pereira Branisso, 2021). Such synergies not only augment the visibility and vitality of physical enterprises (Ghali et al., 2016) but also engender additional employment opportunities (Wu et al., 2022), thereby laying the groundwork for a symbiotic marketing economic ecosystem poised to deliver enhanced business value and social impact.

The sphere of social media influencers has broadened to include avatars and AIGCs, delivering more immersive experiences (Gursoy et al., 2023). Thus, a deeper probe into virtual influencers is urgent. First, expose the technical roots. Explain how AI for image generation, motion capture, and natural language processing shape their personalities and interactions (Appel et al., 2020). Second, widen the application analysis across fashion, gaming, tech, etc., exploring how they build unique emotional ties with consumers via personalized virtual experiences and real-time interactions. Thirdly, dissect the application of AI-driven tools throughout influencer marketing, such as using machine learning for audience analysis to pinpoint target customers, and for monitoring and predicting the effectiveness of marketing campaigns regarding brand

awareness and sales conversion (Ki & Kim, 2019). Fourthly, zero in on how emerging technologies reshape the influencer market. Examine if virtual influencers intensify competition with human ones, and how they drive the industry towards greater diversification and technological sophistication. Also, analyze the potential shifts in selection criteria for brands and consumers, and how influencers must adapt to stay competitive in this new tech landscape (Gannon & Prothero, 2018).

Social media influencers serve not only as disseminators of information but also as opinion influencers and conduits of social values (Alshurideh et al., 2021). Consequently, there is an increasing need to examine their roles and responsibilities in educational and community public service efforts and address issues related to their professional training and development in areas like education, social responsibility, and ethical standards. Notably, handling content responsibility is especially challenging as many social media influencers are young adults (Hudders et al., 2021), highlighting the importance of educating influencers about responsibility from a stakeholder perspective to develop more ethical marketing practices (Menon & Suresh, 2020). There is a need to enhance the understanding of responsible business leaders in Asia, and a similar examination is required for social media influencers' roles and responsibilities, especially due to the challenges of many being young adults and the need for ethical practices.

Although this study has explored multiple aspects of social media influencers, its research methodology has limitations. It mainly relies on existing literature and case studies, using qualitative methods like theoretical elaboration and description, lacking quantitative support. For instance, when analyzing influencer characteristics, classification, and their impact on consumer behavior, it doesn't fully utilize large-scale surveys or experiments to measure and verify relationships. Future research should combine qualitative and quantitative methods. Through in-depth interviews and focus groups, researchers can uncover the motivational and emotional factors in influencer-consumer interactions. Meanwhile, questionnaire surveys and data analysis can build models to accurately assess how influencers affect consumer behavior, like purchasing decisions and brand perceptions, thus more comprehensively understanding this complex phenomenon.

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