

**THE DRIVERS AND IMPACTS
OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS:
THE ROLE OF MIMICRY**

**A Dissertation Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
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ABSTRACT

Despite the growing trend of influencer marketing, little effort has been made to understanding the comprehensive mechanism as to how social media influencers (SMIs) influence their target audiences. Although previous SMI literature identified possible drivers and effects of SMIs, much of former research has focused on the peripheral traits of SMIs: identifying the effect of a SMI's number of followers on a target's influencer likability. Not much investigation has been undertaken to understand the principal traits of SMIs that allow them to amass audience in the first place and gain influence over their audiences. The dissertation filled this void in the literature. Drawing upon Influence Framework and Consumer's Doppelganger Effect theory, the study developed an overarching, structural framework that explains the influence mechanism of a SMI over her target audience as a whole in which (i) a *target's perceptions toward a SMI's influence attempts* (attractiveness, prestige, expertise, information, and interaction) affect the *target's attitudes toward the SMI*, believing that the SMI exercises taste leadership and opinion leadership (H1 to H6), (ii) the *target's positive attitudes toward the SMI* trigger her *conscious mimicry desire toward the SMI* (H7 and H8), and (iii) the target's *mimicry desire* directs her *performance outcomes* of social media WOM and purchase intention (H9 and H10). The study included both a qualitative method approach (focus group (n = 11)) and quantitative approaches (pre-test (n = 48), pilot test (n = 155), and main-test (n = 395) surveys via Mechanical Turk) to attest its conceptual model. The main-test results, using the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis via AMOS 23, confirmed that the conceptual model and all the hypothesized relationships were statistically significant. Further, the bootstrap results demonstrated that a target's *mimicry desire* indeed served as a significant mediator linking the target's attitudinal beliefs to behavioral decisions. The study's findings provide insightful contributions to the SMI literature and practical implications for brand marketers in developing successful influencer marketing strategies.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. PHENOMENON STATEMENT

The Emergence of Social Media Influencers (SMIs)

Social media refers to Web 2.0 applications that facilitate people to create and share information, ideas, opinions, and other forms of expression through virtual networks (Berthon, Pitt, Plangger, & Shapiro, 2012). While original Internet websites, referred to as Web 1.0, allowed one-way communication through static webpages, Web 2.0 expanded communication by allowing more interaction such as sharing, linking, and collaboration as well as inclusion of user generated contents (Thackeray, Neiger, Hanson, & McKenzie, 2008). In this respect, Web 2.0 refers not to an update to any technical specification from Web 1.0, but to changes in the way World Wide Web webpages are designed and used. Examples of Web 2.0 applications are social networking sites (or SNSs), such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and Instagram (Berthon et al., 2012).

Web 2.0 social media landscape has directed three major changes, which led to the emergence of social media influencers. First, it has given people the ability to stay connected to one another in a way that was never possible before. It has enabled brands (or retailers or marketers) to reach people in more engaging ways than previously possible (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Second, it has provided people with the technology to both create and distribute information, allowing people to have greater control over how information is produced, organized, and shared (Thackeray et al., 2008). Third, it has

facilitated the democratization of knowledge. That is, it has granted people, whether they are locals or celebrities, to have an equal footing to share information and opinions (Berthon et al., 2012; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Anyone using social media can be a content producer, can reach out to others, and can have a potential to influence each other (Solis, 2007). In this vein, Web 2.0 social media has created a new army of so-called “social media influencers.”

Social media influencers – often abbreviated as SMIs – are defined as a new type of independent third-party endorsers who influence audience attitudes through the use of social media (Freberg, Graham, McGaughey, & Freberg, 2011). In a similar vein, they denote those who possess greater potential to influence others than average social media users, either by frequent communication or by strong personal persuasiveness (Audrezet, de Kerviler, & Moulard, 2017). SMIs are also referred to as individuals who have accumulated a solid base of followers through creating and sharing contents through SNSs (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017). SMIs publicly share their personal everyday lives, experiences, and opinions through their social media accounts, which may otherwise be inaccessible (Jensen Schau & Gilly, 2003). That is why SMIs are seen as more accessible, authentic, and credible compared to mainstream celebrities (De Veirman et al., 2017). Noting that a similar message is perceived as more authentic and credible when it is communicated by a peer consumer (e.g., a SMI) than when it is put forward by an advertiser or a celebrity (Willemsen, Neijens, Bronner, & De Ridder, 2011), brands are turning away from adopting traditional advertising tactics like celebrity marketing (De Vries, Gensler, & Leeflang, 2012). Instead, they are gearing towards leveraging these SMIs,

incorporating influencer marketing into their social media marketing strategies (De Vries et al., 2012).

The Significance of Influencer Marketing (or Influence Marketing)

With millennial consumers as the target audience for many brands (or retailers or marketers) and Web 2.0 social media as a bridge to these millennial consumers, influencer marketing has drawn great attention from both academia and market practitioners (D. Brown & Hayes, 2008; Ferguson, 2008). Influencer marketing (also referred to as influence marketing) is a form of marketing which focuses on a few, influential people rather than the target market as a whole, to help promote a brand through social media platforms (Talavera, 2017). In other words, it refers to a type of marketing that focuses on identifying and leveraging a small group of key SMIs to communicate a brand's key message or to showcase a brand's new product to mass consumers (Talavera, 2017). By seeding a certain message with these SMIs or having them post new product trials or endorsements, brands can amplify the dissemination and coverage of their message and maximize the adoption of their products among SMIs' wide range of audiences (De Veirman et al., 2017; Keller & Berry, 2003; Momtaz, Aghaie, & Alizadeh, 2011).

According to a recent report entitled, 'the state of influencer marketing in 2018,' influencer marketing is huge and expected to grow further (Linqia, 2018). Specifically, the report shows that 86% of marketers have used influencer marketing in 2017 and among them, 92% found it to be effective; 39% of marketers are planning to increase their budgets for influencer marketing in 2018; and 92% of marketers cited Instagram as the most important social media platform for influencer marketing (Linqia, 2018). In support, brands

agree that Instagram's photo-based medium is the most ideal platform for influencer marketing over other social media platforms (Evans, Phua, Lim, & Jun, 2017). In this respect, the present research explores the influence mechanism of SMIs over their target audiences in the context of Instagram.

1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

This study tackles three problematic issues concerning SMIs. First, although brands (or retailers or marketers) acknowledge the importance of partnering with SMIs for influencer marketing (De Veirman et al., 2017), one of the major challenges to them is to identify the so-called right SMIs (Araujo, Neijens, & Vliegenthart, 2017). Second, while extant literature has proposed a few drivers that make certain SMIs more suitable or right (e.g., number of followers, relatability, and articulation) (De Veirman et al., 2017; Forbes, 2016) and assessed these SMIs' impacts on consumer attitude (e.g., influencer likability and brand attitude) (De Veirman et al., 2017; Evans et al., 2017), little effort has been made to understand the influence mechanism of a SMI over a target audience as a whole under an overarching theoretical framework. Third, although consumers often regard SMIs as one of their role models whose behaviors, examples, or successes are (or can be) mimicked by others (Gashi, 2017), not much research has investigated whether target audiences are indeed inspired to mimic these SMIs which, in turn, may affect their behavioral decisions to purchase one of the same products, services, or brands endorsed or posted by these SMIs. The present research addresses these gaps in the literature.

1.3. PURPOSE STATEMENT

Research Objectives

The present research focuses on exploring the mechanism through which a SMI attempts to influence a target audience and the effects of the influence exercised, particularly focusing on the role of mimicry. Precisely, this study grounds on *Influence Framework* (Scheer & Stern, 1992) to develop and attest a comprehensive model that accounts for the influence mechanism of a SMI on a target audience; whether and how a SMI's *influence attempts* influence a target audience's *attitudes*, *compliance desire*, and *performance outcomes* in sequence. Further, this study partially draws upon *Consumer's Doppelganger Effect* theory (Ruvio, Gavish, & Shoham, 2013) to identify whether targets' *mimicry desire* serves as an indication of compliance desire in a social media context. Specific research questions are addressed in the following section.

Research Questions

- Whether and how a SMI's influence attempts (i.e., *attractiveness*, *prestige*, *expertise*, *information*, and *interaction*) steer a target audience's attitudes toward the SMI (i.e., evaluative beliefs that the SMI embodies the roles of *taste leadership* and *opinion leadership*).
- Whether and how the target audience's attitudes toward the SMI (i.e., beliefs that the SMI has *taste leadership* and *opinion leadership*) trigger her compliance desire (i.e., *mimicry desire*) toward the SMI.
- Whether and how the target's compliance desire (i.e., *mimicry desire*) toward the SMI directs her performance outcomes, both in terms of social outcome (i.e., *social media word-of-mouth (social media WOM)*) and non-social outcome (i.e., *intent to purchase* one of the same products, services, or brands endorsed or posted by the SMI).

According to *Influence Framework* (Scheer & Stern, 1992), when attempting an influence, an influencer first gets to select which power resources (i.e., the raw material of *influence attempts*) to use and also decides the manner in which to exercise these resources. Potential power resources include such qualities as attractiveness, prestige, expertise, information and interactive service (Dwyer, Schurr, & Oh, 1987; Gaski & Nevin, 1985). In the context of this study, *attractiveness* is conceptualized as a SMI's ability to display her Instagram contents in appealing ways (Chattopadhyay & Laborie, 2005). Instagram contents include a range of both visual and verbal contents, from usernames, profiles, texts, hashtags, images, videos, location check-ins, hearts, comments, to shares (Chua, Luan, Sun, & Yang, 2012). *Prestige* refers to the extent to which a SMI's Instagram contents are viewed as upscale (Steenkamp, Batra, & Alden, 2003). *Expertise* refers to a SMI's ability to showcase her experience or knowledge via Instagram (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953). *Information* indicates a SMI's ability to post informative Instagram contents, whereas *interaction* refers to a SMI's ability to communicate reciprocally (Merriam-Webster, 2004).

If an influencer's selection of these power resources and their presentations are successful, it results in a target's *positive, cognitive attitude* such as satisfaction and trust (Scheer & Stern, 1992). The "cognitive" attitude approach defines attitude as an evaluative "beliefs and thoughts" that a target has on an influencer (Vaughan & Hogg, 2005). In this regard, if a SMI's influence attempts of showcasing *attractive, prestigious, expert, informative, and interactive* Instagram contents are effective, the target may evaluate the SMI favorably, being satisfied with the taste offered by the SMI (i.e., taste leadership) and placing trust in the SMI's opinions (i.e., opinion leadership). In this study, *taste leadership* is conceptualized as a target's positive, evaluative belief that a SMI showcases better style

than others and takes the lead in exercising good aesthetic judgements and displays (McQuarrie, Miller, & Phillips, 2012). *Opinion leadership* is conceptualized as a target's positive, evaluative belief that a SMI has the ability to influence others' attitudes or behavior via WOM communication (e.g., advice or suggestions) (Lyons & Henderson, 2005).

A target's *desire for compliance* is also affected by the influence exercised, but takes place after the development of target attitudes (Scheer & Stern, 1992). A target's compliance desire is enhanced when the target believes that there are good reasons for engaging in the behavior sought by the influencer (Scheer & Stern, 1992). Consumer's Doppelganger Effect theory (Ruvio et al., 2013) claims that the same holds true in a consumption-relevant context. According to the theory, people are inspired to comply with (i.e., *mimic*) the consumption choices of whom they consider to be their role models, because they believe that mimicking the role models' product preferences help them be or look more like the models (Ruvio et al., 2013). Employing this stream of review to the relationship between a SMI and her target audience, a target's positive attitudes toward a SMI (i.e., a positive, evaluative belief that the SMI is a role model who exemplifies taste leadership and opinion leadership) may inspire the target to *mimic* the SMI.

If the target decides to comply with (i.e., *mimic*) the influencer, favorable *performance outcomes*, such as social media WOM and purchase intention, take place as a result (Scheer & Stern, 1992). In the present study, *social media WOM* is conceptualized as a target audience's liking, following, and sharing behavior toward a SMI and thus toward the SMI's Instagram contents (Kim & Johnson, 2016). *Purchase intention* is

conceptualized as the target's intention to purchase one of the same products, services, or brands endorsed or posed by the SMI (Schlosser, 2003).

Expected Contributions

By tackling these research questions, the present study expects to contribute to the SMI literature in three main aspects. First, the study will add insights into the current literature by identifying the *core influence attempts* that enable a SMI to impact her target audience. Second, the study will provide an *overarching framework* that accounts for the influence mechanism of a SMI over her target audience as a whole by developing and empirically testing the conceptual model that illustrates the relationships among a SMI's influence attempts, a target audience's attitudes, mimicry desire, and behavioral intentions. Third, the present study will add initial insights to extant SMI literature by demonstrating the role *mimicry desire toward a SMI* plays in affecting a target's favorable behavioral decisions (e.g., product choices) in response to a SMI's influence appeals.

1.4. DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

The current study describes the power dynamics (i.e., influence mechanism) between a SMI and a target audience across four phases in the context of Instagram: (i) a SMI's influence attempts, (ii) a target audience's attitudes toward the influence exercised, (iii) the target's desire for compliance with (i.e., mimicry desire toward) the SMI, and (iv) the target's performance outcomes resulting from such compliance. Table 1 presents the key constructs of each phase and their definitions.

Table 1. Four prime phases of the influence mechanism

[4 phases] Influence Framework		Definitions	References
[1 st] An influencer's influence attempts		The resources for power that an influencer uses to obtain influence over another party (i.e., a target), such as attractiveness, status (or prestige), expertise, information, and (interactive) services.	Tjosvold, Johnson, & Johnson (1984); Scheer & Stern (1992)
	Attractiveness	The extent to which a SMI's Instagram contents look aesthetically pleasing	Patzer (1983)
	Prestige	The extent to which a SMI's Instagram contents are seemingly upscale	Steenkamp et al. (2003)
	Expertise	The extent to which a SMI is perceived as experienced, qualified, or knowledgeable when looking at the SMI's Instagram contents	Hovland et al. (1953)
	Information	The extent to which a SMI's Instagram contents look informative	Merriam-Webster (2004)
	Interaction	The extent to which a SMI's Instagram contents are perceived to be mutually or reciprocally active	Merriam-Webster (2004)
[2 nd] A target's attitudes toward the influence exercised		A target's tendency that is expressed by evaluating the influence exercised, for instance, with some degree of favorable or unfavorable belief	Eagly & Chaiken (1993)
	Taste leadership	A target's positive, evaluative belief that a SMI showcases better style than others or that a SMI takes the lead in offering what looks good	McQuarrie, Miller, & Phillips (2012)
	Opinion leadership	A target's positive, evaluative belief that a SMI has the ability to influence others' attitudes or behavior via WOM communication	Lyons & Henderson (2005)
[3 rd] The target's desire for compliance with the influencer		The target's act of following what is offered by the influencer	Cialdini & Goldstein (2004)
	Mimicry desire	The target's desire to intentionally mimic (i.e., copy) the style, trendiness, or lifestyle of a SMI whom the target regards as a role model of a kind	Ruvio et al. (2013)
[4 th] The target's performance outcomes from compliance		Behavioral outcomes that result from the target's compliance behavior	Scheer & Stern (1992)
	Social media WOM	The target's liking, following, and sharing toward the SMI and thus toward the SMI's Instagram contents	Kim & Johnson (2016)
	Purchase intention	The target's predictions about her own behavior as to whether to consume one of the same products, services, or brands endorsed or posted by the SMI	Schlosser (2003)

1.5. DISSERTATION ORGANIZATION

This dissertation consists of five chapters. Chapter I serves to introduce the recent phenomenon worthy of note, that is, the emergence of SMIs and the significance of influencer marketing. The chapter also discusses the research void in the SMI literature. Thereafter, the chapter describes the primary objectives of the study, addresses the research questions the study tackles, and implies the expected contributions. Chapter II serves to review the extant literature on SMIs across four research streams, that is, consumer behavior, consumer psychology, endorser advertising, and endorsement marketing. The chapter also lays out the adopted theories and describes how the conceptual framework of this study is developed. The chapter also generates research hypotheses based on the literature. Chapter III and Chapter IV discuss the qualitative and quantitative research approaches used in this study, respectively. These chapters describe the procedures, samples, analyses and results of the focus group interview (in Chapter III) as well as those of the pre-test, pilot-test and main-test surveys (in Chapter IV). Chapter IV also explains the instrument development. Chapter V presents the conclusions of the study, its theoretical contributions and managerial implications, and its limitations and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The present research is designed to explore whether and how a SMI's *influence attempts* affect a target audience's *attitudes*, *mimicry desire*, and *behavioral outcomes* in the setting of Instagram. This chapter consists of three sections. In the first section, it reviews extant literature that discusses SMIs. Specifically, it reviews the drivers and impacts of SMIs identified by previous studies. It also discusses the limitations of existing literature and the research void that this study attempts to fill in. In the second section, it introduces the conceptual framework of the present study, which relies upon *Influence Framework* and *Consumer's Doppelganger Effect* theory. The last section generates a set of six hypotheses (from H1 to H6) to identify whether SMIs' positive *influence attempts* (i.e., attractiveness, prestige, expertise, information, and interaction) drive positive *target attitudes* toward the SMIs (i.e., believing that the SMI has taste leadership and opinion leadership); next, a set of two hypotheses (H7 and H8) are proposed to explore whether positive *target attitudes* (i.e., believing that the SMI has taste leadership and opinion leadership) trigger the targets' *compliance desire with* (i.e., mimicry desire toward) the SMIs; thereafter, the last set of two hypotheses (H9 and H10) are formulated to explore whether *mimicry desire* steers the targets' favorable *performance outcomes* (i.e., social media WOM and the intent to purchase one of the same products, services, or brands endorsed or posted by the SMIs).

2.1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Definitions of and Use of Terms for SMIs

To identify a SMI's influence dynamic impacting a target audience, this study first reviews how extant literature named and defined SMIs. Traditionally, *influencers* were referred to as individuals who have the ability to influence the opinions or behaviors of others (Combley, 2011). With the rise of Web 2.0 social media, a new term indicating the influencers in social media platforms was coined, that is, *social media influencers (SMIs)*. Feberg et al. (2011) defined a SMI as a new type of independent third-party endorser who influences the attitudes of audiences through the use of social media. Morgan (2016) conceptualized SMIs as independent third-party endorsers who share their daily lives, tips, and tricks with their followers that are at least thousands via their social media accounts. De Veirman et al. (2017) described these influencers in SNSs as individuals who are viewed as trusted tastemakers in several niches and have developed a sizeable social network of followers. Other researchers coined different terms to refer to SMIs. Marwick (2015) used the term *micro-celebrities* to indicate these influencers in social media platforms, and defined them as individuals who view themselves as public personas who employ strategic intimacy to appeal to their followers. Scott (2015) cited SMIs as *non-traditional celebrities* and defined them as individuals who are considered famous online. When these SMIs exert their influential power through the use of Instagram, they are referred to as *Instagram influencers* (Evans et al, 2017) or *Instafamous* (Dewey, 2014). The summary of the different use of terms for SMIs and their definitions are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Definitions of and use of terms for social media influencers (SMIs)

Terms of Use	Definitions	Authors (Years)
Influencers	Individuals who have the ability to influence others' behaviors and opinions	Combley (2011)
Social media influencers	New type of independent third-party endorsers who influence audience attitudes through the use of social media	Freberg et al. (2011)
	Independent third-party endorsers who have amassed at least thousands of followers; who share their daily lives, tips, and tricks with their followers via social media	Morgan (2016)
	Individuals who have developed a sizeable social network of people following them and are viewed a trusted tastemaker in several niches	De Veirman et al. (2017)
Instagram influencers	Individuals who amass large followings via Instagram by posting aspirational photos, using hashtags, and engaging with their followers	Evans et al. (2017)
Instafamous	A self-made micro-celebrity who is known for her work on Instagram	Dewey (2014)
Citizen influencers	Typical consumers who have a direct and close relationship with their followers	Bell (2012)
Micro-celebrities	Individuals who view themselves as public personas that are consumed by others, who use strategic intimacy in order to appeal to their followers, and who regard their audiences as fans	Marwick (2015)
	Individuals who amp up their popularity through the use of Web technologies, such as SNSs	Abidin (2016)
Non-traditional celebrities	Individuals who are considered famous online and are known to the public	Scott (2015)

Extant Literature on SMIs: Key Drivers and Impacts

The topic of SMIs has garnered the attention of academics only recently. The emerging SMI literature guides this study as to what drivers and impacts of SMIs are worthy of note. The selected drivers and effects of SMIs were identified across a wide range of research streams (i.e., consumer behavior, consumer psychology, endorser advertising, and endorsement marketing).

In the *consumer behavior* research stream, SMIs have been explored in association with consumers' brand switching decision. For instance, Gulamali and Persson (2017) attempted to identify the role SMIs play in consumers' brand switching behavior, based upon the phenomenon in which consumers voluntarily buy a brand, which is not one of the brands they previously used, after being influenced by SMIs. Specifically, they examined how consumers' three brand switching motivations (i.e., (i) dissatisfied, (ii) variety seeking, and (iii) social identification) influenced the roles SMIs play in influencing their brand switching decisions. Their study suggested that SMIs could embody one of the three roles of an opinion leader (i.e., those who have the ability to influence others through their expertise on certain topics), a social leader (i.e., those who lead the online community through their large social capital and set certain standards with regards to the values and behavior of its members), or a micro-celebrity (i.e., those who amp up their popularity on the internet through SNSs). According to their findings, when consumers switched brands out of *dissatisfaction*, SMIs' role as an opinion leader was more prominent than other roles (i.e., social leader or micro-celebrity); when consumers switched brands for *variety seeking*, SMIs also better performed the role as an opinion leader (rather than a micro-celebrity, which the study hypothesized); when consumers switched brands for *social identification*,

each role (i.e., opinion leader, social leader, and micro-celebrity) was equally important in swaying consumers' brand switching decisions. These findings imply the prime attitude consumers hold toward SMIs, that is, believing that SMIs have opinion leadership.

In the *consumer psychology* research stream, SMIs were discussed in association with consumers' *social comparison* tendency and their *feelings of envy* toward SMIs. According to Chae (2017a), the prestigious lifestyle SMIs showcase via social media is often aspired by consumers, which leads to their social comparison behavior and further to their sense of envy. The study hypothesized and empirically demonstrated that consumers' exposure to and interest in SMIs' contents, which publicly display their luxurious daily lives, had a positive effect on female consumers' inclination to compare their lives to those of SMIs, which in turn caused them to feel envious toward these SMIs. In addition, consumers' personal traits of public self-consciousness and self-esteem were found to positively and negatively, respectively, influence their social comparison tendency with SMIs, which consecutively led to their envious feelings toward SMIs. These findings infer that consumers develop certain attitudes toward SMIs based upon what and how they perceive from SMIs' contents.

In the *endorser advertising* literature, the drivers that make certain SMIs more likeable were identified. For example, De Veirman et al. (2017) attempted to identify possible drivers that affect the likability of SMIs. According to their findings, the *number of followers* SMIs have amassed was one prime predictor affecting consumers' *likability* toward SMIs. A SMI with a high number of followers, opposed to a SMI with less followers, was considered to be more popular and thus more likable by a target audience. However, the effect of a SMI's number of followers on a target's likeability was moderated by the

SMI's number of followees (De Veirman et al., 2017). That is, the ratio of a SMI's followers versus followees was found important in a target's assessment of influencer likeability; a SMI with a high number of followers but with a few followees rather had a negative effect on a target's influencer likeability, because the SMI was seen to be less authentic. These findings hint that partnering with SMIs who have a high number of followers may not necessarily benefit the brands; thus, demanding the need to identify the core qualities that make certain SMIs more influential than others and more suitable for endorser advertising.

Last, in the *endorsement marketing* research stream, SMIs were discussed as third-party endorsers. To identify the prime factors that make SMIs' endorsements influential and persuasive enough among consumers, Pang, Yingzhi Tan, Song-Qi Lim, Yue-Ming Kwan, and Bhardwaj Lakhanpal (2016) conducted in-depth interviews with ten Singapore-based SMIs. According to the results of their interviews, SMIs in general made it a point that it is important for them to keep up-to-date with the newest trends and lifestyle. One of the SMIs they interviewed pinpointed trust and credibility as other prime traits that make themselves likable and influential among audiences. For instance, a lifestyle blogger commented on a case in which his audience mentioned that the product endorsed by him was not good, and thus the audience questioned his recommendations. These findings suggest that a target audience's trust in and satisfaction with a SMI's taste may have a significant impact on the effectiveness of the SMI's endorsement marketing (i.e., influencer marketing). The summary of the aforementioned review alongside the summary of other key SMI studies are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Key literature on SMIs: identified drivers and impacts

Research stream	#	Authors (Years)	Theoretic Framework	Key Variables	Key Results
		Main Subject	Methods		
Consumer behavior	1	Abidin (2016)	• Theoretical framework: not applicable	• Not applicable	• Influencers' appropriations of selfies can be viewed as salable objects, an expression of contrived authenticity and reflexivity, which lead to subversive frivolity.
		Influencers' appropriations of selfies	• Method: in-depth ethnographic fieldwork & grounded theory analysis		
	2	Gulamali and Persson (2017)	• Theoretical framework: voluntary brand switching	• Independent variables (IVs): three brand switching conditions; (i) dissatisfied, (ii) variety seeking, and (iii) social identification • Mediator: three perceived roles of the social media influencer; (i) opinion leader, (ii) micro-celebrity, and (iii) social leader • Dependent variable (DV): brand switching decision	• SMIs could embody the role of an opinion leader, a social leader, or a micro-celebrity. • Consumers' brand switching motivations influence which of these three SMIs' roles is most prominent; e.g., when a consumer switches brands out of dissatisfaction, the SMI will foremost be perceived as an opinion leader.
		The role of the social media influencer when a consumer decides to switch brands	• Method: qualitative interview and the paired sample-T test		
	3	Chae (2017b)	• Theoretical framework: social comparison theory	• IVs: (i) selfie-taking, (ii) public self-consciousness, (iii) social media use, and (iv) satisfaction with facial appearance • Mediator: social comparison of appearance with friends or SMIs • DV: selfie-editing	• Frequent selfie-taking, higher public self-consciousness, and more use of social media are associated with social comparison with friends, which lead to selfie-editing behavior. • No indirect effects of selfie-taking; public self-consciousness; and social media use on selfie-editing were detected through social comparison with SMIs or celebrities.
		The indirect effect of selfie-taking, public self-consciousness, social media use, and satisfaction with facial appearance on selfie-editing through social comparison of appearance	• Method: path analysis via Mplus 7.11		

Table 3. Key literature on SMIs: identified drivers and impacts (Cont'd)

Research stream	#	Authors (Years)	Theoretic Framework	Key Variables	Key Results
		Main Subject	Methods		
Consumer psychology	4	Chae (2017a)	• Theoretical framework: social comparison theory	• IVs: (i) exposure to SMIs' social media, (ii) interest in specific content on SMIs' social media, (iii) public self-consciousness, and (iv) self-esteem • Mediator: social comparison of one's life with that of SMIs • DV: envy toward SMIs	• The results explain why and how female consumers feel envy toward SMIs who display their luxurious private life via social media. • There were significant indirect effects of all the four independent variables on the envy toward SMIs through social comparison with SMIs.
		How social media use and personality traits influence female consumers' envy toward SMIs through social comparison	• Method: path analysis via Mplus 7.11		
Endorser advertising	5	De Veirman et al. (2017)	• Key concept: opinion leadership	• IVs: (i) number of followers (moderate vs. high), and (ii) number of followees (low vs. high) • Mediators: (i) perceived popularity and (ii) ascribed opinion leadership • DV: influencer likeability	• SMIs with high numbers of followers are more likeable, mainly because they are considered more popular. • The ratio of followers vs. followees in the assessment of an influencer is also important. • A SMI with a high number of followers but a few followees may negatively affect influencer likeability, because her social media account can be seen as a false account that is created for a commercial or advertising purpose, and thus can be viewed as less authentic from target audience.
		The impact of a SMI's number of followers and number of followees on influencer likability	• Method: experimental design and sequential mediation analysis using Hayes' PROCESS macro		

Table 3. Key literature on SMIs: identified drivers and impacts (Cont'd)

Research stream	#	Authors (Years)	Theoretic Framework	Key Variables	Key Results
		Main Subject	Methods		
Endorser advertising	6	Evans et al. (2017)	• Conceptual framework: persuasion knowledge model	• IVs: four disclosure language conditions; (i) control/no disclosure, (ii) the letters “SP,” (iii) “Sponsored”; (iv) and “Paid Ad.” • DVs: (i) ad recognition, (ii) brand attitude, (iii) sharing intent, and (iv) purchase intent	• There were significant differences in ad recognition based on disclosure language. • There were no significant differences in purchase intention or sharing intention based on disclosure language. • Ad recognition mediated the effect of disclosure language on brand attitude and sharing intention.
		The effect of disclosure language in influencer advertising on ad recognition, brand attitude, purchase intention, and sharing intention	• Method: experimental design		
Endorsement marketing	7	Braatz (2017)	• Key concept: mental imagery	• IVs: (i) message sidedness (one-sided vs. two-sided) and (ii) product depiction (abstract vs. context-based) • DVs: (i) trustworthiness, (ii) source credibility, (iii) purchase intention, (iv) attitude towards the ad, and (v) product liking	• There was a significant main effect of product depiction on product liking (context-based > abstract-based). • There was a significant main effect of message sidedness on source trustworthiness (two-sided > one-sided) and a significant main effect of message sidedness on purchase intention (one-sided > two-sided). • There were no significant interaction effects of the message sidedness and product depiction for purchase intention and for product liking.
		Influencer marketing on Instagram: the effects of message sidedness and product depiction on consumer responses towards promotional posts	• Method: 2 (message sidedness: One-sided vs. two-sided) x 2 (product depiction: Abstract vs. context-based) between-subjects experimental design		

Table 3. Key literature on SMIs: identified drivers and impacts (Cont'd)

Research stream	#	Authors (Years)	Theoretic Framework	Key Variables	Key Results
		Main Subject	Methods		
Endorsement marketing	8	Ewers (2017)	• Theoretical framework: not applicable	• IVs: (i) sponsorship disclosure (“#sponsored” vs. no disclosure), (ii) product placement (product placement vs. no placement), and (iii) type of influencer (celebrity vs. micro-celebrity) • DVs: (i) purchase intention, (ii) message credibility, and (iii) brand attitude	• Among the independent variables, only the type of influencer (celebrity > micro-celebrity) had a significant main effect on purchase intention. • There was a significant interaction effect of type of influencer and sponsorship disclosure on message credibility; in the micro-celebrity condition, higher values for message credibility could be found when with “#sponsored” disclosure than with no disclosure. • There was a significant interaction effect of all three independent variables on brand attitude; no sponsorship disclosure had a greater positive effect for celebrities, but it had a more negative effect for micro-celebrities. • Overall, the findings suggest that sponsorship disclosure is not necessarily harmful for companies employing influencer marketing.
		Influencer marketing on Instagram: the effects of sponsorship disclosure, product placement, type of influencer and their interplay on consumer responses	• Method: 2 (sponsorship disclosure: “#sponsored” vs. no disclosure) x 2 (product placement: product placement vs. no placement) x 2 (type of influencer: celebrity vs. micro-celebrity) between-subjects experimental design		

Table 3. Key literature on SMIs: identified drivers and impacts (Cont'd)

Research stream	#	Authors (Years)	Theoretic Framework	Key Variables	Key Results
		Main Subject	Methods		
Endorsement marketing	9	Pang et al. (2016)	• Theoretical framework: mediating the media model	• Not applicable	• (i) Mindset on content judgment, (ii) media routines, (iii) economic and social goals/roles, and (iv) extra-media forces were found relevant to SMIs, whereas (v) media ideology was irrelevant. • SMIs subscribed to the value of immediacy. If the information was not new, it was unlikely to warrant a post. • SMIs updated their SNSs, to make it look exciting and novel, for a technical reason: that is, ranking. • It is important for SMIs to include the spirit of follower interaction in their posts, relying on such feedback indicators as “comments” and “likes” to gauge the level of resonance they have with their audiences.
		Exploring how organizations can shape effective relations with SMIs, by drawing on the “mediating the media” model	• Method: qualitative method of in-depth interviews conducted with ten Singapore-based SMIs		

Table 3. Key literature on SMIs: identified drivers and impacts (Cont'd)

Research stream	#	Authors (Years)	Theoretic Framework	Key Variables	Key Results
		Main Subject	Methods		
Endorsement marketing	10	Forbes (2016)	Theoretical framework: attribution theory and social learning theory	- Five characteristics were identified to understand the attributes of successful beauty SMIs: (i) relatability, (ii) knowledge, (iii) helpfulness, (iv) confidence, and (v) articulation. - These characteristics were applied to a content analysis of videos posted by a selection of SMIs.	(i) Being relatable is what made these SMIs appealing and credible to consumers. (ii) The SMIs had extensive experience with the application of beauty products and were considered to be insightful about the beauty industry as a whole. (iii) Each video was a tutorial, allowing these SMIs to demonstrate helpfulness via their videos with the how-to instructions. (iv) The SMIs showed confidence through the assertion of specific claims they make on products (e.g., love, favorite), which were persuasive to their audiences. (v) SMIs need not only to be well spoken and understandable, but also need to well present the information visually.
		Identifying the characteristics of selected beauty SMIs and exploring how they are used in advertorials for brands on YouTube	Method: content analysis of Maybelline's sponsored videos that three SMIs produced/featured on their YouTube channels		

Limitations of SMI Literature and Research Void

The literature review regarding SMIs indicates several limitations in fully understanding the influence mechanism of SMIs. First, while former studies suggest a SMI's number of followers as one key influence attempt affecting a target audience's liking and following toward the SMI (De Veirman et al., 2017), an explanation is lacking as to how a SMI can gain a number of followers in the first place. Second, no study has yet provided an overarching, conceptual model that explains the psychological process as to how a target audience is influenced by a SMI (i.e., a target's perceptions, attitudes, mimicry desire, and behavioral intentions in response to a SMI's influence attempts) under a strong theoretical foundation. Third, although SMIs perform as role models for many target audience (Gashi, 2017), no study has viewed SMIs as those whom target audience are inspired to mimic, or has investigated the role mimicry plays in SMIs' influence mechanism. This study fills these gaps in the literature by building upon *Influence Framework* and *Consumer's Doppelganger Effect* theory.

2.2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Influence Framework

Proposed by Scheer and Stern (1992), Influence Framework explains the power dynamic between two parties in the context of marketing channels, where one channel member of distribution (i.e., an influencer) influences the decisions of another member at a different level of distribution (i.e., a target). *Marketing channel* refers to a structure that is composed of a number of interconnected, distribution channel members necessary to

transfer the ownership of merchandise from the point of production to the point of consumption (Mallen, 1967). All goods go through channels of distribution from suppliers, producers, or/and intermediaries (e.g., wholesalers, retailers, or sales agents) to end-consumers, and the marketing strategies depend on the way the goods are distributed. In this vein, a marketing channel is also termed as a distribution channel, where its prime objective is to move a product or service from the manufacturer to the right customer, at the right time and place, and in the most effective ways (Moorthy, 1987; Shareef, Dwivedi, & Kumar, 2016). In a traditional marketing channel context, an *influencer* refers to any individual or party in one distribution channel (e.g., a sales agent or retailers) who has the ability to evoke a change in the attitudes and behaviors of others in a different distribution channel (e.g., target consumers) (Combley, 2011).

In the new marketing channel paradigm, where online marketing channels and mobile-based channels are included, brands are enthusiastically capitalizing the unique characteristic of online social networks for marketing their products to end-consumers (Shareef et al., 2016). For example, brands are recruiting SMIs who have amassed a wide range of audiences in social media platforms as their new, online sales agents to raise brand awareness, to promote their branded products, and to drive sales to e-commerce (Y.-M. Li, Lai, & Chen, 2011). In this updated marketing channel context, an influencer is conceptualized as an individual (e.g., a SMI) who has a combination of both personal attributes (e.g., credibility) and network attributes (e.g., connectivity) that allow to influence the tastes and opinions of a potential consumer (e.g., a target audience) (Bakshy, Hofman, Mason, & Watts, 2011).

In a marketing channel context, the *power dynamic* takes effect in a way that an influencer impacts a target to take specific actions (e.g., to purchase a product sought by the influencer) through four stages, which are generalizable across all power resources (Scheer & Stern, 1992). The four prime phases are:

1. An influencer's *influence attempts*
2. A target's *attitudes* toward the influence attempts exercised
3. The target's *desire for compliance* with the influencer
4. The target's *performance outcomes* resulting from compliance

An influencer's influence attempts. The first stage of the influence framework is where an influencer pitches her *influence attempts*. An influencer obtains power over another (e.g., a target) through the way she controls and presents her resources that are valued by the target (Tjosvold, Johnson, & Johnson, 1984). Marketing researchers suggest such qualities of attractiveness, status, expertise, information, and service (e.g., interaction) as valuable resources for power (Legohérel, Fischer-Lokou, & Gueguen, 2000; Wilkinson, 1979). Power resources, in other words, are termed as raw materials of influence attempts (Scheer & Stern, 1992). One of the prime power resources, *attractiveness* refers to an influencer's ability to appeal herself as aesthetically pleasing (Chattopadhyay & Laborie, 2005). *Prestige* indicates to the extent to which an influencer or her way of presentation is viewed as upscale (Steenkamp et al., 2003). *Expertise* refers to an influencer's ability to showcase her experience or knowledge (Hovland et al., 1953). *Information* is an influencer's ability to be considered as informative, whereas *interaction* denotes an influencer's ability to be reciprocally active (Merriam-Webster, 2004). When attempting an influence, an influencer selects not only which resources to use but also the manner in

which she would exercise those resources. Employing the same power resources, yet in different ways (i.e., positive or negative ways), is expected to derive different attitudinal effects from the target (Scheer & Stern, 1992).

A target's attitudes toward the influence exercised. Although an influencer controls the content and the means of her influence attempts, their effects depend on the target's attitudes (Scheer & Stern, 1992). A target's attitude toward an influencer is manipulated by the way the influence attempts are presented (Frazier & Summers, 1986). That is, positive influence attempts, opposed to negative influence attempts, are expected to result in more positive target attitudes toward the influencer. For example, when the target is exposed to a positive influence attempt that involves reward, opposed to a negative influence attempt involving punishment, the target would evaluate the influencer more favorably, showing greater *satisfaction with* and *trust in* the influencer (Scheer & Stern, 1992). Employing this notion to the social media context, if a SMI's positive influence attempts of showcasing attractive, prestigious, expert, informative, and interactive Instagram contents are successful, a target audience may evaluate the SMI favorably; that is, the target would be *satisfied with the taste* offered by the SMI and place *trust in the SMI's opinions*. Therefore, when it comes to the relationship between a SMI and a target audience, the present research proposes *taste leadership* (e.g., a SMI takes the lead in offering what looks good) and *opinion leadership* (e.g., a SMI is one of the first people to know about and share the newest ideas) as prime, positive target attitudes that would arise in response to a SMI's successful influence appeals.

The target's desire for compliance with the influencer. Followed by a target's perception and attitude toward the influence appeals exercised, the third phase of the

influence mechanism is where the target decides whether or not to show *compliance* with the influencer (Scheer & Stern, 1992). Compliance means conformity, and it refers to the act of adapting to others' wishes, to a rule, or to necessity (Bowman, Heilman, & Seetharaman, 2004). In other words, compliance is a submissive response made in reaction to others' request or influence appeals (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). An influencer can encourage a target's compliance desire by using her power resources that link the influencer's desired behavior to something that is of value to the target (Brennan & Binney, 2010). For example, a sales representative (i.e., an influencer) of a fitness brand can use her expertise and information (i.e., influence appeals) to incite consumers to comply with some of the work-out activities using the brand's fitness products (i.e., desired behavior) that are of value to the target (i.e., health). These appeals must be presented in a way that makes the target see the direct value of compliance (Brennan & Binney, 2010). Direct value could be something which are positive incentives to behave in a certain way (e.g., being fit) or which avoids negative consequences (e.g., preventing overweight) (Atkin, 2001). Likewise, when it comes to the relationship between a SMI and a target audience, the target may develop a mimicry desire toward the SMI when she sees the direct value (or positive incentive) of mimicking the SMI: that is, becoming more like or looking more like the SMI.

The target's performance outcomes resulting from compliance. If a target decides to comply with an influencer, favorable *performance outcomes* result from such compliance action undertaken. Performance outcomes refer to a target's external outcomes, which result from the target's compliance (Scheer & Stern, 1992). For example, if a target is inspired to comply with an influencer's style of fashion or lifestyle, performance outcomes may include the target's *intention to purchase* one of the same fashion or lifestyle

products recommended by the influencer. It may also include the target's liking, following, and sharing behavior towards the influencer (e.g., *social media WOM*). According to Katsikeas, Morgan, Leonidou, and Hult (2016), performance outcomes consist of six aspects of performances: customer mindset outcomes (e.g., brand equity and customer satisfaction), customer behavior outcomes (e.g., word-of-mouth and purchase behaviors), customer-level performance outcomes (e.g., customer profitability), product market performance outcomes (e.g., unit sales and market share), accounting performance outcomes (e.g., profitability and return on assets), and financial-market performance outcomes (e.g., total shareholder returns and bond ratings). Among them, the present study approached performance outcomes from the *customer behavior* perspective. Specifically, within the social media context, the study explores both social customer behavior outcome (i.e., social media WOM) and non-social customer behavior outcome (i.e., the intention to purchase one of the same products, services, or brands endorsed or posted by a SMI). The outline of the Influence Framework (Scheer & Stern, 1992) is presented in Figure 1.

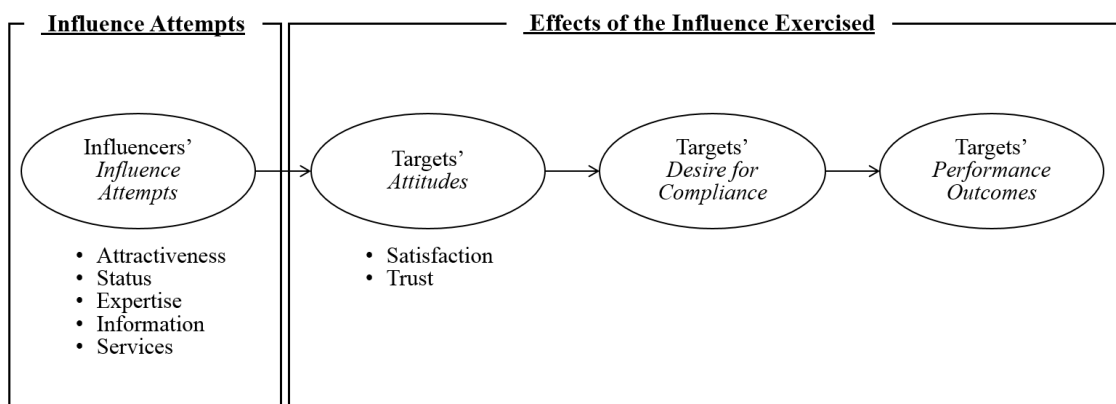


Figure 1. The outline of influence framework (Scheer & Stern, 1992)

Transferring Influence Framework to the context of this study, the present research explores the power dynamic between a SMI and a target audience in the setting of Instagram. More precisely, the study investigates the following relationships: (i) whether a SMI's power resources of showcasing *attractive, prestigious, expert, informative, and interactive* Instagram contents appeal to a target audience and generate positive target attitudes (i.e., positive evaluative belief that the SMI has *taste leadership* and *opinion leadership*); (ii) whether positive target attitudes trigger the target's desire to comply with the SMI (i.e., *mimicry desire* toward the SMI); and (iii) whether the target's mimicry desire directs favorable performance outcomes (i.e., the target's *social media WOM* and *intent to purchase one of the same products, services, or brands endorsed or posted by the SMI*).

Specifically, the Influence Framework emphasizes the role compliance plays in the influence mechanism. Much of former research has also discussed the topic of social influence with a focus on compliance (Burnkrant & Cousineau, 1975; Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004; Zimbardo & Leippe, 1991). Extending this notion to a consumption context, *Consumer's Doppelganger Effect* theory assents that it is a target consumer's compliance desire (i.e., mimicry desire) that steers her to imitate the product preferences or choices of her role model (i.e., an influencer). Incorporating Consumer's Doppelganger Effect theory into Influence Framework, this study proposes that it is the *mimicry desire* that serves as an indication of compliance in the power dynamic between a SMI and a target audience.

Consumer's Doppelganger Effect

The concept of mimicry was initially introduced by Kendon (1970) and LaFrance (1982). Later, it was advanced theoretically as Consumer's Doppelganger Effect by Ruvio

et al. (2013) to describe the phenomenon in which people *consciously mimic* others' consumption behavior.

Mimicry refers to an individual's act of observing and mirroring (or adopting, copying, or imitating) the expressions, postures, attitudes, or behaviors of others that she is interacting with (Chartrand & Dalton, 2009; Stel & Vonk, 2010). For example, when a person interacts with someone who is lively and animated, she tends to gesture more and behave more actively as her interacting partner (Chartrand & Dalton, 2009). Even an individual's mere observation of others who feel sullen and somber will provoke the individual to experience similar feelings. The above two cases imply how much social environments are contagious, and how easily individuals tend to mimic what they see in their social surroundings (Chartrand & Dalton, 2009).

This ability to mimic others is found to be both conscious and unconscious, depending on the situations in which mimicry takes place (White & Argo, 2011). Until recently, one stream of mimicry research has claimed that mimicry often happens unnoticed by both the individual enacting the mimicking behaviors (i.e., the mimicker) and the individual who is being mimicked (i.e., the mimicked) (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999; Chartrand & Dalton, 2009; Lakin & Chartrand, 2003). This *unconscious mimicry* has been detected in diverse contexts in which an individual "automatically" imitates her interacting partners' facial expressions (e.g., smiling and mouth opening) (McIntosh, Reichmann-Decker, Winkielman, & Wilbarger, 2006; Meltzoff & Moore, 1983), postural expressions (e.g., arm positioning) (LaFrance & Broadbent, 1976), emotional expressions (e.g., joy and sadness) (Termine & Izard, 1988), or behavioral expressions (e.g., crying and laughing) without noticing (Simner, 1971). Neuroscientific research attributes unconscious mimicry

to the activation of a mimicker's mirror neurons that take part in her perceptual and behavioral processes (Iacoboni et al., 1999), which in turn lead her to mimic others (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999; Hatfield et al., 1994).

Conscious mimicry. On the other hand, a more recent research stream advocates that mimicry also takes place when the mimicker is aware of her imitation, which is referred to as *conscious mimicry*. (Bertrandias & Goldsmith, 2006; Ruvio et al., 2013; White & Argo, 2011). Consumer's Doppelganger Effect, a term coined by Ruvio et al. (2013), theoretically proposes that mimicry is not at all times an automatic mimicking (i.e., a spontaneous reaction towards stimulation), but rather a consumer's "premediated" mimicking behavior (i.e., a planned behavior) that is designed to achieve her goals (i.e., to become more like her role models). Ruvio et al. (2013) empirically tested the notion. Their findings support that a consumer does mimic others whom she considers to be her role models with an intention to be more like or look more like the models (Ruvio et al., 2013). A role model can be anyone who serves as an example of the values, attitudes, and behaviors associated with a certain role. It is also conceptualized as an individual, whose behavior in a particular role is (or can be) imitated by others (Merriam-Webster, 2004). This way, role models acquire the potential to influence others' attitudes or decisions (Bandura & Walters, 1977). Role models can be either bidirectional (e.g., family members and peers) or unidirectional (e.g., SMIs and celebrities) (Ruvio et al., 2013).

Conscious mimicry plays a critical role in consumers' decision making (Ruvio et al., 2013). Conscious mimicry has been identified in a number of contexts where it sways people's product choices to adopt the interacting partner's style in fashion, clothing behavior (e.g., dressing up in the same colors), and consumption behavior (e.g., product,

brand, or store choices) (E. M. Rogers, 2010; Ruvio et al., 2013; Viswanathan, Childers, & Moore, 2000). Mimicry, whether it is unconscious or conscious, also plays an important role in social interaction (Gueguen, Jacob, & Martin, 2009). For example, mimicry is found to establish rapport between the mimicker and the mimicked (Lakin & Chartrand, 2003). It also develops more feelings of connection between the mimicker and the mimicked (Duffy & Chartrand, 2015). Much of former research proposes the positive relatedness of mimicry and liking, such that mimicry increases liking (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999; Jacob, Guéguen, Martin, & Boulbry, 2011). Further, mimicry also acts as a means of communicating empathy, helping people feel like they are being understood, which results in increased interaction between the mimicker and the mimicked (Hess, Philippot, & Blairy, 1999).

Guided by the Consumer's Doppelganger Effect theory and the literature of mimicry, the present study proposes that it is a target audience's *conscious mimicry desire* toward an SMI that performs as an activation of compliance suggested in the Influence Framework and directs the target's favorable behavioral outcomes of both *social media WOM* (i.e., liking, following, and sharing behavior toward a SMI's Instagram contents) and *purchase intention* (i.e., intent to buy one of the same products, services, or brands endorsed or posted by a SMI). In conclusion, the conceptual model of the present research is developed by merging Consumer's Doppelganger Effect theory (Ruvio et al., 2013) into the Influence Framework (Scheer & Stern, 1992) and is presented in Figure 2.

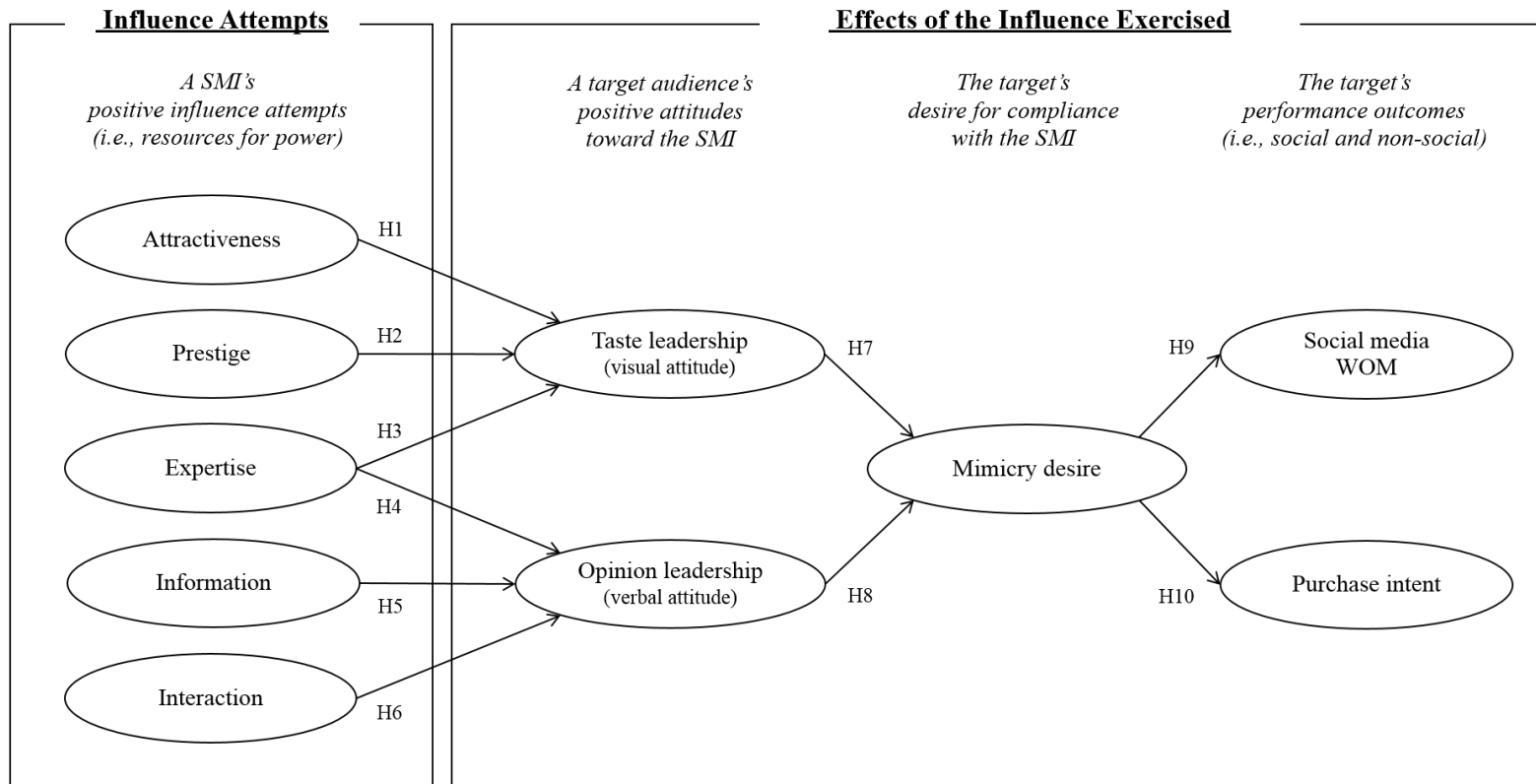


Figure 2. The conceptual model of the present research

2.3. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

A SMI's Influence Attempts affecting a Target's Attitudes

Building upon Influence Framework (Scheer & Stern, 1992), the present study proposes that a SMI would employ *attractiveness*, *prestige*, *expertise*, *information*, and *interaction* as her key power resources (i.e., influence attempts) to appeal to and impact her target audience. Influence Framework further proposes that the way in which the influence attempts are presented would affect the target's *attitude* toward the influencer (Scheer & Stern, 1992). Transferring this notion to the context of this study, the present research proposes that a SMI's influence attempts of showcasing *attractive*, *prestigious*, *expert*, *informative*, and *interactive* Instagram contents will impact a target's attitudes toward the SMI. Specifically, if these influence attempts are effective, the target would develop favorable attitudes toward the SMI, evaluating that the SMI exerts *taste leadership* (visual attitude) and *opinion leadership* (verbal attitude). This study puts a targets' visual and verbal attitudes at equal importance, because a SMI's Instagram contents are interwoven into the constant stream of visual and verbal descriptions of her personal, everyday lives (Abidin, 2015). Detailed explanations as to why this study identifies taste leadership and opinion leadership as noteworthy target attitudes are discussed in the following.

A Target's Cognitive Attitudes: Taste Leadership and Opinion Leadership

Attitude refers to a response to a stimuli or an attitude object (Breckler, 1984). In psychology, attitude is defined as an individual's tendency that is expressed by evaluating

a particular entity (i.e., an attitude object) with some degree of favor or disfavor (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). An attitude object can be a thing (e.g., a product or a brand), an event, a person, or a group of individuals (Scherer, 2005). The definition provided by Eagly and Chaiken (1993) highlighted three features of attitudes: tendency, entity, and evaluation (Robinson, Stimpson, Huefner, & Hunt, 1991). In a similar vein, Faircloth, Capella, and Alford (2001) conceptualized attitude as an evaluative judgement of people, objects, and ideas (i.e., entity or attitude objects). More precisely, Vaughan and Hogg (2005) defined attitude as a set of beliefs, feelings, and behavioral tendencies toward an attitude object.

When viewing the nature of attitude, there are two key approaches. One approach holds that attitude is an affective, unidimensional construct (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Therefore, this approach rates attitude with measures such as good-bad, pleasant-unpleasant, or desirable-undesirable. The other approach, known as the tripartite model (Rosenberg, 1960), describes attitude in terms of three components: cognitive, affective, and behavioral (or conative) components. The cognitive component consists of the “beliefs and thoughts” that an individual has about an attitude object (Robinson et al., 1991; Vaughan & Hogg, 2005). For example, an Instagram user may generate positive beliefs (e.g., “I believe that this SMI has good taste.”) or negative beliefs (e.g., “I believe that this SMI is not an opinion leader.”) in response to a SMI’s Instagram contents. The affective component refers to an individual’s “feelings or emotions” linked to an attitude object (Honkanen, Verplanken, & Olsen, 2006; Robinson et al., 1991). For instance, an Instagram user may feel a positive affect, such as attraction or liking, toward a SMI in response to the SMI’s Instagram contents. The behavioral component refers to the way an individual “behaves” in response to an attitude object (Honkanen et al., 2006). For instance, an

Instagram user may show some behavioral attitudes, such as laughing or crying, after being exposed to a SMI's Instagram contents.

The present research adopts the “cognitive” component of attitude indicated in the tripartite model to examine whether a target developed a positive evaluative belief toward a SMI: whether a target was *satisfied with the taste* offered by the SMI and placed *trust in the SMI's opinions*. To this end, the study proposes that a SMI's attempt of showcasing both visually and verbally attractive Instagram contents would lead a target audience to generate positive cognitive judgements (e.g., evaluations) toward the SMI (e.g., an attitude object), that is, to believe that the SMI exerts *taste leadership* and *opinion leadership*.

Taste Leadership

The work by McQuarrie et al. (2012) on the *megaphone effect* theory proposes that taste leadership is a significant and positive, visual attitude that a target audience would show toward a SMI. The megaphone effect describes the phenomenon in which Web 2.0 social media made a mass audience potentially available to ordinary consumers (McQuarrie & Phillips, 2014). The theory explains that social media allowed its users to publicly display their personal taste and share it with other users (McQuarrie et al., 2012). If such taste presentation is preferred by others, they can garner a wide range of audiences and grab a megaphone to raise their influence over the audiences (McQuarrie et al., 2012). Here, *taste* refers to an individual's “sense” of aesthetics (Berlyne, 1974). It is also conceptualized as an individual's “judgment” or “presentation” of aesthetic objects (e.g., art, home furniture, and fashion clothing), which indicates whether she has sophisticated preferences about the design of things (Bloch, 1995; Hoyer & Stokburger-Sauer, 2012). In

this vein, the present study defines *taste leadership* as a SMI's talent to exercise stylish aesthetic judgments (e.g., decent selections of clothing), showcase a good sense of aesthetic displays (e.g., showcasing an artistic food presentation or representing new mix-match ideas of home decor), and take the lead in exhibiting what looks good to others via her Instagram contents (McQuarrie et al., 2012). This way, taste leadership elevates a SMI from a regular consumer to the status of a role model that is worthy of note to be followed and imitated (McQuarrie et al., 2012; McQuarrie & Phillips, 2014). In brief, the megaphone effect reflects the phenomenon in which Web 2.0 social media allowed regular consumers to exercise taste leadership that wins over a wide audience, and thus to grab hold of the megaphone to influence the audience (McQuarrie et al., 2012). Through the demonstrations of good taste (i.e., showcasing good taste through the choices, evaluations, and engagements with particular products or brands), a peer social media user is capable of attempting and exerting influence over other social media users and amassing audience (McQuarrie et al., 2012; Stephen, 2016).

Taste Leadership from a SMI's Attractiveness, Prestige, and Expertise

This study expects that a target audience would show a positive, visual attitude toward a SMI (i.e., evaluating the SMI as having *taste leadership*) when the SMI's influence attempts of showcasing visually attractive (H1), seemingly prestigious (H2), and seemingly expert (H3) Instagram contents are successful. The rationales for proposing H1 to H3 is detailed in the following.

A SMI's taste leadership from attractiveness. This study proposes *attractiveness* as a trait significantly affecting *taste leadership*. Attractiveness refers to the quality of

being aesthetically appealing or pleasing (Patzner, 1983). In the context of this study, attractiveness is defined as the degree to which a SMI's Instagram contents are aesthetically pleasing. Having distinctive aesthetic judgements (e.g., evaluating a work of art or designs in a product) and aesthetic experiences is an important quality affecting an individual's taste (Hoyer & Stokburger-Sauer, 2012; Jessup, 1960). In the research streams of consumer behavior and marketing, taste is understood as a concept that deals with the judgment of and preference for aesthetic objects or designs (Hoyer & Stokburger-Sauer, 2012). It is also related to an individual's sense of discerning what is beautiful or fine-looking (Hoyer & Stokburger-Sauer, 2012). For instance, if an individual has the ability to "notice" or "see" the things that have good aesthetic designs or objects, she is perceived to have taste leadership (McQuarrie et al., 2012; Sibley, 1959). Taste, in this regard, is not only related to one's aesthetic discrimination or aesthetic appreciation, but also to her aesthetic perceptiveness and sensitivity (Cohen, 1973). According to Krishna, Elder, and Caldara (2010), good taste comes from the combination of the visual sensitivity and other sensory inputs. This hints the significant effect visual sensitivity has on aesthetic sensitivity and further on taste leadership. When this notion is applied to the context of this study, it is expected that a target audience would identify a SMI who has the ability to showcase attractive, appealing, or good-looking Instagram contents as having greater aesthetic sense. Therefore, the target would believe that the SMI whose Instagram contents are attractive exercises taste leadership. Hence, the present research formulates the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1. The extent to which a target audience identifies a SMI's Instagram contents as visually *attractive* will have a positive effect on the target's attitude toward the SMI, believing that the SMI has *taste leadership*.

A SMI's taste leadership from prestige. This study proposes *prestige* as another prime influence attempt affecting *taste leadership*. In this study, *prestige* is conceptualized as a SMI's Instagram contents being perceived as showcasing a relatively high-standing or high-status than those of others (Steenkamp et al., 2003). Extant literature suggests that *prestige* and *taste leadership* are highly related (Bourdieu, 1984; Hoyer & Stokburger-Sauer, 2012). The notion that *prestige* is an important factor influencing an individual's aesthetic appreciation and judgement and thus *taste leadership*, was empirically demonstrated in the context of art (Chapman & Williams, 1976). For example, when individuals were asked to rate pictures, they evaluated a picture that was highly rated by socially prestigious groups (e.g., experts or elite groups) as more attractive, compared to other pictures (Farnsworth & Beaumont, 1929). McQuarrie (2015) assents that a fine aesthetic taste is led by the taste of people who are in better social positions. That is, people who were born to higher social status are often better in discerning what has better aesthetic designs or what is better in terms of aesthetic taste (McQuarrie, 2015). This implies that those with high social status offers greater *taste leadership* than their counterpart. An individual's social status can be hinted by the products or brands she wears. For instance, the consumption of luxury branded products would signal that the owner is prestigious or in high social status (Alden, Steenkamp, & Batra, 1999). *Prestige* communicated by an individual's cultural capital is also a key driver affecting her aesthetic taste, particularly expressed in consumption choices (Bourdieu, 1984; Coskuner-Balli & Thompson, 2012). Cultural capital refers to the collection of an individual's symbolic elements, such as knowledge (e.g., knowing what a good wine is), skills (e.g., playing polo), and education (e.g., upbringing in families with well-educated parents), which are used when the person

demonstrates her high social status (Bourdieu, 1984; Lamont & Lareau, 1988). Gronow (2002) went so far as to say that taste is an ideal measure for stratifying those who belong to high-status versus those who do not. In the social media context, if a SMI had no access to prestigious occasions to attend luxury fashion shows or wear designer brand clothing, she would not be good at selecting and presenting high taste of fashion to others, that is, she would unlikely succeed in becoming a taste leader (McQuarrie et al., 2012). On the other hand, if a SMI implies high prestige via her Instagram contents (e.g., a selfie of a SMI wearing a luxury handbag or drinking a luxurious wine), she would appear to offer better taste leadership than a SMI with less prestige. Based on this stream of review, the present study generates the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2. The extent to which a target audience identifies a SMI's Instagram contents as *prestigious* will have a positive effect on the target's attitude toward the SMI, believing that the SMI has *taste leadership*.

A SMI's taste leadership from expertise. This study proposes *expertise* as another significant quality affecting a SMI's *taste leadership*, noting that good taste is prescribed by experts in a particular field (Holbrook, 2005). Expertise refers to an individual's quality of having more knowledge and experience in making product choices or decisions, than others do (McQuarrie et al., 2012). This is why expertise renders an individual to be perceived as a source of valid assertions (Hovland et al., 1953). When viewed from an aesthetic perspective, an individual with expertise has the skills to make a more sophisticated interpretation of visual input in terms of art and style than a person with less knowledge and experience (Leder, Belke, Oeberst, & Augustin, 2004). Individuals with more experiences and knowledge tend to have better standards and judgements of what is

aesthetically pleasing or visually appealing (Hekkert & Van Wieringen, 1996; Kirk, Skov, Christensen, & Nygaard, 2009; Leder et al., 2004), and thus are able to exercise better taste leadership (McQuarrie et al., 2012). The same holds true for SMIs. When SMIs share their professional knowledge or personal brand experiences in terms of fashion, food, or home decor via their Instagram contents, target audience regard these SMIs as experts in such fields (McQuarrie & Phillips, 2014). Moreover, target audience deem these SMIs' experiences not just as their personal statements, but also as their sophisticated taste display (McQuarrie & Phillips, 2014). Donna Kim, a SMI who are "in the know" when it comes to beauty, is one good example. Because Donna Kim is well known as a beauty expert, her tips and taste in the choice of beauty products are important to her followers (Kapitan & Silvera, 2016). This stream of review leads this study to expect that the more a SMI is recognized to have expertise, the more she appears to exert taste leadership. Therefore, this study formulates the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3. The extent to which a target audience identifies a SMI's Instagram contents as *expert* will have a positive effect on the target's attitude toward the SMI, believing that the SMI has *taste leadership*.

Opinion Leadership

The *two-step flow* theory, introduced by Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1944) and later elaborated by Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955), provides the conceptual framework for this study's proposition that *opinion leadership* is a significant and positive, verbal attitude that a target audience would show toward a SMI in the setting of Instagram. Two-step flow model assumes that information and ideas flow from mass media to opinion leaders (the

so-called influencers (Merton, 1968)), and then, from these opinion leaders to a wider population (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). Through this two-step flow process, an opinion leader communicates not only the pure information that she receives from the media, but also projects her personal interpretations and opinions into the information and convey them altogether to the mass public. This way, opinion leaders intervene between the media's direct message and the mass audience's reaction to the message. They can direct the attention of target audience to a particular issue, and moreover signal how the audiences should respond or react toward it (Park & Kaye, 2017). In this regard, opinion leaders are individuals who are motivated to talk about certain products, and influence the attitudes or product choices of others via WOM communication (Hollander, 1961). A SMI plays such role of an opinion leader by endorsing a certain product or giving personal recommendations about a particular brand via WOM communication, thus directing the audience's attention (F. Li & Du, 2011). A SMI influences audiences to change their attitudes and behaviors more quickly and efficiently than traditional media does, because a SMI is more relatable to her target than an article in a newspaper (Glucksman, 2017). Based on this stream of review, the present study conceptualizes *opinion leadership* as a SMI's ability to influence the attitudes or behaviors of her audience via social media WOM (Lyons & Henderson, 2005).

Opinion Leadership from a SMI's Expertise, Information, and Interaction

In this section, the study proposes the relationships between a SMI's influence attempts and a target audience's verbal attitude toward the SMI. Specifically, it suggests that a target would evaluate a SMI as exerting *opinion leadership*, when the target perceives

the SMI's Instagram contents as having expertise (H4), and being informative (H5) and interactive (H6). Detailed rationales for proposing H4 to H6 are specified in the following.

A SMI's opinion leadership from expertise. It has been noted that a SMI with greater expertise has more opinion leadership than a SMI with less expertise (F. Li & Du, 2011; Xiong, Cheng, Liang, & Wu, 2018). Therefore, this study proposes *expertise* as a critical quality affecting SMIs' verbal attitude of *opinion leadership*. Opinion leaders have been traditionally viewed as those who have higher levels of interest, recognition, and knowledge in diverse social issues compared to non-influencers (Weimann, 1994). They were also viewed as the pioneers of social trends, or regarded as early adopters of innovations (Park, 2013; E. Rogers, 1995). Therefore, the more knowledge, competence, and experience an individual has, the more opinion leadership she could exert. More recently, social media has put more emphasis on this expertise quality of an opinion leader than before (Park, 2013). A new type of social media opinion leader (i.e., a SMI) plays the same role of WOM generator and WOM communicator as traditional opinion leaders did, by having the skill to stay on top of "what is new" and having wide social networks to share the newest information (Wei, 2016). However, the manner in which these social media opinion leaders exert an opinion leadership has become different from the way that traditional opinion leaders did. While traditional opinion leaders relied mostly on their high socioeconomic status or political standing to influence others' opinions and attitudes, social media opinion leaders depend more upon their own expertise, perspectives, and personal judgements than upon their social positions in exercising opinion leadership (Chang & Ghim, 2011; Park, 2013). Applying this notion to the context of this study, it is expected

that a SMI who is perceived as an expert in a particular field would exert greater opinion leadership than her counterpart. Thus, this study formulates the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4. The extent to which a target audience identifies a SMI's Instagram contents as *expert* will have a positive effect on the target's attitude toward the SMI, believing that the SMI has *opinion leadership*.

A SMI's opinion leadership from information. Being *informative* is another important influence attempt that a SMI would pitch to appeal to her target audience and exercise *opinion leadership*. Social media platform provides its users with opportunities to become an opinion leader if she could produce noticable information that would attract public attention (Hwang & Shim, 2010). People have always been seeking information so that they would increase the awareness and knowledge of a variety of issues (Shao, 2009). Today, one of the popular mediums that individuals use for seeking such information is SNSs (Bilgihan, Peng, & Kandampully, 2014). Specifically, when people search for information concerning products, services, or trends, they rely more upon these SNSs than traditional media (De Veirman et al., 2017; Liljander, Gummerus, & Söderlund, 2015). They do so because many of these SNSs allow peer consumers to post and share their personal experiences and true opinions about the products, services, or trends, which serve as information for others (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Especially, the information provided by SMIs are believed to be more reliable than that of other sources (Bailey, 2005; Bilgihan et al., 2014; Chu & Kim, 2011; De Veirman et al., 2017). Indeed, SMIs are considered to be a trusted source of information by opinion seekers, because they explain not only the features or quality of a product or service but also share their personal experiences (e.g., reviews, comments, and recommendations) about it (Alhidari, Iyer, & Paswan, 2015;

Alsulaiman, Forbes, Dean, & Cohen, 2015; Liljander et al., 2015; Song, Cho, & Kim, 2017). By sharing both the functional and personal information via their Instagram contents, these SMIs appear to be more informative about the subjects (e.g., the newest trends and products related to fashion, food, health, travel, and others) than non-influencers, and thus are more likely to exert opinion leadership to others (Lin, Bruning, & Swarna, 2018). Taken above, the present research formulates the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5. The extent to which a target audience identifies a SMI's Instagram contents as *informative* will have a positive effect on the target's attitude toward the SMI, believing that the SMI has *opinion leadership*.

A SMI's opinion leadership from interaction. The present study proposes *interaction* as another prime skill affecting SMIs' *opinion leadership*. In the context of this study, interaction is conceptualized as the degree to which a SMI is perceived as reciprocally active (Merriam-Webster, 2004). It is important for opinion leaders to communicate and interact with mass audiences because they act as information brokers between the media and the public (Meng & Wei, 2015). Such quality of interaction is particularly more important to social media opinion leaders than to traditional opinion leaders. While the influence of traditional opinion leaders was largely determined by their demographics, social status or lifestyle features, the influential power of SMIs is significantly shaped by the online interaction they make with others (Wang & Li, 2016). The form of online interaction can be the user-to-user interaction of posting a comment or SMIs' communication with their audiences, which provides a sense of interpersonal interaction (Thorson & Rodgers, 2006). It is further proposed that the more an individual

perceives interpersonal interaction toward another person or an object, the more she develops a positive attitude toward the person/object. The relationship between perceived interaction and positive attitude has been demonstrated by numerous studies (Chen, Griffith, & Shen, 2005; Lee, 2005; Sicilia, Ruiz, & Munuera, 2005; Wu, 2005). For example, Sicilia, Ruiz, and Munuera (2005) conducted an experiment to compare how consumers process ad information in a Website when they are exposed to an interactive Website versus a non-interactive Website. Their results show that individuals who were exposed to the interactive Website, opposed to those who were exposed to the non-interactive Website, processed the ad information more thoroughly and expressed a more favorable attitude toward the Website. Applying this notion to the context of this study, it is expected that the more a SMI is perceived to interact with her target audience, the more likely that the target audience would process the opinions of the SMI thoroughly and express a favorable attitude toward the SMI, that is, evaluating the SMI as exerting greater opinion leadership. Therefore, the present research formulates the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 6. The extent to which a target audience identifies a SMI and her Instagram contents as *interactive* will have a positive effect on the target's attitude toward the SMI, believing that the SMI has *opinion leadership*.

The Target's Attitudes affecting Conscious Mimicry Desire

Influence Framework (Scheer & Stern, 1992) proposes that a target audience would decide whether or not to comply with (e.g., consciously mimic) an influencer depending on the attitude that she develops, which is shaped in response to the influencer's influence attempts. Guided by this flow of influence mechanism, the present study proposes that the

extent to which a target develops a positive visual attitude of *taste leadership* (H7) and a positive verbal attitude of *opinion leadership* (H8) toward a SMI's Instagram contents would positively influence the extent to which the target is inspired to *consciously mimic* the SMI. Detailed rationales for proposing H7 and H8 are specified in the following.

Attitude, which refers to an individual's predisposition or tendency in response to an attitude object (e.g., a certain idea, object, person, or situation), is a significant predictor affecting automatic mimicry (Bourgeois & Hess, 2008; McHugo, Lanzetta, & Bush, 1991; Stel et al., 2010). Automatic mimicry (e.g., unconsciously imitating other's facial or emotional expressions) is influenced by the observer's attitude towards the observed, such that people often mimic those whom they like without noticing (Blocker & McIntosh, 2016; McIntosh, 2006). According to Blocker and McIntosh (2016), when people develop an interpersonal attitude toward their interaction partner (e.g., considering the partner to be a member of their in-group), they are more likely to non-consciously mimic the emotional expressions of the partner. In a similar vein, Leighton, Bird, Orsini, and Heyes (2010) suggest the impact of social attitudes on automatic mimicry. They empirically demonstrated that individuals primed with words promoting pro-social attitudes (e.g. affiliate, friend, cooperate, together) displayed greater automatic mimicry than people primed with words stimulating anti-social attitudes (e.g. rebel, independent, individual, disagreeable). Indeed, attitude is a critical driver influencing one's imitative behavior (Likowski, Mühlberger, Seibt, Pauli, & Weyers, 2008).

A target's conscious mimicry desire from taste and opinion leaderships. The effect of attitude on mimicry holds true in a conscious mimicry context as well. Ruvio et al. (2013) propose that people are inclined to intentionally mimic the product choices of

their interaction partner when they evaluate the partner favorably as one of their role models. They tested this notion among Israeli teenage students, and found that the students indeed showed a strong desire to doppelgang the consumption behavior of others whom they perceived as either their unidirectional role models (e.g., celebrities) or bidirectional role models (e.g., family members). This type of mimicry is referred to as conscious mimicry, in that the students copied their role models with a consciousness to be more like or to look more like the models (Martin & Bush, 2000; Ruvio et al., 2013). It is also labeled as conscious mimicry in that they are aware of their imitative behavior (White & Argo, 2011). While unconscious mimicry communicates to the mimicked individual a message of “I show how I feel” (Bavelas, Black, Lemery, & Mullett, 1986), conscious mimicry signals a different message, which is “I show who I want to be” (Ruvio et al., 2013). Former research consents that people are motivated to observe and mimic the values, attitudes, and behaviors of others whom they aspire to be (i.e., role models) (Bandura, 1986; Martin & Bush, 2000). A role model can be anyone they come in contact with, either directly or indirectly, anyone who has the potential to influence others’ attitudes or decisions (Bandura & Walters, 1977), or anyone who inspires others by excelling at her domain of interest (Lockwood & Kunda, 1997). From these definitions of role models, a range of role players including parents, teachers, and peers can be counted as potential role models (Martin & Bush, 2000).

To choose a role model among potential influencers, people rely on some cues (Sims & Brinkman, 2002). Both visual and verbal cues facilitate individuals to decide whom they can look up to as their role models. Specifically, when either visual or verbal cues signal that a person is a *leader* in one way or another, people would label the person

as a role model whom others can imitate (Nisbet & Kotcher, 2009; Weimann, 1994). This is not an exception when classifying a role model to be mimicked in a social media context, such as identifying a SMI. The visual contents (e.g., images or videos) created by a SMI with her personal lifestyle, style in fashion, and product choices signal whether or not the SMI takes the lead in offering good taste (De Veirman et al., 2017; McQuarrie et al., 2012). When a SMI is recognized as a *taste leader* and thus serves as a role model by other social media users, other users feel inspired to copy the lifestyle patterns or product choices of the SMI (De Veirman et al., 2017). Also, exerting *opinion leadership* can be a significant verbal cue that makes people identify a SMI as a role model (Clark, Martin, & Bush, 2001; Kratzer & Lettl, 2009). People consider opinion leaders to be more innovative (Childers, 1986), more experienced (Venkatraman, 1989), and therefore more familiar with diverse products (Chan & Misra, 1990) than they are. Due to the novel information and guidance these opinion leaders offer in terms of products, people consider them as role models whose consumption behavior can be trusted and imitated (Ruvio et al., 2013). Based on this stream of review, the present study expects that positive target attitudes toward a SMI, that is, believing that the SMI embodies the roles of *taste leadership* and *opinion leadership*, would influence the target to *consciously mimic* the SMI with an aspiration to look like or be more like the SMI. In this regard, the present research formulates the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 7. The extent to which a target audience believes a SMI as having *taste leadership* will have a positive effect on the target's desire to *consciously mimic* the SMI.

Hypothesis 8. The extent to which a target audience believes a SMI as having *opinion leadership* will have a positive effect on the target's desire to *consciously mimic* the SMI.

The Target's Mimicry Desire affecting Performance Outcomes

An individual's mimicry behavior leads to a variety of favorable outcomes (White & Argo, 2011). Drawing on the influence framework of Scheer and Stern (1992), the last two hypotheses of this study describe the effects of a target's conscious mimicry desire on her behavioral outcomes, both in terms of social (H9) and non-social (H10) outcomes. The literature that guides the formulation of H9 and H10 is specified in the following.

A target's mimicry desire and social outcome. Extant literature proposes the effect of mimicry on interpersonal relationship (Chartrand & Dalton, 2009; Duffy & Chartrand, 2015; Lakin, Jefferis, Cheng, & Chartrand, 2003; Stel & Vonk, 2010). Consistent with this notion, the present study proposes that a target audience's conscious mimicry desire would direct her social performance outcome, that is, *social media WOM*. In the present study, social media WOM is conceptualized as a target's liking, following, and sharing behavior toward a SMI and thus toward a SMI's Instagram contents (Kim & Johnson, 2016). Indeed, mimicry has a powerful effect on developing a strong interpersonal relationship, empathy, liking, and sharing between the mimicker (e.g., a target audience) and the mimicked (e.g., a SMI) (Chartrand & Dalton, 2009). According to an experiment study of Adank, Stewart, Connell, and Wood (2013), consciously imitating another's speech accent increased liking between partners (i.e., the mimicker and the mimicked) in a conversation. Research by LaFrance and Broadbent (1976) assents that the extent of mimicking that takes place during interactions between a student and a teacher (in a college seminar classroom) is related to

the degree of interpersonal closeness the student feels with the teacher. Much of former mimicry research supports the notion that mimicry creates harmonious interactions and empathy (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999; Lakin et al., 2003), which results in greater sharing and liking between the mimicker and the mimicked (Bourgeois & Hess, 2008; Lakin et al., 2003). Particularly, the unique features of social media facilitate target audience to directly express their affinity and empathy toward SMIs by clicking the heart-shaped button below posts created by SMIs, by leaving comments on the SMIs' posts, or by regramming (reposting) to share them with others (Chen, Chen, Chen, Chen, & Yu, 2013; Kim & Johnson, 2016). Thereupon, it is reasonable to expect that the more a target develops a *mimicry desire* toward a SMI, the more she would show *social media WOM*, expressing her liking, following, and sharing toward the SMI using the Instagram features (i.e., a heart, follow, or regarm button). To this end, this study proposes as following:

Hypothesis 9. The extent to which a target audience is inspired to *consciously mimic* a SMI will have a positive effect on the target's social performance outcome, that is, *social media WOM*.

A target's mimicry desire and non-social outcome. Extant research proposes the effect of mimicry on consumer product choice or consumer decision making (Herrmann, Rossberg, Huber, Landwehr, & Henkel, 2011; Jacob et al., 2011; Tanner, Ferraro, Chartrand, Bettman, & Baaren, 2007). This is because consumer decisions, in many cases, take place in social environments (Tanner et al., 2007). Whether the environment is highly central to a consumer choice (e.g., negotiating with a salesperson at a retail store) or of a more peripheral nature (e.g., browsing around a store with other shoppers), interactions with others often play a critical part in the consumer decision process (Tanner et al., 2007).

Specifically, it happens in a way that people unconsciously imitate the consumption behavior of their interaction partner (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999; Dimberg, Thunberg, & Elmehed, 2000). The study of Tanner et al. (2007) empirically tested this notion in a food consumption context. In their study, participants were asked to observe a video in which a subject was consuming either a goldfish-cracker or an animal-cracker. As expected, participants who were exposed to the goldfish-cracker food condition automatically mimicked the subject's consumption behavior, such that they selected more of the goldfish-cracker consumed by the subject than the snack not consumed by the subject (i.e., animal-cracker). Jacob et al. (2011) propose that the effect of mimicry on consumer product choice holds true even in a conscious mimicry context. They empirically demonstrated that the sales clerks who mimicked some of the verbal or nonverbal expressions of customers resulted in more consumption from these customers, which led to greater sales, than the sales clerks who did not mimic customers. Transferring this effect to the context of the present study, it is expected that the more a target audience shows conscious mimicry desire toward a SMI, the more the target will imitate the product choices of the SMI, that is, to buy one of the same products, services, or brands endorsed or posted by the SMI. In this vein, the present research proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 10. The extent to which a target audience is inspired to *consciously mimic* a SMI will have a positive effect on the target's nonsocial performance outcome, that is, the *intent to purchase one of the same products, services, or brands* endorsed or posted by the SMI.

2.4. SUMMARY

Chapter II described the emergence of SMIs and the significance of Influencer Marketing led by these new influencers in social media. The chapter also introduced different use of terms for SMIs and provided their definitions. Thereafter, the chapter reviewed the SMI literature to identify the drivers and impacts of SMIs that are worthy of note and discussed the research void which this study attempts to fill in. Next, the chapter provided the theoretical justifications for proposing the conceptual model of this study. The research model of this study relied upon the Influence Framework (Scheer & Stern, 1992), which comprises of four structures: an influencer's influence appeals, a target's attitudes, compliance desire, and performance outcomes. The study also partially grounded on Consumer's Doppelganger Effect (Ruvio et al., 2013) theory, from which it adopted the concept of conscious mimicry. Guided by these two theories, the conceptual model of this study proposed that *a SMI's influence attempts* (i.e., attractiveness, prestige, expertise, information, and interaction) would lead to *positive target attitudes* (i.e., positive evaluative belief that the SMI has taste leadership and opinion leadership), which, in turn, would trigger the target's *conscious mimicry desire* that would eventually direct the target's *favorable behavioral outcomes* (i.e., social media WOM and purchase intent to try one of the same products, services, or brands endorsed or posted by the SMI) in the setting of Instagram. Table 4 lists the hypotheses proposed in this study.

Table 4. List of hypotheses

[The # of Hypothesis] Proposed Relationships	Hypotheses Statements
[H1] Attractiveness → Taste leadership	The extent to which a target audience identifies a SMI's Instagram contents as visually attractive will have a positive effect on the target's attitude toward the SMI, believing that the SMI has taste leadership.
[H2] Prestige → Taste leadership	The extent to which a target audience identifies a SMI's Instagram contents as prestigious will have a positive effect on the target's attitude toward the SMI, believing that the SMI has taste leadership.
[H3] Expertise → Taste leadership	The extent to which a target audience identifies a SMI's Instagram contents as expert will have a positive effect on the target's attitude toward the SMI, believing that the SMI has taste leadership.
[H4] Expertise → Opinion leadership	The extent to which a target audience identifies a SMI's Instagram contents as expert will have a positive effect on the target's attitude toward the SMI, believing that the SMI has opinion leadership.
[H5] Information → Opinion leadership	The extent to which a target audience identifies a SMI's Instagram contents as informative will have a positive effect on the target's attitude toward the SMI, believing that the SMI has opinion leadership.
[H6] Interaction → Opinion leadership	The extent to which a target audience identifies a SMI and her Instagram contents as interactive will have a positive effect on the target's attitude toward the SMI, believing that the SMI has opinion leadership.
[H7] Taste leadership → Mimicry desire	The extent to which a target audience believes a SMI as having taste leadership will have a positive effect on the target's desire to consciously mimic the SMI.
[H8] Opinion leadership → Mimicry desire	The extent to which a target audience believes a SMI as having opinion leadership will have a positive effect on the target's desire to consciously mimic the SMI.
[H9] Mimicry desire → Social media WOM	The extent to which a target audience is inspired to consciously mimic a SMI will have a positive effect on the target's social performance outcome, that is, social media WOM.
[H10] Mimicry desire → Purchase intention	The extent to which a target audience is inspired to consciously mimic a SMI will have a positive effect on the target's nonsocial performance outcome, that is, the intent to purchase one of the same products, services, or brands endorsed or posted by the SMI.

CHAPTER THREE:

QUALITATIVE METHOD AND RESULT

This chapter illustrates the methodological approaches that have been used to achieve the stated research objectives of this study. To attest the conceptual model of this study, which explains the overarching, influence mechanism of a SMI on a target audience (as shown in Figure 2), the study included both the qualitative approach (i.e., focus group) and the quantitative approaches (i.e., descriptive, survey research) in its research design. In this chapter, the qualitative phase of research is discussed. The chapter employed a focus group discussion to gain insight as to why Instagram users (i.e., target audiences) favor and follow certain SMIs. Detailed descriptions regarding the sample, procedure, analysis, and result of the focus group are presented in the following.

3.1. FOCUS GROUP

Focus group is a research technique employed as a means of generating in-depth experiential information (i.e., qualitative data) (Carey & Smith, 1994). More precisely, it refers to an exploratory, guided interview or interactive conversation among a group of individuals who are selected and assembled by researchers to discuss about the topic of interest to the research (Powell, Single, & Lloyd, 1996). Through a focus group, participants comment, explain, and share their experiences about the discussion subject (Powell et al., 1996). This allows reserachers to find the cognitive rationale as to *why* participants hold certain attitudes toward the discussion topic and *why* they behave in the

way they do (Powell et al., 1996). To gain better understanding as to *why* target audience favor and follow certain SMIs, the present research conducted one focus group session.

Focus Group: Sample

The sample for a focus group should consist of informants who represent the overall population and can contribute to helping researchers gain a better understanding of the research topic (Nagle & Williams, 2013). A group size of seven to twelve participants is proposed to be most effective for a focus group (Nagle & Williams, 2013). To this end, the present research invited eleven informants to the focus group session. All informants were students who were taking one of the retail and consumer sciences courses from University of Tennessee at Knoxville. They had experiences using Instagram, had their own Instagram accounts, and followed at least one SMI on Instagram.

Focus Group: Procedure

The focus group session was held on February 15th of 2018 in a classroom at University of Tennessee at Knoxville. The focus group discussion was conducted with the attendance of one moderator (the author of this dissertation) who prepared the discussion guide to ensure that the focus group covered all subjects of interest. Another observer (major advisor of this study) attended the focus group interview to take notes and summarized the discussion with the participants during the session for efficient analysis (Nagle & Williams, 2013). The session continued for 40 minutes. Upon focus group closure, all informants in the session were compensated with extra points for the course as a token of appreciation. The details of the focus group interview are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Details of the focus group session

Number of participants	Date	Location	Duration	Moderator	Observer & note taker
11 female informants	February 15 th , 2018	A senior level classroom of a retail and consumer sciences course at University of Tennessee at Knoxville	40 mins (morning)	1	1

The focus group discussion was designed to elicit information on possible concepts or themes that may explain *why* target audience consider certain SMIs more desirable to like and follow than others; whether they are related to personal characteristics (e.g., SMIs' appearance, personality, or lifestyle) or other prime factors (e.g., SMIs' Instagram contents, which include their visual presentations such as good quality pictures or their verbal presentations such as inspiring quote postings). An optimal focus group is suggested to include approximately five open-ended questions that promote discussion, but to exclude yes-no questions that limit discussion and decrease the value of a focus group (Nagle & Williams, 2013). To this end, the focus group of the present study consisted of one set of yes-no questions (for the screening purpose only) and five open-ended questions (for discussion). The questions pitched in the focus group are listed in Table 6.

Table 6. The questions of the focus group interview

# of question & purpose	Questions prepared and pitched by the moderator
1 st screening question	Do you use Instagram and have an Instagram account?
2 nd screening question	Do you have at least one SMI you like and follow on Instagram?
1 st discussion question	Why do you like and follow these SMIs?
2 nd discussion question	What aspects/qualities of them attract and influence you?
3 rd discussion question	If you have (or if you haven't) thought about mimicking or mimicked the style (e.g., lifestyle, hairstyle, makeup style, or fashion style) or behavior (e.g., activities) suggested by your choice of SMIs, why?
4 th discussion question	Why do you (or why don't you) want to try one of the same products endorsed or posted by your choice of SMIs?
5 th discussion question	What is the audience size (i.e., the number of followers) that makes you perceive that he/she is a SMI?

Focus Group: Analysis and Result

The analysis of the focus group followed the guideline of Nagle and Williams (2013). As recommended, the analysis was initiated immediately after the focus group closure and the participants' discussion of the focus group question was summarized into big themes. The results of the analysis are presented in the following.

The screening questions confirmed that all the participants were qualified to share their experiences about SMIs on Instagram. Next, participants' responses to the first and second discussion questions hinted what qualities or aspects of SMIs are worthy of note. As shown in Table 7, participants commented that they preferred and followed certain SMIs for five prime reasons (themes); (1) the SMIs' personality (e.g., having genuine, relatable, or inspirational personality), (2) lifestyle (e.g., showcasing ideal lifestyle), (3) taste (e.g., showcasing good sense of taste), (4) visual contents (e.g., showcasing good quality pictures), and (5) verbal contents (e.g., sharing positive quotes). These responses,

in line with the megaphone effect theory (McQuarrie et al., 2012) and SMI literature, support the significance of two attitude constructs proposed in this study: *taste leadership* (visual target attitude) and *opinion leadership* (verbal target attitude).

In terms of the third discussion question asking about the participants' *mimicry desire* toward SMIs, most of the participants responded that they were *inspired* to adopt certain style, attitudes, or behaviors sought by SMIs, but they did not admit that they were *mimicking* them. However, the statement of one of the respondents hinted that it was the term *mimic* that made respondents reluctant to admit their imitation behavior towards SMIs, although they were revealing their desire to mimic: "I don't usually wear makeup as you can see, but I thought about it after I saw a makeup video of an Instagram influencer who wore shades of pink lipstick. After then, I thought maybe I should wear makeup." These findings inferred that the researcher should be careful when adopting and modifying the measurement item for *mimicry desire*. The procedure of instrument development will be described more in detail in the next section.

In regard to the fourth discussion question, all the respondents commented that although they developed favorable attitudes toward the products endorsed by SMIs, it did not lead them to their purchase behavior. However, the researcher deemed that Instagram users in the quantitative survey, among a greater size of sample, may show the intent to purchase one of the same products, services, or brands endorsed or posted by one of the SMIs they are following. Therefore, the researcher decided to include the question about *purchase intention* in the online survey questionnaire. As for the last discussion question, all the respondents agreed that an Instagram user with at least a thousand followers was deemed appropriate to be regarded as one of the SMIs.

Table 7. Prime themes emerged in the focus group interview

Question: “Why do you like and follow one of your favorite SMIs on Instagram?”	
Prime themes	List of responses: “The SMI whom I like and follow ..”
Personality	is realistic, relatable
	is unique, genuine
	is honest, confident, charismatic, successful
	is pretty or beautiful
	is a role model of a kind; inspires me; gives inspiration
Lifestyle	has a perfect life
	has ideal family relationship
	has a healthy lifestyle
	has an adventurous lifestyle
	provides lifestyle tips
Taste	has good sense of taste
	has expensive taste
	showcases great style in fashion or passion for clothing
Visual contents	posts good quality pictures
	makes good visual presentations
	posts funny pictures
Verbal contents	posts positive quotes
	posts motivational quotes
	posts inspirational quotes

3.2. SUMMARY

The chapter discussed the purpose, sample, procedure, analysis and results of the focus group discussion in regards to the conceptual model introduced in Chapter II. Specifically, it described the qualitative research approach, a focus group, which was aimed at gaining insights as to why Instagram users like and follow certain SMIs. The focus group session induced five prime themes that accounted for the participants' liking and following behavior toward their favorite SMIs: SMIs' *personality, lifestyle, taste, visual contents, and verbal contents*. The focus group discussion also provided important suggestion; it alerted the researcher to pay special attention to the measurement development for *mimicry desire*. Based upon these key results of the focus group interview, online survey questionnaire (including the measurement development) and three phases of quantitative research (i.e., the pre-test, pilot-test, and main-test survey research) were proceeded, which are described in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR:

QUANTITATIVE METHODS AND RESULTS

This chapter illustrates the quantitative methods (i.e., descriptive survey research) performed to statistically attest the proposed conceptual model and hypothesized relationships in this study. The quantitative research employed an online survey method with three phases of data collection: the pre-test, the pilot-test, and the main-test. The chapter is divided into five sections. The first section describes how the present study developed its initial measurement items. The second section describes the purpose, sample, procedure, analysis, and results of the pre-test survey (n = 48). In the third section, the purpose, sample, procedure, analyses, and results of the pilot-test survey (n = 155) are discussed. The fourth section presents those of the main-test survey (n = 395), focusing on analyzing the measurement model and the structural model, testing the hypothesized relationships among the proposed constructs, and confirming the mediation effect of mimicry through the use of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The last section provides the summary of the quantitative research performed in this study. Prior to dispatching the surveys, this study was reviewed and exempted by the University of Tennessee Institutional Review Board (Approval No: UTK IRB-18-04414-XM; Appendix A).

4.1. INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT

Initial measurement items were developed prior to conducting three phases of quantitative research. As shown in Figure 2, the suggested model illustrates the relationships among four tenets: a target audience's (i) perceived influence attempts, (ii) attitudes, (iii) mimicry desire, and (iv) performance outcomes in response to a SMI's Instagram contents. The measurement scales of each tenet were adapted from the literature and modified to fit the Instagram context. The development of the initial measurement items is described in detail in the following.

Measurement Development

Measurements were defined in terms of *perceived influence attempts* (i.e., the extent to which a target perceives a SMI's Instagram contents to be attractive, prestigious, expert, informative and interactive), *positive cognitive attitudes* (i.e., the extent to which the target believes that the SMI has taste leadership and opinion leadership), *conscious mimicry desire* (i.e., the extent to which the target is inspired to mimic the SMI so as to be more like the SMI), and *behavioral outcomes* (i.e., the extent to which the target reveals social media WOM and an intent to purchase one of the same products, services, or brands endorsed or posted by the SMI). All the items were measured on a 7-point-Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (7). Table 8 presents the initial measurement developed for pre-testing versus the original measurement that it relied upon.

Measurement of influence attempts. As demonstrated by the review of literature in Chapter 1, attractiveness, prestige, expertise, information, and interaction were identified as prime power resources that a marketing channel member (e.g., a SMI) exerts

to influence another channel member in a different distribution level (e.g., a target audience). To this end, a three-item scale of *attractiveness* was adapted from Argo and Main (2008); a three-item scale of *prestige*, from Han and Terpstra (1988) and Steenkamp et al. (2003); and a five-item scale of *expertise*, from Liljander et al. (2015). All these scales were modified from the original scales to fit the Instagram context of this study. For example, as for *attractiveness*, the measure of “good-looking” was modified as “I find [the name of the selected SMI (hereafter referred to as ‘SMI’s name’)]’s Instagram contents good-looking.” In addition, for *information*, a three-item scale was selected and adapted from Asghar (2015). The original scale measurement contained seven items; however, four items were deleted due to redundancy and irrelevance in the Instagram context (e.g., “Facebook makes me learn about a topic I am not familiar with”). As for *interaction*, a four-item scale was adapted from Labrecque (2014). In addition to these four items, two more items were added to reflect the Instagram context of sending a direct message or posting a comment. For example, the original statement, that is, “[Brand] will talk back to me if I post a message.” was divided into two statements: “I feel that [SMI’s name] would talk back to me if I send a private message.” and “I feel that [SMI’s name] would talk back to me if I post a comment.” As a result, a total of twenty items were used to measure target audience’ perceived influence attempts in response to their choice of SMIs (see Table 8).

Measurement of attitudes. In this study, two types of positive cognitive attitudes were proposed: a positive visual attitude of taste leadership and a positive verbal attitude of opinion leadership. For *taste leadership*, the study relied upon a ten-item scale of Bloch, Brunel, and Arnold (2003). Among the three dimensions (i.e., value, acumen, and response) of the original construct proposed by Bloch et al. (2003), this study adopted only the ‘value’

and ‘acumen’ dimensions and modified the measures to fit the Instagram context. Further, the measures for taste leadership were refined to reflect its definition. For example, the original statement, “I see things in a product’s design that other people tend to pass over.” was modified as “[SMI’s name] is one of the first people to find the newest trends and designs that other people tend to pass over.” In terms of *opinion leadership*, this study adopted the measure from Park (2013). The original scale measurement contained seven items. However, two items were deleted due to irrelevance in the Instagram context: “I like to assume responsibility what I do on Twitter.” and “I enjoy convincing others of my opinions on Twitter.” As a result, a total of nine items were used to measure positive target attitudes in response to the SMIs’ influence attempts (see Table 8).

Measurement of mimicry desire. The measurement of *mimicry desire* was adapted from a five-item scale of Awasthi and Choraria (2015) to reflect the conscious facet of mimicry. The original scales were modified to fit the Instagram context of this study. For example, the original statement of “I do not aspire to the lifestyle of celebrities.” was modified as “I aspire to the lifestyle of this social media influencer [SMI’s name].” More importantly, the measure of mimicry was refined to reflect the discussion derived from the focus group; most of the participants commented that they were *inspired* to copy certain style, attitudes, or behaviors sought by SMIs, but did not admit the fact they were *mimicking* the SMIs. Referring to the result of the focus group, this study revised the wording of the original scale to reflect both the *inspirational* and *conscious* aspects of mimicry (in which respondents are inspired to imitate certain attitudes or behaviors that are in line with their beliefs) rather than non-conscious mimicry (in which respondents automatically mirror others’ attitudes or behaviors regardless their beliefs). To this end, the

statement “I want to be as trendy as models in magazines.” was modified to “Inspired by this social media influencer [SMI’s name], I want to be as trendy as him/her.” As a result, a total of five items were used to measure a target audience’s desire to consciously mimic their choice of SMIs (see Table 8).

Measurement of performance outcomes. Behavioral outcomes were measured both in terms of social performance outcome (i.e., social media WOM) and non-social performance outcome (i.e., purchase intention). For *social media WOM*, a scale was adopted from Kim and Johnson (2016). The original scale measurement contained five items. However, two items were deleted due to lack of relevance to the Instagram context: “I would pass along the postings to contacts on my Facebook friends list.” and “I would pass on the information along using other forms of social media.” As for *purchase intention*, a three-item scale was adopted from Netemeyer, Maxham III, and Pullig (2005). These scales were modified to fit the Instagram context of this study. For example, the statement of “In the future, I intend to use _____ for _____ purchases.” was modified as “In the future, I am likely to try one of the same products that [SMI’s name] endorsed or posted on his/her Instagram.” As a result, a total of six items were used to measure a target audience’s performance outcomes resulting from mimicry desire (see Table 8).

Table 8. Adapted scale items for pre-testing vs. original scale items

This study's construct name, (# of items), adapted scale items, and indicators		The original study's construct name, (# of items), original scale items, and references	
Attractiveness (3)	Indicators	Attractiveness (3)	References
I find [the name of the selected SMI (hereafter referred to as "SMI's name")]s Instagram contents good-looking.	ATT1	Good-looking	Argo & Main (2008)
I find [SMI's name]'s Instagram contents attractive.	ATT2	Attractive	
I find [SMI's name]'s Instagram contents visually appealing.	ATT3	Appealing	
Prestige (3)	Indicators	Brand prestige (3)	References
I find that [SMI's name]'s Instagram contents are prestigious.	PRE1	This brand is very prestigious.	Han & Terpstra (1988); Steenkamp et al. (2003)
I find that [SMI's name]'s Instagram contents are upscale.	PRE2	This brand is very upscale.	
I find that [SMI's name]'s Instagram contents have high status.	PRE3	This brand has high status.	
Expertise (5)	Indicators	Competence (5)	References
When looking at [SMI's name]'s Instagram, I find he/she is experienced.	EXP1	Not experienced/experienced	Liljander, Gummerus, & Söderlund, (2015)
When looking at [SMI's name]'s Instagram, I find he/she is an expert.	EXP2	Not an expert/expert	
When looking at [SMI's name]'s Instagram, I find he/she is competent.	EXP3	Incompetent/competent	
When looking at [SMI's name]'s Instagram, I find he/she is qualified.	EXP4	Unqualified/qualified	
When looking at [SMI's name]'s Instagram, I find he/she is knowledgeable.	EXP5	Not knowledgeable/knowledgeable	

Table 8. Adapted scale items for pre-testing vs. original scale items (Cont'd)

This study’s construct name, (# of items), adapted scale items, and indicators		The original study’s construct name, (# of items), original scale items, and references	
Information (3)	Indicators	Information seeking in Facebook (7)	References
I look at [SMI’s name]'s Instagram posts and messages because I find them informative.	INF1	In general, I read news, scientific facts or inspirational quotes shared on Facebook because I find them informative.	Asghar (2015)
		I do not use Facebook as a source of information.	
		I use Facebook to follow new trends.	
[SMI’s name]'s Instagram contents keep me informed about products, services, and trends.	INF2	Facebook groups/pages keep me informed about products, services and trends.	
I find [SMI’s name]'s Instagram contents informative.	INF3	I think reading Facebook feed is informative.	
		Facebook makes me learn about a topic I am not familiar with.	
		I believe that Facebook provides me with information on many subjects.	
Interaction (6)	Indicators	Perceived interaction (4)	References
I feel that [SMI’s name] would talk back to me if I send a private message.	INT1	[Brand] will talk back to me if I post a message.	Labrecque (2014); McMillan & Hwang (2002), Song & Zinkhan (2008); Thorson & Rodgers (2006)
I feel that [SMI’s name] would talk back to me if I post a comment.	INT2		
I feel that [SMI’s name] would respond to me quickly and efficiently if I send a private message.	INT3	[Brand] would respond to me quickly and efficiently.	
I feel that [SMI’s name] would respond to me quickly and efficiently if I post a comment.	INT4		
I feel that [SMI’s name] would allow me to communicate directly with him/her.	INT5	[Brand] allows me to communicate directly with it.	
I feel that [SMI’s name] would listen to what his/her followers have to say.	INT6	[Brand] listens to what I have to say.	

Table 8. Adapted scale items for pre-testing vs. original scale items (Cont'd)

This study's construct name, (# of items), adapted scale items, and indicators		The original study's construct name, (# of items), original scale items, and references	
Taste leadership (4)	Indicators	Centrality of visual product aesthetics (10)	References
[SMI's name] showcases his/her own personal taste.	TL1	Value dimension:	Bloch, Brunel, & Arnold (2003)
[SMI's name] takes the lead in sharing what looks good with his/her followers through Instagram.	TL2	Owning products that have superior designs makes me feel good about myself.	
[SMI's name] is one of the first people to find the newest trends and designs that other people tend to pass over.	TL3	I enjoy seeing displays of products that have superior designs.	
When worn or used by [SMI's name], the product becomes a look, a style, an exhibition of taste.	TL4	A product's design is a source of pleasure for me.	
		Beautiful product designs make our world a better place to live.	
		Acumen dimension:	
		Being able to see subtle differences in product designs is one skill that I have developed over time.	
		I see things in a product's design that other people tend to pass over.	
		I have the ability to imagine how a product will fit in with designs of other things I already own.	
		I have a pretty good idea of what makes one product look better than its competitors.	
		Response dimension:	
		Sometimes the way a product looks seems to reach out and grab me.	
		If a product's design really "speaks" to me, I feel that I must buy it.	

Table 8. Adapted scale items for pre-testing vs. original scale items (Cont'd)

This study's construct name, (# of items), adapted scale items, and indicators		The original study's construct name, (# of items), original scale items, and references	
Opinion leadership (5)	Indicators	Twitter opinion leadership (7)	References
		I like to assume responsibility what I do on Twitter.	Park (2013)
[SMI's name] takes the lead in sharing the newest ideas, trends, and developments with his/her followers through Instagram.	OL1	I like to take the lead when a group does things together on Twitter.	
		I enjoy convincing others of my opinions on Twitter.	
[SMI's name] serves as a role model for others on Instagram.	OL2	I often notice that I serve as a role model for others on Twitter.	
[SMI's name] shares a great deal of information via his/her Instagram.	OL3	I am good at getting information that I need from Twitter.	
[SMI's name] is one of the first people to know about the newest ideas, trends, and developments.	OL4	I am often a step ahead of others on Twitter.	
[SMI's name] often gives his/her followers advice and suggestions via Instagram.	OL5	I often give others advice and suggestions via Twitter.	
		I like to assume responsibility what I do on Twitter.	
Conscious mimicry desire (5)	Indicators	Imitation behavior (5)	References
I aspire to the lifestyle of this social media influencer [SMI's name].	MI1	I want to be as smart as movie idols.	Awasthi & Choraria (2015)
Inspired by this social media influencer [SMI's name], I want to be as stylish as him/her.	MI2	I want to be as stylish as people appearing in ads.	
Inspired by this social media influencer [SMI's name], I want to be as trendy as him/her.	MI3	I want to be as trendy as models in magazines.	
Inspired by this social media influencer [SMI's name], I want to have a lifestyle more like him/her.	MI4	I do not aspire to the lifestyle of celebrities.	
Inspired by this social media influencer [SMI's name]'s attitude of life, I want to have an attitude more like him/her.	MI5	I have sometimes tried to change aspects of my personality in order to be more like the celebrity I admire.	

Table 8. Adapted scale items for pre-testing vs. original scale items (Cont'd)

This study's construct name, (# of items), adapted scale items, and indicators		The original study's construct name, (# of items), original scale items, and references	
Social media WOM (3)	Indicators	Information pass-along (5)	References
I will click "like" on some of the postings of [SMI's name].	SW1	I would click "like" on the some of the postings.	Kim & Johnson (2016)
I will "share" some of the postings of [SMI's name] on my Instagram.	SW2	I would share the postings on my own timeline	
		I would share the postings on a friend's timeline	
I will continue to "follow" [SMI's name]'s Instagram and interact with him/her.	SW3	I would pass along the postings to contacts on my Facebook friends list.	
		I would pass on the information along using other forms of social media.	
Purchase intention (3)	Indicators	Purchase intention (3)	References
In the future, I am likely to try one of the same products that [SMI's name] endorsed or posted on his/her Instagram.	PI1	In the future, I intend to use _____ for _____ purchases.	Netemeyer, Maxham III, & Pullig (2005)
In the future, I am likely to try one of the same services (e.g., travel or beauty services) that [SMI's name] endorsed or posted on his/her Instagram.	PI2	If you were in the market for _____, how likely would you be to use _____?	
In the future, I am likely to try one of the same brands that [SMI's name] endorsed or posted on his/her Instagram.	PI3	In the near future, I will not use _____ as my provider. (r)	

4.2. PRE-TEST

With the initial measurement, a pre-test survey was administered on a small sample of respondents before conducting a full-scale study. The study performed a pre-testing for three prime intentions. First, it aimed at examining whether the survey questions worked as intended and were understood by respondents (Hilton, 2017). Second, it was intended to identify whether there are statements or questions that need to be revised to enhance questionnaire response rates (De Leeuw, 2001). Third, it aimed at evaluating whether a new measure performed as planned (Del Greco & Walop, 1987). Prior to administering the pre-test survey, content validity test was assessed. Detailed descriptions of the pre-test, concerning its procedure, sample, analyses, and results, are illustrated in the following.

Content Validity Test

To ensure content validity, six academic experts (i.e., four consumer behavior research experts and two social media research experts) in Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management at the University of Tennessee were invited to review the scale items that were adapted from the literature. Content validity refers to the extent to which the instrument is relevant to and representative of the construct that is supposed to measure (Haynes, Richard, & Kubany, 1995). The invited experts assessed the measurement in terms of the clarity and readability of the questionnaires, and their relevance to the constructs. Particularly the two social media experts carefully evaluated each item and statement. After the review, there was a suggestion about revising the term ‘Instagram post’ to ‘Instagram contents’; this way, a survey participant may consider not only a SMI’s visual or verbal posts, but also the SMI herself, her profile, location information, number of likes,

and comments. In addition, another recommendation was made; one of the experts recommended to make the measurement of *taste leadership* clear enough to imbue a sense of leadership, by including such expressions as ‘take the lead in,’ or ‘one of the first people to.’ The researcher agreed with these suggestions and revised the scale items accordingly. Thereafter, the experts reviewed the revised measurement once again and confirmed that all the items (after revisions) were clear and reflected the definitions of their constructs. To this end, content validity was achieved. The revised measurement was used for pre-testing.

Pre-Test: Procedure

Upon IRB approval, the measurement items were transcribed into the Qualtrics survey system to collect data online. In the process of transcribing, two academic experts of quantitative research and one online survey expert at University of Tennessee checked the survey in Qualtrics in terms of visual appeal and technical flow. After the visual appeal and technical flow were confirmed, the pre-test survey was dispatched via Mechanical Turk, that is, a crowdsourcing internet marketplace, from May 4, 2018 for fifteen consecutive days. Once respondents opened the link of the online survey, they were given the survey questionnaire consisting of four sections: (i) consent (see Appendix B for consent statement) and age, (ii) social media usage, (ii) main questions (i.e., perceived influence attempts, attitudes, mimicry desire, and behavioral intentions in response to their favorite SMIs’ Instagram contents), and (iv) demographic information (i.e., gender, ethnicity, marital status, education, employment, and annual household income). Upon completion of a full survey, participants received an incentive of \$1.00.

Pre-Test: Survey Description

The introductory paragraph of the survey provided a general description: “This survey is about general consumer behavior in a social media setting, asking about your perceptions and attitudes about social media influencers.” Then, it provided contact information for both the researcher and the University of Tennessee IRB compliance officer. After this introduction, it asked survey respondents’ consent to participate in the survey and their age. If the respondents disagreed to participate, they were automatically screened out. The survey confined the age of the respondents to 18-49, as suggested by the social media research experts, to recruit active social media users and fit the context of this study. Participants who did not fall into this age category were also screened out.

To identify eligible respondents among the participants, additional screening questions were included at the beginning of the survey; however, respondents were not directly given any hint about whether these questions were screening questions or actual survey questions. For example, participants were asked to select up to four social media platforms that they used the most. The respondents who were not using ‘Instagram’ as one of their most used social media platforms were screened out. Next, participants were asked to answer how long they spend on Instagram on a typical day. The respondents who selected ‘not at all’ were discontinued from the survey. Thereafter, the definitions of SMI (i.e., “new type of independent third-party endorsers who influence audience attitudes through the use of social media” or “independent third-party endorsers who hold at least a thousand followers and share their daily lives, tips, or tricks vial social media.”) were provided to give respondents a context for the pre-test survey questions that referred to this term. Then, they were asked a simple yes/no question about whether they have at least

one SMI that they follow on Instagram. The respondents who selected ‘no’ were further screened out. On the other hand, those who passed the above screening questions were asked to write the name of one of their favorite SMIs on Instagram.

The SMIs’ names provided by the respondents were automatically embedded in the main survey questionnaires, which asked about their *perceived influence attempts, attitudes, mimicry desire*, and *behavioral outcomes* in response to their choice of SMIs’ Instagram contents. The survey instrument included 20 items for perceived influence attempts (i.e., perceived attractiveness, prestige, expertise, information, and interaction in response to their choice of SMIs’ Instagram contents), 9 items for attitudes (i.e., evaluative belief that their choice of SMIs have taste leadership and opinion leadership), 5 items for mimicry desire (i.e., desire to consciously mimic their choice of SMIs), and 6 items for behavioral outcomes (i.e., social media WOM and intention to purchase one of the same products, services, or brands endorsed or posted by their choice of SMIs). The questionnaire was designed to be completed within less than 15 minutes. The organization, flow, and questions of the pre-test survey are presented in Appendix C.

Pre-Test: Data Collection and Sample

The pre-test survey recorded a total of 359 data. Among them, 311 data were ruled out either because participants were not qualified or they did not pay attention to the survey questions. The pre-test survey embedded five qualification questions. Respondents who (i) answered ‘no’ to the consent question, (ii) were below age 17 or above age 50, (iii) were not using ‘Instagram’ as one of the most used social media platforms, (iv) selected ‘not at all’ for the questions asking how many hours they spend on Instagram on a typical day, or

(v) did not have at least one SMI they follow on Instagram were all unqualified and discontinued from the survey. In addition to the screening questions, the survey contained a total of five attention-checking questions: (i) “Have you used the iPhone 11?”; (ii) “Please click ‘Somewhat agree.’” (included in the measurement items for prestige); (iii) “Please click ‘Somewhat disagree.’” (included in the measurement items for information); (iv) “Please click ‘Somewhat disagree.’” (included in the measurement items for opinion leadership); and (v) “Please click ‘Somewhat agree.’” (included in the measurement items for mimicry desire). If respondents wrongfully responded to any of these attention-checking questions, they were further ruled out. As a result, 48 data remained valid for analysis; the response rate was 13.37%. The demographic characteristics of the respondents from the pre-testing are presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Pre-test: demographic characteristics (n = 48)

Demographics		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	24	50%
	Female	24	50%
Ethnicity	African-American	7	14.6%
	Caucasian	30	62.5%
	Native American Indian	0	0%
	Asian or Pacific Islander	6	12.5%
	Hispanic	4	8.3%
	Other	1	2.1%
Marital Status	Married	16	33.3%
	Single, never married	31	64.6%
	Separated, divorced, or widowed	1	2.1%
Education	High school or less	12	25%
	Bachelor's degree	30	62.5%
	Associate degree	4	8.3%
	Graduate degree	2	4.2%
Employment	Work full-time	41	85.4%
	Work part-time	6	12.5%
	Do not work	1	2.1%
Annual household income	Less than \$20,000	5	10.4%
	\$20,000~ \$39,999	6	12.5%
	\$40,000~ \$59,999	14	29.2%
	\$60,000~ \$79,999	9	18.8%
	\$80,000~ \$99,999	8	16.7%
	\$100,000~ \$119,999	2	4.2%
	\$120,000~ \$139,999	1	2.1%
	\$140,000~ \$159,999	3	6.3%
	\$160,000 or more	0	0%

Pre-Test: Analysis and Result

The researcher analyzed the invalid data (n = 311). The analysis implied that the speed of the data collection (i.e., having 359 data collected for 15 days) and the response rate were low due to respondents' lack of understanding of SMIs. To enhance respondents' understanding of SMIs and thus to increase the response rate, the researcher revised the definitions of SMIs in the pilot survey with plain terms. Except for the definition of SMIs, the questions in the pre-test survey performed as intended and were understood by respondents. As shown in Table 10, the reliability of the pre-test results showed that all constructs -- including a relatively new measure of *taste leadership* and *mimicry desire* -- are reliable except for *social media WOM*. All constructs except for social media WOM ranged from .810 to .950, above the threshold value of .70, demonstrating satisfactory levels of internal consistency (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). However, the reliability of social media WOM was .671, which may have resulted from the small sample size. The researcher decided to analyze the reliability of this construct once more in the pilot-test and decide whether it requires revision then. To this end, all the three objectives of the pre-testing were achieved.

Table 10. Pre-test: reliability of the constructs (n = 48)

Construct	Number of items	Reliability (Cronbach's alpha)
<i>SMLs' influence attempts (20)</i>		
Attractiveness	3	.937
Prestige	3	.932
Expertise	5	.913
Information	3	.906
Interaction	6	.950
<i>Targets' attitudes (9)</i>		
Taste leadership	4	.810
Opinion leadership	5	.876
<i>Targets' mimicry desire (5)</i>		
Desire for conscious mimicry	5	.946
<i>Targets' performance outcomes (6)</i>		
Social media WOM	3	.671
Purchase intention	3	.921
Total	40	-

4.3. PILOT-TEST

This study administrated a pilot-test survey for three prime objectives. First, the pilot-testing was aimed at examining whether the response rate has been enhanced from the pre-testing, with the revised definition of SMIs presented. Second, it was intended to confirm whether three factors of *taste leadership*, *opinion leadership*, and *mimicry desire*, which include relatively new constructs with relatively undefined measurement items, should be set as mediators in the conceptual model. Third, it was aimed at ensuring the robustness in terms of the reliability and validity of the measurement. The detailed procedure, sample, analysis, and results of the pilot-testing are described in the following.

Pilot-Test: Procedure

The pilot-test survey was administrated using Mechanical Turk from May 23, 2018 and for five consecutive days. Before dispatching the survey, the researcher added two conditions in the Mechanical Turk survey settings to increase the quality of responses. First, the researcher required the survey respondents to be Mechanical Turk Masters (i.e., a specialized group of respondents who demonstrate a high degree of success and accuracy in performing a wide range of HITs across a number of survey requesters). Second, the researcher confined the location of respondents to be only in the United States. Upon respondents' consent to participate in the survey, they were asked to answer questions about their *perceived influence attempts*, *attitudes*, *mimicry desire*, and *behavioral intentions* in response to their choice of SMIs' Instagram contents, in addition to their social media usage and demographic information. Upon completion of a full survey, participants received an incentive of \$1.50.

Pilot-Test: Survey Description

The pilot-test survey was reviewed by the online survey expert at the University of Tennessee before being dispatched. The survey maintained the same organization, flow, and questions (including the attention-checking questions) of the pre-test survey except for two conditions. First, complying with the online survey expert's recommendation, one of the five qualification (screening) questions that was deemed redundant was removed from the pilot-survey, to make the survey concise and to increase the response rate; the item 'not at all' was removed from the "Overall, how long do you spend on Instagram on a typical day?" question. Second, the online survey expert suggested that the definition of SMIs may be too difficult for respondents to understand the context of this study, which may have resulted in reduced speed of data collection and low response rate in the pre-testing. Reflecting her comment, SMIs were redefined in the pilot-test survey. The revised definition and examples of SMIs presented in the pilot-test questionnaire were as follow: "they are the so-called influencers -- not celebrities -- who influence audience attitudes through the use of social media (e.g., Instagram)."; "examples are beauty bloggers, fashionistas, fitness gurus and others."; "they hold at least a thousand followers and share their daily lives, tips or tricks on social media."; "they DO NOT include mainstream celebrities (e.g., a TV or movie star) or already well-known politicians or athletes." A sample questionnaire of the pilot-survey is presented in Appendix D.

Pilot-Test: Sample

The pilot-testing recorded a total of 463 data via Amazon Mechanical Turk within five days, which indicated that the speed of the data collection was enhanced from the pre-

testing. Among them, only 196 data remained after ruling out those who did not pass the screening questions or failed to answer the attention questions correctly. With the 196 data, the researcher further examined each one of the responses to confirm whether the respondents truly understood the definition of SMIs and named the right SMIs. For example, the respondents who named a corporate Instagram page (e.g., Apple or Forbes) as one of their favorite SMIs were screened out. Those who named mainstream celebrities (e.g., Selena Gomez), already well-known athletes (e.g., David Beckham) and politicians (e.g., Donald Trump), or an Instagram user with less than a thousand followers were further ruled out. After all, a total of 155 set of valid data were used for analysis, resulting in the response rate of 33.48%. To this end, the first aim of pilot-testing was achieved.

The demographic characteristics of the respondents from the pilot test are presented in Table 11. The analysis of respondents' demographic information showed that 50.3% of the respondents were male and 49.7% were female. With respect to ethnicity, majority of the respondents (68.4%) were Caucasian, followed by Asian or Pacific Islander (14.2%), African-American (11.6%), Hispanic (5.2%), and other (0.6%). In terms of marital status, 54.2% of the respondents were single or never married; 37.4% were married; and 8.4% were separated, divorced, or widowed. As for education, majority of the respondents (47.7%) earned a bachelor's degree, followed by high school or less (21.3%), an associate degree (15.5%), and graduate degree (14.8%). With respect to employment status, majority of the respondents (85.2%) worked full-time, followed by part-time (11%). In terms of annual household income, the respondents represented a range of income group fairly evenly: 21.9% had incomes of \$40,000~ \$59,999, 21.3% had either \$20,000~ \$39,999 or \$60,000~ \$79,999, 12.3 % had \$80,000~ \$99,999, and 7.7% had \$100,000~ \$119,999.

Table 11. Pilot-test: demographic characteristics (n = 155)

Demographics		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	78	50.3%
	Female	77	49.7%
Ethnicity	African-American	18	11.6%
	Caucasian	106	68.4%
	Native American Indian	0	0%
	Asian or Pacific Islander	22	14.2%
	Hispanic	8	5.2%
	Other	1	0.6%
Marital status	Married	58	37.4%
	Single, never married	84	54.2%
	Separated, divorced, or widowed	13	8.4%
Education	High school or less	33	21.3%
	Bachelor's degree	74	47.7%
	Associate degree	24	15.5%
	Graduate degree	23	14.8%
	Other	1	0.6%
Employment	Work full-time	132	85.2%
	Work part-time	17	11%
	Do not work	6	3.9%
Annual household income	Less than \$20,000	9	5.8%
	\$20,000~ \$39,999	33	21.3%
	\$40,000~ \$59,999	34	21.9%
	\$60,000~ \$79,999	33	21.3%
	\$80,000~ \$99,999	19	12.3%
	\$100,000~ \$119,999	12	7.7%
	\$120,000~ \$139,999	4	2.6%
	\$140,000~ \$159,999	4	2.6%
	\$160,000 or more	7	4.5%

Pilot-Test: Measurement Analysis and Result

With 155 set of data, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed to confirm whether three constructs for mediation were deemed appropriate; *taste leadership*, *opinion leadership*, and *mimicry desire*, which are relatively novel constructs using comparatively undefined measurement items in a social media context. In addition, a reliability analysis was conducted to attest the robustness of the measurement.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and results. EFA serves to identify a set of latent constructs underlying a set of measured variables (Fabrigar, Wegener, MacCallum, & Strahan, 1999). In this study, EFA was used to confirm whether three constructs of *taste leadership*, *opinion leadership*, and *mimicry desire* were deemed appropriate to be proposed as the prime mediating constructs, respectively, as suggested in the conceptual model of this study. EFA was conducted with the use of maximum-likelihood estimation and varimax rotation to identify the underlying structure of the mediation constructs of this study. According to the results, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy for each construct was above the threshold value of 0.6 (J. Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998). The Bartlett's test of sphericity for the three constructs was also significant ($p < 0.5$). In addition, the communalities of the items were all above .40, demonstrating that each item shared some common variance with other items. A minimum eigenvalue of 1.0 was used as a criterion to decide the number of factors. A cut-off of an eigenvalue ≥ 1 derived three factors with the cumulative distribution of 73.737%. The varimax result of the factor loadings of each item is shown in Table 12.

EFA is also used to place the scale items into meaningful categories (Yong & Pearce, 2013). The EFA results showed that all the 13 scale items were classified into the

right constructs as expected, except for item OL4. Because item OL4 was grouped in the construct of taste leadership, instead of opinion leadership, the researcher decided to remove this item from either taste leadership or opinion leadership constructs and exclude it from the main-test survey. To this end, the EFA results confirmed that three (mediating) constructs of *taste leadership*, *opinion leadership*, and *mimicry desire* with a total of 13 scale items were deemed suitable.

Table 12. Pilot-test: exploratory factor analysis results (n = 155)

Factor	Items	Factor loadings			Communality
		TL	OL	MI	
Taste leadership	TL1	.629	.186	.118	.444
	TL2	.807	.071	.264	.725
	TL3	.884	.107	.139	.813
	TL4	.870	.105	.212	.813
	OL4	.693	.535	-.027	.767
Opinion leadership	OL1	.570	.605	.116	.705
	OL2	.100	.715	.342	.639
	OL3	.260	.759	.252	.708
	OL5	.070	.842	.215	.760
Mimicry desire	MI1	.158	.249	.846	.802
	MI2	.458	.126	.778	.830
	MI3	.487	.122	.758	.827
	MI4	.105	.230	.864	.810
	MI5	-.014	.244	.788	.680
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure: .872; Bartlett's test of sphericity: 1595.191 (df = 91, $p < .001$); Cumulative distribution: 73.737%					

Reliability analysis and results. The reliability of the pilot-test results (as shown in Table 13) confirmed that all constructs are reliable. The constructs ranged from .741 to .952, demonstrating satisfactory levels of internal consistency (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Although the reliability of social media WOM increased from .671 of the pre-test to .741 in this pilot-test, one more scale item (i.e., “I would pass on some of the postings of [SMI’s name] along using other forms of social media.”) was adapted from the literature and added in the main-test survey questionnaire to further increase the reliability of this construct. To this end, all the three objectives of the pilot-testing were achieved.

Table 13. Pilot-test: reliability of the constructs (n = 155)

Construct	Number of items	Reliability (Cronbach’s alpha)
<i>SMIs’ influence attempts (20)</i>		
Attractiveness	3	.899
Prestige	3	.913
Expertise	5	.901
Information	3	.876
Interaction	6	.952
<i>Targets’ attitudes (8)</i>		
Taste leadership	4	.870
Opinion leadership	4	.826
<i>Targets’ mimicry desire (5)</i>		
Desire for conscious mimicry	5	.917
<i>Targets’ performance outcomes (6)</i>		
Social media WOM	3	.741
Purchase intention	3	.931
Total	39	-

4.4. MAIN-TEST

A full-scale, main-test survey was administered to test the proposed hypotheses. Specifically, structural equation modeling (SEM) was used via AMOS 23 to analyze a set of relationships hypothesized in this study. In line with a two-step approach of Anderson and Gerbing (1988), a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed first to evaluate whether the measurement items reliably reflected the latent constructs proposed in this study. Thereafter, the structural (causal) relationships among the latent variables were analyzed. Both the measurement model and the structural model were assessed using the maximum likelihood method. The model fits of the estimated models were assessed by five statistic criteria: (i) chi-square (χ^2) tests, (ii) the ratio of chi-square to degrees of freedom, (iii) the comparative fit index (CFI), (iv) the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and (v) the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) (J. F. Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006). Detailed descriptions concerning the procedure, sample, analyses, and results of the main-testing are illustrated in the following.

Main-Test: Procedure and Survey Description

The main-test survey was administrated using Mechanical Turk from May 29, 2018 for five consecutive days. The survey setting confined respondents to Mechanical Turk Masters to secure the validity of responses and to those who were living in the United States to use the same sampling frame with the pilot test. The survey questionnaire consisted of four sections: respondents' (i) consent and age, (ii) social media usage (i.e., 'mostly used social media platforms' and 'the average time spent on Instagram on a typical day'), (iii) perceived influence attempts, attitudes, mimicry desire, and behavioral

intentions in response to their choice of SMIs' Instagram contents, and (iv) demographic information. As in the pilot-survey, the main-survey included four screening questions: respondents who (i) answered “no” to the consent question, (ii) were below age 17 or above age 50, (iii) were not using “Instagram” as one of the most used social media platforms, or (iv) did not have at least one SMI they follow on Instagram were deemed unqualified and thus screened out. In addition, five attention questions remained same in the main survey: (i) “Have you used the iPhone 11?”; (ii) “Please click 'Somewhat agree.’” (included in the measurement items for prestige); (iii) “Please click 'Somewhat disagree.’” (included in the measurement items for information); (iv) “Please click 'Somewhat disagree.’” (included in the measurement items for opinion leadership); and (v) “Please click 'Somewhat agree.’” (included in the measurement items for mimicry desire). Participants who completed the full survey received an incentive of \$2. A sample questionnaire of the main-test survey is presented in Appendix E.

Main-Test: Sample

The main-testing recorded a total of 1315 data. Among them, 591 respondents passed through both the screening and attention-checking questions and completed the survey. The researcher further examined each one of the 591 responses to confirm whether the respondents understood the context of SMIs correctly and named the right SMIs. The respondents who wrongfully named a corporate Instagram page (e.g., Facebook or Hugo Boss), mainstream celebrities (e.g., Katy Perry or Justin Bieber), already well-known athletes (e.g., Cristiano Ronaldo), or an Instagram user with less than a thousand followers

as one of their favorite SMIs were excluded from analysis. After all, a total of 395 set of data remained valid and were used for analysis, resulting in the response rate of 30.04%.

Main-Test: Sample Demographics

The demographic characteristics of the respondents from the main-test are presented in Table 14. The analysis of respondents' demographic information showed that 55.2% of the respondents were female and 44.8% were male. With respect to ethnicity, majority of the respondents (67.3%) were Caucasian, followed by Asian or Pacific Islander (11.9%), African-American (9.1%), Hispanic (7.3%), and other (2.8%). In terms of marital status, 57.2% of the respondents were single or never married; 38% were married; and 4.8% were separated, divorced, or widowed. As for education, majority of the respondents (45.8%) earned a bachelor's degree, followed by high school or less (20%), an associate degree (19%), and graduate degree (13.7%). With respect to employment status, majority of the respondents (70.9%) worked full-time, followed by part-time (16.7%). In terms of annual household income, the respondents represented a range of income group fairly evenly: 24.1% had incomes of \$40,000~ \$59,999, 20% had \$60,000~ \$79,999, 19.5% had \$20,000~ \$39,999, 12.7 % had \$80,000~ \$99,999, and 10.1% had less than \$20,000.

Table 14. Main-test: demographic characteristics (n = 395)

Demographics		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	177	44.8%
	Female	218	55.2%
Ethnicity	African-American	36	9.1%
	Caucasian	266	67.3%
	Native American Indian	6	1.5%
	Asian or Pacific Islander	47	11.9%
	Hispanic	29	7.3%
	Other	11	2.8%
Marital Status	Married	150	38%
	Single, never married	226	57.2%
	Separated, divorced, or widowed	19	4.8%
Education	High school or less	79	20%
	Bachelor's degree	181	45.8%
	Associate degree	75	19%
	Graduate degree	54	13.7%
	Other	6	1.5%
Employment	Work full-time	280	70.9%
	Work part-time	66	16.7%
	Do not work	49	12.4%
Annual Household Income	Less than \$20,000	40	10.1%
	\$20,000~ \$39,999	77	19.5%
	\$40,000~ \$59,999	95	24.1%
	\$60,000~ \$79,999	79	20%
	\$80,000~ \$99,999	50	12.7%
	\$100,000~ \$119,999	21	5.3%
	\$120,000~ \$139,999	10	2.5%
	\$140,000~ \$159,999	13	3.3%
	\$160,000 or more	10	2.5%

Main-Test: Respondents' Social Media Usage

The description of the respondents' social media usage is presented in Table 15. According to the first question, “which social media platform do you use most? (please select up to four),” all the respondents answered Instagram as one of their most often used social media platforms. Followed by Instagram (395), respondents answered Facebook (320), YouTube (288) and Twitter (227) as their next most often used social media platforms. In the category for ‘others,’ respondents cited that they use Reddit and Pinterest often too. In response to the second question, “overall, how long do you spend on Instagram on a typical day?”, respondents answered ‘30 minutes to 1 hour’ (30.6%) the most, followed by ‘15 to 30 minutes’ (23.5%), ‘5 to 15 minutes’ (14.9%), ‘1 hour~ 2 hours’ (14.4%), and ‘2 ~ 3 hours’ (8.1%).

Table 15. Main-test: respondents' social media usage (n = 395)

Social media usage		Frequency	Percentage
The most used social media platform (select up to four)	Instagram	395	N/A
	YouTube	288	N/A
	Facebook	320	N/A
	Twitter	227	N/A
	Snapchat	118	N/A
	Others (e.g., Reddit, Pinterest)	21	N/A
Average time spent on Instagram on a typical day	5 minutes or less	18	4.6%
	5~ 15 minutes	59	14.9%
	15~ 30 minutes	93	23.5%
	30 minutes~ 1 hour	121	30.6%
	1 hour~ 2 hours	57	14.4%
	2~ 3 hours	32	8.1%
	More than 3 hours	15	3.8%

Main-Test: Respondents' Favorite SMIs on Instagram

The next step in data analyses was a description of the respondents' favorite SMIs, a description of the topics of these selected SMIs, and a content analysis regarding the reasons as to why the respondents chose these SMIs as one of their favorite influencers. The analyses were conducted based upon their responses to three questions: (i) "please name one of your favorite social media influencers on Instagram.", (ii) "what is the main topic (or subject) of this social media influencer [SMI's name]'s Instagram?", and (iii) "why do you like and follow this social media influencer [SMI's name]'s Instagram account?".

In regards to the first question, the names (or IDs) that the respondents provided as one of their favorite SMIs on Instagram are listed in Table 16. The respondents provided a total of 291 different names (or IDs), which include SMIs such as Zach King (17), Huda Kattan (15), Pewdiepie (9), and others. For the second question that asked about what subjects these SMIs were showcasing through their Instagram accounts or Instagram contents, respondents answered 'others' (24.8%) the most, followed by 'beauty' (23.3%), 'health' (21.5%), and 'fashion' (17%) (as shown in Table 17). 'Others' included such subjects as 'entertainment', 'music', and 'technology'.

To analyze the responses for the last question, a descriptive, content analysis was performed using NVivo 12. NVivo analysis was aimed at deriving the most cited words (reasons) as to why respondents liked and followed these SMIs. To identify the top most cited texts (reasons), the researcher set the display of NVivo to 10 most frequently cited words with the minimum length of 5 using the grouping technique of synonyms. According to the result (as shown in Table 18), texts such as *posts*, *videos*, *content*, *inspiring*, and

personality were derived as important keywords that account for the reasons why respondents favored and followed these SMIs. Further, to graphically represent the respondents' answers, a word cloud was generated via NVivo (as shown in Figure 3). The word cloud was set to display a larger group of texts (i.e., 50 most frequently cited words) using the minimum length of 5 and the grouping technique of exact matches. The font size and other visual characteristics in the word cloud showed the relative importance of the words in the data set. As shown in Figure 3, mostly cited words (reasons) were *posts* (62 counts), followed by *makeup* (38), *great* (34), *really* (34), *videos* (34), *content* (33), *pictures* (22), and others. The word frequency results in both Table 18 and Figure 3 showed that SMIs' Instagram contents (e.g., pictures, posts, and videos) were indeed important in steering the target audiences' attitude (i.e., liking) and behavior (i.e., following) toward these SMIs. To this end, the NVivo results supported that the main questions created in this study's online surveys -- asking about a respondent's perceived influence attempts, attitudes, mimicry desire, and behavioral intentions in response to a SMI's *Instagram contents* -- were appropriate: for example, "I find [SMI's name]'s Instagram contents good-looking."

Table 16. Main-test: respondents' favorite SMIs on Instagram (n = 395)

#	SMI's name	Frequency	#	SMI's name	Frequency	#	SMI's name	Frequency
1	A r Rahman	1	26	Blogilates	1	51	Chriselle Lim	1
2	Aaliyah Pretty	1	27	Bodypositivepear	1	52	Chrissy Teigan	1
3	Aaron Marino	1	28	Bradley Martyn	1	53	Christain Guzman	1
4	Alex Costa	1	29	Bretman Rock	2	54	Christmas Abbot	1
5	Alexis Renn	2	30	Brett Larkin	1	55	Chuu	1
6	Ali Cole	1	31	Brian the Bootmaker	1	56	CoffeeBreakwithDani	1
7	Alyssa Spaw	1	32	Bucket list family	1	57	Coffeecashmere	1
8	Ana cheri	1	33	Bygracekim	1	58	Solleen Ballinger	1
9	Anllela Sagra	1	34	Calum Von Moger	1	59	Cookingwithdog	1
10	Annie Vasquez	1	35	Cameron Dallas	2	60	Cr5p_br	1
11	Anuel_2bleA	1	36	Cameron Hanes	1	61	Crissythedoll	1
12	Arminvanbuuren	1	37	Camila Coelho	1	62	Crystal Paine	1
13	Ashley Nocera	1	38	Candidmommyjeni	1	63	Curlypenny	1
14	AshleyDBeauty	1	39	Cardi b	3	64	Curtis Stone	1
15	Asiyami_gold	1	40	Carla	1	65	Cutegirlshairstyles	1
16	Aspyn Ovard	1	41	Carly Bybel	3	66	Daily Dose	5
17	Audery Roloff	1	42	Caroline Tusiuk	1	67	Dan Bilzarian	5
18	Autumn Calabrese	2	43	Carrotsncake	1	68	Daniel Eisenman	1
19	Baddiewinkle	1	44	Casey Holmes	1	69	Daniella Perkins	1
20	Bdotadot5	1	45	Charlene Johnson	1	70	Danielleacooper	1
21	Beachyogagirl	1	46	Chase Amie	1	71	Danison	1
22	Beardedlady	1	47	Cheaplazyvegan	1	72	Danny Nunez	1
23	Benjamin Ortega	1	48	Chelcie Lynn	1	73	Dashiexp	1
24	Bethany Struble	1	49	Chiara Ferragni	2	74	David de las Morenas	1
25	BJ Gaddour	1	50	Chris Burkard	1	75	David Dobrik	1

Table 16. Main-test: respondents' favorite SMIs on Instagram (n = 395) (Cont'd)

#	SMI's name	Frequency	#	SMI's name	Frequency	#	SMI's name	Frequency
76	Davidchang	1	101	Glamlifeguru	1	126	Iwantmylauren	1
77	Desi Perkins	1	102	Glennon Doyle	1	127	Jackie Foster	1
78	Diana Korkunova	1	103	Goggins	1	128	Jaclyn Glenn	1
79	Dining in Disney	1	104	Goicoechea22	1	129	Jaclyn Hill	3
80	Dj dod	1	105	Goodlife	1	130	Jake Paul	3
81	Dj Khaled	1	106	Gordon Ramsey	1	131	Jambeauty89	1
82	Doctor Mike	1	107	Grace Helbig	2	132	James Aspey	2
83	Dolan Twins	1	108	Gracefituk	1	133	James Charles	3
84	Dr. Josh Axe	1	109	Greg O Gallagher	1	134	James Smith	1
85	Drake	2	110	Gunnar Peterson	1	135	Jamielynn.smiles	1
86	Dulcecandy	1	111	Hannaeoberg	1	136	Jasmine	1
87	Dylan Werner	1	112	Hapatime	2	137	Jay Alvarrez	2
88	Emily Weiss	1	113	Heidi Powell	2	138	Jeanie Mai	1
89	Emma Abrahmason	1	114	Herosheemaz	1	139	Jeffree Star	3
90	Emma the Yellow	1	115	Holycitychic	1	140	Jen Selter	3
91	Esteelalonde	1	116	Hopescope	1	141	Jenn Im	1
92	Ethan Klein	1	117	Huda Kattan	15	142	Jenna Ezarik	1
93	Extra Petite	1	118	Iamposh	1	143	Jenna Kutcher	1
94	Famouslos32	1	119	Ice_poseidon	2	144	Jenna Wang	1
95	Fatburningman	1	120	Ijustine	3	145	Jesse La Flair	1
96	Fatgirlfedup	1	121	Indigo Soul	1	146	Jessenia Vice	1
97	Funeralformyf	1	122	Ingrid Nilson	1	147	Jessica Graff	1
98	Gabbi Hanna	1	123	Iron Chef	1	148	Jessica Northey	1
99	Gabi Demartino	1	124	Iskra Lawrence	1	149	Jessica Quirk	1
100	Gary Vaynerchuk	1	125	Ivan	1	150	Jewel Staite	1

Table 16. Main-test: respondents' favorite SMIs on Instagram (n = 395) (Cont'd)

#	SMI's name	Frequency	#	SMI's name	Frequency	#	SMI's name	Frequency
151	Jmargaretbeauty	1	176	Ling KT	1	201	Mike Mathews	1
152	Joanna Gaines	3	177	Lira Galore	1	202	Miss YanYi	1
153	Joe Rogan	2	178	Livinginyellow	1	203	Molly Yeh	1
154	Joe Wicks	1	179	Loey Lane	1	204	Ms Gold Girl	1
155	Jordyn Woods	1	180	Logal Paul	2	205	Msjeanettejenkins	1
156	Julia Dzafic	1	181	Love Taza	1	206	Muradosmann	1
157	Julia Engel	1	182	Mackenzie Horan	1	207	Namaste Embroidery	1
158	Karissa Pukas	1	183	Maheen_sh	1	208	Nash Grier	1
159	Karl Shakur	1	184	Maite Delgado	1	209	Natalie Halcro	2
160	Kate LaVie	1	185	Mallory1712	1	210	Natalie Wall	1
161	Kayla Itsines	3	186	Maloriwoods302	1	211	Nick Bare	1
162	Kelly Slater	1	187	Maluma	1	212	Nikkie De Jager	1
163	Ketoguido	2	188	Manny Mua	1	213	Nikkitutorials	1
164	Ketokarma	1	189	Mariam	2	214	Nimai Delgado	1
165	Kevin Hart	2	190	Mariano Di Vaio	1	215	Nude Yoga Girl	1
166	Kira Stokes	1	191	Marko	1	216	Ohwawa	1
167	Kristen Leanne	1	192	Maryhadalittleglam	1	217	Omar Isuf	1
168	Kylie Jenner	1	193	Matt Cutshall	1	218	Paige Hathaway	1
169	Ladyandpups	1	194	Max Lugavere	1	219	Paleomg	1
170	Lee Litumbe	1	195	Meenu	1	220	Park Hye Min	1
171	Lele Pons	4	196	Meg Turney	1	221	ParTar400	1
172	Lewis Hamilton	1	197	Michael Fisher	1	222	Passport Heavy	1
173	Lexi Jiaras	2	198	Michelle Lewin	5	223	Pautips	1
174	Lilieth	1	199	Michelle Phan	3	224	Pewdiepie	9
175	Lindabooxoxo	2	200	Michelletakeaim	1	225	Platinum_D	1

Table 16. Main-test: respondents' favorite SMIs on Instagram (n = 395) (Cont'd)

#	SMI's name	Frequency	#	SMI's name	Frequency	#	SMI's name	Frequency
226	Promise Phan	1	251	Songofstyle	1	276	Valenlandin	1
227	Raeann Langas	1	252	Sprinklingsgirls	1	277	Vicky Logan	1
228	Ralph Smart	1	253	Steve Cook	1	278	Victor Cruz	1
229	Realasianbeauty	1	254	Stylebydnicole	1	279	Vivian V	1
230	Rena Awada	1	255	Tabithafaith	1	280	Watchanish	1
231	Rosanna Pansino	1	256	Tai Lopez	3	281	Waverider_	1
232	Ryan Trahan	1	257	Tana Mongeau	1	282	Wellness Mama	1
233	Salice Rose	1	258	Tank.sinatra	1	283	Whitney Simmons	1
234	Salomondrin	1	259	Tasty	1	284	Will Taylor	1
235	Samryan_designs	2	260	Tati Westbrook	3	285	Wiz Khalifa	1
236	Sandy	1	261	Taychay	1	286	Wod Doc	1
237	Sarah Kalke	1	262	Temí	1	287	YokoTsang	1
238	Sarah Lee	1	263	Tess Christine	1	288	Zachking	17
239	Sarah_louwho	1	264	Thebeautybeau	2	289	Zayuri.insta	1
240	Sarperduman	1	265	The Rock	3	290	Zoe Sugg	1
241	SashaFitness	1	266	Thevanlife	1	291	Zoella	1
242	Saturn Suicide	1	267	Thrifter	1			
243	Scott Disick	1	268	Tiffany Ivanovsky	1			
244	Shayla Mitchell	1	269	Tonyd2wild	1			
245	Simone Anderson	1	270	Trisha Paytas	1			
246	Skinnytaste	1	271	Tyler Perry	1			
247	Smartista Beauty	1	272	Tymetheinfamous	1			
248	Smith	1	273	Tyrese	1			
249	Snoop	1	274	Unbox Therapy	1			
250	Sommer Ray	2	275	Underthesycamore	1			

Table 17. Main-test: main topics of respondents' choice of SMIs (n = 395)

Main topic (or subject) of the SMIs' Instagram	Frequency	Percentage
Beauty	92	23.3%
Family	8	2%
Fashion	67	17%
Food	14	3.5%
Health	85	21.5%
Home	10	2.5%
Travel	21	5.3%
Others (e.g., entertainment, music, and technology)	98	24.8%

Table 18. Main-test: most frequently cited words (reasons) for following SMIs

Most cited words	Length	Count	Weighted %	Similar words
Posts	5	180	2.60%	Brand, brands, posting, post
Videos	6	136	1.87%	Picture, pictures, video, videos
Fashion	7	126	1.39%	Fashion, fashionable, style, styles
Follow	6	114	1.66%	Follow, follower, followers
Interesting	11	94	1.53%	Interest, interested, interesting
Beauty	6	88	1.29%	Attractive, beautiful, beauty
Content	7	82	1.35%	Content, messages, subjects
Inspiring	9	80	1.25%	Inspiration, inspirational, inspired
Makeup	6	76	1.27%	Makeup
Personality	11	76	1.24%	Individual, person, personal

Main-Test: Preliminary Analysis

Prior to the measurement model and structural model evaluations, preliminary analyses of the main-survey dataset were performed. As shown in Table 19, the minimum values, maximum values, mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis of each measurement item were evaluated. The mean values ranged from 3.69 to 6.27, and the standard deviations ranged from .831 to 1.783 on the 7-point rating scale. Values for skewness and kurtosis were examined to confirm the univariate normality of the data. The absolute values of skewness ranged from .012 to 1.615, all of which were within an acceptable range of ± 1.96 . The absolute values of kurtosis ranged from .071 to 4.289. The kurtosis values of EXP3 (3.158), EXP5 (4.289), and TL1 (3.439) were greater than the threshold value of ± 3.0 (Bollen, 1989), indicating that the distribution of these items are not normal. Thus, three items of EXP3, EXP5, and TL1 were eliminated from both the measurement model and the structural model.

Table 19. Main-test: assessment of normality (n = 395)

Construct	Item	Min	Max	Mean	STD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Attractiveness	ATT1	2	7	6.12	.932	-1.265	1.845
	ATT2	3	7	6.15	.906	-.994	.663
	ATT3	3	7	6.27	.831	-1.102	1.020
Prestige	PRE1	1	7	5.11	1.328	-.591	.089
	PRE2	1	7	5.33	1.329	-.605	-.303
	PRE3	2	7	5.51	1.212	-.803	.183
Expertise	EXP1	1	7	6.01	1.009	-1.357	2.853
	EXP2	2	7	5.82	1.166	-1.026	.782
	EXP3	1	7	6.12	.975	-1.471	3.158
	EXP4	2	7	6.04	.980	-.971	.894
	EXP5	1	7	6.08	.988	-1.615	4.289
Information	INF1	1	7	5.72	1.148	-1.116	1.576
	INF2	1	7	5.57	1.299	-.958	.400
	INF3	1	7	5.39	1.387	-.924	.683
Interaction	INT1	1	7	4.02	1.757	-.066	-1.039
	INT2	1	7	4.17	1.704	-.187	-.856
	INT3	1	7	3.69	1.783	.132	-.909
	INT4	1	7	3.87	1.713	-.012	-.897
	INT5	1	7	4.12	1.735	-.195	-.883
	INT6	1	7	5.13	1.401	-.947	.751
Taste leadership	TL1	1	7	5.91	1.086	-1.467	3.439
	TL2	1	7	5.55	1.155	-.905	1.311
	TL3	1	7	4.97	1.469	-.560	-.223
	TL4	1	7	5.17	1.348	-.606	.071
Opinion leadership	OL1	1	7	5.26	1.178	-.579	.372
	OL2	1	7	5.67	1.206	-1.027	1.475
	OL3	1	7	5.57	1.152	-1.071	1.751
	OL5	1	7	5.60	1.243	-.905	.839
Mimicry desire	MI1	1	7	5.03	1.497	-.554	-.311
	MI2	1	7	4.96	1.475	-.549	-.302
	MI3	1	7	4.89	1.516	-.522	-.294
	MI4	1	7	5.20	1.387	-.878	.587
	MI5	1	7	5.43	1.328	-.947	.968
Social media WOM	SW1	1	7	5.88	1.156	-.1439	2.688
	SW2	1	7	4.78	1.778	-.571	-.685
	SW3	1	7	5.75	1.175	-1.068	1.604
	SW4	1	7	4.89	1.646	-.659	-.283
Purchase intention	PI1	1	7	4.88	1.374	-.540	.168
	PI2	1	7	4.71	1.456	-.510	.088
	PI3	1	7	5.01	1.363	-.657	.431

Main-Test: Measurement Model Evaluation

The measurement model was evaluated by CFA, in which individual manifest variables (measured variables) were loaded on their appropriate latent variables and all latent variables were correlated with each other. The model fit of the measurement model was evaluated by such criteria as the chi-square (χ^2 or CMIN) tests, the ratio of chi-square to degrees of freedom, CFI, TLI, and RMSEA. In terms of the chi-square tests, a good model fit is expected to be insignificant at a threshold of .05 (Barrett, 2007). However, because the chi-square statistic is sensitive to sample size, it is no longer relied upon as a basis for acceptance or rejection; the focus is rather on the value of χ^2/df ratio (Schermele-Engel, Moosbrugger, & Müller, 2003). Relative chi-square (χ^2/df) is examined to minimize the effect of sample size; a χ^2/df ratio below 5.0 is considered to be an acceptable model fit (Wheaton, Muthen, Alwin, & Summers, 1977). CFI and TLI above .90 is considered a satisfactory model fit (Wupperman, Neumann, & Axelrod, 2008), whereas RMSEA below .08 is considered an acceptable fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Measurement model improvement. The fit of the initial measurement model of this study was: $\chi^2 (584) = 1978.190$ ($p = .000$), $\chi^2/\text{df} = 3.387$, CFI = .874, TLI = .856, RMSEA = .078 (as shown in Table 20), thus requiring improvement. For measurement model improvement, three statistical criteria were used to evaluate the models: (i) standardized regression weights, (ii) standardized residual covariance, and (iii) modification indices (MIs). A standardized regression weight less than 0.4 is considered as unacceptable due to measurement error (Singh, 1995). As for standardized residual covariance, its absolute values being greater than 2.58 indicates a substantial prediction error (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1988). In addition, excessively high MI is an indication of misfit.

Drawing upon the above criteria and threshold values, the study proceeded several stages of revisions for model improvement (see Table 20). For the first trial of model improvement, items SW1 (.569) and SW3 (.429) were deleted as they showed relatively low standardized regression weights ($<.60$) and the measurement errors of MI1 and M4 were set to be correlated as they showed excessively high MI (49.311). The fit of the revised measurement model with 35 items were: $\chi^2 (514) = 1516.251$ ($p = .000$), $\chi^2/df = 2.950$, CFI = .905, TLI = .890, RMSEA = .070, which demanded further improvement. For the second trial of model improvement, the researcher removed two more items of INF2 (.612) and MI5 (.647) that were less than the standardized regression weight of .65. After the revisions made, the measurement model fit with 33 items was acceptable: $\chi^2 (449) = 1202.283$ ($p = .000$), $\chi^2/df = 2.678$, CFI = .925, TLI = .911, RMSEA = .065. To further enhance the model fit, the researcher removed three more items that were less than the standardized regression weight of .70: INT6 (.652), OL1 (.678), and OL2 (.680). After all, the fit of the final measurement model with 30 items was good: $\chi^2 (359) = 841.165$ ($p = .000$), $\chi^2/df = 2.343$, CFI = .947 TLI = .936, RMSEA = .058. The correlation matrix of constructs with the final measurement items (30 items) is presented in Table 21.

Table 20. Main-test: measurement model improvement (n = 395)

CFA analysis	# of items	Revisions made	<i>p</i> -value	χ^2 (<i>df</i>)	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
1 st CFA	37	- Removed two items that were under the standardized regression weight of .60: SW1 (.569) and SW3 (.429) - Correlated the measurement errors of MI1 and MI4 that showed high MI of 49.311	.000	1978.190 (584)	3.387	.874	.856	.078
2 nd CFA	35	Removed two items that were under the standardized regression weight of .65: INF2 (.612) and MI5 (.647)	.000	1516.251 (514)	2.950	.905	.890	.070
3 rd CFA	33	Removed three items that were under the standardized regression weight of .70: INT6 (.652), OL1 (.678), and OL2 (.680)	.000	1202.283 (449)	2.678	.925	.911	.065
4 th CFA	30	Final measurement	.000	841.165 (359)	2.343	.947	.936	.058
Overall, a total of seven items were removed from structural model evaluation: INF2, IN6, OL1, OL2, MI5, SW1, and SW3								

Table 21. Main-test: correlation matrix with the final measurement (n = 395)

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Attractiveness	1.000									
2. Prestige	.534	1.000								
3. Expertise	.597	.459	1.000							
4. Information	.397	.326	.649	1.000						
5. Interaction	.004	.121	.072	.287	1.000					
6. Taste leadership	.537	.544	.448	.291	.136	1.000				
7. Opinion leadership	.375	.293	.628	.799	.329	.485	1.000			
8. Mimicry desire	.416	.500	.404	.295	.227	.582	.389	1.000		
9. Social media WOM	.137	.298	.286	.317	.245	.295	.341	.402	1.000	
10. Purchase intention	.350	.340	.365	.417	.328	.433	.454	.599	.399	1.000

Construct validity. As the final measurement model with 30 items achieved a good model fit, the construct validities of the latent constructs were tested via both convergent validity and discriminant validity. Convergent validity refers to the degree to which the measures of constructs that theoretically should be related, are in fact statistically proven to be related (Trochim & Donnelly, 2006). Discriminant validity refers to the degree to which constructs that are not supposed to be related are, in fact, unrelated (Trochim & Donnelly, 2006). First, convergent validity was confirmed by the following findings: (i) factor loadings for all items were significant ($p < .001$) (as shown in Table 22); (ii) the composite reliability for each construct exceeded the recommended value of .70 (as shown in Table 22); (iii) the average variance extracted (AVE) for all latent variables was greater than the threshold value of .50 (ranging from .608 to .809) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) (as shown in Table 23). In addition, discriminant validity was assessed by two criteria: (i) all correlations across constructs must be below the threshold of .85 (T. Brown, 2006; Kenny, 2012) and (ii) the AVEs must be larger than the shared variances (squared correlation coefficients) between all possible pairs of constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As shown in Table 21, all correlations across constructs were below .85. Next, as shown in Table 23, AVEs were larger than the shared variances between all possible construct pairs except for one construct of *opinion leadership*; AVE of opinion leadership (.608) was slightly lower than the shared variance between opinion leadership and information (.638). Because the correlation of these two items was .799 (below .85) as shown in Table 21, this was deemed non-problematic. To this end, construct validity of all the ten latent variables in this study was satisfactory.

Table 22. Main test: final measurement model and convergent validity (n = 395)

Construct	Indicator	Item	Factor loading	t-value	Composite reliability
Attractiveness	ATT1	I find [SMI's name]'s Instagram contents good-looking.	.900	23.097***	.919
	ATT2	I find [SMI's name]'s Instagram contents attractive.	.926	23.972***	
	ATT3	I find [SMI's name]'s Instagram contents visually appealing.	.841		
Prestige	PRE1	I find that [SMI's name]'s Instagram contents are prestigious.	.818	17.425***	.879
	PRE2	I find that [SMI's name]'s Instagram contents are upscale.	.914	19.073***	
	PRE3	I find that [SMI's name]'s Instagram contents have high status.	.788		
Expertise	EXP1	When looking at [SMI's name]'s Instagram, I find he/she is experienced.	.863	19.879***	.875
	EXP2	When looking at [SMI's name]'s Instagram, I find he/she is an expert.	.807	18.300***	
	EXP4	When looking at [SMI's name]'s Instagram, I find he/she is qualified.	.840		
Information	INF1	I look at [SMI's name]'s Instagram posts and messages because I find them informative.	.796	18.320***	.858
	INF3	I find [SMI's name]'s Instagram contents informative.	.934		
Interaction	INT1	I feel that [SMI's name] would talk back to me if I send a private message.	.907	30.330***	.955
	INT2	I feel that [SMI's name] would talk back to me if I post a comment.	.888	28.619***	
	INT3	I feel that [SMI's name] would respond to me quickly and efficiently if I send a private message.	.921		
	INT4	I feel that [SMI's name] would respond to me quickly and efficiently if I post a comment.	.904	30.092***	
	INT5	I feel that [SMI's name] would allow me to communicate directly with him/her.	.877	27.638***	

Table 22. Main test: final measurement model and convergent validity (n = 395) (Cont'd)

Construct	Indicator	Item	Factor loading	t-value	Composite reliability
Taste leadership	TL2	[SMI's name] takes the lead in sharing what looks good with his/her followers through Instagram.	.775		.846
	TL3	[SMI's name] is one of the first people to find the newest trends and designs that other people tend to pass over.	.791	15.592***	
	TL4	When worn or used by [SMI's name], the product becomes a look, a style, an exhibition of taste.	.846	16.489***	
Opinion leadership	OL3	[SMI's name] shares a great deal of information via his/her Instagram.	.838		.755
	OL5	[SMI's name] often gives his/her followers advice and suggestions via Instagram.	.717	14.033***	
Mimicry Desire	MI1	I aspire to the lifestyle of this social media influencer [SMI's name].	.748		.887
	MI2	Inspired by this social media influencer [SMI's name], I want to be as stylish as him/her.	.925	20.271***	
	MI3	Inspired by this social media influencer [SMI's name], I want to be as trendy as him/her.	.866	19.500***	
	MI4	Inspired by this social media influencer [SMI's name], I want to have a lifestyle more like him/her.	.702	16.674***	
Social media WOM	SW2	I will "share" some of the postings of [SMI's name] on my Instagram.	.872		.854
	SW4	I would pass on some of the postings of [SMI's name] along using other forms of social media.	.854	11.941***	
Purchase intention	PI1	In the future, I am likely to try one of the same products that [SMI's name] endorsed or posted on his/her Instagram.	.921	21.389***	.912
	PI2	In the future, I am likely to try one of the same services (e.g., travel or beauty services) that [SMI's name] endorsed or posted on his/her	.798		
	PI3	In the future, I am likely to try one of the same brands that [SMI's name] endorsed or posted on his/her Instagram.	.917	21.303***	

Table 23. Main-test: average variance extracted and discriminant validity (n = 395) ¹

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Attractiveness	.792									
2. Prestige	.285	.708								
3. Expertise	.356	.211	.701							
4. Information	.158	.106	.421	.753						
5. Interaction	.000	.015	.005	.082	.809					
6. Taste leadership	.288	.296	.201	.085	.018	.647				
7. Opinion leadership	.141	.086	.394	.638	.108	.235	.608			
8. Mimicry desire	.173	.250	.163	.087	.052	.339	.151	.664		
9. Social media WOM	.019	.089	.082	.100	.060	.087	.116	.162	.745	
10. Purchase intention	.123	.116	.133	.174	.108	.187	.206	.359	.159	.775

¹ Diagonal entries show the average variance extracted by the construct. Off-diagonal entries represent the variance shared (squared correlation) between constructs.

Main-Test: Structural Model Evaluation and Hypotheses Testing

The conceptual model of this study and the hypothesized relationships among the constructs were tested in the structural model. As shown in Table 24, the fit indices of the structural model provided a satisfactory model fit: $\chi^2 (385) = 1075.152$ ($p = .000$), $\chi^2/df = 2.793$, CFI = .925, TLI = .915, RMSEA = .067. Thus, as the next step, hypotheses testing was performed. As presented in Table 24, all the hypothesized relationships were supported.

In regards to the first two hypotheses, the extent to which a target perceived her choice of SMI as *attractive* and *prestigious* had a significant effect on her cognitive attitude that the SMI has *taste leadership*, thus supporting H1 ($\beta = .271, p < .001$) and H2 ($\beta = .361, p < .001$), respectively. As for H3, the extent to which a target perceived her choice of SMI as an *expert* also had a significant effect on her evaluative belief that the SMI has *taste leadership* ($\beta = .135, p < .05$); however, the significance level of this relationship ($p = .034; p < .05$) was relatively lower than the relationships depicted in H1 and H2 ($p < .001$). Next, the extent to which a target perceived her choice of SMI as *expert*, *informative*, and *interactive* had a significant effect on her cognitive attitude that the SMI has *opinion leadership*, confirming H4 ($\beta = .238, p < .001$), H5 ($\beta = .602, p < .001$), and H6 ($\beta = .149, p < .001$), respectively. Next, the target's cognitive attitudes (i.e., believing the SMI as having *taste leadership* and *opinion leadership*) had significant effects on her *mimicry desire*, confirming H7 ($\beta = .496, p < .001$) and H8 ($\beta = .238, p < .001$). Lastly, the target's *mimicry desire* significantly directed her performance outcomes of *social WOM* and *purchase intention*, supporting H9 ($\beta = .433, p < .001$) and H10 ($\beta = .613, p < .001$), respectively. To this end, both the structural model and the hypotheses proposed in Chapter II were statistically verified.

Table 24. Main-test: structural model evaluation and hypotheses testing (n = 395)

Hypothesis	Structural path	Standardized regression weight	Standard error	t-value (Sig.)	Result
H1	Attractiveness → Taste leadership	.271	.085	4.051***	Supported
H2	Prestige → Taste leadership	.361	.058	5.797***	Supported
H3	Expertise → Taste leadership	.135	.069	2.118*	Supported
H4	Expertise → Opinion leadership	.238	.077	3.645***	Supported
H5	Information → Opinion leadership	.602	.066	8.170***	Supported
H6	Interaction → Opinion leadership	.149	.027	3.305***	Supported
H7	Taste leadership → Mimicry desire	.496	.083	8.678***	Supported
H8	Opinion leadership → Mimicry desire	.238	.070	4.484***	Supported
H9	Mimicry desire → Social media WOM	.433	.069	7.665***	Supported
H10	Mimicry desire → Purchase intention	.613	.048	11.360***	Supported
Fit statistics					
$\chi^2(df)$	1075.152 (385) ($p<.001$)				
χ^2/df	2.793				
CFI	.925				
TLI	.915				
RMSEA	.067				
*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$					

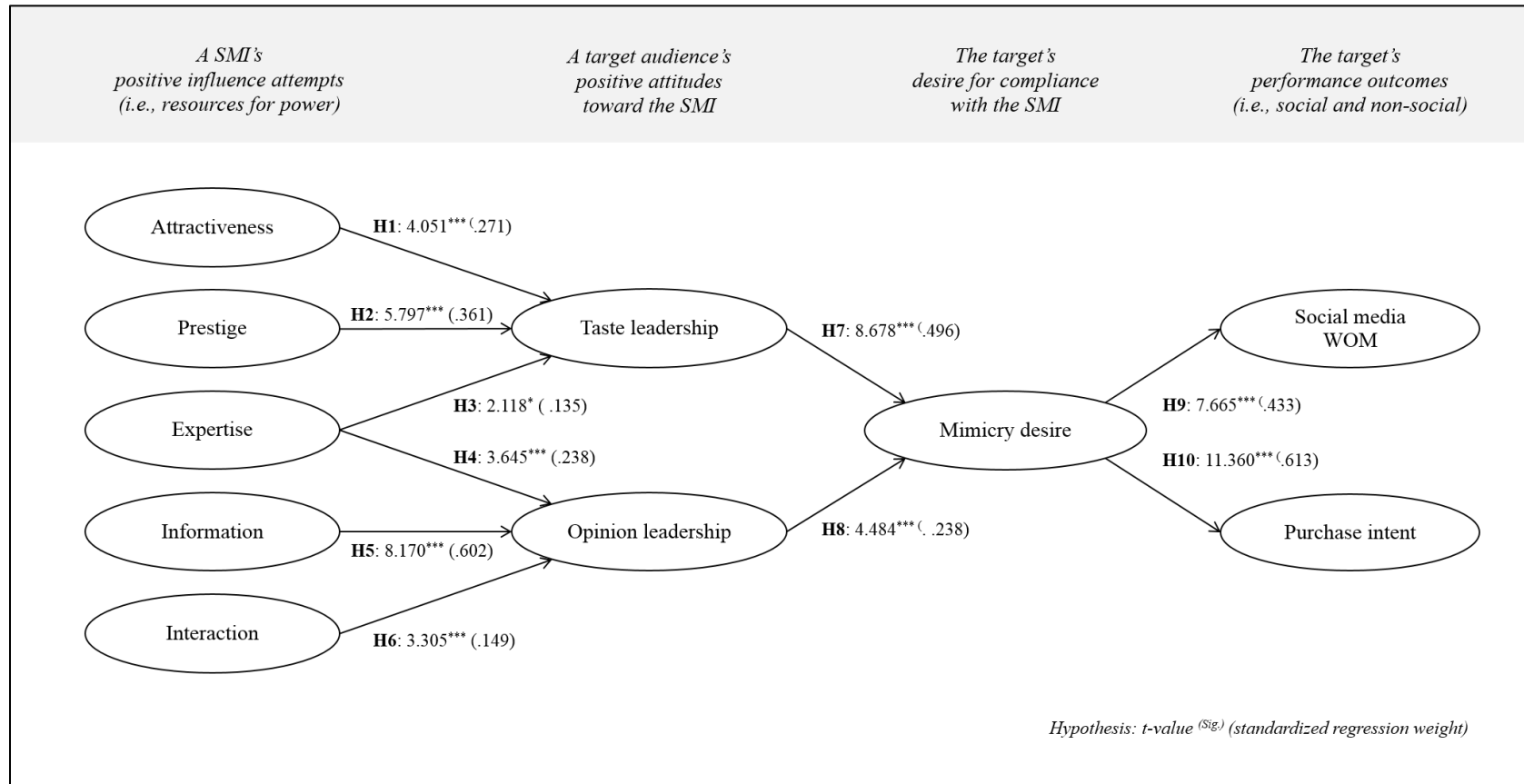


Figure 4. Main-test: hypotheses testing results (n = 395)

Main-Test: Mediation Evaluation

As the present study focuses on the role *mimicry desire* plays in the influence mechanism of a SMI over her target audience, the mediation effects of mimicry on the relationships between a target's attitudes toward a SMI (i.e., evaluative belief that the SMI has taste leadership and opinion leadership) and the target's behavioral intentions (i.e., social media WOM and purchase intention) were tested. Specifically, indirect effects were analyzed via bootstrapping ($n = 5000$) with a 95% confidence interval via AMOS 23. As shown in Table 25, significant indirect effects of a target's attitudes on her behavioral outcomes via mimicry desire were detected; all p values were $< .001$, and all path coefficients were within the confidence intervals of the bootstrap results (i.e., bootstrap confidence intervals of significant paths did not include zero) (Hayes, 2017). To this end, the bootstrap results confirmed the significant mediating roles *mimicry desire* serve in the relationships between target attitudes and behavioral outcomes.

Table 25. Main-test: mediation effects of attitudes on behaviors via mimicry ($n = 395$)

Path	Standardized indirect effect	Bootstrap standard error	Bias corrected 95% confidence interval	
			Lower bound	Upper bound
Taste leadership → Social media WOM	.215***	.038	.148	.296
Taste leadership → Purchase intention	.304***	.043	.221	.394
Opinion leadership → Social media WOM	.103***	.033	.047	.179
Opinion leadership → Purchase intention	.146***	.043	.069	.239
*** $p < .001$				

4.5. SUMMARY

The chapter discussed the quantitative methods employed in this study. The chapter discussed three phases of quantitative research (i.e., the pre-test, pilot-test, and main-test surveys), performed to empirically test the conceptual model and hypotheses proposed in Chapter II. Prior to three phases of online surveys, the instrument development process was illustrated in the first section. In the second section, the results of the pre-testing were discussed in which it was performed to enhance the clarity and readability of the survey questionnaire. The second section also discussed the content validity results of the survey questionnaire. Next, in the third section, the pilot-testing results were discussed; the results of EFA analysis, measurement reliability test, and measurement validity test were presented. The fourth section discussed the analyses and their results of the main-test survey. The main-test analyses included: (i) descriptive analyses of the respondents' social media usage and their favorite SMIs, (ii) content analysis of their responses as to why they favored and followed these SMIs using NVivo, (iii) CFA analysis for measurement model evaluation, (iv) SEM analyses for structural model evaluation and hypotheses testing, and (v) mediation analysis for assessing the role of mimicry using AMOS 23. Overall, the chapter demonstrated that the conceptual model and the hypotheses proposed in this study were all statistically supported. In addition, the chapter verified the significant mediating role mimicry plays in the relationships between target attitudes and behavioral outcomes via bootstrapping ($n = 5000$) analysis.

CHAPTER FIVE:

DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1. OVERVIEW

The present study explored the phenomenon in which SMIs attempt to influence target audiences' attitudes, compliance desire, and behavioral decisions. More precisely, drawing upon Influence Framework (Scheer & Stern, 1992) and Consumer's Doppelganger Effect (Ruvio et al., 2013) theory, the study attempted to identify whether SMIs' *prime influence appeals* (i.e., SMIs' attractive, prestigious, expert, informative, and interactive Instagram contents) led to targets' *positive attitudes* (i.e., positive evaluative judgements of believing that the SMIs have taste leadership and opinion leadership), *mimicry desire*, and ultimately to *behavioral intentions* (i.e., social WOM and purchase intention). In so doing, two lines of research methods were employed: first, a qualitative investigation (i.e., one focus group session) was undertaken to explore what may be a SMI's potential, influence attempts that appeal to a target audience to like and follow the SMI, and second, quantitative approaches (i.e., the pre-test, pilot-test, and main-test surveys) were designed to attest and validate the conceptual model and hypotheses proposed in this study (as shown in Figure 2). Based upon the findings of these two streams of research methods, the chapter discusses the study's theoretical contributions and managerial implications. Thereafter, the chapter concludes with the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.

5.2. THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Despite the growing trend of influencer marketing, little effort has been made to understanding the comprehensive mechanism as to how SMIs influence their target audiences. Although SMI literature attempted to identify possible drivers and effects of SMIs on target audiences, much of former research has focused on some partial, peripheral attributes of SMIs: identifying whether SMIs' *number of followers* affected targets' likability toward the SMIs (De Veirman et al., 2017) or how the *disclosure language* (e.g., 'sponsored' or 'paid ad') in SMIs' contents (i.e., advertising endorsements) influenced targets' purchase intentions toward the ad (Evans et al., 2017). Less is known about the principal qualities of SMIs that allow them to amass a number of followers in the first place and influence their audiences: SMIs' *prime influence attempts* that appeal to Instagram users (i.e., target audiences) and their effects on targets' *attitudes, mimicry desire, and behavioral decisions*. After all, an overarching conceptual framework that explains the influence mechanism of a SMI over her target (in other words, the psychological process that a target goes through in response to a SMI's influence appeals) is lacking. The present dissertation filled this void in the literature.

The study advanced the SMI literature in several ways. First, the study contributed to the SMI literature by suggesting that the Influence Framework (Scheer & Stern, 1992), which described the power dynamic between two parties in the context of traditional marketing channels (e.g., a sales agent and an end-consumer), is also applicable in today's marketing channels explaining the power dynamic between a SMI and a target audience. Specifically, this study confirmed the structural, influence process of a SMI over a target

audience across four prime phases; (i) the first phase in which a target perceived a SMI's *core influence appeals* (i.e., attractive, prestigious, expert, informative, and interactive Instagram contents); (ii) the second phase in which the target developed a *visual attitude toward the SMI* (i.e., the target's evaluative judgement of being satisfied with the taste displayed by the SMI, that is, believing that the SMI exhibits taste leadership) and a *verbal attitude toward the SMI* (i.e., the target's evaluative judgement of placing trust in the SMI's opinion, that is, believing that the SMI holds opinion leadership) in response to the SMI's influence appeals; (iii) the third phase in which the target expressed her *compliance desire toward the SMI* (i.e., mimicry desire toward the SMI) triggered by the positive target attitudes (i.e., taste leadership and opinion leadership); (iv) the last phase in which the target showed her *performance outcomes*, both in terms of social (i.e., social media WOM) and non-social outcomes (i.e., intent to purchase one of the same products, services, or brands endorsed or posted by the SMI), which resulted from her mimicry desire. To this end, the study contributed to the SMI literature by offering an overarching mechanism that describes a SMI's influence over her target audience as a whole.

Second, this study provided important insights as to what qualities of SMIs are worthy of note. The findings of the study's qualitative research (i.e., both the focus group and NVivo results) indicated that it was a SMI's Instagram contents that a target audience was focusing on. The results of the quantitative research further identified specifically *which qualities of Instagram contents* made certain SMIs more desirable and followable. According to the findings of the study's main-testing, the more a target audience recognized a SMI's Instagram contents as *having expertise, being informative, and seemingly interactive*, the more the target developed a favorable attitude of believing that

the SMI exerted greater *opinion leadership*. On the other hand, the more a target perceived a SMI's Instagram contents as *visually appealing, seemingly prestigious, and seemingly expert*, the more likely the target evaluated the SMI as having *taste leadership*. These findings indicate that a SMI's Instagram contents with such qualities of attractiveness, prestige, expertise, information, and interaction make the SMI deemed more favorable with taste leadership and opinion leadership and thus more followable by a target audience.

Third, this study put both taste leadership (as a prime visual attitude) and opinion leadership (as a prime verbal attitude) at equal importance, based upon the notion that a SMI's Instagram contents are interwoven into the constant stream of visual and verbal descriptions of her personal, everyday lives (Abidin, 2015). Previous scholars who have discussed SMIs mostly focused on their opinion leadership (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008; Gillin, 2009; Gulamali & Persson, 2017; Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014). Not much investigation has been undertaken to understanding SMIs' taste leadership and further to identifying the factors affecting their taste leadership. This is a surprising omission given that consumer behavior researchers have advocated the megaphone effect of SMIs (Kedzior, Allen, & Schroeder, 2016; McQuarrie et al., 2012; McQuarrie & Phillips, 2014; Stephen, 2016). The megaphone effect refers to the phenomenon in which Web 2.0 social media allows regular consumers to publicly display their taste leadership, through which they amass a wide audience, grab a megaphone to raise their voices over these audiences, and thus elevate their status from ordinary consumers to that of a role model of a kind (McQuarrie et al., 2012). In this study, the researcher reconfirmed *taste leadership* as an important, visual attitude that a target audience feels towards her SMI and identified the

keynote qualities affecting a SMI's taste leadership that pinpoint to *attractiveness, prestige, and expertise*.

Most importantly, the study provided initial insight into the SMI literature by proposing a target's *mimicry desire* as the prime mediator in the relationships between target attitudes (i.e., taste leadership and opinion leadership) and behavioral decisions (i.e., social media WOM and purchase intention). The study's findings confirmed that a target's *cognitive attitude* of believing that a SMI exercises taste leadership and opinion leadership, triggered her *desire to consciously mimic the SMI* to have a style, trendiness, or lifestyle more like the SMI. The study also verified that it was this mimicry desire that directed the target's *favorable performance outcomes*: influencing the target to share or pass on the SMI's Instagram contents (i.e., social performance outcome) or to purchase one of the same products, services, or brands posted by the SMI (i.e., non-social performance outcome). The study's bootstrap results further confirmed that a target's mimicry desire indeed served as a significant mediator linking her attitudinal beliefs to behavioral decisions.

These findings shed new light on SMIs and also on consumer decision-making process. In terms of SMIs, the study's findings suggest that SMIs should be discussed not only as those with taste leadership or opinion leadership, but further as those whose taste, opinions, or examples are (or can be) mimicked by target audiences. In addition, it is noteworthy that targets' *mimicry desire toward SMIs* explained their *purchase intention* toward one of the products, brands, or services posted by these SMIs ($\beta = .613$) more strongly than any other path (as shown in Table 24). This finding reiterates the significance of a target's *mimicry desire* in the discussion of influencer marketing. Further, the study's findings suggest the need to re-define the consumer decision-making process that would

better fit today's marketing channels. Consumers may not necessarily go through the process of need recognition, search for information, and evaluation of alternatives to make purchase decisions anymore, as they traditionally did (Engel, Kollat, & Blackwell, 1968). Instead, in this new marketing paradigm with Web 2.0 social media, consumers may make their purchase decisions more simply and instantly, sparked by their aspirations to be like someone they look up to (e.g., a SMI).

5.3. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The present research provides guidance for marketing practitioners in planning and executing successful influencer marketing strategies. First, according to this study's findings, it was a SMI's Instagram contents that drove consumer traffic and triggered their attitudinal or behavioral changes. More precisely, the significant influence appeals of SMIs were identified to be such qualities of attractiveness, prestige, expertise, information, and interaction. These findings guide brand managers and retailers as to which traits of SMIs are worthy of note. When segmenting and selecting SMIs with potential marketing power, brands (or retailers or marketers) should focus on analyzing SMIs' Instagram contents rather than checking on their number of followers. That is, SMIs' being famous may not necessarily mean that they have potential influence to steer target audiences' product choices. To classify the so-called right SMIs, brands (or retailers or marketers) should rather evaluate SMIs' Instagram contents as to whether they look attractive (or visually appealing), prestigious (or upscale), expert (or experienced or qualified), informative, and interactive (or responsive to targets' comments or messages). For instance, although some

game-themed Instagram influencers (e.g., El Rubius) are popular enough with more than 50 million followers, they may not be the right SMIs for endorsing your products. It would rather be wiser to target a SMI, albeit she has less followers, with the ability to showcase a visually attractive, prestigious, or informative Instagram contents.

Second, as this study identified the specific qualities of SMIs related to opinion leadership and taste leadership, respectively, brands (or retailers or marketers) can partner with different SMIs depending on their aim of influencer marketing; (i) whether they want to seed a corporate message or create online buzz about a corporate campaign/event (e.g., corporate CSR campaign), or (ii) whether they want to promote a newly launched product and do endorser advertising/endorsement marketing. The study's finding demonstrated that a SMI with attractive, prestigious, and expert Instagram contents led to a target's attitude of believing that the SMI has taste leadership. Therefore, if brands (or retailers or marketers) aim at advertising about their newly launched products or at maximizing the adoption of their products, particularly for fashion or cosmetic products that are related to consumers' aesthetic sense (e.g., Chanel's collaboration with SMIs for their launch of the new Chanel No. 5 L'Eau perfume), it is recommended to leverage SMIs who are well-known for exerting visually appealing and seemingly upscale Instagram contents with a sense of expertise. On the other hand, brands should note that the more a SMI displayed expert, informative, and interactive Instagram contents, the more they were trusted to have opinion leadership. Hence, if the aim of brands' (or retailers' or marketers') influencer marketing is at disseminating and maximizing coverage about their corporate campaigns/events (e.g., Sprint's #LiveUnlimited campaign), they may decide to collaborate with SMIs who are good at publicly displaying their expertise, information, and interaction qualities.

Most notably, when it comes to product adoption or product decisions, it was consumers' mimicry desire toward SMIs that eventually guided their intentions to try one of the same products, brands, or services posted or endorsed by these SMIs. To this end, when employing influencer marketing, brands should make sure that their choice of SMIs for influencer marketing has the taste, trend opinions, and lifestyle that are aspired by others. The more SMIs exhibit a desirable lifestyle, high style in fashion, or better knowledge about the newest trend through their Instagram contents, the more likely they are to inspire their target audiences and trigger the targets' mimicry desire to look like or be more like them. That is, targets' conscious mimicry desire influenced the targets not only to be favorable toward the SMIs (shown via social WOM), but also to be favorable toward the products, services, or brands endorsed or posted by them (shown via purchase intention). Further, noting that both SMIs' taste leadership (visual attitude) and opinion leadership (verbal attitude) led to targets' desire to mimic these SMIs, brands may consider classifying their SMI partnerships depending on their marketing purposes. For example, if brands aim at showcasing the visual aspects of their products or framing their products/brands as those of highly desirable taste (all of which are relevant to taste leadership), they may partner with SMIs who have the qualities of attractiveness, prestige, and expertise; this may trigger greater mimicry desire toward the SMIs from target consumers, which may ultimately lead to their greater product adoptions. On the other hand, if brands' influencer marketing strategies are aimed at spreading WOM about their corporate messages or at maximizing coverage about their corporate campaigns through these SMIs (all of which are relevant to opinion leadership), they may partner with SMIs who have the qualities of expertise, information, and interaction. The researcher hopes that

the managerial implications addressed in the above inspire brand marketers, and have them mimic one of the study's recommendations when planning for influencer marketing strategies.

5.4. LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The dissertation has some methodological and contextual limitations, which provide recommendations for future research. First, the researcher recommends future research to be careful when using the measures of *information* and *opinion leadership* together, as the discriminant validity of these two variables were not fully demonstrated. One way to enhance the discriminant validity is as follows: although the measurement items of opinion leadership were adopted from the social media literature of Twitter, they were not fully applicable in the Instagram context. Thus, future research can develop and use a scale of opinion leadership specifically relevant to the Instagram setting. Second, although this study provided the overarching, influence framework of SMIs over their target audiences, which is generalizable across different themes of SMIs (i.e., beauty, family, fashion, food, and others), it would be interesting and meaningful to classify SMIs more in detail according to their themes and investigate which SMIs are more associated with taste leadership opposed to opinion leadership, and vice versa. Third, as this study provided initial insights as to the role mimicry desire plays in swaying target consumers' product decisions in response to SMIs' influence attempts, it would be thought-provoking to examine whether mimicry desire directs consumers' behavioral decisions in different, up-to-date marketing channels (e.g., whether a consumer's mimicry desire toward a VR

model would lead the consumer to make favorable purchase decisions toward the products endorsed by the model). To this end, the researcher hopes to instigate future research to further explore the mediating effects of consumers' *mimicry desire* in the relationships between consumer attitudes and behavioral decisions in diverse digital marketing channels.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

IRB Approval



April 09, 2018

Chung Wha Ki

UTK - Coll of Education, Hlth, & Human - Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Mgmt

Re: UTK IRB-18-04414-XM

Study Title: The drivers and impacts of social media influencers

Dear Chung Wha Ki:

The Human Research Protections Program (HRPP) reviewed your application for the above referenced project and determined that your application is eligible for **exempt** review under 45 CFR 46.101, Category 2. Your application has been determined to comply with proper consideration for the rights and welfare of human subjects and the regulatory requirements for the protection of human subjects.

Therefore, this letter constitutes full approval of your application (version 1.0) as submitted, including:

Informed Consent Statement_Dissertation_Ki_2 - Version 1.0

IRB_Ki_ScaleItems_2 - Version 1.0

The above listed documents have been dated and stamped IRB approved on 4/9/2018.

Informed consent may be altered in accord with 45CFR46.116(d), with a consent cover statement used in lieu of a consent interview. The requirement to secure a signed consent form is waived under 45CFR46.117(c)(2).

In the event that volunteers are to be recruited using solicitation materials, such as brochures, posters, web-based advertisements, etc., these materials must receive prior approval of the IRB.

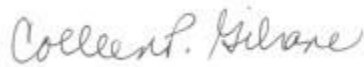
Any alterations (revisions) in the protocol [including any of the above listed IRB stamped approved documents] must be promptly submitted to and approved by the UTK Institutional Review Board prior to implementation of these revisions. You have individual responsibility for reporting to the Board in the event of unanticipated or serious adverse events and subject deaths.

Institutional Review Board | Office of Research & Engagement
1534 White Avenue Knoxville, TN 37996-1529
865-974-7697 865-974-7400 fax irb.utk.edu

BIG ORANGE. BIG IDEAS.

Flagship Campus of the University of Tennessee System 

Sincerely,



Colleen P. Gilrane, Ph.D.
Chair

APPENDIX B

Consent Statement

Informed Consent Statement
for the study entitled
[Working Title] social media influencers

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the survey! This survey is about general consumer behavior in a social media setting. The survey will take about 15 minutes to complete. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and anonymous. **You may decline to answer specific questions and withdraw from the study without penalty. Completing the survey will constitute your consent to participate.** All the information you provide in this survey will remain completely confidential. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

You will be participating in an online survey. First, please read the definition about "Instagram influencers." After you read the definition, you will be asked to answer a set of questions. You will be asked to name one of your favorite Instagram influencers, and will be answering some of the questions based upon your choice of the Instagram influencers. The survey will also contain questions on individual-oriented consumer characteristics and consumer responses (e.g., attitudes, behavioral intent, and behaviors) toward your choice of Instagram influencers, as well as demographic information. Each session will take about five minutes to complete. The total duration to complete the survey will take about 15 minutes.

RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks other than those encountered in everyday life.

BENEFITS

There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. However, the study could help people learn about consumer attitudes and behavior in response to different social media influencers in the context of Instagram.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Information in the study records will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to persons conducting the study, unless participants specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link participants to the study.

COMPENSATION

Participants will receive payment (rewards points) for completing the survey from the marketing company for their participation.

IRB NUMBER: UTK IRB-18-04414-XM
IRB APPROVAL DATE: 04/09/2018

CONTACT INFORMATION

Should you have any questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact Dr. Lydia Kim at 865-974-1025 or 1215 W Cumberland Avenue, JHB 244A, University of Tennessee, or contact Miss. Chloe Ki at 865-724-6883. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact the University of Tennessee IRB Compliance Officer at utkirb@utk.edu or (865) 974-7697.

IRB NUMBER: UTK IRB-18-04414-XM
IRB APPROVAL DATE: 04/09/2018

APPENDIX C

A Sample Questionnaire of the Pre-Test Survey

Start of Block: Block 1_Consent and Age

Introduction

Dear Participants,

Welcome to the survey!

This survey is about general consumer behavior in a social media setting, asking about your perceptions and attitudes about social media influencers. The survey will take about 5 to 10 minutes to complete.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and anonymous. **You may decline to answer specific questions and withdraw from the study without penalty. Completing the survey will constitute your consent to participate.**

All the information you provide in this survey will remain completely confidential. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study.

Should you have any questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact Dr. Lydia Kim at 865-974-1025 or 1215 W Cumberland Avenue, JHB 244A, University of Tennessee, or contact Miss. Chloe Ki at 865-724-6883.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact the University of Tennessee IRB Compliance Officer at utkirb@utk.edu or (865) 974-7697.

Thank you in advance for your time and effort in completing the survey.

Do you agree with the above terms? By clicking Yes, I consent that I am willing to answer the questions in this survey.

- ☐ yes
☐ no

Skip To: End of Block If Do you agree with the above terms? By clicking Yes, I consent that I am willing to answer the que... = no

What is your age?

Skip To: End of Block If What is your age? > 49

Skip To: End of Block If What is your age? < 18

End of Block: Block 1_Consent and Age

Start of Block: Block 2_Screening Qs_Social media usage and Instagram influencer

Which social media platform do you use most? Please **select up to four.**

- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ Instagram
- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ YouTube
- ☐ Snapchat
- ☐ Others _____

Skip To: End of Block If Which social media platform do you use most? Please select up to four. != Instagram

Overall, how long do you spend on Instagram on a typical day?

- ☐ not at all
- ☐ 5 minutes or less
- ☐ 5~15 minutes
- ☐ 15~30 minutes
- ☐ 30 minutes~1 hour
- ☐ 1 hour~2 hours
- ☐ 2~3 hours
- ☐ more than 3 hours

Skip To: End of Block If Overall, how long do you spend on Instagram on a typical day? = not at all

Please carefully read the definitions of social media influencers.

Social media influencers:

- refer to “new type of independent third-party endorsers who influence audience attitudes through the use of social media (e.g., Instagram)”
 - or “independent third-party endorsers who hold at least a thousand followers and share their daily lives, tips, or tricks via social media (e.g., Instagram)”
 - **DO NOT include** celebrities or already well-known politicians or athletes
-

Do you follow at least one **social media influencer on Instagram**?

- ☐ yes
☐ no

Skip To: End of Block If Do you follow at least one social media influencer on Instagram? = no

Please name one of your favorite **social media influencers on Instagram**.

Why do you like and follow this **social media influencer [SMI's name]'s Instagram account**?

End of Block: Block 2_Screening Qs_Social media usage and Instagram influencer

Start of Block: Block 3_Main Qs

What is the **main topic (or subject)** of this social media influencer **[SMI's name]'s Instagram**?

- ☐ Beauty (e.g., cosmetics or make-up)
☐ Family (e.g., child care or parenting)
☐ Fashion
☐ Food
☐ Health (e.g., work-out or diet)
☐ Home (e.g., home decorations or interior designs)
☐ Travel
☐ Others _____

Have you used the iPhone 11?

- ☐ yes
☐ no

Skip To: End of Block If Have you used the iPhone 11 ? = yes

[Questions about Attractiveness] Please respond to the following statements as to whether the Instagram content of your choice of social media influencer is attractive.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I find [SMI's name]'s Instagram contents good-looking.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I find [SMI's name]'s Instagram contents attractive.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I find [SMI's name]'s Instagram contents visually appealing.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

[Questions about Prestige] Please respond to the following statements as to whether the Instagram content of your choice of social media influencer is prestigious.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I find that [SMI's name]'s Instagram contents are prestigious.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I find that [SMI's name]'s Instagram contents are upscale.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Please click 'Somewhat agree.'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I find that [SMI's name]'s Instagram contents have high status.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

[Questions about Expertise] Please respond to the following statements as to whether your choice of social media influencer has expertise.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
When looking at [SMI's name]'s Instagram, I find he/she is experienced.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When looking at [SMI's name]'s Instagram, I find he/she is an expert.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When looking at [SMI's name]'s Instagram, I find he/she is competent.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When looking at [SMI's name]'s Instagram, I find he/she is qualified.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When looking at [SMI's name]'s Instagram, I find he/she is knowledgeable.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

[Questions about Information] Please respond to the following statements as to whether the Instagram content of your choice of social media influencer is informative.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I look at [SMI's name]'s Instagram posts and messages because I find them informative.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
[SMI's name]'s Instagram contents keep me informed about products, services, and trends.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I find [SMI's name]'s Instagram contents informative.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Please click 'Somewhat disagree.'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

[Questions about Interaction] Please respond to the following statements as to whether your choice of social media influencer is interactive.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I feel that [SMI's name] would talk back to me if I send a private message.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel that [SMI's name] would talk back to me if I post a comment.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel that [SMI's name] would respond to me quickly and efficiently if I send a private message.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel that [SMI's name] would respond to me quickly and efficiently if I post a comment.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel that [SMI's name] would allow me to communicate directly with him/her.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel that [SMI's name] would listen to what his/her followers have to say.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

[Questions about Taste Leadership] Please respond to the following statements as to whether your choice of social media influencer has taste leadership.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
[SMI's name] showcases his/her own personal taste.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
[SMI's name] takes the lead in sharing what looks good with his/her followers through Instagram.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
[SMI's name] is one of the first people to find the newest trends and designs that other people tend to pass over.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When worn or used by [SMI's name], the product becomes a look, a style, an exhibition of taste.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

[Questions about Opinion Leadership] Please respond to the following statements as to whether your choice of social media influencer has opinion leadership.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
[SMI's name] takes the lead in sharing the newest ideas, trends, and developments with his/her followers through Instagram.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
[SMI's name] serves as a role model for others on Instagram.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
[SMI's name] shares a great deal of information via his/her Instagram.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
[SMI's name] is one of the first people to know about the newest ideas, trends, and developments.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Please click 'Somewhat disagree.'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
[SMI's name] often gives his/her followers advice and suggestions via Instagram.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

[Questions about Mimicry Desire] Please respond to the following statements as to whether you aspire to be more like your choice of social media influencer.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I aspire to the lifestyle of this social media influencer [SMI's name].	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Inspired by this social media influencer [SMI's name], I want to be as stylish as him/her.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Inspired by this social media influencer [SMI's name], I want to be as trendy as him/her.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Please click 'Somewhat agree.'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Inspired by this social media influencer [SMI's name], I want to have a lifestyle more like him/her.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Inspired by this social media influencer [SMI's name]'s attitude of life, I want to have an attitude more like him/her.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

[Questions about Social Media WOM] Please respond to the following statements about social media WOM.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I will click "like" on some of the postings of [SMI's name].	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I will "share" some of the postings of [SMI's name] on my Instagram.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I will continue to "follow" [SMI's name]'s Instagram and interact with him/her.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q48. [Questions about Purchase Intention] Please respond to the following statements about your purchase intention.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
In the future, I am likely to try one of the SAME PRODUCTS that [SMI's name] endorsed or posted on his/her Instagram.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
In the future, I am likely to try one of the SAME SERVICES that [SMI's name] endorsed or posted on his/her Instagram.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
In the future, I am likely to try one of the SAME BRANDS that [SMI's name] endorsed or posted on his/her Instagram.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

End of Block: Block 3_Main Qs

Start of Block: Block 4_Demographic information

[Questions about your Demographic Information] The following statements are regarding your individual characteristics. Your answers will be used only for the descriptive purpose.

What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
 - ☐ Female
-

Which of the following best describes your racial or ethnic identification?

- ☐ African-American
 - ☐ Caucasian
 - ☐ Native American
 - ☐ Asian or Pacific Islander
 - ☐ Hispanic
 - ☐ Other _____
-

What is your marital status?

- ☐ Married
 - ☐ Single, never married
 - ☐ Separated, divorced, or widowed
-

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- ☐ High school or less
 - ☐ Bachelor's degree
 - ☐ Associate degree (community college, technical school, two-year college)
 - ☐ Graduate degree (Master's, MBA, or doctoral)
 - ☐ Other _____
-

What is your employment status?

- ☐ Work full-time
- ☐ Work part-time
- ☐ Do not work

What was your approximated TOTAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME last year (before tax)?

- ☐ Less than \$20,000
- ☐ \$20,000-\$39,999
- ☐ \$40,000-\$59,999
- ☐ \$60,000-\$79,999
- ☐ \$80,000-\$99,999
- ☐ \$100,000-\$119,999
- ☐ \$120,000-\$139,999
- ☐ \$140,000-\$159,999
- ☐ \$160,000 or more

End of Block: Block 4_Demographic information

APPENDIX D

A Sample Questionnaire of the Pilot-Test Survey

Start of Block: Block 1_Consent and Age

Introduction

Dear Participants,

Welcome to the survey!

This survey is about general consumer behavior in a social media setting, asking about your perceptions and attitudes about social media influencers. The survey will take about 5 to 10 minutes to complete.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and anonymous. **You may decline to answer specific questions and withdraw from the study without penalty. Completing the survey will constitute your consent to participate.**

All the information you provide in this survey will remain completely confidential. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study.

Should you have any questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact Dr. Lydia Kim at 865-974-1025 or 1215 W Cumberland Avenue, JHB 244A, University of Tennessee, or contact Miss. Chloe Ki at 865-724-6883.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact the University of Tennessee IRB Compliance Officer at utkirb@utk.edu or (865) 974-7697.

Thank you in advance for your time and effort in completing the survey.

Do you agree with the above terms? By clicking Yes, I consent that I am willing to answer the questions in this survey.

- ☐ yes
☐ no

Skip To: End of Block If Do you agree with the above terms? By clicking Yes, I consent that I am willing to answer the que... = no

What is your age?

Skip To: End of Block If What is your age? > 49

Skip To: End of Block If What is your age? < 18

End of Block: Block 1_Consent and Age

Start of Block: Block 2_Screening Qs_Social media usage and Instagram influencer

Which social media platform do you use most? Please **select up to four.**

- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ Instagram
- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ YouTube
- ☐ Snapchat
- ☐ Others _____

Skip To: End of Block If Which social media platform do you use most? Please select up to four. != Instagram

Overall, how long do you spend on Instagram on a typical day?

- ☐ 5 minutes or less
- ☐ 5~15 minutes
- ☐ 15~30 minutes
- ☐ 30 minutes~1 hour
- ☐ 1 hour~2 hours
- ☐ 2~3 hours
- ☐ more than 3 hours

Skip To: End of Block If Overall, how long do you spend on Instagram on a typical day? = not at all

Please carefully read the definitions of social media influencers.

Social media influencers:

- They are the so-called **influencers** - **not celebrities** - who influence audience attitudes through the use of social media (e.g., Instagram).
- Examples are beauty bloggers, fashionistas, fitness gurus and others.
- They hold **at least a thousand followers** and **share their daily lives, tips or tricks** on social media. They **DO NOT include** mainstream celebrities (e.g., a TV or movie star) or already well-known politicians or athletes.

Do you follow at least one **social media influencer on Instagram**?

- ☐ yes
- ☐ no

Skip To: End of Block If Do you follow at least one social media influencer on Instagram? = no

Please name one of your favorite **social media influencers on Instagram**.

Why do you like and follow this **social media influencer** [SMI's name]'s Instagram account?

End of Block: Block 2_Screening Qs_Social media usage and Instagram influencer

Start of Block: Block 3_Main Qs

What is the **main topic (or subject)** of this social media influencer [SMI's name]'s Instagram?

- ☐ Beauty (e.g., cosmetics or make-up)
- ☐ Family (e.g., child care or parenting)
- ☐ Fashion
- ☐ Food
- ☐ Health (e.g., work-out or diet)
- ☐ Home (e.g., home decorations or interior designs)
- ☐ Travel
- ☐ Others _____

Have you used the iPhone 11?

- ☐ yes
- ☐ no

Skip To: End of Block If Have you used the iPhone 11 ? = yes

[Questions about Attractiveness] Please respond to the following statements as to whether the Instagram content of your choice of social media influencer is attractive.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I find [SMI's name]'s Instagram contents good-looking.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I find [SMI's name]'s Instagram contents attractive.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I find [SMI's name]'s Instagram contents visually appealing.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

[Questions about Prestige] Please respond to the following statements as to whether the Instagram content of your choice of social media influencer is prestigious.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I find that [SMI's name]'s Instagram contents are prestigious.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I find that [SMI's name]'s Instagram contents are upscale.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Please click 'Somewhat agree.'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I find that [SMI's name]'s Instagram contents have high status.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

[Questions about Expertise] Please respond to the following statements as to whether your choice of social media influencer has expertise.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
When looking at [SMI's name]'s Instagram, I find he/she is experienced.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When looking at [SMI's name]'s Instagram, I find he/she is an expert.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When looking at [SMI's name]'s Instagram, I find he/she is competent.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When looking at [SMI's name]'s Instagram, I find he/she is qualified.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When looking at [SMI's name]'s Instagram, I find he/she is knowledgeable.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

[Questions about Information] Please respond to the following statements as to whether the Instagram content of your choice of social media influencer is informative.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I look at [SMI's name]'s Instagram posts and messages because I find them informative.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
[SMI's name]'s Instagram contents keep me informed about products, services, and trends.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I find [SMI's name]'s Instagram contents informative.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Please click 'Somewhat disagree.'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

[Questions about Interaction] Please respond to the following statements as to whether your choice of social media influencer is interactive.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I feel that [SMI's name] would talk back to me if I send a private message.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel that [SMI's name] would talk back to me if I post a comment.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel that [SMI's name] would respond to me quickly and efficiently if I send a private message.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel that [SMI's name] would respond to me quickly and efficiently if I post a comment.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel that [SMI's name] would allow me to communicate directly with him/her.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel that [SMI's name] would listen to what his/her followers have to say.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

[Questions about Taste Leadership] Please respond to the following statements as to whether your choice of social media influencer has taste leadership.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
[SMI's name] showcases his/her own personal taste.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
[SMI's name] takes the lead in sharing what looks good with his/her followers through Instagram.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
[SMI's name] is one of the first people to find the newest trends and designs that other people tend to pass over.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When worn or used by [SMI's name], the product becomes a look, a style, an exhibition of taste.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

[Questions about Opinion Leadership] Please respond to the following statements as to whether your choice of social media influencer has opinion leadership.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
[SMI's name] takes the lead in sharing the newest ideas, trends, and developments with his/her followers through Instagram.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
[SMI's name] serves as a role model for others on Instagram.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
[SMI's name] shares a great deal of information via his/her Instagram.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
[SMI's name] is one of the first people to know about the newest ideas, trends, and developments.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Please click 'Somewhat disagree.'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
[SMI's name] often gives his/her followers advice and suggestions via Instagram.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

[Questions about Mimicry Desire] Please respond to the following statements as to whether you aspire to be more like your choice of social media influencer.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I aspire to the lifestyle of this social media influencer [SMI's name].	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Inspired by this social media influencer [SMI's name], I want to be as stylish as him/her.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Inspired by this social media influencer [SMI's name], I want to be as trendy as him/her.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Please click 'Somewhat agree.'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Inspired by this social media influencer [SMI's name], I want to have a lifestyle more like him/her.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Inspired by this social media influencer [SMI's name]'s attitude of life, I want to have an attitude more like him/her.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

[Questions about Social Media WOM] Please respond to the following statements about social media WOM.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I will click "like" on some of the postings of [SMI's name].	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I will "share" some of the postings of [SMI's name] on my Instagram.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I will continue to "follow" [SMI's name]'s Instagram and interact with him/her.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

[Questions about Purchase Intention] Please respond to the following statements about your purchase intention.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
In the future, I am likely to try one of the SAME PRODUCTS that [SMI's name] endorsed or posted on his/her Instagram.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
In the future, I am likely to try one of the SAME SERVICES that [SMI's name] endorsed or posted on his/her Instagram.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
In the future, I am likely to try one of the SAME BRANDS that [SMI's name] endorsed or posted on his/her Instagram.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

End of Block: Block 3_Main Qs

Start of Block: Block 4_Demographic information

[Questions about your Demographic Information] The following statements are regarding your individual characteristics. Your answers will be used only for the descriptive purpose.

What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

Which of the following best describes your racial or ethnic identification?

- ☐ African-American
- ☐ Caucasian
- ☐ Native American
- ☐ Asian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ Other _____

What is your marital status?

- ☐ Married
- ☐ Single, never married
- ☐ Separated, divorced, or widowed

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- ☐ High school or less
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Associate degree (community college, technical school, two-year college)
- ☐ Graduate degree (Master's, MBA, or doctoral)
- ☐ Other _____

What is your employment status?

- ☐ Work full-time
- ☐ Work part-time
- ☐ Do not work

What was your approximated TOTAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME last year (before tax)?

- ☐ Less than \$20,000
- ☐ \$20,000-\$39,999
- ☐ \$40,000-\$59,999
- ☐ \$60,000-\$79,999
- ☐ \$80,000-\$99,999
- ☐ \$100,000-\$119,999
- ☐ \$120,000-\$139,999
- ☐ \$140,000-\$159,999
- ☐ \$160,000 or more

End of Block: Block 4_Demographic information

APPENDIX E

A Sample Questionnaire of the Main-Test Survey

Start of Block: Block 1_Consent and Age

Introduction

Dear Participants,

Welcome to the survey!

This survey is about general consumer behavior in a social media setting, asking about your perceptions and attitudes about social media influencers. The survey will take about 5 to 10 minutes to complete.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and anonymous. **You may decline to answer specific questions and withdraw from the study without penalty. Completing the survey will constitute your consent to participate.**

All the information you provide in this survey will remain completely confidential. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study.

Should you have any questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact Dr. Lydia Kim at 865-974-1025 or 1215 W Cumberland Avenue, JHB 244A, University of Tennessee, or contact Miss. Chloe Ki at 865-724-6883.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact the University of Tennessee IRB Compliance Officer at utkirb@utk.edu or (865) 974-7697.

Thank you in advance for your time and effort in completing the survey.

Do you agree with the above terms? By clicking Yes, I consent that I am willing to answer the questions in this survey.

- ☐ yes
☐ no

Skip To: End of Block If Do you agree with the above terms? By clicking Yes, I consent that I am willing to answer the que... = no

What is your age?

Skip To: End of Block If What is your age? > 49

Skip To: End of Block If What is your age? < 18

End of Block: Block 1_Consent and Age

Start of Block: Block 2_Screening Qs_Social media usage and Instagram influencer

Which social media platform do you use most? Please **select up to four.**

- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ Instagram
- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ YouTube
- ☐ Snapchat
- ☐ Others _____

Skip To: End of Block If Which social media platform do you use most? Please select up to four. != Instagram

Overall, how long do you spend on Instagram on a typical day?

- ☐ 5 minutes or less
- ☐ 5~15 minutes
- ☐ 15~30 minutes
- ☐ 30 minutes~1 hour
- ☐ 1 hour~2 hours
- ☐ 2~3 hours
- ☐ more than 3 hours

Skip To: End of Block If Overall, how long do you spend on Instagram on a typical day? = not at all

Please carefully read the definitions of social media influencers.

Social media influencers:

- They are the so-called **influencers - not celebrities** - who influence audience attitudes through the use of social media (e.g., Instagram).
- Examples are beauty bloggers, fashionistas, fitness gurus and others.
- They hold **at least a thousand followers** and **share their daily lives, tips or tricks** on social media. They **DO NOT include** mainstream celebrities (e.g., a TV or movie star) or already well-known politicians or athletes.

Do you follow at least one **social media influencer on Instagram?**

- ☐ yes
- ☐ no

Skip To: End of Block If Do you follow at least one social media influencer on Instagram? = no

Please name one of your favorite **social media influencers on Instagram.**

Why do you like and follow this **social media influencer** [SMI's name]'s Instagram account?

End of Block: Block 2_Screening Qs_Social media usage and Instagram influencer

Start of Block: Block 3_Main Qs

What is the **main topic (or subject)** of this social media influencer [SMI's name]'s Instagram?

- ☐ Beauty (e.g., cosmetics or make-up)
- ☐ Family (e.g., child care or parenting)
- ☐ Fashion
- ☐ Food
- ☐ Health (e.g., work-out or diet)
- ☐ Home (e.g., home decorations or interior designs)
- ☐ Travel
- ☐ Others _____

Have you used the iPhone 11?

- ☐ yes
- ☐ no

Skip To: End of Block If Have you used the iPhone 11 ? = yes

[Questions about Attractiveness] Please respond to the following statements as to whether the Instagram content of your choice of social media influencer is attractive.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I find [SMI's name]'s Instagram contents good-looking.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I find [SMI's name]'s Instagram contents attractive.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I find [SMI's name]'s Instagram contents visually appealing.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

[Questions about Prestige] Please respond to the following statements as to whether the Instagram content of your choice of social media influencer is prestigious.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I find that [SMI's name]'s Instagram contents are prestigious.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I find that [SMI's name]'s Instagram contents are upscale.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Please click 'Somewhat agree.'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I find that [SMI's name]'s Instagram contents have high status.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

[Questions about Expertise] Please respond to the following statements as to whether your choice of social media influencer has expertise.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
When looking at [SMI's name]'s Instagram, I find he/she is experienced.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When looking at [SMI's name]'s Instagram, I find he/she is an expert.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When looking at [SMI's name]'s Instagram, I find he/she is competent.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When looking at [SMI's name]'s Instagram, I find he/she is qualified.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When looking at [SMI's name]'s Instagram, I find he/she is knowledgeable.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

[Questions about Information] Please respond to the following statements as to whether the Instagram content of your choice of social media influencer is informative.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I look at [SMI's name]'s Instagram posts and messages because I find them informative.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
[SMI's name]'s Instagram contents keep me informed about products, services, and trends.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I find [SMI's name]'s Instagram contents informative.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Please click 'Somewhat disagree.'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

[Questions about Interaction] Please respond to the following statements as to whether your choice of social media influencer is interactive.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I feel that [SMI's name] would talk back to me if I send a private message.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel that [SMI's name] would talk back to me if I post a comment.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel that [SMI's name] would respond to me quickly and efficiently if I send a private message.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel that [SMI's name] would respond to me quickly and efficiently if I post a comment.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel that [SMI's name] would allow me to communicate directly with him/her.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel that [SMI's name] would listen to what his/her followers have to say.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

[Questions about Taste Leadership] Please respond to the following statements as to whether your choice of social media influencer has taste leadership.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
[SMI's name] showcases his/her own personal taste.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
[SMI's name] takes the lead in sharing what looks good with his/her followers through Instagram.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
[SMI's name] is one of the first people to find the newest trends and designs that other people tend to pass over.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When worn or used by [SMI's name], the product becomes a look, a style, an exhibition of taste.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

[Questions about Opinion Leadership] Please respond to the following statements as to whether your choice of social media influencer has opinion leadership.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
[SMI's name] takes the lead in sharing the newest ideas, trends, and developments with his/her followers through Instagram.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
[SMI's name] serves as a role model for others on Instagram.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
[SMI's name] shares a great deal of information via his/her Instagram.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
[SMI's name] is one of the first people to know about the newest ideas, trends, and developments.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Please click 'Somewhat disagree.'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
[SMI's name] often gives his/her followers advice and suggestions via Instagram.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

[Questions about Mimicry Desire] Please respond to the following statements as to whether you aspire to be more like your choice of social media influencer.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I aspire to the lifestyle of this social media influencer [SMI's name].	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Inspired by this social media influencer [SMI's name], I want to be as stylish as him/her.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Inspired by this social media influencer [SMI's name], I want to be as trendy as him/her.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Please click 'Somewhat agree.'	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Inspired by this social media influencer [SMI's name], I want to have a lifestyle more like him/her.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Inspired by this social media influencer [SMI's name]'s attitude of life, I want to have an attitude more like him/her.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

[Questions about Social Media WOM] Please respond to the following statements about social media WOM.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I will click "like" on some of the postings of [SMI's name].	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I will "share" some of the postings of [SMI's name] on my Instagram.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I will continue to "follow" [SMI's name]'s Instagram and interact with him/her.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I would pass on some of the postings of [SMI's name] along using other forms of social media.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

[Questions about Purchase Intention] Please respond to the following statements about your purchase intention.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
In the future, I am likely to try one of the SAME PRODUCTS that [SMI's name] endorsed or posted on his/her Instagram.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
In the future, I am likely to try one of the SAME SERVICES that [SMI's name] endorsed or posted on his/her Instagram.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
In the future, I am likely to try one of the SAME BRANDS that [SMI's name] endorsed or posted on his/her Instagram.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Start of Block: Block 4_Demographic information

[Questions about your Demographic Information] The following statements are regarding your individual characteristics. Your answers will be used only for the descriptive purpose.

What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
 - ☐ Female
-

Which of the following best describes your racial or ethnic identification?

- ☐ African-American
 - ☐ Caucasian
 - ☐ Native American
 - ☐ Asian or Pacific Islander
 - ☐ Hispanic
 - ☐ Other _____
-

What is your marital status?

- ☐ Married
 - ☐ Single, never married
 - ☐ Separated, divorced, or widowed
-

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- ☐ High school or less
 - ☐ Bachelor's degree
 - ☐ Associate degree (community college, technical school, two-year college)
 - ☐ Graduate degree (Master's, MBA, or doctoral)
 - ☐ Other _____
-

What is your employment status?

- ☐ Work full-time

- ☐ Work part-time
 - ☐ Do not work
-

What was your approximated TOTAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME last year (before tax)?

- ☐ Less than \$20,000
- ☐ \$20,000-\$39,999
- ☐ \$40,000-\$59,999
- ☐ \$60,000-\$79,999
- ☐ \$80,000-\$99,999
- ☐ \$100,000-\$119,999
- ☐ \$120,000-\$139,999
- ☐ \$140,000-\$159,999
- ☐ \$160,000 or more

End of Block: Block 4_Demographic information

VITA

Chung-Wha (Chloe) Ki was born in Seoul, Republic of Korea, on February 5, 1981. She holds an M.S. degree in Clothing and Textile, specialized in fashion marketing, from Ewha Womans University at Seoul, Korea, and a B.S. degree in English Language and Literature from Ewha Womans University. Prior to joining the Ph.D. program at University of Tennessee at Knoxville, she worked as a marketing representative at Li & Fung Korea and a senior PR consultant at Edelman Korea. During her Ph.D. years, she published articles in *European Journal of Marketing (EJM)*, *Social Behavior & Personality (SBP)*, *Family & Consumer Sciences Research Journal (FCSRJ)*, and *Fashion, Industry & Education (FIE)*. The paper that she co-authored with her advisor received the *2016 Best Paper Award in the FCSRJ* from the apparel, textiles, and merchandising track and was honored as one of the *Top 10 Most Downloaded FCSRJ Articles during 2016*. She also received the *Graduate Student Senate Award for Excellence in Research* from the University of Tennessee in 2018. Her research interests lie in consumer psychology and linking it to diverse contexts, such as sustainable fashion consumption, luxury fashion consumption, ethnic-inspired design consumption, and digital marketing. Starting from Fall 2018, she will serve as an Assistant Professor of Fashion Business at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University.