Influencer Marketing: Social Media Influencers as Human Brands

Attaching to Followers and Yielding Positive Marketing Results by Fulfilling Needs

Abstract

While the literature related to this topic has predominantly focused on investigating the influence mechanism that social media influencers (SMIs) impose over their followers, less is known about their attachment mechanism. Given that social media platforms were originally designed to facilitate personal bonding and not product or brand recommendations, we posited that social media followers' emotional attachment to SMIs is an important precedent that affects the followers' behavioral inclination to accept the SMIs' endorsements. We thus drew new attention to the relationship between SMIs and their followers by focusing on their attachment development mechanism and its casual factors and effects. In doing so, Study 1 inductively analyzed the key causal factors, both with respect to SMI persona- and content-driven attributes, that make followers feel attached to SMIs. By integrating the findings of Study 1 with the human brand theory, Study 2 provided empirical evidence after analyzing 325 U.S. consumers' responses about how SMIs' personas (i.e., inspiration, enjoyability, and similarity) and content curation abilities (i.e., informativeness) affected followers to perceive the SMIs as human brands who fulfill their needs for ideality, relatedness, and competence—all of which resulted in an intense attachment to SMIs. It was this positive emotion shaped with SMIs that transferred to SMIs' endorsements and positively influenced the followers to acquire the products/brands that the SMIs recommended.

Keywords: Social media, social media influencers, influencer marketing, human brands, attachment, Instagram

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1. INTRODUCTION

A notable and current phenomenon in retail marketing is retailers' use of social media, particularly their partnerships with social media influencers (hereafter referred to as SMIs), to draw consumers' interest of their goods and services and drive traffic to their online stores (Ryu and Park, 2020). Indeed, social media has changed the way we communicate, connect, and influence one another (Jacobson et al., 2020). Using social media, anyone—whether a celebrity or a mediocre person—can share his/her thoughts and feelings, create and curate any kind of online content (e.g., in-feed, Stories, Live and IGTV), and thereby develop his/her unique persona on social media (Labrecque, 2014). Certain social media personas and their contents are particularly favored by others, which allows them to amass millions of followers. Those who have built a sizable social media network of followers and thereby have acquired the potential to exert their influence over their followers are commonly described as SMIs (Ki and Kim, 2019). This recent phenomenon of SMIs has attracted the attention of retail marketers and created the new trend of influencer marketing, which is a form of social media marketing through which retail brands collaborate with an SMI and ask him/her to create branded content that includes endorsements or product mentions that increase consumers' brand awareness and product acquisition (Lou and Yuan, 2019).

Influencer marketing has become an integral part of retailers' digital marketing strategies because many retailers believe this new way of marketing is effective in translating into higher profits. In fact, an industry report (Linqia, 2019) indicated that 86% of brand marketers used influencer marketing in their advertising campaigns in 2017 and 92% of them found it effective.

Nearly 89% of these marketers reported that their return on investment from influencer marketing was better than, or comparable to, other marketing channels in 2018 (Mediakix, 2018). Furthermore, SMI-generated content was found to be 6.9 times more effective than studio-shot content (Ki and Kim, 2019). Due to the impacts of these SMIs, 42% of the marketers reported that they are planning to use influencer marketing as their always-on strategy instead of implementing it as a one-off, tactical campaign (Linqia, 2019). The market size of influencer marketing worldwide reached 148 million in 2019, which is about a 7.95% increase from 2018, and this number is expected to exceed US$373 million by 2027 (Statista, 2020).

To maximize the significant benefits influencer marketing can offer, it is important for retailers and marketers to identify who may be the most suitable SMIs to partner with (Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017). While many past studies have indicated that the number of followers SMIs have is a decisive factor affecting retailers' choice of SMIs (De Veirman et al., 2017; Evans et al., 2017; Jin and Phua, 2014), surprisingly, less is understood about how SMIs initially amass their number of followers and acquire the potential to influence them (Ki and Kim, 2019). Our study addresses this issue. Given that many people use social media to feel close and connected to one another (Ladhari et al., 2020), our study focused on the sense of emotional attachment that SMIs provide as an important precedent allowing SMIs to amass both followers and influence. To provide a more nuanced understanding of this aspect, we explored the attachment mechanism between SMIs and their followers from the lens of followers. While previous studies have investigated the relationship between SMIs and their followers, many of them discussed it from the stance of SMIs in efforts to identify which role of SMIs would attract more or less attention from their followers (Breves et al., 2019; Casaló et al., 2018). In contrast, very few studies have focused on what followers desire to see and what needs they hope to fulfill

by following SMIs. We thus seek to contribute to the literature by investigating the SMI-follower attachment mechanism from the followers' needs fulfillment perspective. Yet, a truer understanding of this mechanism cannot be accomplished without considering both SMIs' personal and content-driven traits holistically. When identifying what followers desire to perceive from SMIs, one line of research has highlighted that followers focus on SMIs' personal qualities (Audrezet et al., 2018), whereas another line of research has emphasized that followers' focus on SMIs' content (Ki and Kim, 2019). However, we believe that both SMIs' personal and content-driven traits are equally significant in affecting the relational bond between SMIs and their followers.

Thus, to address the aforementioned gaps in the literature, our study:

1. Investigated the attachment mechanism between SMIs and their followers.

2. Identified the key antecedents of the attachment mechanism from the followers' needs fulfillment perspective.

3. Examined whether and how SMIs' personal attributes and content-driven attributes affected their followers' needs fulfillment.

4. Investigated the attachment mechanism's effect by examining whether the attachment to the SMIs facilitated an effective transfer of positive feelings from the SMIs to their endorsements.

We reviewed the SMI literature more in detail in the next section to gain a sharper understanding of what has been explored and underexplored in the current literature, which directs the strong need why the aforementioned issues should be investigated.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Social Media Influencer (SMI) Literature

As the popularity of influencer marketing grows, academic researchers have devoted much attention to identifying what traits SMIs have that allow them to exert more or less

influence over their followers (Arora et al., 2019; Audrezet et al., 2018; Ki and Kim, 2019). In doing so, several studies have treated SMIs' branded content as online advertisements and investigated its influence on followers' decisions (Daniel et al., 2018; Glucksman, 2017). For example, one line of research focused on identifying whether the number of followers a SMI accumulated, or the number of times the SMI's content was shared, influenced the advertising effectiveness of SMIs' branded content (Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017; Freberg et al., 2011). Another line of research has investigated how a distinct sponsorship disclosure in SMIs' branded content, e.g., "sponsored," "paid ad," or "no disclosure," affects followers' advertising recognition and, in turn, their intention to acquire the sponsored product (Dhanesh and Duthler, 2019; Evans et al., 2017; Stubb and Colliander, 2019). Despite these contributions made by previous studies, less is still understood about how SMIs initially acquire their persuasive power and be able to partner with brands and create branded contents that include endorsements. Given that social media platforms were originally designed to facilitate personal connections and bonding (Lim and Kumar, 2019), we investigated the attachment mechanism between SMIs and their followers to see whether this attachment facilities the SMIs' influence over them.

Next, while reviewing the SMI literature, we found that much of the prior research leaned towards investigating the relationship between SMIs and their followers from the SMIs' perspective (Casaló et al., 2018; Cooley and Parks-Yancy, 2019). In contrast, less research considered the followers' side. For example, the majority of the literature focused on identifying which ones among the SMIs' roles are sufficiently strong to influence the followers' choice decisions (Ki and Kim, 2019; Lin et al., 2018). In doing so, one line of research has demonstrated that SMIs are opinion leaders who have the ability to sway their followers' tendency to accept their advice (De Veirman et al., 2017; Shareef et al., 2019). However, another

line of research focused on the SMIs' role as taste makers and described the way their judgment of aesthetic taste influenced their followers' product decisions (Martensen et al., 2018; McQuarrie et al., 2012). While the literature has tried to identify the SMIs' role that grants them this influence, there is a lack of understanding about what followers desire to fulfill by following and connecting with SMIs regardless of the roles they serve. We thus sought to identify the attachment mechanism between the SMIs and their followers from the followers' needs fulfillment perspective.

Lastly, we found that few studies have explored the way SMIs' personal traits, as well as their content-driven traits, comprehensively affect their followers. When identifying the SMI phenomenon, one line of research has focused solely on SMIs' personal qualities, such as authenticity (Audrezet et al., 2018), attractiveness (Lou and Yuan, 2019), and intimacy (Lou and Yuan, 2019), as important attributes for followers to like and then follow the SMIs. Another line of research has indicated that followers are attracted to SMIs' content, such as visually pleasing (Ki and Kim, 2019), informative (Stubb and Colliander, 2019), or entertaining content (Lou and Yuan, 2019). However, given that SMIs' personal traits and ability to curate social media content are equally important in attracting and retaining followers (Gannon and Prothero, 2016), our study treated SMIs' personal and content-driven attributes as equally important in fulfilling their followers' needs, which develops into emotional attachments toward the SMIs and by extension to their endorsements.

This study addressed these points using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. In Study 1, we conducted an inductive analysis of an open-ended survey to identify the key SMI attributes that affect social media followers' attachment to SMIs and to explore the needs the followers want to fulfill by following the SMIs. Based on Study 1's findings, we developed and

empirically tested a research model in Study 2 that describes the mechanism through which followers develop a feeling of attachment to SMIs that, in turn, results in a positive emotional transfer from the SMIs to their endorsements. In doing so, we drew on human brand theory (Thomson, 2006).

2.2. Human Brand Theory

Human brand theory (Thomson, 2006) provides the conceptual lens for our study as it proposes the specific ways in which a media persona can develop into a human brand, who provides a sense of attachment to his/her audience and yields positive marketing results by fulfilling needs. The theory proposes three key points in this process. First, certain media personas, such as celebrities, athletes, and politicians, can be viewed as *human brands* if they meet certain conditions. As much as a brand refers to a name, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's product or service as being distinct from those of others, an individual whose name, persona, or other qualities distinguish him or her from others can serve as a human brand (Moulard et al., 2015; Thomson, 2006). Similarly, a human brand refers to any well-known person who has brandable features, such as a unique personality or ability, and thereby becomes the subject of marketing communications efforts. Second, the theory also proposes that these human brands can create strong relationships with their followers and earn their loyalty by fulfilling their needs (Duffy, 2005; Thomson, 2006). Strong attachments are associated with committed relationships that can develop when human brands meet others' needs, particularly individuals' three intrinsic psychological needs: 1) a feeling of self-determination in choice and action (i.e., *autonomy*), 2) a sense of intimacy (i.e., *relatedness*), and 3) a feeling of proficiency (i.e., *competence*) (Deci and Ryan, 2000; Huang et al., 2015; Thomson, 2006). Thus, if a human brand fulfills individuals' desire to feel a sense of self-governance, closeness, and expertise,

these individuals will develop an intense emotional bond with the human brand. Third, the theory proposes that this strong attachment leads human brands to create successful marketing effects (Thomson, 2006). Consumers who have developed an attachment to a particular brand are more likely to embrace that brand's product extension by showing an automatic transfer of positive effects from the brand to another branded product (Yeung and Wyer, 2005), and the same holds true in the human brand context. The attachment formed to a human brand facilitates the effective transfer of positive feelings from that human brand to the products/brands that human brand endorses. This effect is referred to as *attachment transfer* (Thomson, 2006).

Much evidence of human brands exists across various contexts (Ilicic et al., 2016; Walsh and Williams, 2017). For example, past studies have indicated celebrities (Moulard et al., 2015), idols (Huang et al., 2015), and athletes (Carlson and Donavan, 2013) as human brands and described audiences' attachments to them. However, no study has investigated whether and how SMIs serve as human brands for social media followers. In response, we proposed SMIs as a new type of human brand in that they showcase brandable persona-driven qualities (e.g., enjoyable persona) and content curation skills (e.g., informative content curation), both of which allow them to perform as a brand influencer in marketing efforts. We also propose that social media followers will develop an intense attachment to these new human brand SMIs if the SMIs fulfill their intrinsic needs. In this way, we seek to contribute to the literature by extending the application of the human brand theory to describe the attachment mechanism between SMIs and their followers and the way this intense relationship spills over to influence the followers' choices positively.

3. STUDY 1

As the human brand theory does not indicate what specific attributes allow an average media persona to be elevated to the status of a human brand, Study 1 was designed to conduct a qualitative analysis of an open-ended survey to identify key SMI attributes that affect followers' tendency to perceive SMIs as a human brand and develop an attachment to them.

3.1. Respondents and Procedure

We developed an open-ended survey via Qualtrics and administered it on Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) to those who are over 18, reside in the U.S., and use Instagram frequently. We chose Instagram as the principal context of our study because 78% of SMIs reported that it is their primary platform for brand collaborations (Statista, 2020). With Instagram as the main context, we provided a definition of SMIs (i.e., individuals who have established a likeable online personality by sharing their daily lives, tips, and tricks on social media) and examples (e.g., James Charles, a beauty influencer, and Michelle Lewin, a fitness guru) at the beginning of the survey to ensure that the survey participants were familiar with our study's context. After reading the definition and examples of SMIs, the participants were asked to provide one of the SMIs they like and follow on Instagram. Because the literature indicates that the "likes" and "following" functions of social media are valid measures that show followers' online exhibition of attachment to SMIs (Chua and Chang, 2016), with respect to the SMIs the respondents named, we then asked the respondents to note freely their responses to an open-ended question: "Why do you like and follow [SMI's name] on Instagram?"

3.2. Inductive Approach to Qualitative Data Analysis

With the descriptive terms 395 participants provided, we used an inductive approach for the data analysis. The purposes of using this approach were to condense the extensive raw text data into meaningful categories and identify significant SMI attributes that affect followers

feeling of attachment to SMIs. Specifically, the analytic induction process involved two researchers who interpreted the 395 individual excerpts vigilantly and assigned them to relevant categories (Bitner et al., 1990). This process was carried out in Excel, where the categories identified were based on the similarities in responses. Agreements on the labeled categories were then achieved through the two researchers' repetitive coding of the excerpts. At the end of this process, the induction rate was calculated for each category to determine the extent to which the category identified was represented within the excerpts overall (Lim and Kumar, 2019).

3.3. Results: Factors Affecting the Social Media Followers' Attachment to SMIs

As a result of our approach, two overarching factors emerged as SMIs' key attributes that helped them establish relational bonding with their followers: 1) SMIs' persona-driven attributes and 2) their content-driven attributes. To be more precise, eight noteworthy sub-categories emerged under each category: informativeness with an induction rate of 27.53%; inspiration (15.91%); enjoyability (15.40%); visual aesthetics (11.87%); similarity (10.61%); physical attractiveness (9.85%); expertise (10.10%); and authenticity (6.06%). Among these subcategories, inspiration, enjoyability, similarity, physical attractiveness, and authenticity were associated with SMIs' persona-related traits, whereas informativeness, visual aesthetics, and expertise were associated with SMIs' content. Subsequently, a third judge who did not participate in the preliminary categorization induction process verified all entries in the categories identified. An agreement percentage was then computed to quantify the inter-raters' reliability. These reliabilities were suitable, ranging from 87% to 97%, which exceeded the acceptable level of 85% (Kassarjian, 1977).

With these initial subcategories identified, we adopted the threshold induction rate of 10% for deciding which SMI attributes to include in, or exclude from, our research model

(Fishbein and Middlestadt, 1995). As a result, three SMI persona-driven attributes (inspiration, enjoyability, and similarity) and three SMI content-driven attributes (informativeness, visual aesthetics, and expertise) remained valid. On the other hand, two subcategories of SMIs' personal traits, physical attractiveness and authenticity, were excluded from our model. Table 1 presents example of excerpts of survey entries for each subcategory identified.

== Place Table 1 About Here ==

In addition to deriving the key SMI attributes, the sample excerpts described what needs the followers projected onto SMIs that made them feel attached to SMIs. For instance, the following excerpt thoroughly illustrated the connection a respondent developed with an SMI: "I started following her career years ago before social media was a thing. When she got big on YouTube and Instagram, I stayed as her fan because she talked about things that I was interested in. We are close in age, so I feel connected to her." This display of attachment was common, as many respondents referred to the passionate bonds that described the three facets of their need fulfillment factors posited in the human brand theory.

First, an analysis of our qualitative data revealed that respondents felt attached to a SMI as the SMI's self-presentation reflects their own ideal self (i.e., *ideality need fulfillment)*. Examples of responses included:

"She pushes you to be a better version of yourself,"
"She's…an all-around role model for me."
"…whenever he posts, it just looks so aesthetic, and like something I would want my life to be like,"

While the autonomous need for fulfillment in the human brand theory pertains to followers' desire to feel a sense of being "in control of the self" (Thomson, 2006, p. 107), the findings of

our qualitative study demonstrated that the respondents' attachment to an SMI is related to the latter's perceived ideality that helps them "become an ideal self."

The sample excerpts also illustrated the way respondents' *relatedness need*, fulfilled by an SMI's personal traits of enjoyability and similarity, strengthens their attachment to an SMI:

> "I have a Latina wife, Dulce, who stands proud and shares her story as an immigrant and all that she has accomplished so she is an inspiration to many; that you can start off at the bottom and reach for the stars and your dreams can come true…."
> "Everything she posts…is about family life and home living. As a stay-at-home mom, I appreciate her sense of style and mommyhood."
> "I think he has a great personality. He is hilarious and relatable."

Lastly, our data analysis revealed that a respondent's *competency need*, fulfilled by an SMI's knowledge or skills, leads to a strong connection to the SMI, as the following excerpts suggest:

> "I like that he is a filmmaker. I am very into independent videos and documentaries. He does a good job of showing how he makes films,"
> "She has a great style and personality, and sometimes I follow her makeup tutorials."

4. STUDY 2

Integrating the findings of Study 1 with the human brand theory, Study 2 was designed to construct a research model that depicts the attachment mechanism between SMIs and their followers, and empirically test it. Rationales for proposing each hypothesis are described below.

4.1. Hypotheses Development

4.1.1. SMI attributes that fulfill followers' ideality, relatedness, and competence needs

The literature defines the need for ideality as individuals' desire to seek a person who possesses the traits that they feel they lack but would like to possess (Karp et al., 1970). The literature further indicates that an SMI is the kind of person who can fulfill people's need for

ideality (Ki and Kim, 2019). Specifically, an SMI whose taste, style, and lifestyle are inspiring is effective in attracting followers' liking, following, and modeling (Ki and Kim, 2019). Indeed, people like and imitate role models, such as a celebrity, whose behaviors and attitudes are sufficiently inspiring to induce them to modify their own attitudes and behaviors to match the celebrity (Ruvio et al., 2013). They believe that following inspiring role models supports their personal self-enhancement (Lockwood and Kunda, 1999). We thus posit that an SMI who displays an inspiring persona will make the followers perceive this SMI as a human brand who satisfies the followers' need for ideality. This leads us to:

> **H1:** An SMI whose persona is inspiring affects followers to perceive the SMI as a human brand who fulfills their need for ideality.

Individuals' need for ideality also can be fulfilled when they follow an SMI who offers aesthetically pleasing content. The literature indicates that aesthetic experiences can benefit people psychologically and by enriching their imagination and by fulfilling their need for self-enhancement (Dennis et al., 2014; Leder and Nadal, 2014). For example, Lim (2005) shows that when a teacher has good aesthetic values and rich aesthetic experiences, these help the teacher to enhance his/her own personal growth as well as his/her teaching skills (Lim, 2005). The study by Kim (2010) also shows that an aesthetic experience has a positive effect on self-enhancement. When individuals consume aesthetically appealing designs or products, this consumption induces them to enhance their self-image. For instance, owning a well-designed apparel product makes a consumer appear more desirable to others and thus she/he feels good about himself/herself. We thus posit that an SMI who can produce and curate visually appealing content will convince followers into perceiving the SMI as a human brand who fulfills their need for ideality. This leads us to:

H2: An SMI who showcases his/her visually aesthetic content affects followers to perceive the SMI as a human brand who fulfills their need for ideality.

The literature defines the need for relatedness as individuals' desire to feel socially connected to, and maintain meaningful relationships with, others (Lin, 2016; Ryan and Deci, 2000). The literature further indicates that people can satisfy their need for relatedness when they interact with others who are pleasant and fun (Reis et al., 2000). This phenomenon was also found in the online and social media contexts (Quan-Haase and Young, 2010; Reinecke et al., 2014; Ryan et al., 2006; Tamborini et al., 2011). For example, while people expect celebrities to be trendy and stylish, they expect SMIs to be funny and friendly, and thereby able to make them feel more approachable to the SMIs than they do toward celebrities (Nazerali, 2017). Indeed, an Instagram influencer, Baddie Winkle, is known well as a hilarious granny and had garnered more than 3.5 million followers by entertaining her followers and thus satisfying their desire for greater intimacy. We thus posit that an SMI whose persona is funny, hilarious, and thus enjoyable will make followers perceive him/her as a human brand who fulfills the followers' need for relatedness. This leads us to:

H3: An SMI whose persona is enjoyable affects followers to perceive the SMI as a human brand who fulfills their need for relatedness.

In addition to enjoyability, the literature also shows that similarity contributes to individuals' need fulfillment for relatedness. When individuals share personally relevant or similar matters with others, they feel more connected to, and understood by, others. This, in turn, contributes to their feelings of relatedness (Parks and Floyd, 1996; Reis et al., 2000). This effect of similarity fulfilling individuals' need for relatedness remains constant in the interactions that take place in social media. For instance, Kywe et al. (2012) show that people tend to like and

follow social media personas who are similar to themselves, and thus provide a greater sense of connection and relatedness. The more individuals perceive that they and another social media user have much in common, or have tastes and preferences similar to theirs, the more they feel an intimate emotional connection with that social media user (King, 2015). We thus posit that an SMI whose persona is similar to the followers will convince the followers to see the SMI as a human brand who fulfills their need for relatedness. This leads us to:

> **H4:** An SMI whose persona is similar to that of the followers affects them into perceiving the SMI as a human brand who fulfills their need for relatedness.

The literature defines the need for competence as individuals' inherent desire to feel capable or effective (Deci and Ryan, 2000). Because competent judgment is related to whether a person perceives him/herself to be skillful, competitive, or intelligent (Aaker et al., 2010), the more an individual acquires information from others, the more she/he is likely to feel herself/himself as competent. Social media is a critical channel in which people acquire information through surveillance or browsing, and thus satisfy their competence need (Dunne et al., 2010; Karapanos et al., 2016; Urista et al., 2009). Specifically, Ki and Kim (2019) show that SMIs' content serves as an important source of information for other social media users in their product choices or purchase decisions. The more people are exposed to these informational situations, the more their feelings of competence are enhanced (Hagger et al., 2015). We thus posit that an SMI who generates and curates informative content will affect the followers to perceive the SMI as a human brand who fulfills their need for competence. This leads us to:

> **H5:** An SMI who showcases informative content affects the followers to perceive the SMI as a human brand who fulfills their need for competence.

The literature also shows that individuals' need for competence can be fulfilled when they follow an SMI whose content features expertise. Indeed, SMIs are defined commonly as content creators who have established a reputation for their expertise in a specific area (Lou and Yuan, 2019). When an SMI shares professional knowledge of fashion, beauty, or home decor on social media, followers are likely to see such knowledge and experience not simply as the SMI's personal statements but also as his/her display of expertise (McQuarrie and Phillips, 2014). For instance, Huda Kattan is regarded as a famous influencer because she posts makeup tips and knowhow on her social media, both of which feature her as a beauty expert. By following up on these makeup skills and tips she posts, followers can also make themselves appear to be more competent about cosmetic knowledge. We thus posit that an SMI who creates and curates content that showcases his/her expertise will make the followers view the SMI as a human brand who fulfills their need for competence. This leads us to:

H6: An SMI who posts content that showcases his/her expertise affects the followers to perceive the SMI as a human brand who fulfills their need for competence.

4.1.2. Followers' needs fulfillment affects their strong attachment to SMIs

The literature defines attachment as an emotional bond that two individuals share (Hazan and Shaver, 1994). Creating individuals' emotional attachment to a brand has long been one of the key branding issues (Malär et al., 2011). Therefore, understanding how human brand SMIs build an intense attachment with their followers and yield effective marketing effects is also critical. The literature indicates that people will gravitate toward relationships to the extent that the relationships provide opportunities for their basic need fulfillment (La Guardia et al., 2000). One way to provide such an opportunity is by fulfilling people's need for ideality. For example, when consumers choose a brand and become attached to it, such a choice and feeling are often

based on the aspiration of who they would like to be in the future (Japutra et al., 2014). That is, if a brand can match its image to be closer to that of consumers' ideal self, then the brand can entice an intense attachment from the consumer. Similarly, if a human brand, an SMI, satisfies followers' desire for enhancing their self-image and achieving their ideal self, then the SMI will facilitate an intense attachment formation with them. Attachment is also created when individuals' relatedness need is fulfilled. For example, Patrick et al. (2007) show that when an individual perceives a sense of relatedness from his/her romantic partner, it leads to a long-term relationship with, and greater attachment to, the partner. Attachment also can be developed when an individual's need for competence is satisfied. Afshari and Gibson (2016) indicate the effect of competence need fulfillment on attachment in the context of organizational behavior. Employees whose organizations provide them rewards after they complete their tasks achieve a sense of competence that, in turn, leads them to feel greater commitment and attachment to the firm. On the other hand, it is unlikely for people to develop an attachment with others who thwart their need for competence (La Guardia et al., 2000). We thus posit that, in social media context, followers will develop a strong attachment toward a human brand, SMI, when the SMI fulfills their needs for ideality, relatedness, and competence. This leads us to:

H7: The extent to which followers feel their needs for (H7a) ideality, (H7b) relatedness, and (H7c) competence are fulfilled by an SMI affects the intensity of the attachment they develop with the SMI.

4.1.3. Attachment transfer from SMIs to their endorsements

Lastly, we propose that followers' positive emotional feelings toward SMIs will transfer to their endorsements, so that the more the followers forge a strong emotional bond with the SMIs, the more likely they will adopt the SMIs' products or brand recommendations. Such an attachment transfer effect has been found previously in the celebrity endorsement literature. For

example, McCracken (1989) indicated a meaning transfer in which the positive feelings developed through the celebrity-consumer attachment spilled over to create positive consumer attitudes toward a celebrity's brand endorsement. Indeed, past studies have shown that intense attachments formed between consumers and celebrities increase value transfer in an endorsement, thus increasing consumers' confidence in the endorsed brand as well as their purchase intention toward the brand (Hung et al., 2011; Ilicic and Webster, 2011). We expect this positive meaning transfer to hold true in the relationships between SMIs and their followers. We thus posit that the more the followers form a strong emotional bonding with SMIs, the more effective the emotional transfer is from the SMIs to their product/brand recommendations, thus increasing the propensity of the followers to adopt the recommended product/brand. This leads us to:

H8: The level of the followers' attachment to an SMI has a significant effect on the positive emotional transfer from that SMI to his/her endorsements, increasing the followers' intention to buy one of the same products/brands the SMI posted on social media.

Figure 1 shows the pictorial representation of our research model and hypotheses.

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4.2. Methods

4.2.1. Respondents and procedure

To test our research model and hypotheses, we developed an online survey questionnaire consisting of three sections. In the first section, we defined SMIs and provided several examples, so that the survey participants understood our study's context. Then, we asked the participants to name one of their favorite SMIs on Instagram and state in which specific area (e.g., beauty, fashion, etc.) she/he specialized. The names of the SMIs they provided were embedded

automatically in the remaining sections of the questionnaire. To protect our data's quality, we filtered out participants who named celebrities incorrectly rather than SMIs. In the second section, the participants were asked to indicate (1) their perceptions of their choice of an SMI's personal traits with respect to inspiration, enjoyability, and similarity, and their perceptions of the SMI's content with respect to visual aesthetics, informativeness, and expertise; (2) whether following the SMI fulfilled their needs for ideality, relatedness, and competence; (3) how attached they were to the SMI; and (4) whether their positive feelings toward the SMI transferred to his/her endorsements. In the third section, we included questions about the participants' demographics. We administered the survey via Amazon MTurk. To enhance the data's quality, we restricted the participants to MTurk workers who live in the U.S., are over 18 years old, and use Instagram as one of their top three social media venues. As a result, a dataset of 325 responses was collected for analysis.

4.2.2. Measurement

The measurement items were adopted from former studies and modified to fit our study's context. The scale items for *inspiration* were adapted from Böttger et al. (2017); *enjoyability* from Chattopadhyay and Basu (1990); *similarity* from Burgoon and Hale (1987); Feick and Higie (1992); *visual aesthetics* from Bell et al. (1991); *informativeness* from Asghar (2015); *expertise* from Liljander et al. (2015); *ideality need fulfillment* from Malär et al. (2011); Swaminathan et al. (2008); *relatedness need fulfillment* from La Guardia et al. (2000); *competence need fulfillment* from La Guardia et al. (2000); Pham and Avnet (2004); *attachment* from Park et al. (2010); and *attachment transfer* from Netemeyer et al. (2005). All items were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale that ranged from "*strongly disagree*" (1) to "*strongly agree*" (7). Table 2 presents our instrument.

== Place Table 2 about here ==

4.3. Results

According to our descriptive analysis, respondents' selected SMIs had the following

areas of specialty: beauty (21.85%), fashion (13.85%), health (13.54%), food (7.38%), travel

(7.08%), and others (e.g., games, technology, etc.). With respect to the type of SMIs they chose,

49.54% of the respondents liked and followed SMIs who had more than one million followers

(i.e., mega-influencers). However, more than 50% of the respondents liked and followed SMIs

with less than 1.0 million followers; 28.62% followed macro-influencers who had 100,000 to 1.0

million followers; 14.77% followed micro-influencers who had 1,000 to 50,000 followers; and

7.08% followed mid-tier influencers who had 50,000 to 100,000 followers. As for respondents'

demographic information, males accounted for 52%. The majority of respondents were between

23 to 42 years of age (80.62%), identified as Caucasian (63.38%), had a college degree

(45.23%), and were single (55%).

4.3.1. Measurement model evaluation

The results of our measurement model evaluation using confirmatory factor analysis

showed a satisfactory model fit: $\chi^2_{379} = 717.42$, CFI = .97, TLI = .96, NFI = .93, and RMSEA =

.05. To validate our measurements further, we tested our instrument's convergent and

discriminant validity. As shown in Table 2, the results demonstrated convergent validity, as (1)

all factor loadings were between .73 and .96, greater than the recommended minimum value of

.70; (2) the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct ranged from .69 to .89, greater

than the recommended threshold of .50; and (3) the composite reliabilities of all constructs

ranged from .85 to .97, exceeding the threshold of .70. In addition, as Table 3 shows, the AVE

values were larger than the corresponding shared variance (squared correlation coefficient)

between all possible pairs of factors, and this confirmed discriminant validity.

== Place Table 3 about here ==

4.3.2. Structural model evaluation and hypothesis tests

The structural model's fit using structural equation modeling (SEM) was also

satisfactory: χ^2_{409} = 1070.02, CFI = .93, TLI = .92, NFI = .90, and RMSEA = .07. Table 4 shows

the hypotheses test results. As shown in Table 4, SMIs' inspiring persona (H1: β = .78, p < .01)

significantly affected the followers' ideality need fulfillment, while SMIs' content attribute of

visual aesthetics did not (H2: β = -.04, p > .1). Both SMIs' personal attributes of enjoyability

(H3: β = .30, p < .01) and similarity (H4: β = .44, p < .01) affected the followers' relatedness

need fulfillment positively. For the followers' competence need fulfillment, only the quality of

SMIs' informative content (H5: β = .42, p < .01) was significant, but not expertise (H6: β = -.02,

p > .1). Next, the followers' ideality (H7a: β = .26, p < .01), relatedness (H7b: β = .59, p < .01),

and competence (H7c: β = .24, p < .01) needs fulfillment affected the development of a strong

attachment to SMIs significantly and positively. Lastly, the attachment transfer effect was

significant, as the followers' attachment to SMIs affected their intention to purchase the

products/brands the SMIs endorsed (H8: β = .44, p < .01).

== Place Table 4 about here ==

4.3.3. Mediation evaluation

We tested the mediation effects of attachment in the relations between followers' needs

fulfillment and attachment transfer via bootstrapping (n = 5000) with a 95% bias-corrected

confidence interval. As Table 5 shows, our bootstrap results demonstrate the significant indirect

effects of attachment in the relations between needs fulfillment and attachment transfer in that

(1) all p values are lower than .001 and (2) the bias corrected 95% confidence intervals of all significant paths do not include zero (Hayes, 2017). The followers' attachment toward SMIs indeed served as a critical mediator that links the followers' ideality, relatedness, and competence needs fulfillment to their positive adoption of the SMIs' product/brand recommendations.

== Place Table 5 about here ==

5. DISCUSSION

Grounded in human brand theory, our study drew new attention to the relationship between SMIs and their followers and focused on their attachment development mechanism and its casual factors and effects. While previous research focused predominantly on identifying the mechanism of SMIs' influence over their followers, our study shed light on identifying the mechanism by which social media followers developed strong attachments to SMIs. Our study documented that it is this intense attachment that followers feel to SMIs that yields desirable marketing effects that exert an influence over them. When identifying the attachment mechanism through the followers' lens, we made a special effort to identify the particular SMI attributes they perceived in SMIs and/or the SMIs' content and the specific needs they wished to fulfill by following SMIs, all of which allowed the SMIs to serve as human brands. Further details about our study's implications are described below.

5.1. Theoretical and Managerial Implications

First, we find that the influential power SMIs exert over their followers comes from the emotional bond they build with their followers. The results of our study clearly show that SMIs' attachment to their followers is a significant precedent that allows them to exert their influence over their followers. The stronger emotional bond the SMIs develop with their followers, the

more effectively they influence them to accept their product/brand endorsements. In the current literature, previous studies have leaned towards treating SMIs' branded content as online advertisements and examined how SMIs could exert influence over their followers most effectively. In doing so, some studies have identified the number of followers a SMI accumulated (Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017; Freberg et al., 2011), or distinct sponsorship disclosure messages SMIs use (e.g., #PaidAd, #Sponsored, or #SP) (De Veirman et al., 2017; Evans et al., 2017), as the key causal factors influencing the advertising effectiveness of SMIs' branded content. These studies are based on the precondition that SMIs have an influential power over their followers. However, they do not explain how SMIs could gain such an influence in the first place. The findings from both of our qualitative and quantitative studies address this issue and show evidence that the emotional relationship SMIs build with their followers is the key that grants them their influence over the followers. Therefore, to maximize the influencers' marketing effectiveness, we recommend market practitioners collaborate with SMIs, albeit those with a lesser number of followers, who have formed intense relational bonds with their followers.

Second, our study indicates the key antecedents that affect the development of SMIs' attachment with their followers. Our findings show that the more SMIs satisfy their followers' needs for ideality, relatedness, and competence, the more they perceive SMIs as human brands who have strong emotional bonds with their followers. Specifically, our qualitative and quantitative studies indicate that the followers' need for ideality is satisfied when they perceive an SMI to be inspiring. The more an SMI intrigues his/her followers with new ideas, broadens their horizon, and inspires them to discover something new, the more the SMI facilitates the followers to perceive that she/he is the kind of person they would like to be (i.e., ideal self). These findings are noteworthy to the SMI literature in that when previous endorsement literature

discussed how to project idealized images through endorsers (e.g., celebrities) to consumers and thereby maximize their endorsement effectiveness, they have treated physical attractiveness as an important trait to instill such ideality in consumers' minds (Lin and Yeh, 2009; Liu and Brock, 2011). However, when it comes to SMIs, our findings show that followers focus less on SMIs' physical traits, such as their attractiveness (as shown with a low induction rate of 9.85%), and put more emphasis on the SMIs' persona, i.e., inspiration, which showed a high induction rate of 15.91%. Our findings indicate that it is not even SMIs' visually attractive content, but SMIs' inspiring persona that satisfies followers' desire for ideality. Therefore, when market practitioners, particularly beauty brand marketers who often appeal to consumers' ideal self-image, plan influencer marketing, they may wish to be cautious about who to collaborate with. For example, these marketers might maximize an influencer's marketing effects by partnering with SMIs who showcase inspiring characters, rather than those who are simply good looking or who are simply good at showcasing visually attractive content.

Third, our findings show that relatedness fulfillment is another key to facilitating social media followers to perceive SMIs as human brands and develop a strong attachment to them. Specifically, this need for relatedness is fulfilled when an SMI's personality is enjoyable and similar to their own. The more an SMI is funny and hilarious, or the more an SMI is found to have similar tastes and preferences with the followers, the more the SMIs give a sense of intimacy to their followers and fulfill their needs for relatedness. In this way, our research supports the findings by Khamis et al. (2017) in that the similarity is indeed an important personal quality of SMIs and is worthy of note. In addition, our qualitative findings show that the enjoyable persona of SMIs (15.40%) is one of the top three critical attributes that followers pointed out as the reason why they like, follow, and feel attached to SMIs, in addition to

informative content (27.53%) and inspiring persona (15.91%) of SMIs. These findings provide more nuanced insights into the SMI literature by highlighting enjoyability as another important persona-driven attribute SMIs can appeal to followers' relatedness need fulfillment. Therefore, when market practitioners use influencer marketing rather than celebrity marketing in order to appeal to consumers' sense of relatedness, they might want to collaborate with SMIs who are perceived not only as the girl next door but also as enjoyable. For example, when luxury marketers want to promote affordable luxury by projecting a sense of relatedness to their consumers through their product endorsers, they might want to collaborate with fashion influencers, such as Jenn Im, who are not ideally pretty but look more approachable with a smiling face that gives a sense of enjoyment to the followers.

Finally, our findings indicate that competence is another critical need that followers' desire to fulfill by following SMIs, and that the successful fulfillment of this competence need leads to feeling a strong emotional bond with SMIs. Specifically, we find that the social media followers satisfy their needs for competence when they perceive an SMI's content to be informative. Notably, our qualitative findings show that an SMI's ability to generate and curate informative content was cited as the most important reason why followers like and feel an emotional bond with SMIs, with an induction rate of 27.53%. Our SEM results further show that SMIs' informative content significantly and positively resulted in followers' competence need fulfillment. On the other hand, an SMI's content that showcases expertise with respect to beauty, music, film making did not have any significant effect on satisfying the followers' need for competence. Therefore, when marketers are planning to implement influencer marketing strategies for high-tech products that appeal to consumers' competence needs, they might want to focus more on curating informative social media content in collaboration with SMIs rather than

on choosing which SMIs to collaborate with. That is, marketers can benefit from SMIs' branded content that provides detailed information about the product usage or unique product features.

In brief, using both qualitative and quantitative research approaches, our study identified SMIs as a new type of human brand in that they possess brandable persona-driven qualities—particularly showcasing inspiration, enjoyability, and similarity—and have the ability to curate informative social media content. Both SMIs' unique personas and content curation abilities allowed them to satisfy followers' needs for ideality, relatedness, and competence. This, in turn, entailed an intense emotional bond with the followers. It was this positive emotion shaped with SMIs that transferred to SMIs' endorsements and positively influenced the followers to acquire the products/brands that the SMIs recommended.

5.2. Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

Although our study provides new insights into the SMI literature by investigating the SMI-follower attachment mechanism, it has some contextual limitations. First, we limited the investigation of the SMI-follower attachment mechanism to the context of Instagram. Given that social media venues are diverse and have distinctive features, future research should explore whether our proposed model holds true and, if not, the way it differs from other popular social media platforms. For example, given the rise in such other popular social media platforms as TikTok, which specializes in video-sharing social media, future researchers may consider investigating whether followers wish to fulfill the same, or different, needs when they follow SMIs in other platforms. Second, another important future study would be to investigate whether our proposed model is applicable in other cultural contexts. As our study was grounded in the empirical findings of our U.S. social media user dataset, future researchers are encouraged to investigate whether there are any cultural differences in our proposed attachment mechanism, for

example, with respect to Western (e.g., U.S.) vs. Eastern (e.g., Chinese) social media followers'

needs fulfillment in the formation of their attachments to SMIs. Taking note of the above, we

hope that our research findings will motivate future researchers to investigate other possible

needs followers desire that affect the development of their attachment to SMIs, as we believe that

it is this attachment that allows SMIs to exert an influence over their followers.

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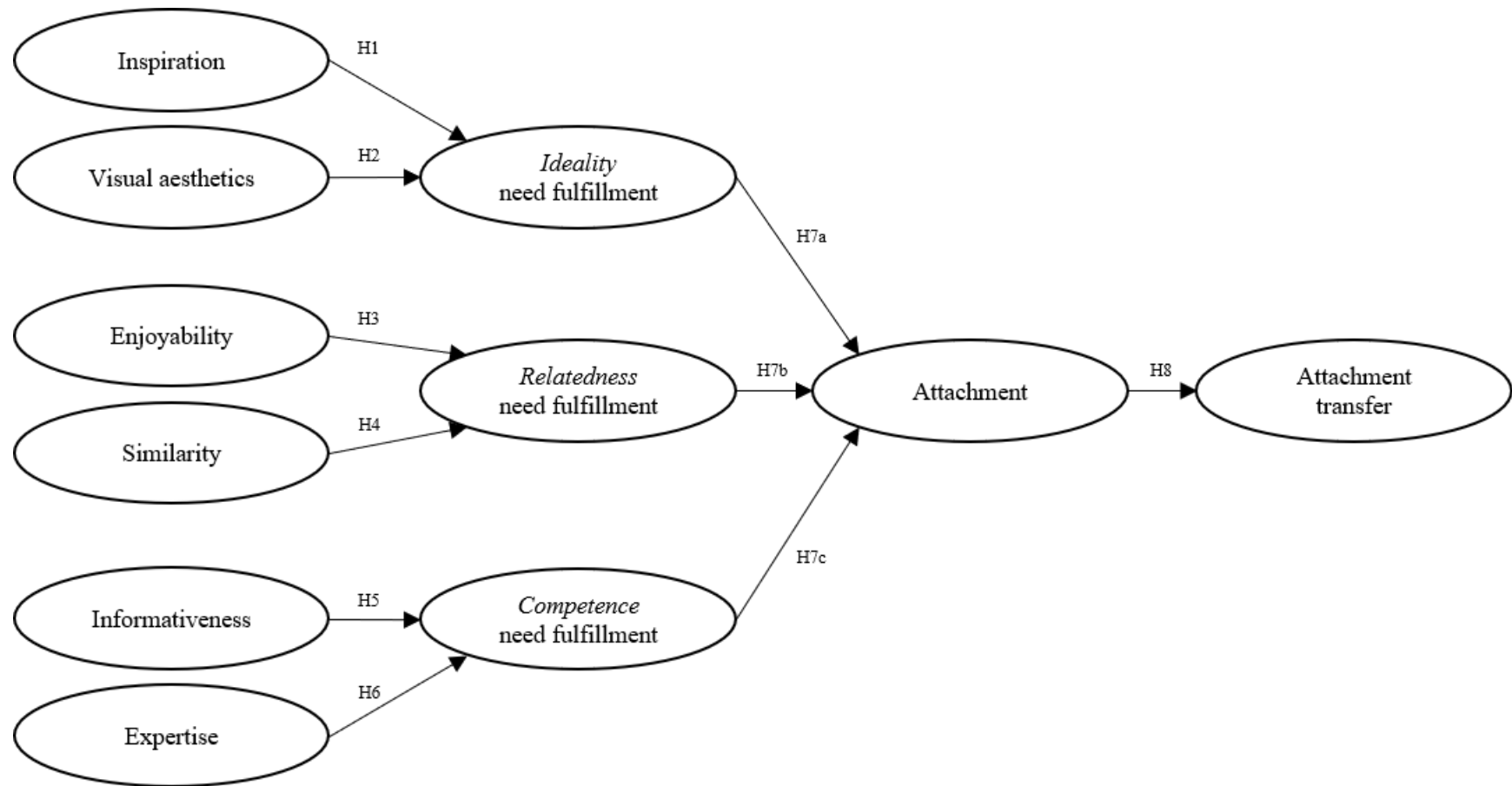
Figure 1. Conceptual model

Table 1. Findings of Inductive Analysis: Reasons Followers Like and Follow Social Media Influencers (*n* = 395)

Overarching categories identified	Sub-categories identified (Induction rate)	Examples of participants' quotes
Induction rate above 10%		
SMIs' *persona driven* attributes	Inspiration (15.91%)	Informant 6: "He makes boots and it inspires my own boot-making hobby."
		Informant 32: "He sends out motivational messages daily and that helps get my day started."
		Informant 57: "Because she is awesome with her fitness. Her motivation and inspiration are solid. And she pushes you to be a better version of yourself."
		Informant 66: "She's inspiring. She used to be anorexic. She overcame her eating disorder. Now she shows that healthy can, in fact, be chubby."
		Informant 269: "I'm trying to get more fit, and even though I'm not necessarily in her target market, I find it oddly inspiring."
	Enjoyability (15.40%)	Informant 41: "He's just a funny dude who lightens up the day…."
		Informant 59: "She is very funny and doesn't take herself too seriously. She is an older lady, but wears lots of crazy and fashionable clothes and lives life to the fullest."
		Informant 141: "I think she has a great sense of humor. She really cracks me up."
		Informant 279: "…he is truly funny and enjoyable to watch and follow."
		Informant 296: "He makes me laugh and what he says interests me."
	Similarity (10.61%)	Informant 110: "The culture he represents in his Instagram is similar to my own."
		Informant 140: "I stayed her fan because she talked about things that I was interested in. We are close in age so I feel connected to her."
		Informant 221: "I like her account because, although she is a beauty blogger, she is extremely down to earth and has a similar outlook on life that I do."
		Informant 277: "She is a fashion and beauty influencer who is slightly older and has kids. I can relate to the stage of life she is in."
		Informant 351: "I like and follow his account because he is a shoe collector like I am."
SMIs' *content driven* attributes	Informativeness (27.53%)	Informant 70: "She has good information on her yoga program. I'm really interested in yoga so this gives me a chance to explore more options."
		Informant 147: "I like that she posts videos to give information that is useful to me in regards to health, exercise, and diet. I don't have to sit there and read a long detailed post."
		Informant 188: "He gives important information about why we should not create demand for harm to animals by refraining from buying products made from animals and going vegan."
		Informant 287: "Because he provides great insights and knowledge into strength training and bodybuilding for drug-free, recreational lifters."

		Informant 368: "Because she teaches a lot of beauty secrets."
	Visual aesthetics (11.87%)	Informant 101: "I just enjoy all of the quotes and style of pictures they use."
		Informant 134: "It is very aesthetically pleasing to see. I love seeing her photos."
		Informant 316: "He posts beautiful videos of his piano playing and his rescued cats."
		Informant 347: "The content is fresh and appealing."
		Informant 357: "I love her photography style and her home's interior design elements."
	Expertise (10.10%)	Informant 157: "Because she's great with makeup and it's really awesome to see her makeup looks."
		Informant 208: "She creates such a best music and speaks the Hashtag language like her mother tongue."
		Informant 340: "She is a makeup guru…always finding affordable makeup and she looks so good in it."
		Informant 372: "He does magic and uses editing to make interesting videos."
		Informant 373: "He does a good job of showing how he makes films."
Induction rate below 10%		
SMIs' *persona driven* attributes	Physical attractiveness (9.85%)	Informant 51: "She is attractive and fit."
		Informant 254: "She is a very gorgeous lady."
		Informant 267: "She promotes exercise things, like workouts, and is very fit and pretty."
		Informant 281: "I think she's really pretty and has a good style."
		Informant 318: "She is incredibly gorgeous."
	Authenticity (6.06%)	Informant 69: "… Unlike other MUAs, Bretman Rock seems more authentic and seems to care more about his followers rather than the money he gets from sponsors."
		Informant 192: "He gives no nonsense advice about fitness you don't hear from anyone else. He is blunt and uses swear words and seems very real."
		Informant 219: "She is honest and real! She posts relatable stories about real topics—including her motherhood journey to falling in love with her child, her sinus surgery, her miscarriages, and her self-confidence struggles. She also posts recipes, fashion, and event information. She seems like the real deal to me, and I follow her because I could see us being friends in another life."
		Informant 275: "He does not sell lies."
		Informant 301: "She is honest about products."

Table 2. Measurement Items and Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results (*n* = 325)

Construct	Factor loading	AVE	CR
Inspiration		.69	.87
[SMI] intrigues me with new ideas.	.73		
[SMI] broadens my horizon.	.87		
[SMI] inspires me to discover something new.	.88		
Visual aesthetics		.82	.93
[SMI]'s content is aesthetically pleasing.	.89		
[SMI]'s content is attractive.	.89		
[SMI]'s content is visually appealing.	.93		
Enjoyability		.81	.90
I find [SMI] funny.	.92		
I find [SMI] hilarious.	.88		
Similarity		.77	.91
I find [SMI] to be quite a bit like me.	.90		
I find [SMI] to have similar tastes and preferences as me.	.88		
I find [SMI] to have a lot in common with me.	.86		
Informativeness		.76	.86
I use [SMI]'s content as a source of information.	.85		
I find [SMI]'s content informative.	.89		
Expertise		.69	.87
When looking at [SMI]'s content, I find he/she is an expert.	.73		
When looking at [SMI]'s content, I find he/she is competent.	.83		
When looking at [SMI]'s content, I find he/she is knowledgeable.	.92		
Ideality need fulfillment		.79	.92
[SMI] makes me feel like a mirror image of the person I would like to be (my ideal self).	.82		
[SMI] makes me feel close to what is important to me in life with his/her statements.	.94		
[SMI] makes me feel like the kind of person I would like to be with his/her statements.	.92		
Relatedness need fulfillment		.74	.85
[SMI] makes me feel very close to him/her.	.94		
[SMI] gives me a sense of intimacy.	.76		
Competence need fulfillment		.88	.96
[SMI] makes me feel competent.	.94		
[SMI] makes me feel adequate.	.96		
[SMI] makes me feel capable and effective.	.92		
Attachment		.83	.93
I find [SMI] to be a part of me.	.88		
I feel personally connected to [SMI].	.92		
I feel emotionally attached to [SMI].	.93		
Attachment transfer		.89	.97
In the future, I am likely to consider buying one of the same products that [SMI] posted on his/her Instagram.	.93		
In the future, I am likely to consider using one of the same brands that [SMI] posted on his/her Instagram.	.94		
In the future, I am likely to try one of the same products that [SMI] posted on his/her Instagram.	.95		
In the future, I am likely to try one of the same brands that [SMI] posted on his/her Instagram.	.96		

Note. Average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR)

Table 3. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Discriminant Validity (*n* = 325)

Constructs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Inspiration	**.69**										
2. Visual aesthetics	.12	**.82**									
3. Enjoyability	.11	.01	**.81**								
4. Similarity	.45	.04	.16	**.77**							
5. Informativeness	.47	.08	.03	.19	**.76**						
6. Expertise	.42	.15	.06	.16	.59	**.69**					
7. Ideality need fulfillment	.54	.05	.09	.43	.23	.19	**.79**				
8. Relatedness need fulfillment	.30	.04	.22	.30	.14	.10	.45	**.74**			
9. Competence need fulfillment	.30	.04	.08	.33	.13	.10	.37	.48	**.88**		
10. Attachment	.31	.02	.14	.28	.14	.09	.46	.69	.46	**.83**	
11. Attachment Transfer	.28	.08	.15	.22	.23	.21	.23	.19	.21	.22	**.89**

Note. Diagonal entries show the AVE by the construct and off-diagonal entries represent the variance shared (squared correlation) between constructs.

Table 4. Structural Model Evaluation and Hypothesis Test Results (n = 325)

Hypothesis	Structural path	β	t-value	Result
H1	Inspiration → Ideality need fulfillment	.78***	11.27	Supported
H2	Visual aesthetics → Ideality need fulfillment	-.04	-0.93	Not supported
H3	Enjoyability → Relatedness need fulfillment	.30***	5.44	Supported
H4	Similarity → Relatedness need fulfillment	.44***	8.09	Supported
H5	Informativeness → Competence need fulfillment	.42***	3.69	Supported
H6	Expertise → Competence need fulfillment	-.02	0.31	Not supported
H7a	Ideality need fulfillment → Attachment	.26***	5.66	Supported
H7b	Relatedness need fulfillment → Attachment	.59***	11.18	Supported
H7c	Competence need fulfillment → Attachment	.24***	5.91	Supported
H8	Attachment → Attachment transfer	.44***	7.90	Supported

Fit statistics

χ^2_{df}	χ^2_{409} = 1070.02
CFI	.93
TLI	.92
NFI	.90
RMSEA	.07

Note. *p< .1 **p< .05 ***p< .01.

Table 5. Mediation Effects of Needs Fulfillment on Attachment Transfer via Attachment (n = 325)

Independent variable	Dependent variable	Standardized indirect effect	Bootstrap SE	Bias-corrected 95% confidence interval	
				Lower bound	Upper bound
Ideality need fulfillment	Attachment transfer	.11***	.04	.04	.19
Relatedness need fulfillment	Attachment transfer	.26***	.04	.18	.35
Competence need fulfillment	Attachment transfer	.11***	.03	.05	.18

Note. *p< .1 **p< .05 ***p< .01.