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DOES SOCIAL MEDIA CHECKING-IN MAKE ME FEEL GOOD
ABOUT MYSELF? THE EFFECTS OF INFLUENCER
ENDORSEMENT VS. VIRALITY ON SOCIAL MEDIA CHECK-IN
INTENTIONS

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WEE KIM WEE SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

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Abstract

Check-in behavior has become a form of selective self-presentation prevalent among the young generation. By posting check-in photos, users attempt to shape others' perceptions of their images. Others' endorsement is an important criterion for users to judge whether a place is worth checking in. What is not yet clear is the impact of others' endorsement (i.e., influencer & other users) on their check-in behaviors. Drawing on self-enhancement and self-discrepancy theories, the study posits self-enhancement through strategic self-presentation as the significant mediator for checking-in places endorsed by influencers and/or other mass users. I conducted a 2 (influencer endorsement vs. non-influencer endorsement) x 2 (high vs. low virality) between-subjects online experiment ($N = 218$). Results revealed that influencer (vs. non-influencer) endorsement significantly increased check-in intentions. A significant interaction effect between influencer endorsement and virality was also found: The presence of influencer endorsement enhanced the check-in intentions only when the message had low virality, while the presence of non-influencer endorsement and low virality led to the lowest check-in intentions. The interaction effects were mediated by compensatory self-enhancement. Theoretical and practical implications were discussed.

Keywords: selective self-presentation, check-in behaviors, influencer endorsement, virality

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Does Social Media Checking-in Make Me Feel Good About Myself? The Effects of Influencer Endorsement vs. Virality on Social Media Check-in Intentions

With the rise of mobile-based social media, check-in behavior has become a social activity prevalent among the young generation (Zhang, 2019). The check-in behaviors in the social media context refer to going to certain places, mainly recommended by other users of social networking services, and sharing posts about them. There are even popular hashtags of check-in behaviors and lists of Internet-famous places on popular user-generated content platforms such as RED, a fast-growing lifestyle sharing platform in China, where young users share contents mainly about fashion, beauty, food, and travel (C. Chen, 2020). With the rapid industrialization, check-in behaviors have become more widely popular, especially are more prevalent in China. Influenced by Chinese collectivist culture, Chinese people are more inclined to focus on the social self and rely on others' evaluation of the self for self-presentation behaviors like check-ins (Xiao et al., 2018). According to China Consumer Reports, 60% of Chinese respondents did check-ins more than once or twice a month; only 10% said they rarely check in endorsed places (Deng, 2021). Therefore, studying check-in behaviors in Chinese contexts is more appropriate for the purpose of self-presentation, which focus on guiding others' impressions on oneself.

Through check-in behaviors, users are motivated to reflect values that they want to borrow from the selected places for constructing their self-concepts (Schwartz & Halegoua, 2015). Frequent check-in posts at mundane locations even can negatively influence self-presentation (Bertel, 2016). Therefore, compared to non-Internet-famous places with no identifiability, young people prefer to check in at Internet-famous places that can maximize the benefits of self-presentation. Internet-famous places are selected places that “have shared

meaning for an individual's social network or specific significance for an individual" (Schwartz & Halegoua, 2015, p. 7). By posting information about where they have been, users present an edited part of their daily life to shape others' perceptions of their cultural tastes, aesthetic orientations and living standards that are associated with the selected places (Absolute Art, 2020; Song & Liu, 2019; Wang & Stefanone, 2013). For example, young users connect Internet-famous art exhibitions with a fashionable lifestyle, thus they check in at Internet-famous art exhibitions to make others perceive they are fashionable (Yang, 2020).

Others' endorsements are the important criteria for users to judge whether a place is really an Internet-famous place that is worth checking in. Several researchers suggested that the trending check-in behaviors are significant acts of online self-presentation driven by herd mentality, showing-off motivation, and interpersonal needs (G. Chen, 2020; Li, 2019; Patil et al., 2012; Song & Liu, 2019; Wang & Stefanone, 2013; Yang, 2020). Goal internalization promoted by media exposure is one of the main causes of these motivations (Herring & Kapidzic, 2015; Fox & Vendemia, 2016). When people are exposed to others' place endorsements on social media, they can be motivated to internalize others' lifestyles presented in posts into goals for their own lifestyles, stimulating the motivation for online self-presentation (Strubel et al., 2018). Checking-in is a common behavior among young social media users, and it can function as an important mean of self-presentation motivated by self-enhancement. However, the motivation of self-enhancement has not been fully investigated. In addition, in consideration of the social aspect of social media, the source (i.e., endorser) has a significant implication for the message effect. On social media, both influencers and other users can be powerful endorsers. Because of the halo effect that the influencer induces due to the reputation and credibility that influencer has, influencer endorsement increases the

probability of adoption (Lou & Yuan 2019). On the other hand, endorsement from other peer users can be also influential because the sheer number of endorsement or ratings can trigger a bandwagon heuristic, which goes like, "If many other people think something is good, then I should do or take that too" (Sundar, 2008). Hence, the virality caused by mass endorsements of a place can also enhance one's desire to check-in the place. Yet, it is still not clear if different types of endorsement source (influencer & other common users) have different impact on check-in behaviors.

Linking self-enhancement theory and source effects on social media, the study aims to understand: (1) how can place endorsement influence contemporary self-presentation through social media behaviors, (2) the differences in different types of endorsement source on check-in behaviors, (3) the interaction of different types of endorsement source on check-in behaviors, and (4) the psychological mechanism underlying the endorser effects on check-in behaviors.

Drawing on self-enhancement and self-discrepancy theories, the current study posits that social media check-in behavior is a means for self-presentation, which is motivated by compensatory self-enhancement. Technological affordances of social media allow users to control nonverbal cues in online pictures for selective self-presentation (Walther, 1992; 1996). Hence, when Internet-famous places were endorsed by influencers or a large number of others, users would think that the place can be used as a useful nonverbal cue that helps them present themselves in a positive way to reduce psychological imbalance and/or interpersonal pressure that is caused by social media use, leading to self-enhancement. Such expectation will ultimately increase the likelihood of visiting the place and posting about it on social media, and this effect is explained by the mediating influence of having a stronger

compensatory self-enhancement motivation. Specifically, those who display a large discrepancy between actual vs. ideal self will be more likely to be influenced by influential checking-in posts than those who do not show such discrepancy. Therefore, the study also examines the moderating role of actual-ideal discrepancy in the relationships between media exposure of others' endorsements of a place on one's check-in behaviors. In sum, this study aims to contribute to this growing area of research on influencer marketing and online self-presentation by exploring the effects of place endorsement of others—influencers vs. other common social media users—on social media users' behavioral motives and their underlying psychological mechanism from the negative normative perspective of social media use. The findings demonstrate that social media users' check-in behaviors are motivated by compensatory self-enhancement, and the types of endorsers (influencer vs. other social media users) are significant factors, which highlight the importance of understanding the source effects on check-in behaviors.

Literature Review

Check-in Behaviors as Self-presentation

Displaying Internet-famous places as the backgrounds of photos and videos posted online, social media users prove that they have been to these places (Zhang, 2019). Internet-famous places are locations popular on the Internet, especially on photo and video-sharing social media platforms (Bassi, 2019; Zhang, 2019). Some Internet-famous places have unusual scenes, distinctive themes or strong design senses, and the Internet amplifies one of these characteristics to make the places famous (Absolute Art, 2020). However, even ordinary places can become famous places online because they have been endorsed by influencers or by a large group of people (Science Planet, 2020). Influencers include people who used to be

ordinary but gained fame through the Internet, as well as traditional public figures, like celebrities or politicians, who also adopt the Internet for publicity and are active on social media (Abidin, 2018). Due to the “fame” associated with the Internet-famous places, users can be motivated to check in at Internet-famous places for the symbolic and performative characteristics rather than the actual utilities of the places (Schwartz & Halegoua, 2015). For example, checking in at an Internet-famous tea cafe has a symbolic label, representing the cultural taste of the user and maintaining the emotional resonance with others who have the same label (G. Chen, 2020). Users associate the cultural tastes they want to show with the styles that an Internet-famous place represents, or the influencers that an Internet-famous place has hosted (Yang, 2020).

Using the location-aware feature, users can explicitly display their locations on social media posts (Sutko & de Souza e Silva, 2011). They can also communicate about their locations through photos, videos and/or texts of the posts without explicitly displaying the locations (Bertel, 2016). For example, the background cues in a photo rather than adding conspicuous location can be used, to give the audiences a sense of showing their tastes and hobbies inadvertently as if just sharing their daily life; this can, make the self-presentation intention not too obvious to assure the self-presentation effect to some extent (Yang, 2020). In this case, places that are already familiar to the audiences can better serve as background cues in social media posts. Hence, checking-in at Internet-famous places on social media have become a common form of selective self-presentation on social media.

Self-presentation refers to how people present themselves to guide and control the impressions they leave on others (Goffman, 1959). Selective self-presentation on social media functions differently when compared to face-to-face (FtF) interactions (Fox & Vendemia,

2016; Kim & Lee, 2010; Walther, 2007). The indirectness of online communication between users and audiences reflects the “*context collapse*” on social media: The features and technical capacities of social media platforms prevents the audiences from accessing the specific social contexts and backgrounds of social media posts (Hollenbaugh, 2021). Hence, compared with online messaging services and emails, one-to-many social media posts with amorphous audiences offer more possibilities for selective self-presentation (Hollenbaugh, 2021).

Research on self-presentation in social media has explored some significant changes associated with the features of social media. First, common social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram suggest using real names and personal photos in profiles, which cater to some users’ tendency to use these platforms to connect their existing offline social networks (Chua & Chang, 2016). Under this condition, users are constrained by their offline identities and increased visual presentation contents such as self-photos, which leads to more careful posting and facilitates selective self-presentation (Hollenbaugh, 2021). Second, on social media platforms, what others add to the posts, such as likes and comments, significantly influence audiences’ interpretation of the users’ self-presentation (Rui & Stefanone, 2013; Walther et al., 2009). For example, a large amount of positive other-generated content that is consistent with users’ own self-presentation content can create an attractive impression for users (Hong et al., 2012). High number of likes and comments intuitively show the attractiveness of a user, making people more likely to perceive the user as an upward comparison target (Chan & Prendergast, 2008; Vogel et al., 2014). Riesman et al. (1950) used “*other-directed society*” to describe how self-presentation of modern people is driven by sensitivity to the expectations and likes of others. Users tend to pursue tastes that are liked by others through imitating the behaviors of their upward comparison targets (Riesman et al.,

1950; Vogel et al., 2014). Moreover, the context collapse in social media leads to the need for users to imagine their potential audiences, which prompts users to refer to the established public tastes when presenting their cultural tastes to cater to a wider audience within the same interest circle (Yang, 2020).

On social media, like other online nonverbal cues, background cues carefully curated using platforms' technical features contribute to selective self-presentation. To explore how individuals achieve the goal of self-presentation by intentionally linking the offline physical activities to curated location announcements on social media platforms, Schwartz and Halegoua (2015) used the term, "*the spatial self*". Defining the arrangements and decorations of the space as nonverbal cues, Knapp (2013) has shown that these cues can influence people's perceptions in FtF contexts. Maslow and Mintz (1956) also have demonstrated that in FtF, esthetic aspects of spaces play a role in shaping people's positive public selves. In FtF, however, space cues occur intentionally or unintentionally, and their influence on others' perceptions is not always purposeful. Yet, curated background cues online use the role of certain offline spaces that can shape others' perceptions of one's identity (Schwartz & Halegoua, 2015). A stylized repetition of presenting the similar type of background cues that is perceived by audiences can promote the formation of a clear spatial self (Butler, 1988). Therefore, selected places must be identifiable to audiences.

Internet-famous places check-in behaviors reflect people's desire to attain an optimal balance of their social identification and perceived uniqueness by following the check-in trend and selecting places (Papyrina, 2012). Users, especially young users, enjoy sharing visual self-presentation content selectively for constructing their online identities and shaping attractive images in the eyes of others (Herring & Kapidzic, 2015; Van House, 2009). Internet-famous

places can help users construct their online identities that reflect their styles, and to get approval from others who conduct the same check-in behaviors easily. Users can facilitate their self-presentation on social media by intentionally selecting which kind of Internet-famous places they would like to associate with their constructed self-concepts online (Boyd, 2002). Therefore, social media users select certain places and carefully curate them as background cues in social media visual posts to enhance self-presentation. When users are exposed to influencer place endorsement or posts of a place that has high virality on social media, they can get the information that the place is Internet-famous and worth being selected for self-presentation. Even more, the motivation to internalize others' lifestyles presented in posts into their lifestyle goals will trigger them to imitate them by checking in the places (Fox & Vendemia, 2016; Strubel et al., 2018).

Places Endorsed by Social Media Influencers vs. Non-Influencers

In general, places can become Internet-famous places through the endorsements of social media influencers or a high number of other users (Li, 2019). The main driving force of checking in at Internet-famous places is attention-seeking, thus the users prefer to promote themselves and become social media sensations by mimicking social media influencers (Kapuku, 2020; Nouri, 2018). In this situation, influencers are often regarded as idealized self-images of the followers for they to refer to: they imitate appearance, behaviors, values, and attitudes of influencers for online self-presentation (Chan & Prendergast, 2008). Basically, places that are endorsed by influencers can offer powerful background cues to make users present themselves more effectively (Yang, 2020). For example, the dog logo on the wall of Machi Machi Bubble Tea Shop can be a clear background cue in the photo for the audiences to know that the user has been to this Internet-famous place, because this shop has become

popular since Mandopop king Jay Chou certified it as his favorite bubble tea brand on Instagram (Yip, 2020). The user thus can shape the image as a bubble tea lover or a Jay Chou fan to gain attention in his or her social circles by expressing the same preference as Jay Chou. For average users, Internet-famous places are affordable means to mimic celebrity-styles (Song & Liu, 2019). Internet-famous places check-in behaviors offset the ambition of being able to get attention through their own fame as influencers and attract attention through the easily available celebrity-style elements, which compensate to realize their desired impressions. In addition, social media users tend to display more trust in content shared by influencers than non-influencer's content, as the content shared by influencers tends to be more informative and the influencers themselves have credibility and appeal (Cao et al., 2009; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Weismueller et al., 2020). The degree to which users trust content shared by uploaders will enhance intentions to consume the same place. Therefore,

Hypothesis 1a: When a place is endorsed by a social media influencer (versus non-influencer), users will show higher intentions to check in the place.

Virality on Social Media

Sampson (2012) used the term "*virality*" to describe how Internet fame affects consumer behaviors such as the prevalence of checking in at selected places. Check-in posts, as forms of marketing message related to a company, brand or product, can be transmitted in an exponentially growing way through many others' endorsements on social media (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2011). In the behavior of checking in, users construct their self-concepts based on the characteristics of the selected place. The characteristic of a place is "continuously created and adjusted by the plethora of visitors to that location and the connotation of that place" (Schwartz & Halegoua, 2015, p. 7). Compared to the general sense of traveling,

shopping, dining out, checking-in is a relatively niche social activity, thus it can make young people have a sense of their superiority in cultural taste (Li, 2019; Yang, 2020). Consumers make symbolic consumer behaviors such as Internet-famous places check-in behaviors to construct their self-concepts, express and strengthen their self-identities (Berger & Heath, 2008). They tend to choose products or services with characteristics that can match some aspects of the self-concepts they want to construct (Escalas & Bettman, 2005). Moreover, they also know that it is difficult to get likes and comments for unfamiliar places, while checking in at Internet-famous places endorsed by many other people could be recognized by an even wider audience within the same interest circle easily (Yang, 2020).

A large number of positive feedbacks indicate the popularity of a place, which makes users feel that checking-in at the place is like a social norm. Social norms are social phenomena, such as the phenomenon of checking in, that spread among group members through communication (Kincaid, 2004). The degree to which people see others performing a behavior affects their perception of the social pressure to perform (or not to perform) that behavior (Lapinski & Rimal, 2005). If many significant others such as members from the same interest circle endorse such behavior, individuals are more likely to intend to perform it (Armitage & Conner, 2001). Thus, checking in at Internet-famous places endorsed by high number of visitors can help users shape others' perceptions of them more effectively (G. Chen, 2020). In addition, social media users respond to the positive feedback given by many others of a brand or product more positively than respond to the positive feedback given by a few others (Rice et al., 2012; Srivastava et al., 2021). Therefore,

Hypothesis 1b: When a place is endorsed by many other users (versus a few other users), users will show greater intentions to check in the place.

Influencer Endorsement and Virality

Md Said and Wan Napi (2015) have demonstrated the effectiveness of both celebrity and non-celebrity endorsement on consumers' positive attitudes toward advertising products. Endorsements, intentional or unintentional, resulting from the act of checking in, are positive examples of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), which refer to actual consumers' positive comments about a place shown to the public via the Internet (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). On the one hand, the credibility of celebrities or influencers per se represents endorser quality, while on the other hand, a certain amount of advertising disclosure of ordinary users reflects endorser quantity (Srivastava et al., 2021). Both of them effectively enhance consumers' intentions of consuming Internet-famous places by positively affecting source credibility for persuasion (Weismueller et al., 2020).

According to Hannu and Johannisson (2020), many people usually refer to social norms when deciding whether to purchase something that has been endorsed by influencers. The study hypothesizes that there will be a significant interaction between two types of endorsement: influencer and other common social media users. Specifically, it is expected that the endorsement of many other users will magnify the positive effect of influencer endorsement than with the endorsement of just a few other users, as it can be regarded as a social approval of influencer-endorsed place. Hence, the study also tests the moderating role of others' endorsement in the effects of influencer endorsement on check-in intentions with the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: There will be an interaction between influencer endorsement and virality on check-in intentions: Such that, the effect of the influencer (vs. non-influencer)

endorsement on check-in intentions will be magnified when the place has been endorsed by many (vs. a few) other users.

Compensatory Self-enhancement as a Psychological Mechanism

Another significant aspect of others' endorsements of places, represented as check-in posts, is that they can reflect the materialistic values that are accepted by the general public (Chan & Prendergast, 2008). Online self-presentation strategies can be further guided by these values which can stimulate users' psychological imbalance and/or interpersonal pressure to create a sense of self-enhancement (Absolute Art, 2020; G. Chen, 2020; Jin & Ryu, 2020; Yang, 2020). The halo effect caused by source factor and the bandwagon heuristic caused by virality make self-evaluation more likely to be unbalanced under the guidance of materialistic values, leading people to protect themselves easily by means of fashionable consumption like check-ins (Chan & Prendergast, 2008; Lei & Wang, 2018). In check-in behaviors, users focus more on ideal selves than actual selves, and users just want to make the audiences perceive them as people who know about art or fashion, rather than being people who know about art or fashion indeed. Therefore, among the self-evaluation motives, self-enhancement is more appropriate for studying self-presentation on social media in the check-in context.

Baumeister and Jones (1978) suggested two motives of self-presentation: consistency and compensation. One of the social goals of controlled self-presentation is to promote consistency in personal expressions and occasions based on actual selves, thus making social interactions smoother (DePaulo et al., 1996). Different from consistency, compensation refers to people's inner tendency to use their actual selves only as the starting point of self-enhancement, and try to neutralize the bad aspects of their existing images by making others focus on the good aspects (Baumeister, 1982).

Hence, self-enhancement is a basic driving force for self-presentation strategies. Self-enhancement refers to people's desire to improve the positive side of the self-concept as compensatory self-enhancement, or reduce its negative side as indirect self-enhancement (Sedikides & Strube, 1995). Boney-McCoy et al. (1999) suggested that when people are confronted with unflattering information about themselves, they try to make themselves look good by focusing on idealized self-presentation and maximizing self-enhancing opportunities, namely, compensatory self-enhancement. In addition, media exposure associated with the ideal images makes people compare and reflect on their own unattractiveness, and thus increases negative emotions such as disappointment and dissatisfaction (Bessenoff, 2006).

In this situation, people will refer to others' positive outcomes and imitate similar behavioral strategies to maximize positive outcomes of self-presentation, that is, increase perceived attractiveness of the self (Kunda, 1999). In check-in behaviors, places are used to present users' attractiveness purposefully, rather than to share personal trajectories as other sharing to do with locations such as displaying mundane locations (G. Chen, 2020).

Compared to social media influencers, ordinary people have neither fame nor fortune to attract attention, thus they will present other positive traits such as physical attractiveness and social activity competence that can reflect attraction to offset the displeasure of the unsatisfactory condition (Boney-McCoy et al., 1999; Dion et al., 1972; Goldman & Lewis, 1977). As a kind of media exposure that presents ideal lifestyles, others' check-in photos can bring psychological imbalance to some young people whose life situation and social position are less than ideal to stimulate compensatory self-enhancement (Absolute Art, 2020; Jin & Ryu, 2020; Yang, 2020). Moreover, influencers' check-in photos can present positive results

of how others gain attention by checking in Internet-famous places, which can guide users to take appropriate self-presentation strategies (Song & Liu, 2019).

Likewise, when a place has already been checked in by many other people, it indicates that checking in at that place has become the interactive trend of users (Li, 2019). Through sharing posts featuring places endorsed by many other users, social media users express oneself as having the social attribute of being trendy, mainly focusing on echoing public taste to attract attention (Yang, 2020). As a kind of media exposure that presents trendy lifestyles, a certain amount of others' check-in photos of the same place can make users feel the social anxiety to keep up with the trends, which can stimulate compensatory self-enhancement (G. Chen, 2020). Therefore,

Hypothesis 3: There will be an interaction between influencer endorsement and virality on compensatory self-enhancement: Such that, the effect of the influencer (vs. non-influencer) endorsement on compensatory self-enhancement will be strengthened when the place has been endorsed by many (vs. a few) other users.

Given that selective self-presentation is a direct motivation for checking-in behaviors on social media, the study posits that compensatory self-enhancement is a strong driving force of checking-in behaviors, thus will mediate the effects of different types of endorsement on checking-in behaviors. Hence:

Hypothesis 4: The interaction between influencer endorsement and virality on check-in intentions (hypothesized in as H2) will be mediated by compensatory self-enhancement.

Motivation to Reduce the Discrepancy between Actual and Ideal Self

When others' lifestyles are made salient standards through social media, people internalize the standards into the references for self-evaluation (Bessenoff, 2006). In the

process of self-evaluation, those who believe the standards are far from their actual images are more likely to be linked with dejection, which leads to the desire to compensate for the negative state (Packard & Wooten, 2013). The study, therefore, posits that self-discrepancy will moderate the effects of influencer endorsement vs. virality on check-in intentions.

Higgins (1987) developed the self-discrepancy concept to interpret the individual differences in self-presentation. Self-discrepancy theory attempts to explain the gaps between an individual's so-called self-guides and the actual self, and how these gaps lead to psychological discomfort in the individual (Suh, 2013). Self-guides refer to ought self and ideal self, which are the self-images that one should form according to their responsibilities or goals; actual self refers to a self-image that an individual indeed has (Higgins, 1987; O'Brien, 2010). Individuals construct these self-images from their own perspective or from their perspective-taking (Higgins, 1987).

Developed from Higgins's (1987) definition of self-discrepancy, some researchers suggested that the psychological needs of reducing actual-ideal discrepancy (the discrepancy between the current private self and desired public self) motivate individuals' self-presentation (Hartmann et al., 2014; Li et al., 2019). The psychological needs in social interactions make people want to alleviate and eliminate the psychological discomfort caused by self-discrepancy to gain a sense of belonging, love, and self-esteem (Baldwin & Baccus, 2004; Zhang et al., 2020). Actual-ideal discrepancy (actual/own versus ideal/other) is one of the self-discrepancy types refer to the discrepancies between one's current private self and the desired public self (Hartmann et al., 2014; Higgins et al., 1986; Li et al., 2019). The current private self is the actual self from one's own standpoint, while the desired public self is the ideal self from others' standpoints.

A few studies have illustrated the facilitative relationship of the individual difference factor, actual-ideal self-discrepancy, on the psychological state of compensatory self-enhancement through social comparison theory: People's motivation to control others' perceptions is more robust when they believe that their public images are relevant to their values and goals, or notice that there is a discrepancy between the desired public images and the current private images of themselves (Schlenker & Leary, 1982; Smelser & Baltes, 2001). Bessenoff (2006) have demonstrated that media exposure associated with the ideal images made people disappointed in comparison and reacted with compensatory self-enhancement especially when one's perceived actual-ideal discrepancy was high. On social media platforms, people usually reduce actual-ideal discrepancy by presenting edited photos to replace the actual self to some extent (Ratan, 2013).

Nowadays, young people's life concepts and cultural tastes are largely influenced by the values prevalent in social media (Yang, 2020). For example, check-in posts are more likely to be pushed to the users' explore pages and gain more likes on social media platforms, which can promote the artistic lifestyle displayed in check-in behaviors as the lifestyle of users' ideal selves (Zhang, 2019). Users can easily refer to others' images on social media platforms, and choose a place which can shape their ideal selves. As a kind of symbolic consumer behaviors, check-in behaviors thus can serve the social function of selective self-presentation, and reduce the discomfort caused by actual-ideal discrepancy (Stewart, 2019).

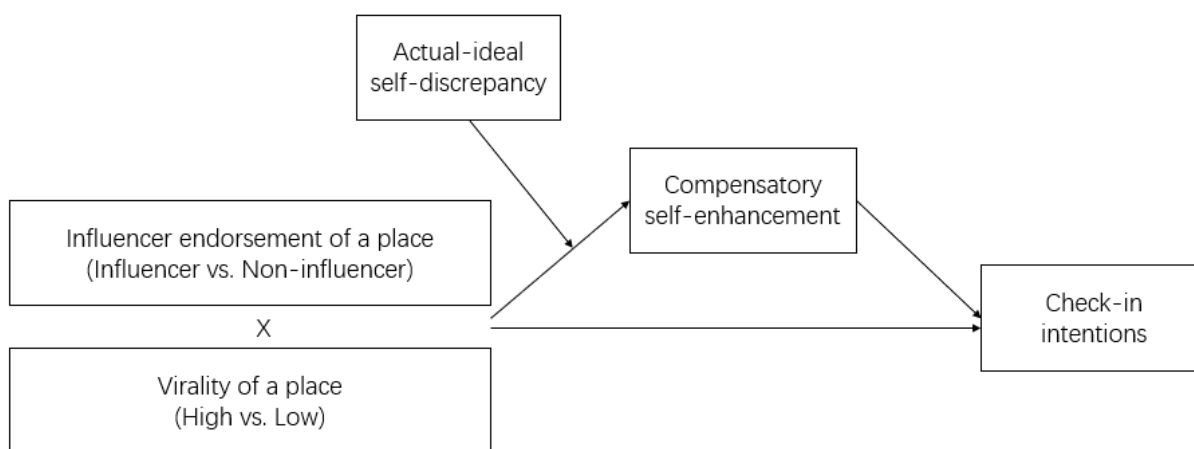
Consumers with high self-discrepancies are more likely to be motivated to compensate for constructing their self-concepts through symbolic consumer behaviors (Belk, 1988). Pentina et al. (2009) and Xiao et al. (2018) have demonstrated the effect of high actual-ideal self-discrepancy on symbolic consumption such as buying counterfeit branded luxuries and

taking plastic surgeries respectively. Moreover, Bessenoff (2006) has substantiated the moderation effect of self-discrepancy on the relationship between viewing ideal image templates conveyed by media and negative psychological outcomes. Social media actively expose others' check-in posts and convey the value that users should take the ideal and trendy lifestyles presented therein to become social media sensations, which makes it easier for users to notice the discrepancy between their ideal selves and actual selves, and thus motivates them to reduce the discrepancy (G. Chen, 2020; Yang, 2020). Therefore,

Hypothesis 5: The relationship between being exposed to check-in posts of an Internet-famous place and check-in intentions will be stronger among high actual-ideal discrepancy users than low actual-ideal discrepancy users when compensatory self-enhancement mediates.

Figure 1

Proposed Research Model



Method

Study Design and Participants

This study employed a 2 (influencer endorsement: influencer vs non-influencer) x 2 (virality: high vs. low # of related feeds) between-subjects factorial design. A total of 398

Chinese participants (age >18) were recruited to participate in the experiment via a professional sample collection company named Credamo in China. Credamo recruited Chinese participants from online panels, sent them links to questionnaires and paid them compensation. All the questioning and data collection were carried out on Qualtrics.

Responses from participants who did not remember or answered the manipulations of influencer endorsement and virality incorrectly were deleted. After screening, the final statistical analysis was conducted among 218 participants' responses (99 males, 119 females; aged 18–58, $M = 27.24$, $SD = 6.94$). The majority of the participants ($n = 182$, 83.49%) were young generation aged between 20 and 32 (the frequencies of the age between 20 and 32 are all in double digits, which are significantly higher than the other ages). 164 (75.23%) participants had bachelor's degrees or above. 167 (76.61%) participants responded that they live in cities in China (i.e., large settlements formed by non-agricultural industries and non-agricultural population), while 51 (23.39%) participants live in towns or country areas. Media resources are unevenly distributed among cities, towns and country areas in China (Pavlik, 2015). Therefore, the large proportion of city dwellers leads to a relatively high frequency of social media use by participants in general. The proportion of participants who used their favorite photo and video-sharing platform two or three times a week was the highest (33.49%), followed by that of participants who used the platform more than once a day (31.19%). As for the duration of the platform use per day, 69 (31.65%) participants responded that they used more than 1 hour to 2 hours, and 63 (28.90%) participants used more than 30 minutes to 1 hour. The design of the experimental study was reviewed and approved by the institutional review board of Nanyang Technological University.

Procedure

Participants first were asked to read and sign an informed consent form and were screened to ensure that they are Chinese people above age of 18. Participants then filled out the pre-test questionnaire including some basic background questions about participant's age, ethnicity, gender, education level, living area, social media use, and perceived actual-ideal discrepancy level. Then, they were randomly assigned to one of the four experimental conditions with a scenario: "Imagine that you are searching for information about a cafe named Go to Play in Beijing. When you searched for this café on RED, you found the search results. Then, you found a check-in post from the related feeds". Following this, they were exposed to the experimental stimulus, which depicted the number of the location-related search of a fake cafe in Beijing, a check-in photo post on RED of this cafe, and the uploader's profile for them to closely observe. Finally, the participants were directed to a post-test questionnaire which included the mediating variable (i.e., compensatory self-enhancement) and the dependent variables (i.e., visit intentions and sharing intentions). All the questions were written in Chinese for the convenience of participants' understanding.

Experimental Stimulus

RED mock-up pages were designed to replicate actual RED pages. There were four different stimulus pages to represent each condition (see Appendix A). Across all conditions, intra-medium elements such as the content of the post, the profile name of the uploader, the profile picture of the uploader, the following number of the uploader, the name of the location were kept constant. The place used for the study manipulation was a café deemed to have relatively low psychological barriers, in terms of the affordability and accessibility. The check-in photo post of the cafe as background in the study was fake for minimizing the impact

of the given impressions generated by other Internet-famous places that participants may recognize or have experienced (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Screenshot of the RED Post's Image



Being exposed to influencer place endorsement. Influencer place endorsement was elicited through the follower number of the uploader. Influencers who gain fame through the Internet can be identified by their follower numbers, which are between one hundred thousand and one million (Ismail, 2018). Influencer endorsement conditions reflected the uploader as an influencer with 160 thousand followers shown on the profile, while non-influencer endorsement conditions reflected the uploader as an ordinary person with 20 followers shown on the profile.

Being exposed to posts of a place that has high virality. The level of virality was manipulated through the number of feeds associated with the cafe (Srivastava et al., 2021). High virality conditions reflected 23 thousand plus users have shared their experiences at the cafe shown on the number of the location-related search, while low virality conditions indicated that 2 users have shared their experiences at the cafe shown on the number of the location-related search.

Measures

Actual-ideal discrepancy. A modified version of Higgins' (1986) Selves Questionnaire was used to assess actual-ideal discrepancy (Philippot et al., 2018). Participants were required to fill in three to eight words to describe the ideal self (ideal/other). The adjective words were chosen from the provided list of attributes (see Appendix B). Then for each attribute they chose, participants were asked to assess the extent to which they actually possess it from their own standpoints (actual/own). These perceived actualization scores were on a four-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*the actual self is slightly in line with the ideal self*) to 4 (*the actual self is extremely in line with the ideal self*). Perceived actualization scores of the chosen attributes were averaged into one index of actual-ideal discrepancy (Bak, 2014).

Check-in intentions. A five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Extremely Unlikely*) to 5 (*Extremely Likely*) was used to assess the strength of check-in intentions, including evaluating the intentions to mark the cafe as a prelude to check-in behaviors, and actually go to the cafe and post on social media as engaging in the check-in behaviors (see Appendix C).

Compensatory self-enhancement. A five-item Personality Rating Scale was used to assess the level of compensatory self-enhancement (see Appendix D). Personality ratings were used to determine the extent to which participants' attraction is maximized after imagining

themselves checking in at the cafe. The five items were based on physical attractiveness and social activity competence as traits that can compensate to reflect attraction and enhance users' own self-concepts without considering fame and fortune (Boney-McCoy et al., 1999; Dion et al., 1972; Goldman & Lewis, 1977). Each item consisted of a phrasing: "If I go to this cafe and post it on social media, I will feel I am more..." and was answered on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*) with a specific personality (attractive, capable, successful, intelligent, friendly). Scores of the five items were averaged into one index of compensatory self-enhancement.

Manipulation Checks

Influencer endorsement. The amount of attention paid to the influencer endorsement versus non-influencer endorsement was tested by a single item using a bipolar scale: "The person who shared the post was...(1) Non-social influencer to (7) social influencer." In addition, a multiple-choice question was used to check: "How many followers did you find the uploader has?" with three options: "160 thousand", "20", or "I don't know". Data from the participants who answered incorrectly or selected "I don't know" were excluded from the analysis.

Virality. Whether the participants have paid attention to the high versus low virality cues was checked using a single item using a bipolar scale: The place has been endorsed by...(1) a few people to (7) a lot of people. In addition, a multiple-choice question was used to check: "How many related feeds did you find on RED?" and participants were provided three possible answers: "23 thousand plus", "2", or "I don't know". Data from the participants who answered incorrectly or selected "I don't know" were excluded from the analysis.

Result

Manipulation Checks

I utilized two-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) to validate the manipulations. Participants in the influencer endorsement condition ($M = 6.23$, $SE = .11$) rated significantly higher on influencer manipulation check item (7-point bipolar scale ranging from 1 = “non-social influencer” to 7 = “social influencer”) than did those in the non-influencer endorsement condition ($M = 2.53$, $SE = .17$), $F(1,214) = 317.15$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .60$. In addition, participants in the high virality condition ($M = 5.30$, $SE = .13$) scored higher on virality manipulation check item (7-point bipolar scale ranging from 1 = “a few people” to 7 = “a lot of people”) than did those in the low virality condition ($M = 3.08$, $SE = .23$), $F(1,214) = 95.04$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .31$.

Effects of Influencer Endorsement and Virality on Check-in Intentions (H1a & H1b)

I conducted a two-way ANOVA to answer H1a and H1b. Participants in the influencer endorsement condition rated their intentions to visit the place higher ($M = 3.83$, $SE = .08$) than those in the non-influencer endorsement condition ($M = 3.50$, $SE = .10$), $F(1,214) = 9.33$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .04$. Similarly, participants in the influencer endorsement condition displayed higher intentions ($M = 3.80$, $SE = .10$) to share check-in posts of the place than those in the non-influencer endorsement condition ($M = 3.26$, $SE = .11$), $F(1,214) = 17.24$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .08$. The results for the two-way ANOVA indicated that there was no significant effect for virality on intentions to visit the place, $F(1,216) = .44$, $p > .05$, $\eta^2 = .00$, and on intentions to share check-in posts of the place either, $F(1,216) = .07$, $p > .05$, $\eta^2 = .00$. Therefore, H1a was supported, yet H1b was not supported.

Interaction of Influencer Endorsement and Virality on Check-in Intentions (H2)

The two-way ANOVA analysis results indicated that a significant interaction existed between the influencer endorsement and virality on participants' intentions to visit the place, $F(1,214) = 7.14, p < .05, \eta^2 = .03$, and on participants' intentions to share check-in posts of the place, $F(1,214) = 6.60, p < .05, \eta^2 = .03$. Post-hoc tests employing Bonferroni adjustments indicated that, when low number of endorsements were present, participants in the non-influencer endorsement condition would be significantly less likely to show higher intentions to visit the place and share check-in posts of the place than did those in the influencer endorsement condition. Yet, in the presence of high number of endorsements, no notable difference in the likelihood of intentions to visit the place and share check-in posts of the place appeared between influencer and non-influencer endorsement conditions. See Figure 3 and Figure 4 for the interaction plots. However, different from H2, effect of the influencer (vs. non-influencer) endorsement on check-in intentions would be strengthened when the place had been endorsed by a low (vs. high) number of other users.

Figure 3

Interaction between Influencer Endorsement and Virality on Intentions to Visit the Place

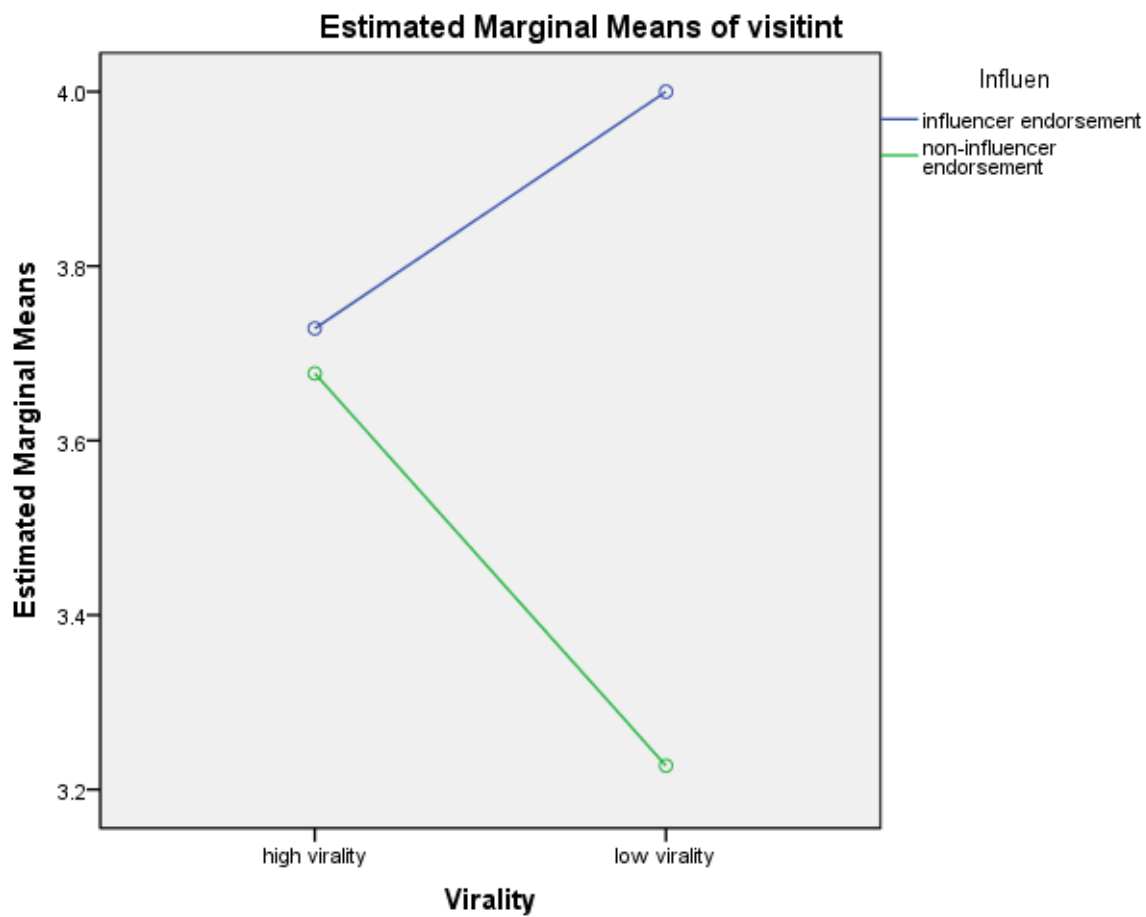
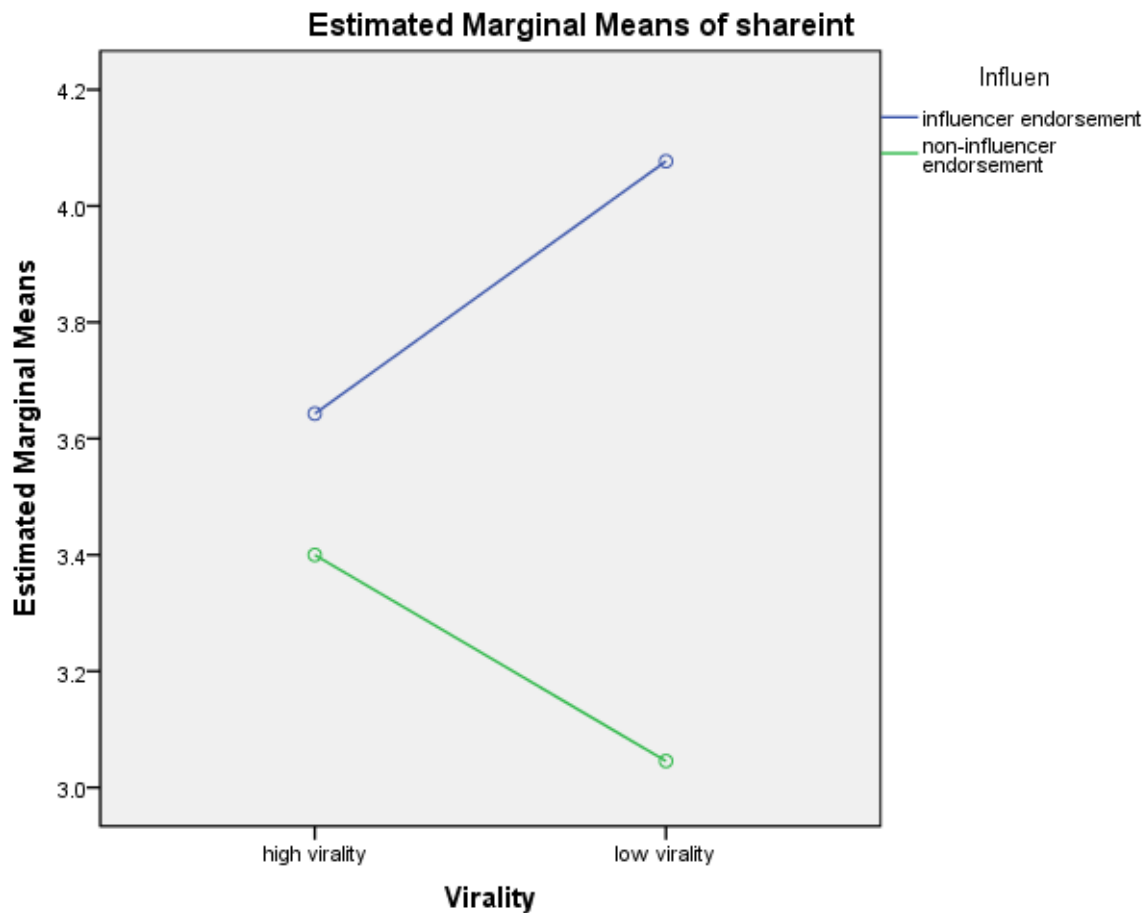


Figure 4

Interaction between Influencer Endorsement and Virality on Intentions to Share Check-in Posts of the Place



Indirect Effects of the Interaction of Influencer Endorsement and Virality on Check-in Intentions Mediated by Compensatory Self-enhancement (H3 & H4)

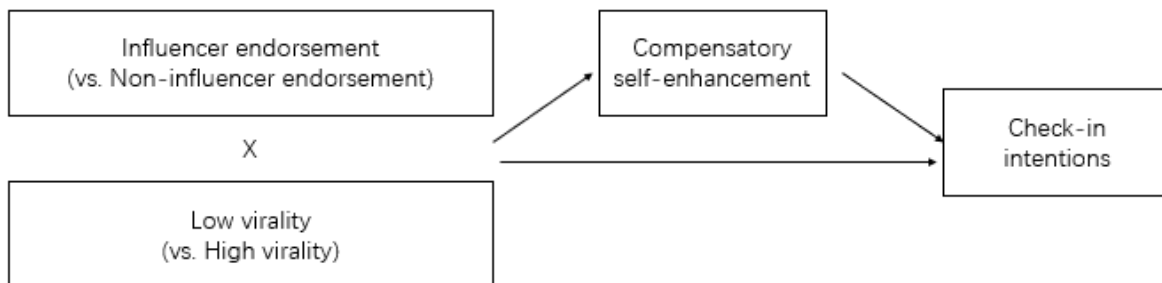
The results for the two-way ANOVA suggested that there was a significant interaction between the influencer endorsement and virality on participants' compensatory self-enhancement, $F(1,214) = 8.99, p < .05, \eta^2 = .04$. Bonferroni-adjusted comparisons indicated that, participants who were exposed to low virality of the café post rated their levels of compensatory self-enhancement when exposed to influencer endorsement of the café post higher ($M = 3.85, SD = .62$) than the non-influencer endorsement of the café post ($M = 3.04, SD = .91$), $F(1,214) = 18.70, p < .001, \eta^2 = .08$. In contrast, ratings of levels of compensatory self-enhancement when exposed to influencer endorsement and high virality of the café post

($M = 3.51$, $SD = .98$) did not significantly differ from the ratings when exposed to non-influencer endorsement and high virality of the café post ($M = 3.42$, $SD = .76$), $F(1,214) = 0.43$, $p = 0.51$, $\eta^2 = .00$. Bonferroni-adjusted comparisons also indicated that, participants who were exposed to influencer endorsement of the café post rated their levels of compensatory self-enhancement when exposed to low virality of the café post higher ($M = 3.85$, $SD = .62$) than the high virality of the café post ($M = 3.51$, $SD = .98$), $F(1,214) = 3.91$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .02$. In addition, participants who were exposed to non-influencer endorsement of the café post rated their levels of compensatory self-enhancement when exposed to high virality of the café post higher ($M = 3.42$, $SD = .76$) than the low virality of the café post ($M = 3.04$, $SD = .91$), $F(1,214) = 5.13$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .02$. Different from what has been hypothesized (H3), effect of the influencer (vs. non-influencer) endorsement on compensatory self-enhancement would be strengthened when the place had been endorsed by a low (versus high) number of other users.

To test the indirect effects, Model 7 of the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013) has been used. Model 7 is designed to test indirect and direct effects when a mediator and a moderator exists, with 5000 bootstrapped samples. Indirect effects of the interaction of influencer endorsement and virality on intentions to visit the place and intentions to share check-in posts of the place mediated by compensatory self-enhancement was significant. However, different from H4, when users were exposed to influencer endorsement and low number of endorsements of a place, they would be more likely to react with compensatory self-enhancement and, in turn, show higher intentions to visit the place and share check-in posts of the place. See Figure 5 for the resulting model and detail results.

Figure 5

a) Resulting Model



b) *Summary of Results of Mediation Test*

Dependent variable	Indirect effect <i>Index (Boot SE), Boot 95% CI</i>	Conditional indirect effect at values of compensatory self-enhancement <i>B (Boot SE), Boot 95% CI</i>		Direct effect <i>B (Boot SE), Boot 95% CI</i>
		High virality	Low virality	
Visit intentions	<i>Index = -.56 (.19)* CI = -.94, -.21</i>	<i>B = -.08 (.12)* CI = -.31, .17</i>	<i>B = -.63 (.14)* CI = -.93, -.37</i>	<i>B = -.04 (.10)* CI = -.24, .15</i>
Sharing intentions	<i>Index = -.65 (.22)* CI = -1.12, -.23</i>	<i>B = -.09 (.14)* CI = -.35, .18</i>	<i>B = -.74 (.17)* CI = -1.09, -.42</i>	<i>B = -.20 (.11)* CI = -.42, .01</i>

Note. *: statistically significant at 95% confidence level. Coding of each condition: influencer endorsement = 1, non-influencer endorsement = 2; high virality = 1, low virality = 2.

Moderated Mediation Model of Self-discrepancy and Compensatory Self-enhancement (H5)

Lastly, I tested whether self-discrepancy moderated the indirect effect of the interaction of influencer endorsement and virality on the dependent variables, as proposed in H5. Specifically, I expected that the relationship between the independent variable (i.e., the interaction of influencer endorsement and virality) and the dependent variable (i.e., check-in intentions) would be mediated through compensatory self-enhancement and that this mediated relationship would be moderated by self-discrepancy. Therefore, I employed Model 11 of the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013), which is designed to test a moderated mediation model, with 5000 bootstrapped samples. The results indicated that the moderated mediation effect was not significant (See Table 1). Thus, H5 was not supported.

Table 1

Summary of Results of Moderated Mediation Test

Dependent variable	Conditional indirect effect at values of compensatory self-enhancement						Direct effect <i>B (Boot SE), Boot 95% CI</i>
	<i>B (Boot SE), Boot 95% CI</i>						
	High virality			Low virality			
	SD=2.75	SD=3.30	SD=3.84	SD=2.75	SD=3.30	SD=3.84	
Visit intentions	<i>B</i> = .07	<i>B</i> = -.07	<i>B</i> = -.21	<i>B</i> = -.47	<i>B</i> = -.61	<i>B</i> = -.75	<i>B</i> = -.04
	(.17)*	(.12)*	(.18)*	(.29)*	(.15)*	(.21)*	(.10)*
	<i>CI</i> = -.25, .41	<i>CI</i> = -.31, .16	<i>CI</i> = -.56, .14	<i>CI</i> = 1.06, .08	<i>CI</i> = .93, -.34	<i>CI</i> = 1.16, -.34	<i>CI</i> = -.24, .15
Sharing intentions	<i>B</i> = .08	<i>B</i> = -.08	<i>B</i> = -.24	<i>B</i> = -.55	<i>B</i> = -.71	<i>B</i> = -.88	<i>B</i> = -.20
	(.19)*	(.14)*	(.20)*	(.35)*	(.18)*	(.24)*	(.11)*
	<i>CI</i> = -.26, .49	<i>CI</i> = -.35, .20	<i>CI</i> = .63, .14	<i>CI</i> = 1.24, .12	<i>CI</i> = 1.11, -.39	<i>CI</i> = 1.35, -.42	<i>CI</i> = -.42, .01

Note. SD is self-discrepancy level; *: statistically significant at 95% confidence level. Coding

of each condition: influencer endorsement = 1, non-influencer endorsement = 2; high virality

= 1, low virality = 2.

Discussion

This study has yielded interesting findings about selective self-presentation through social media check-in behaviors. As check-in behavior has become a form of selective self-presentation on social media prevalent among the young generation, scholars have attempted to understand the motives of check-in behaviors and their outcomes. However, the impact of different types of influential endorsements (i.e., influencer vs. other common users' endorsements) on check-in behaviors and the underlying mechanisms are not yet clearly understood. The purpose of this study was to fill in the gap.

The study results showed that (1) influencer endorsement and other common users' endorsements have different impacts on social networking users' check-in behaviors, (2) these two different types of endorsement source have interaction effects on social networking users' check-in behaviors, and (3) one of the important mediating factors of the endorser effects on check-in behaviors is compensatory self-enhancement.

Theoretical Implications

The key contribution of this study is the application of self-presentation theory and a psychological concept (i.e., compensatory self-enhancement) to the analysis of the effect of others' endorsements (i.e., influencer endorsement vs. other social media users' endorsements) on social media in the check-in context. This study enriches the big growth areas in communication research in recent years: influencers and viral communication on social media. Through experimentally understanding the mechanism of the interaction between influencers and virality, this study complements the concept of influencers, whereby low virality helps influencers maximize the impact of endorsement, rather than high virality.

First, the study tested how social media users' intentions to visit an offline place and share check-in posts of this place differ when the place is endorsed by influencer versus non-influencer online. I found that places endorsed by influencers rather than the places endorsed by other users had more positive influences on users' motivations to check-in the places. This might be because social media users tend to trust influencers for their high credibility as many social influencer studies suggested (Hannu & Johannisson, 2020; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Weismueller et al., 2020).

Moreover, the results for the interaction effects indicate that the highest intentions for checking in at places that are endorsed by influencers but rarely checked in by others (H2). One possible explanation for this finding might be that, as a behavior of self-presentation on social media, checking-in implies users' need for experiencing a sense of agency and fulfilling attention-seeking: social media platforms encourage users to create and share content through status updates, photo and video sharing, location check-ins and other functions (Sundar, 2008). By sharing and redistributing messages of Internet-famous places online, social media users show their proactive efforts to be sources of the messages, rather than just being followers (Oeldorf-Hirsch & Sundar, 2015). Therefore, compared to places that are endorsed by influencers and many other users, places that are endorsed by influencers but rarely checked in by others are more novel to cater to social media users' preferences for trustworthy but niche tastes when they present themselves as avant-garde sources online (Li, 2019; Yang, 2020).

The study findings also reveal that compensatory self-enhancement is a significant psychological mechanism underlying the most positive responses observed when influencer endorsement and low virality interact. When social media users are exposed to influencer

endorsement and low number of endorsements of a place, the motives to create the perceptions that they are competent and capable individuals will be stronger, which lead to higher intentions to check in the place. Social media users are more likely to confirm that they are better than others via checking-ins: they are not easily influenced by the trend than many others, and they think they ought to be pioneers that followed by others (Kim, 2018).

However, as shown in results of tests of H5, self-discrepancy did not moderate the indirect effect of the interaction of influencer endorsement and virality on check-in intentions. This finding also helps us to understand that compensatory self-enhancement caused by media exposure may not be significantly different depending on the level of self-discrepancy. Moreover, combined with the results obtained from the test of H4, the study findings suggest that social media users' check-in behaviors are motivated by compensatory self-enhancement, but the types of endorsers (influencer vs. other social media users) are more significant factors than individual differences in terms of self-discrepancy level. This highlights the importance of understanding the source effects (i.e. degree effect induced by influencer endorsement and cluster effect induced by virality) on social media (Katona et al., 2011).

This study also hypothesized that influencer (vs. non-influencer) endorsement and high (vs. low) virality on social media may induce positive effect on self-presentation intentions. However, the results of the interaction effect indicate that influencer endorsement would not be always positive: influencer endorsement is positively influential only when the place is not yet popular. This finding suggests that “novelty” or “innovativeness” factor is important for the information endorsed by influencer. This finding also contributes to extant research on social influencer and virality study (Sampson, 2012), by giving a more detailed analysis of the effect of virality caused by Internet fame. Moreover, the study contributes to extant research

on self-presentation study, by first suggesting that compensatory self-enhancement through strategic self-presentation as the significant mediator of checking-in places endorsed by influencer and low virality. Such an influential role of compensatory self-enhancement is further supported by the results of the mediation analysis.

Practical Implications

The study provides useful implications for viral marketing. First, social media users tend to show higher intentions to check in an offline place when it is endorsed by influencers. This finding suggests that offline places such as stores, cafes, restaurants, and museums hiring influencers to visit and share posts of the places can be crucial to enhancing social media users' check-in intentions.

The study also provides implications for social media marketing, especially for influencer marketing: influencer marketing would be particularly impactful when a new place or product is launched. However, when a place or product is already popular on social media, influencer marketing would not be influential anymore. Therefore, when a new place or product is launched, operator of the place or marketing department of the product can hire influencers to update posts about it for marketing. When the marketing effect near saturation (under the high virality condition), there is no need to hire influencers for marketing, but should focus on how to maintain good word of mouth or how to innovate, which can make the place or product does not become a one-off consumption object to the public (Song & Liu, 2019).

Moreover, this study demonstrates the mediating role of compensatory self-enhancement in the effect of interaction of influencer endorsement and low virality on check-in intentions. This finding underscores the importance of the psychological mechanism of

peoples' check-in intentions: social media checking-in make people feel good about themselves. Checking in at these non-cliché places and adding a unique personal meaning to the places that they have built upon their own experience, which gives people a sense of agency and fulfills attention-seeking by shaping people as creators of quality content on social media. Therefore, when individuals want to create perceptions that they are competent and capable, they can refer to places that are endorsed by influencer and low virality to check in.

Limitations and Directions for Future Study

This study provides vital insights into how interaction of influencer endorsement (vs. non-influencer endorsement) and low virality (vs. high virality) influence social media users' compensatory self-enhancement and, in turn, motivate their check-in intentions. However, due to the limited generality of this study, the results and implications should be interpreted with caution. Recently, check-in behavior has become a social activity prevalent all over the world (Zhang, 2019). Therefore, the broad spectrum of social media users who present themselves online through checking-ins may not be fully represented by the sample of Chinese people recruited for the experiment. While the collectivist culture in China limits the motivation of check-in behaviors, the individualist culture in the West may make people pay more attention to their own characteristics to guide their behaviors (Xiao et al., 2018). Therefore, when engaging in social media activities like check-ins, people in the West may focus more on self-disclosure motive for interpersonal needs than self-presentation motive for impression management (Patil et al., 2012; Wang & Stefanone, 2013). In addition, in consideration of the industrialization of checking-in in China, the term "Internet-famous" has gradually taken on a derogatory meaning: rather than being driven by the things that link together with "Internet-

famous” to appear average, more and more Chinese people tend to visit and share barely known places (Yang, 2020).

Moreover, I should be aware of the limitations of the experimental scenarios. First, the virtual cafe cannot generalize the characteristics of all places for checking in, and thus participants may be biased in their preferences for checking in when considering different kind of places. Furthermore, the manipulation of virality was not as successful as expected, only 64.57% participants have noticed the number of the feeds of the cafe, suggesting that participants might not care so much about the number of feeds displayed on the social media platform. One reasonable explanation is that because the sharers are not people in the participants’ social circle, but strangers on the network, so the influence of virality may not be significant (Katona et al., 2011).

In addition, the mediator compensatory self-enhancement was measured based on personality rating scale according to previous research about the concept. However, personality is often assumed to be relatively consistent and not to change frequently. An imaginary check-in behavior in the experimental scenarios was probably not enough to change an individual’s assessment of their own personality. The limitation the measurement might have an impact on the expected state change in compensatory self-enhancement.

Future studies may be able to test virality more effectively by limiting the variable of virality to highly connected social circles of participants. In addition, although the study results did not confirm the moderating effect of self-discrepancy, future studies may also investigate the effects of other different individual differences such as race, gender, and self-esteem level. With in-depth research by incorporating these variables into the study model and

testing their moderating effects, researchers may get more comprehensive understanding on people's check-in motives.

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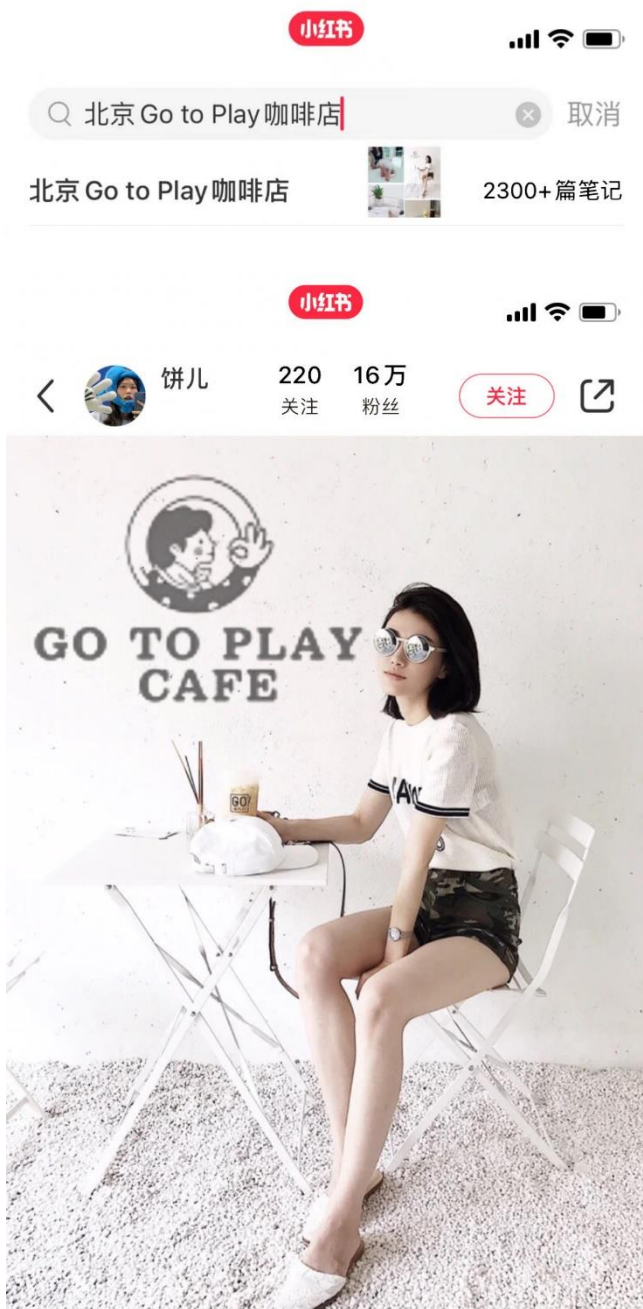
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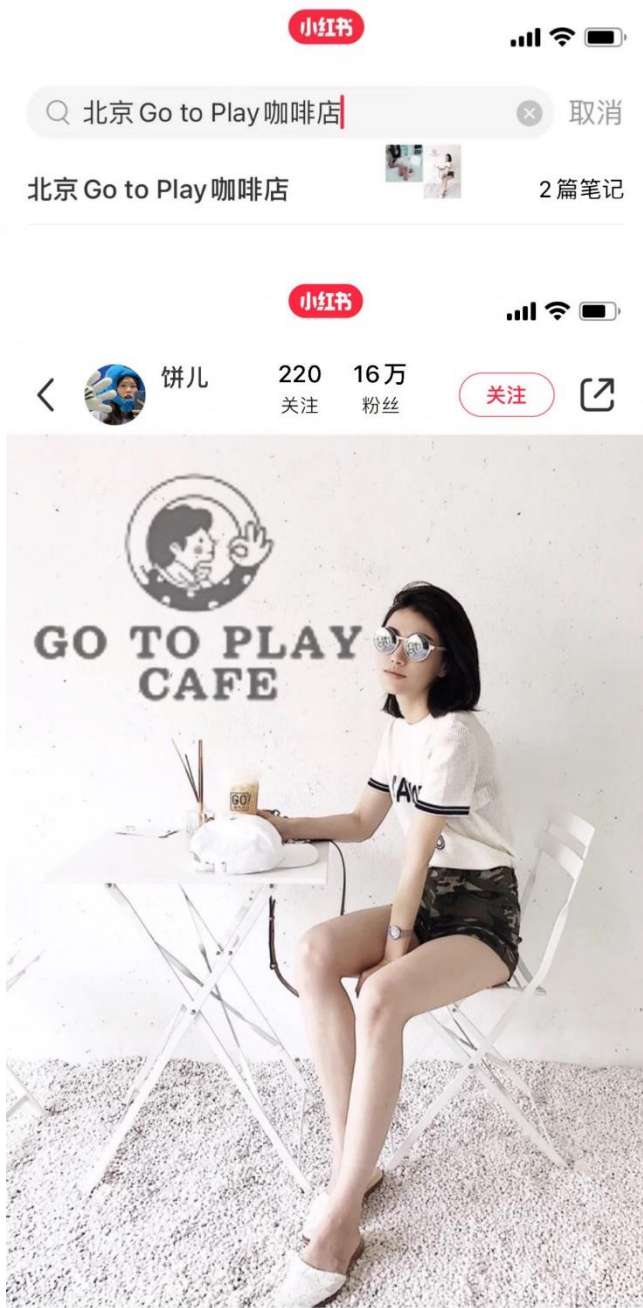
Appendix A

Experimental Stimulus

A1. Condition: influencer endorsement (160 thousand followers), high virality (23 thousand plus users' feeds)



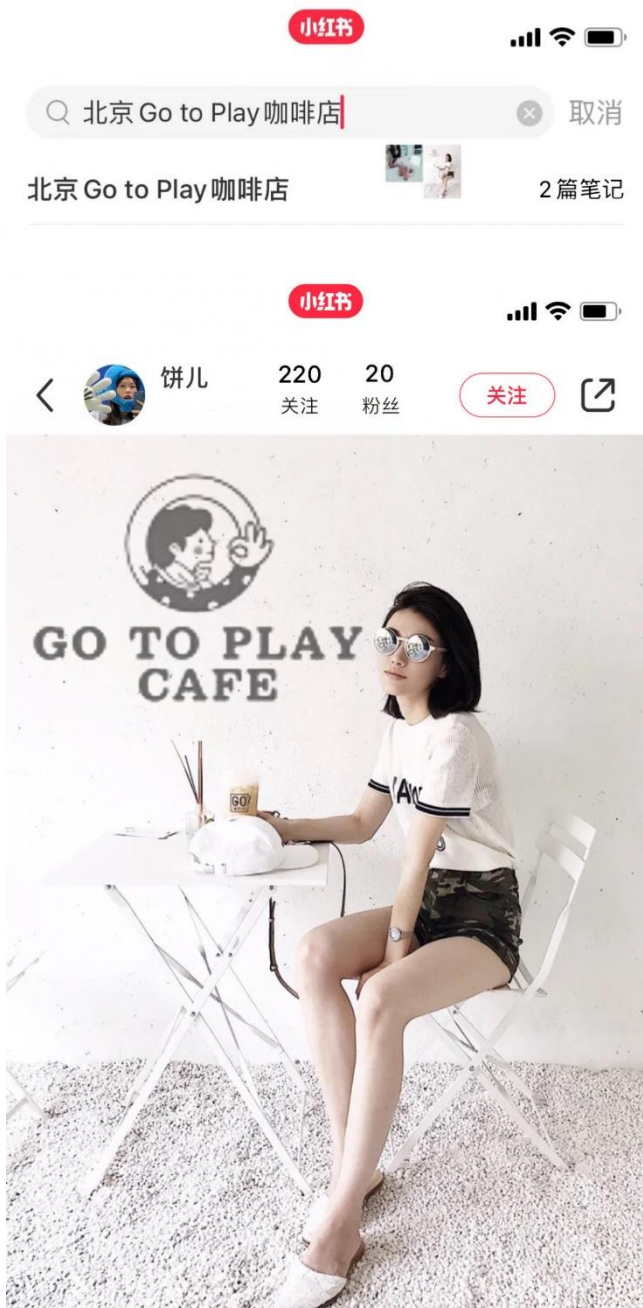
A2. Condition: influencer endorsement (160 thousand followers), low virality (2 users' feeds)



A3. Condition: non-influencer endorsement (20 followers), high virality (23 thousand plus users' feeds)



A4. Condition: non-influencer endorsement (20 followers), low virality (2 users' feeds)



Appendix B

Selves Questionnaire

Pick out three to eight attributes from the table that you perceive others think you would possess:

Fashionable	Conformist	Reliable	Normal	Spiritual
Pleasant	Cordial	Kind	Obedient	Witty
Amiable	Creative	Honest	Openness	Tolerant
Ambitious	Educated	Unpredictable	Careful	Curious
Artist-like	Discreet	Logic	Refined	Delicate
Clever	Soft	Lucid	Sensible	Disinterested
Benevolent	Efficient	Methodical	Grateful	Independent
Brilliant	Energetic	Moderate	Wise	Ingenious
Calculating	Enthusiastic	Modern	Helpful	Perceptive
Calm	Well-balanced	Modest	Simple	Philosophical
Clear-sighted	Exuberant	Moral	Submissive	Lively

Note. For the purpose of this study, the negative adjectives in the original table were removed.

The original table was presented in French and here it was translated into English using the Cambridge Dictionary. The polysemous words were divided into different English words to avoid ambiguity. Adapted from “Validation of the Self-Discrepancies Scale (S-DS). A tool to investigate the self in clinical and research settings,” by P. Philippot, V. Dethier, C. Baeyens, and M. Bouvard, 2018, *European Review of Applied Psychology*, 68(2), p. 76. Copyright 2018 by the Elsevier Masson SAS.

For each attribute you choose, how well do you think you actually possess it from your own standpoints on a scale from 1 (Slightly) to 4 (Extremely)?

Attribute 1 (the actual self is slightly in line with the ideal self) to 4 (the actual self is extremely in line with the ideal self)

1)	Slightly			Extremely
	01	02	03	04

2)	Slightly			Extremely
	01	02	03	04

3)	Slightly			Extremely
	01	02	03	04

4)	Slightly			Extremely
	01	02	03	04

5)	Slightly			Extremely
	01	02	03	04

6)	Slightly			Extremely
	01	02	03	04

7)	Slightly			Extremely
	01	02	03	04

8)	Slightly			Extremely
	01	02	03	04

自我问卷

从下表中找出在你看来别人认为你会具备的特质作为理想自我特质，最少 3 种、最多 8

种：

时尚的	循规蹈矩的	可靠的	规范的	高尚的
令人喜爱的	热诚的	和蔼的	顺从的	风趣的
亲切的	有创意的	诚实的	开明的	宽容大度的
有抱负的	有教养的	不可预料的	仔细的	有求知欲的
有艺术鉴赏力的	谨慎的	逻辑性强的	优雅的	讲究的
机灵的	柔和的	头脑清楚的	明智的	公正无私的
仁慈的	高效的	有条理的	心怀感激的	独立自主的
有才气的	精力充沛的	稳健的	智慧的	心灵手巧的
深谋远虑的	热情的	现代的	乐于助人的	洞察力强的
沉着的	神智健全的	谦虚的	单纯的	有哲理性的
有远见的	充满活力的	品性端正的	温顺听话的	活泼的

对于你选择的每一个特质，从你自己的角度来看，从1（轻微）到4（非常），你认为实际自我拥有这些特质的程度有多高？

特质 1（实际自我与理想自我略有契合）-4（实际自我与理想自我极其契合）

1)				
	01	02	03	04
2)				
	01	02	03	04
3)				
	01	02	03	04
4)				
	01	02	03	04
5)				
	01	02	03	04
6)				
	01	02	03	04
7)				
	01	02	03	04
8)				
	01	02	03	04

Appendix C

Check-in Intentions

How likely are you to mark this cafe by the following activities on social media?

("mark" is commonly known as "ma zhu" /" ma" on the Internet)

	1 Extremely Unlikely	2 Unlikely	3 Neutral	4 Likely	5 Extremely Likely
a) giving likes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b) clicking on favorites/saves	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c) leaving comments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d) forwarding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e) taking screenshots	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f) Tag friends in comments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g) sending direct messages to friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How likely are you to actually visit the cafe?

1 Extremely Unlikely	2 Unlikely	3 Neutral	4 Likely	5 Extremely Likely
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How likely are you to actually share a posting related to the cafe on social media?

1 Extremely Unlikely	2 Unlikely	3 Neutral	4 Likely	5 Extremely Likely
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

打卡意向

你有多大可能通过以下社交媒体活动来标记这个咖啡店？

（“标记”即网上俗称的“码住”/“马住”/“马”/“mark”）

	1 非常不可能	2 不可能	3 中立	4 可能	5 非常可能
a) 点赞	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b) 收藏/保存	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c) 评论	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d) 转发	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e) 截图	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f) 在评论中提到朋友	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g) 私信朋友	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

你有多大可能真的会去这个咖啡店？

1 非常不可能	2 不可能	3 中立	4 可能	5 非常可能
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

你有多大可能真的会在社交媒体上发帖打卡这个咖啡店？

1 非常不可能	2 不可能	3 中立	4 可能	5 非常可能
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix D

Personality Rating Scale

On a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), to what extent do you agree with the statement below:

If I go to this cafe and post it on social media, I will feel I am more...

	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither Agree nor Disagree	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
a) attractive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b) capable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c) successful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d) intelligent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e) friendly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Note. Adapted from “Self-Esteem, Compensatory Self-Enhancement, and the Consideration of Health Risk,” By S. Boney-McCoy, F. X. Gibbons, and M. Gerrard, 1999, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 25(8), p. 958. Copyright 1999 by the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, Inc.

个性评定量表

从 **1**（强烈反对）到 **5**（强烈赞同），你在多大程度上同意以下陈述：

如果我去了这个咖啡店并在社交媒体上打卡，我会觉得我更……

	1 强烈反对	2 反对	3 不赞同也不反对	4 赞同	5 强烈赞同
a) 有魅力	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b) 有能力	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c) 成功	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d) 聪明	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e) 友好	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>