

## EXPLORING MOTIVATIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS AS AN EMERGING JOB MARKET

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### ABSTRACT

*The study explores the motivations of female Social Media Influencers (SMIs) in Indonesia during the Covid-19 pandemic. Phenomenological inquiry is adopted to capture the lived experience of the six Instagram SMIs. Two major themes emerge from the findings; 1) SMIs approach Instagram as a portfolio to showcase their values, hobbies and careers and 2) SMIs increasingly perceive Instagram as a source of income, where being SMI is a job rather than a hobby and endorsement as their main job task. In context of self-determination theory, SMI motivations are built on several intrinsic and extrinsic motives and the net value (Intrinsic minus extrinsic) correlates to authenticity of the SMI and their endorsements.*

**Keywords:** *influencer marketing, social media influencer, social media, Instagram, motivation*

### 1. Introduction

The common belief that incentives, particularly of materialistic nature, drives higher performance is debatable. A meta-analysis of 128 experiments regarding effects of reward, published by Deci, Koestner and Ryan (1999) provides solid grounds to theorize that tangible extrinsic rewards consistently diminished the intrinsic motivations of the respondents. The finding is considered controversial for three decades (Deci, 2017), as it is still a common norm to incentivize for better performance at workplace and more. In addition to tangible rewards, external events including evaluation, deadlines, threats of punishment as well as direct competition undermined the intrinsic motivation, as these events are perceived as control mechanisms and thus depriving them of their autonomy.

In the influencer marketing context, autonomy coincides with the term authenticity (Kernis, 2003). The notion of authenticity stems from intrinsic motivations, and inauthenticity stems from extrinsic motivations such as reward or punishment, often pressured by external decision makers (Audrezet, 2018). Intrinsic motivation drives a person to perform an activity purely for its inherent qualities which gives them satisfaction. Extrinsic motivation refers to underlying attitude or a goal to an action which leads to separable outcome. Recognized as an important antecedent to a successful endorsement (Wiedmann & Mettenheim, 2020), authenticity is prominently sought after by consumers and positively enforces brand perception, loyalty and purchase intention (Chronis & Hampton, 2008). Social Media Influencers (SMIs) are at the center of this phenomenon called influencer marketing.

As a contemporary marketing approach, the influencer marketing industry is growing at a fast pace with 30% compounded annual growth rate forecast (Influencer Marketing Benchmark Report, 2021). The brand communication method of leveraging on social media influencers is becoming more and more mainstream. A survey conducted by Rakuten Insight (2020) finds that approximately 65 percent of their Indonesian consumers (aged between 25 – 34) stated being influenced by online influencer endorsements to purchase a certain product, 57 percent of which were fashion. Ads and recommendations on social media are the number one source of new brand discovery in Indonesia (GWI, Q3 2020). Facebook (2021) reports 85 million potential audience can be reached on Instagram, only second to YouTube (107 million).

Table 1. Overview of Definitions on Social Media Influencers

Author(s), Year	Term	Definition
Freberg et al., 2011	Social Media Influencer	‘a new type of independent third-party endorser who shape audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, and the use of other social media’ (p.90)
Abidin, 2016	Micro-celebrities	‘ordinary internet users who accumulate a relatively large following on blogs and social media through the textual and visual narration of their personal lives and lifestyles, engage with their following in <i>digital</i> and <i>physical</i> spaces, and monetize their following by integrating <i>advertorials</i> into their blogs or social media posts and making physical paid-guest appearances at events (p.3)
De Veirman et al., 2016	Social Media Influencer	‘people who built a large network of followers, and are regarded as trusted tastemakers in one or several niches’ (p.1)
Evans et al., 2017	Social Media Influencer	‘... often amass large following through posting aspirational photos using hashtags and engaging followers on the site...’ (p.139)
Kirwan, 2018	Social Media Influencer	‘Social media influencers are people who have large audiences of followers on their social media accounts, and they leverage this to influence or persuade this following to buy certain products of services’
InfluencerMarketingHub, 2019	Influencer	‘An influencer is an individual who has the power to affect purchase decisions of others because of his or her authority, knowledge, position or relationship with his or her audience’
Lou and yuan, 2019	Social Media Influencers	‘... is first and foremost a content generator: one who has a status of expertise in a specific area, who has cultivated a sizable number of captive followers- who are of marketing value to brands- by regularly producing valuable content via social media’

(Source: Adjusted by Researcher, 2021)

Along with the exponential growth of influencer industry, the segmentation is becoming more and more systematic, mainly categorized by number of their followers and focus area of their content (i.e., Fashion and Beauty, Lifestyle). With the increasing niche of the consumer base, the segmentation of the influencers makes it even more systematic to partner with the most effective medium of brand endorsement. One of the ways to classify SMIs are in terms of their reach; micro tier of 10,000 to 150,000 followers and macro tier for more than 150,000 followers (Nirschel and Steinberg, 2018). For the purpose of the research, the nano and micro influencers (NMI) of the SMI tier is classified as (Figure 1):

- *Micro-influencer* (between 10,000 to 100,000) and,
- *Nano-influencers* (between 1,000 and 10,000).

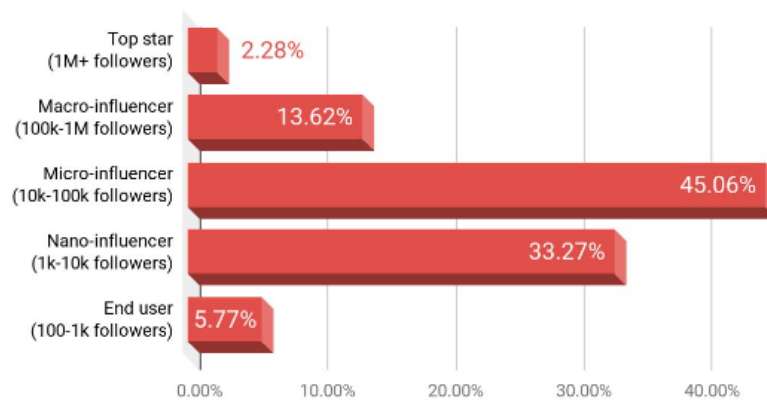


Figure 1. Influencer Segment Breakdown in Indonesian (Q3-2019 to Q3-2020)

(Source: CastingAsia, 2020)

The Gen-Z (aged between 18 to 24) occupied the highest share of Instagram users as of August 2020, rounding up to 36% or approximately 28 million (Statista, 2020). Owing to its convenient platform design, Instagram emerged as the platform of choice for end users – consumers – making it an ideal platform for influencer marketing. Nano (1,000 ~ 10,000 followers) and Micro (10,000 ~ 100,000 followers) influencers report the highest engagement rate (Fig. 2.2) on Instagram, an important antecedent to the customer journey. The engagement, which can be explained as the ability to obtain reactions from followers on shared contents has been identified as one of the important factors to SMI's success and influence.

The research aims to build on the extant literature on the phenomenon of influencer marketing in context of Instagram as the most popular social media platform for brand endorsements. Despite the growing number of research on SMIs, an insight into their motivations remains unexplored. This research adopts phenomenological inquiry into exploring SMI motivations. Six female SMIs are interviewed for an in-depth qualitative analysis using constant comparison and classical content analysis. Prior to the interviews, netnographic analysis is conducted for triangulation of data and analysis method.

The study explores the following research question: *What motivates the SMIs in today's context?*

For aspiring influencers, along with the current trend of social media network penetration into daily lives of youth, especially from the female who have grown up with social media, this research hopes to shed light on the motivations of female influencers reaping the benefits of this phenomenon. The future prospect of brand endorsement as a SMI at an entry stage and the opportunities to make meaningful connections, develop career options and earn income is at the disposal of our hand: smartphones.

For marketers, with Influencer marketing as the emerging form of marketing methods, proving to be especially effective for raising brand awareness for all types of market sizes like niche and mass, newly established micro and small enterprises can fully maximize its potential to their advantage. The research hopes to build a framework of understanding on how the MSMEs can ensure a mutually equitable partnership with the SMIs.

## 2. Method

The study employs qualitative analysis to capture the richness of the in-depth interview transcript. Heideggerian phenomenology offers adequate ontological and epistemological grounds to explore this social phenomenon as inclusively as possible. Assuming that the shared humanness and life experiences are essential in understanding

the human experience (what motivates you to become an SMI), this qualitative methodology provides a unique approach to the influencer side of the phenomenon. Prior to the phenomenological inquiry of the in-depth interviews, the researcher conducts a preliminary study on the social media platform Instagram to better understand the trends of the phenomenon, as well as identify potential respondents.

Netnography refers to a written account of online cyber-culture, informed by methods of cultural anthropology (Kozinets, 1997). Kozinets (2009) highlights accessibility, alteration, anonymity, and archiving as the four distinct differentiations between *vis-à-vis* and digital communications. Accessibility or the higher-than-average availability on social media platforms could be associated with attention-seeking behavior and voyeurism (Logan, 2015). In the research context, this may also be an indicator of increased commercialization of influencer marketing as a popular source of income, which represents external motivations. Alteration can be expressed as being familiar with certain online norms and codes (i.e., DM'd is the past tense of direct mail as a verb, bot account refers to fake Instagram accounts commonly used to increase number of followers artificially, Celebgram is a shorter version of celebrity Instagram). Anonymity is another important characteristic of online interaction which directly clashes with the accessibility. The researcher must be ethical in preserving the identity of the observed participants whether the analyzed data be public or private, as a means for them to express their opinions more freely. Lastly, it is possible to archive the extensive record of digital communications in all forms and sizes, ranging from a caption several years ago to a multi-party argument on a forum. The digital footprint of the online interaction can be viewed and analyzed repeatedly. However, a real-time netnography study has its own perks of being more contemporary and thus drives a more genuine insight into the phenomenon itself.

Instagram was selected as the main platform for observation, through the researcher's personal accounts. The interview was conducted through online (Zoom) with live video and screen share (visual view) of the influencer's Instagram page. The respondent's Instagram posts and stories were viewed to discuss in more detail about the motivations, experiences and endorsement information. For the recording, researcher utilized the Zoom recording tool for MP4 version under the respondents' written and verbal consents and later turned into transcripts using Microsoft Word (2016) and Excel software.

### 3. Results and Discussion

Table 2. Influencer Descriptions

Name	Age (year)	Education	Work Experience (Type, Industry)	Source of Income (Present)	Tier (Followers)	Endorsement Experience (Verticals, Period)
Hana	23	Graduate (S1)	Intern at Law Firm	Freelance Model, Endorsement	5,796	Fashion, Beauty 8 months
Ayu	23	Graduate (S1)	Intern at Legal, Cosmetics	Freelancer, Endorsement	43,200	Food, Fashion, Beauty 7 years
Cindy	23	Graduate (S1)	Intern at PR agency, F&B	Job at PR agency, Endorsement	6,498	Food, Beauty 5 years
Gita	23	Graduate (S1)	Intern at NGO, Environmental	Personal assistant, Freelance Streaming	1,318	Beauty, Streaming 3 years
Maria	23	Graduate (S1)	Intern at Bank, Freelance Model	Job at Bank, Entrepreneurship	3,945	Fashion 3 years
Putri	28	Graduate (S1)	Entrepreneurship (Retail, Trade)	Entrepreneurship, Network Marketing	1,891	Fitness & Health 9 months

Note: Age (23 = 1998, 28 = 1993); Education (S1 = Bachelor's degree); Tier (nano influencers: 1,000-10,000, micro influencers: 10,000 ~ 100,000)

(Source: Adjusted by Researcher, 2021)

The respondents who participated in the in-depth interview are as stated in Table 2. The educational background is bachelor's degree and professional background limited to internship experience as part of the academic degree requirements. They are considered relatively new to the workforce and due to the Covid-19 pandemic, have been presented with less favorable working conditions. A total of six SMIs have been interviewed whose endorsement experiences are in the fields of fashion, beauty, food and health.

In the process of identifying the motivations to become SMI, two major themes emerged: 1) Instagram as portfolio and 2) Instagram as source of income. Further classifications and most used keywords are articulated in Figure 2. The type of motivations identified here are intrinsic and extrinsic, labelled from left to right respectively to identify the motivations. SMI adoption of Instagram portfolio as value and hobby is both intrinsically motivated because of the inherent satisfaction they bring to the SMI. By sharing their passion and influencing their followers to share the same values and hobbies (or the other way round, attracting people with same values and hobbies as followers), the activity itself provides the SMI with sense of fulfilment.

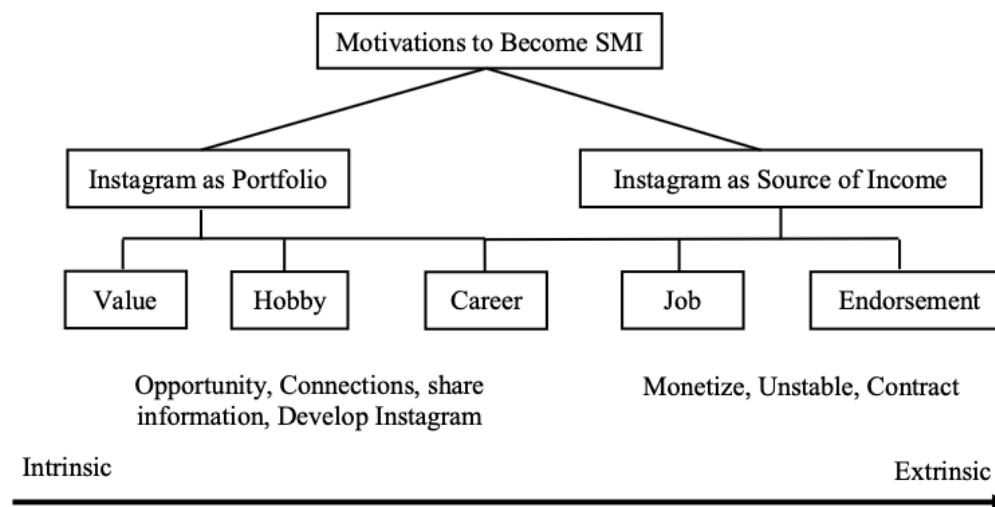


Figure 2. Motivations to Become SMI  
(Source: Adjusted by Researcher, 2021)

The difference between usage of portfolio for career and job is that the prior is an antecedent to job opportunities as well as publication of current career (i.e., post a photoshoot of modelling, singer post her concert performance) whereas, job refers to dedicating fixed amount of time to Instagram whether it be as part-timer, free-lancer or full-time content creator for specific brand or several brands. Prior to the commercialization of influencer marketing, career portfolio was a means to increase public exposure and therefore increase chance of opportunities. It also enabled to share the expertise and professionalism to the aspiring people, giving them motivation as well as gain fame for oneself. Career portfolio, in case of achieved opportunities leading to job or endorsements, can also be a part of Instagram as source of income motivation. Values and hobby portfolio also can lead to job opportunities and endorsements.

Codes, "Share information", "Connections", "Opportunity" and "develop Instagram" are mentioned repeatedly throughout the transcribed data in defining the motivation to become SMI by using Instagram as a portfolio for value, hobby and career. Sharing information and forming connections is nothing new to the world of social media. Opportunity which comes along as the result of those activities has much taken on new meaning: online activity can generate real-life benefits in forms of career development, job (free-lance streamer) and paid endorsements. It is for these opportunities that female SMIs develop their Instagram, gaining more followers to become SMIs.

The SMI motivation to gain income from Instagram is expressed by codes "Monetize", "Unstable", "Partnership" and "Contract". Once you monetize your Instagram, it means you generate income from the contents in various

ways. However, the income is described as unstable compared to a formal job and the SMIs call influencer job as “not easy job” in multiple meanings. The more experience they have with online job offers and brand endorsements, the emphasis is put on agreeing on contract which highlights the professional aspect of SMI as a job title.

### *Instagram as a Portfolio*

Utilization of Instagram as a portfolio can be interpreted in various ways. The portfolio for everyday life is what first comes to the mind; posts of memorable events, hanging out with friends in fancy restaurants and a scenery view of landscapes engraved with famous quotes are common sightings of a well-managed Instagram account. It serves its basic function as a social network platform to connection people through sharing their life with friends online. Over time, an individual’s Instagram account page as become more of a canvas for perfection. As Maria points out, “Everyone wants to look good on Instagram”.

With the readiness of own online platform of far-reaching impact at our disposal, its users are tempted to use the platform to achieve certain goals, whether it be intrinsic or extrinsic. When asked why they aspire to be SMI (gain more followers), Maria playfully replies with “you can make people do what you want”. In the following conversations, she expresses her hopes of being able to inspire others. With most of her contents focusing on photoshoots from her modelling contracts, her expertise and experience in the industry is what she hopes to deliver to her followers. She specifically points out teenage girls as her target audience whom she is willing to interact and give advice as she has done before.

(being SMI) ... obviously you are going to give a good thing, sharing experience that I know to help others... there are not many people exposed to fashion industry of modelling, based on my experience, I also like to travel to other countries to do that, by having that experience, I could give them motivation and also influence them to go and be what they wanna be, like for example if they wanna be model or fashion designer...

Interestingly, among the few posts into her private life is a photo at graduate ceremony. The captions that come along with posts also leave a strong impression with her own personal messages and strong sense of identity that is uniform throughout the portfolio. When questioned with what values she wants to deliver to her community, a statement that adheres to the netnography observations is made as the following:

There are a lot of girls who are still studying but they get pregnant, but I want them to still continue their study. Because education is the only way to build career... they should have someone to look up. It’s not like I want them to look me up as something big but at least I go for study, to do something for myself... like my cousins, I ask them who do you wanna be like in the future and they say like “I wanna be you” and I say “thank you”.

From above contexts, Maria derives her motivation from inherent satisfaction of positively influencing others with her expertise, experiences and values. Opportunities for modelling contracts and endorsements arose as a result of the portfolio. Aside from the primary motivation of value delivery, the utilization of Instagram as a career portfolio (model’s resume) is the outcome of the action, but nevertheless served as an external event to increase her motivation. Maria points out regarding her modelling career aspect, “It’s always good outcome.”

Without a doubt, many professional careers have been developed from the connections made purely on social media platforms. LinkedIn, the platform for largest professional network, is a good example of how online portfolios and connections can land a job. Instagram contents, described by interviewees as being very “picture and video intensive” gives more room to shine for occupation that require artistic qualities. Professional portfolio building on Instagram for aspiring models to get connected to professional photographers, make-up artists and consequently fashion and make-up brands is one of the ways to utilize Instagram for career purposes.

Face painting hobby which transpired ever since she was little, in combination of her passion for gory movies is what motivated Gita to start her journey to becoming SMI. As a result of her hobby portfolio, she formed new connections and opportunities which set her on a career path, as stated below:

After a while it became more of a hobby and then I start drawing more and I start posting more and I think it was a bazaar thing, so I think there was a shopping Bazaar and they need some sort of entertainment so they called me to join a smaller scale makeup competition and there I met a lot of other people who were also like makeup artists and they just build connections and then you get your names spread out as well. So that was kind of my journey from nothing to almost something. I honestly don't know how they found me (on Instagram). It might be hashtags, I don't know. But suddenly some random girl texted me or DM'd to me ... So that was really cool... Yeah, those were pretty amazing and I am quite happy with how it turned out and I feel very grateful.

Prior to the common use of influencer marketing, the range of motivations to becoming SMIs were mainly the usage of Instagram as a portfolio to share, which is inherent in self, thus intrinsically motivated. Other common motivations such as fame and social comparison is not discussed as it is methodically limited (verbatim transcript analysis).

### ***Instagram as a Source of Income***

Those who started out building Instagram portfolios for sharing their values, hobbies and careers succeed in gaining more followers than average and come upon opportunities to make professional connections and also endorse brands. They may have started out as lifestyle influencers and later expand into fashion, make-up and more. With the rise of SMIs, the types of entries into Instagram for female SMIs especially is more intentional and targeted. Influencer marketing, more specifically brand endorsement by SMIs is becoming such a mainstream idea backed by influencer agencies to enable the endorsements in large scales.

This increasing awareness on the concept of endorsement has changed the way female SMIs perceive Instagram. For example, Hana who describes herself to be introvert and shy around people, decided at some point that she needs to change to achieve her goals of becoming a model. The first step she took towards this goal was to develop her Instagram portfolio and open to public (turn off private setting so anyone can follow without her consent). When asked about her motivations, Hana states:

During the pandemic, I was kind of bored. I feel like I want to make income, but because of the pandemic it was hard to get a job or internship opportunities. So probably social media will be one of the platforms to do it. But at the beginning, my main objective was not to be an influencer because I want to start my career in modelling. I still like, if you wanna like, a lot of make-up artists or hair stylists to approach you, they will firstly see your Instagram. That's the reason I try to upgrade my Instagram... I was kinda introvert and shy. I privatize my Instagram, but I felt like if I kept doing this, it won't, I won't get any benefit. So that's the reason why I try to open my Instagram

Although her main objective was to develop her portfolio for career purposes, she was made aware from her surroundings that it can also lead to income generation. As stated above, "getting some benefit" (job opportunities, endorsements) out of Instagram was her primary motivation and her efforts to post good content, publicize her Instagram account and enter into influencer management agencies are clearly extrinsically motivated. After consultation with friends who are already involved in the industry and personal observation in search for income source on Instagram, she reinforces her motivation on becoming SMI and quote "... from that day (join management agency), I know exactly how to be a Nano influencer".

Putri started to endorse a specific brand she has consumed for a long time as a trial to see whether she would be fit for a network marketing part-time job of the brand. With strong concerns for health and fitness, she naturally started to endorse health product of the brand and provided information from the company and personal review as a loyal consumer. Despite being convinced by a family member to pursue this endorsement, the experience

clicks with her innate passion for social media and hobby of sharing health and fitness-related information, driving her to be highly motivated. The external rewards such as monetary compensation for increased sales and recognition in the community only increase the motivation. Despite the obvious extrinsic motivation of becoming SMI for job and income, Putri points out that the primary motivation is sharing her value on health and how her experience can positively influence others, as stated below:

My motive is for people to be healthy. I feel consistent to post it (product information). If people don't care, it's okay. I believe one day, they don't care now, but one day they will come back. Because I experience that before. I post about this product few months ago, they don't care but I know they are checking it. I want to be (influencer with huge influence). Why? Because I consume myself for 10 years, it's not fake. If people would like to try and listen from me, why not?

The perception of Instagram as a source of income has now become a common knowledge among the female SMIs and more and more SMI, extrinsically motivated with specific goals of earning income are joining the industry of influencer marketing. This does not mean the prior SMIs are more intrinsically motivated as the next findings will elaborate.

### ***Interaction of Motivations: External Events***

Both Hana and Putri started out mainly motivated by external benefits that come out of being SMI: job (part-time, freelance) and paid endorsements (free products, fee). The most common extrinsic motivation from the research is the use of Instagram as a source of income. It's interesting to note that both of these SMIs have only recently started their journey of developing their portfolio and endorsing brands and their entry point motivation is purely extrinsic with clear goal of earning income. In contrast, both Maria and Gita with more than 3 years of endorsement experience, have started off as a means to satisfy their innate desires to share their values, hobbies and enhance career opportunities which led them to generate income later onwards.

The respondents' motivations at the beginning of their journey to become SMIs were greatly influenced by external events that increased or decreased their motivations at the time of the interview. The type of influence was also changed from intrinsic to extrinsic and vice versa depending on the individual's approach to internalization of those events.

Identifying whether the motivations are intrinsic or extrinsic is less of a problem than identifying which is the primary motivation or the biggest driver of their actions. Unless the words of the respondents can be taken as 100% objective, the answer will always be biased. Take Ayu, for example, who started out as a food blogger with the motivation to share about her favourite foods and passion for writing expresses her current outlook on the SMI job as:

I actually don't do this job for the money. Because it's my hobby. I just want to have another proper job like the full-time one, it's just, this one is for free-lance thing, my hobby. And I don't want to be pressured with my hobby.

The statement above may be objective self-assessment and in combination with the netnography observations and the whole context of the interview, the researcher can confirm to some extent, the truth in this statement. Endorsing brands which are reviewed to be good is a form of hobby, or free-lance job for Ayu as she manages to take the burden (external pressure) off of the activity she enjoys. This hasn't been always the case however, as at the early days of SMI lifestyle, she was pushed to the limit or as she terms it "money driven". Then, her initial motivation to become food blogger (a type of SMI) was intrinsic but later was changed to extrinsic as a result of external rewards and once again self-managed to be intrinsic, to go back to the roots and rediscover the reason she started off in the first place. The intrinsic motivation of writing had been replaced by extrinsic motivation of money and after going through a difficult stage of pressure to keep up, she demotivated the external rewards which in turn strengthened the initial motivation. Surely, the intensity of intrinsic motivation may not be as strong as before as it has been interactive with extrinsic motivations (income, peer comparison) even without oneself realizing. The



pattern of dynamics and interactions of motivations in Ayu's case can also be found in other respondents, though not as complex due to their shorter time period.

All respondents' motivations have progressed as they got offered brand endorsements, job opportunities and other external events adding to the complexity of their motivations, in types (intrinsic extrinsic) and numbers (more than one). Regardless the type of motivations they initially started out with, the variety of motivations increases with the experiences and new opportunities and even the motivations themselves influence to weaken or strengthen one another (Table. 3).

Table 3. Interaction of Motivations

NO.	SMI	AT THE BEGINNING	EXTERNAL EVENTS	INTERACTION OF MOTIVATIONS
1	<b>Hana</b> (8 months)	Earn Income as a Freelance Model and Nano-influencer	Increase Recognition & opportunities in the industry, Meet new people, Endorsements	Internalization of external events that increase inherent satisfaction: Intrinsic motivation to achieve self-growth and Extrinsic motivation to get income <b>Intrinsic &gt; Extrinsic</b>
2	<b>Ayu</b> (7 years)	Passion for writing: start as food blogger	Monetization of blog and Instagram: Endorsements, Peer comparison, Interaction with followers	Increasing pressure of external events that diminish the joy of reviewing products: Extrinsic motivation to get income and intrinsic motivation to advocate for good brands <b>Intrinsic = Extrinsic</b>
3	<b>Cindy</b> (5 years)	Joy of interacting with new people: start as lifestyle influencer	Interaction with followers, Publicity, Endorsements,	Negative experience diminished the initial motivation but positive outcome from endorsements increased the inherent satisfaction <b>Intrinsic = Extrinsic</b>
4	<b>Gita</b> (3 years)	Hobby of face painting – start as portfolio for make-up competition	Increase Recognition & opportunities in the industry, Peer comparison, Interaction with followers, Endorsements,	Opportunities to get income and freelance job offers increase the extrinsic motivations without undermining intrinsic motivation to share her passion for face painting <b>Intrinsic &gt; Extrinsic</b>
5	<b>Maria</b> (3 years)	Motivate others by sharing experience: start as fashion influencer	Increase Recognition & opportunities in the industry, Interaction with followers, Endorsements	Both negative and positive outcomes cancelled each other out and did not influence the motivation <b>Intrinsic &gt; Extrinsic</b>
6	<b>Putri</b> (9 months)	Start as network marketing for a brand: Fitness & health influencer	Monetization of Instagram, Increase Recognition & opportunities in the industry, Interaction with followers, Endorsements	The experience of endorsing a brand has helped her to integrate passion for social media and income, increasing motivation to advocate for the brand <b>Intrinsic &gt; Extrinsic</b>

Source: Verbatim Transcripts; Adjusted by Researcher, 2021

#### 4. Conclusion and Implications

The primary goal of this research was to identify the motivations of female SMIs. In-depth interview data analyzed and interpreted through triangulation of data analysis provide several valuable insights into the female SMI's

motivations. The finding uncovers two major themes which emerges to classify the female SMI motivations: Instagram as a portfolio and as a source of income. This indicates that female SMIs are both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated in their pursuit of SMI career. The perception of SMI as a job/ career opportunity was found to be common among the respondents, emphasizing the income aspect of the SMI experience. The transition of motivation from intrinsic (i.e., joy of sharing hobby) to a more extrinsic one (i.e., get income, gain opportunities) can be identified. As the influencer marketing industry is becoming more systematic, the motivations of Gen-Z female SMIs to becoming influencers at the point of entry are increasingly more extrinsic.

In addition, whether an SMIs place higher importance on the extrinsic or intrinsic motivation can be partly explained by their cultural capital: low versus high. Those possessing HCC, prioritize the portfolio aspect whereas the other are motivated by the income aspect of the SMI experience. This relation between the degree of cultural capital and types of motivation is recommended for further future research to shed light on certain influencer behavior that are fundamental to marketing research.

For aspiring SMIs, it is important to note that to do something for a very long time, such a pursuing SMI as a career or a part-time job which provide income, being intrinsically motivated and not losing sight of that throughout the course is crucial. Not only does this matter for the personal wellness (intrinsic satisfaction), it also transfers to the followers (consumers) in the form of authenticity.

With increasing segmentation of the influencer marketing and importance of authenticity as the key determinant of positive consumer perception, the nano influencers with identified community of followers on a specific category have as much chance as micro influencers for brand endorsements. The pros and cons of becoming SMI should be considered beforehand to limit the negative outcomes and maximize opportunities. Most importantly, authenticity is born when the SMI truly endorses the brand and its values as their own. In contrast, inauthenticity born due to greater net value of extrinsic motivation is harmful to SMI's personal well-being and follower engagement.

This research approaches the SMIs' perception of the influencer marketing phenomenon, it provides unique insight into the special consumer segment. SMIs are special consumers because they have far-reaching impact on the consumer market place through online word of mouth (WOM) and size of their influence. With the SMI industry becoming more and more regulated and systematic, the implications of the findings apply to two aspects of management: marketing and human resources. Viewing SMIs as the most influential consumers and thus researching their consumer behavior will give rise to marketing implications; considering the SMIs as partners in marketing one's brand and thus human resources implications will be useful to result in authentic SMI endorsements.

In conclusion, the findings provide some support for the controversial argument by Deci, Koestner and Ryan (1999) on the negative impact of extrinsic rewards (motivations) towards the intrinsic motivations. There is surely an active ongoing interaction of motivations throughout the SMI experience and as clearly apparent in Ayu's case, the greater the extrinsic motivations, the more diminished the intrinsic motivations. Only by getting rid of and regulating the intrinsic rewards on own terms, was Ayu able to gain back the intrinsic motivation of being an SMI. The store of cultural capital as a control variable for exploring the effect of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations towards authenticity will be an interesting study and recommended for future research.

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