

# Popularity of nutrition influencers and products and services promoted on their websites

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## Introduction

Digital food environments include all online settings that influence eating practices and nutrition (Granheim, 2019). With the rise in popularity of social media and its impacts on health and nutrition, it becomes increasingly necessary to better understand the nature of digital content, and how it contributes to digital food environments. This research aims to compare the popularity of nutrition influencers on common social media platforms and characterize the products and services that are promoted on their websites.

## Methodology

A subsample of 39 nutrition influencers was selected from a larger study of 116 Instagram influencers. The initial sample was determined using keyword searches into Google, Bing and Yahoo and then further screened to only include influencers who posted about nutrition and health (Black et al. 2019). The influencers were then split into two groups: registered dietitians (RD) and non registered dietitians (Non RD).

The popularity of RDs and Non RDs across the top five social media platforms, was recorded from publically available follower/subscriber counts and averaged. The social media presence of RDs and Non RDs was compared based on the number of followers/subscribers and active social media platforms.

Webpages of the selected influencers were first analysed to determine and categorize the products marketed. The products analysed excluded those created primarily by a third party as a sponsored product or affiliated marketing. The first category of products included consumable foods and nutrition supplements and the second category of products included cookbooks, kitchen supplies, merchandise and general books. Subcategories and their respective price ranges were also categorized and determined. Services included anything sold to the public that was not material, such as online or in-person nutrition counselling. The services were then catalogued and grouped together to determine the five most common services provided by nutrition influencers.

# Results

## Popularity

Table 1. Social media presence of Registered Dietitians (RDs) versus Non Registered Dietitians (Non RDs)

	Total n = 39 n (%)	Instagram <sup>1</sup> n (%)	Facebook n (%)	Twitter n (%)	YouTube n (%)	Pinterest n (%)
<b>RDs</b>	14 (36%)	14 (100%)	13 (93%)	13 (93%)	8 (57%)	14 (100%)
<b>Non RDs</b>	25 (64%)	25 (100%)	24 (96%)	24 (96%)	22 (88%)	25 (100%)

1. Instagram accounts were a requirement for inclusion in the initial list of 116 influencers.

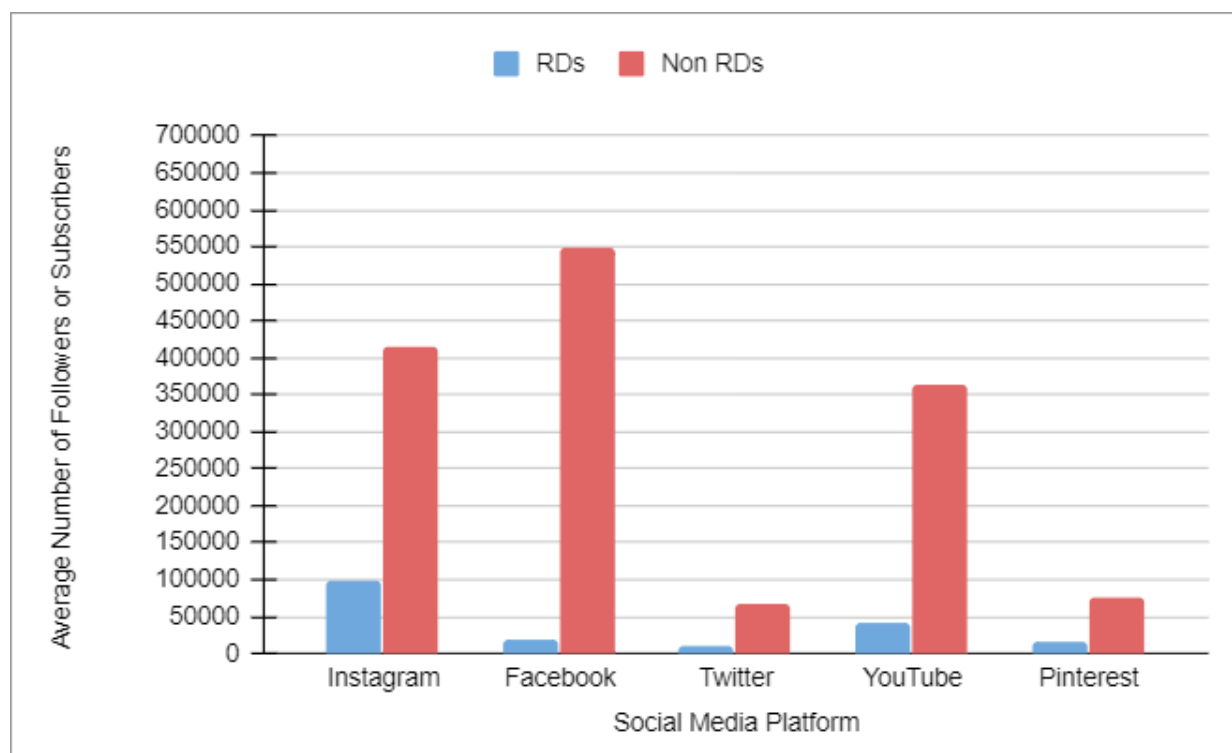


Figure 1. Popularity based on the average number of social media followers/subscribers of Registered Dietitians (RDs) and Non Registered Dietitians (Non RDs).

# Results Continued

## Products and Services

**Table 2. Percentages of Registered Dietitians (RDs) and Non Registered Dietitians (Non RDs) selling products and services on their websites**

	Total n = 39 n (%)	Consumable Foods and Nutritional Supplements n (%)	Other Products (Cookbooks, Kitchen Supplies, Merchandise, General Books) n (%)	Services n (%)
<b>RD</b>	14 (36%)	1 (7%)	13 (93%)	13 (93%)
<b>Non RDs</b>	25 (100%)	10 (40%)	24 (96%)	24 (96%)

**Table 3. Most common subcategories of consumable foods and nutrition supplements and the respective price ranges**

Subcategory	Price Ranges
Supplements (Vitamins, Probiotics, Enzymes, Amino acids, Proteins, Minerals, Fibre)	\$7.99 - \$229.75
Snacks (Chips, Bars, Cookies, Nuts, Seeds)	\$7.99 - \$127.99
Ingredients (Rice, Butters, Sauces, Seasoning, Spices)	\$4.49 - \$75.95
Coffee and Tea	\$12.99 - \$80.97
Performance Drinks	\$12.99- 34.95
Essential Oils	\$7.45 - \$132.17

**Table 4. Most common subcategories of other products and the respective price ranges**

Subcategory	Price Ranges
Merchandise (Clothing, Shoes, Mugs, Stickers, bags, pins)	\$8.43 - \$56.99
Cookbooks	\$4.99 - \$32.00
Kitchen Supplies (Containers, appliances, utensils)	\$4.99 - \$330.00
Books	\$2.99 - \$38.56

# Results Continued

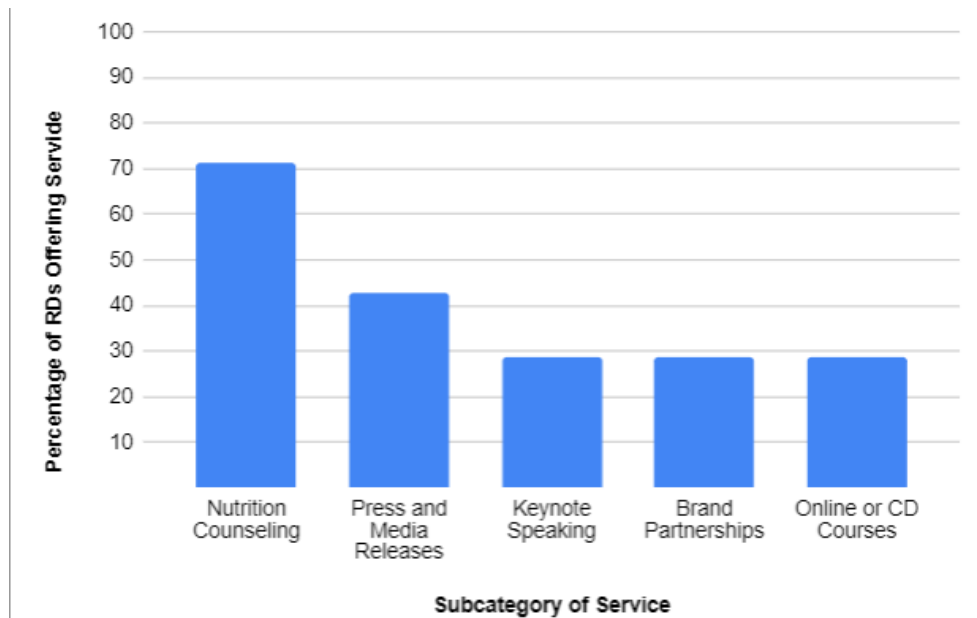


Figure 2. The most popular services offered by registered dietitians (RDs). Nutrition counselling often included a 1-on-1 initial consultation, followed by appointments to track progress. Websites of RDs displayed more information about nutrition counselling service relative to other services they provided. Other services included business consulting, live workshops, sponsored posts, recipe development, and freelance writing.

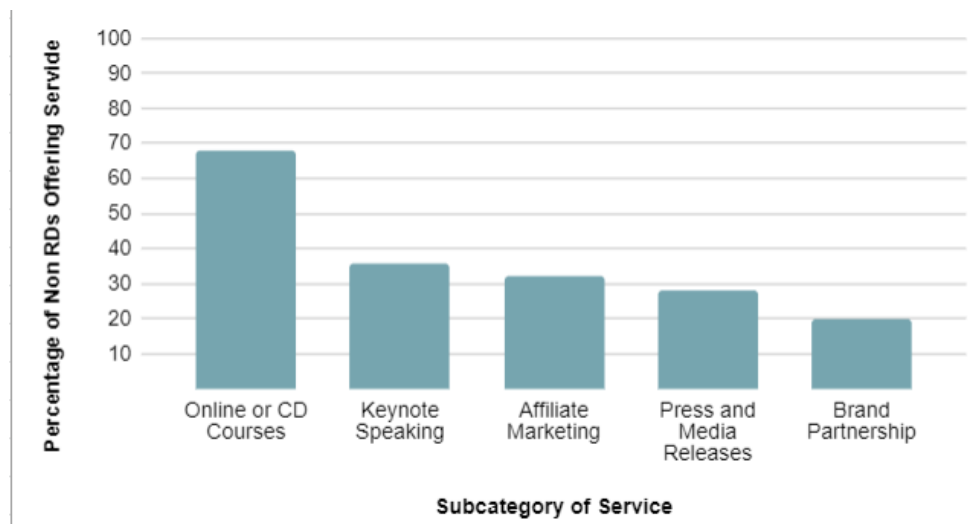


Figure 3. The most popular services offered by Non Registered Dietitians (Non RDs). Online courses and CDs usually consisted of premade educational materials geared towards fitness, nutrition, or professional development. Affiliated marketing services gave third-parties the ability to promote products on influencers webpages. Other services included training and certification programs, live workshops, wellness retreats, and nutrition counselling.

# Conclusions

Both RDs and Non RDs were largely present on all five social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest) with the exception of YouTube. Only 57% of RDs compared to 88% of Non RDs were present on the video sharing platform. Non RDs had an average follower or subscriber count that was significantly higher than RDs across all five social media platforms. Facebook had the largest disparity between the groups with a difference of 532,127 followers while Pinterest had the smallest disparity between the groups with a difference of 57,162 followers. RDs were most popular on Instagram and Youtube respectively while Non RDs were most popular on Facebook and Instagram respectively.

40% of Non RDs marketed consumable food and nutrition products while just 7% of RDs marketed this same category of products. The subcategory with the highest upper limit in price range was supplements (\$229.75) and the lowest lower limit was ingredients (\$4.49). Around the same percentage of RDs and Non RDs marketed other products and services (93% and 96%). The other products included kitchen supplies and appliances at the highest upper price limit (\$330.00) and books at the lowest lower price limit (\$2.99). The most popular service that RDs promoted was 1-on-1 nutrition counseling (71%) while the most popular service that Non RDs promoted was premade online or CD courses and programs (68%)

Further research should be undertaken to better understand the effectiveness of products marketed by nutrition influencers, particularly Non RDs. Additionally, research into communication strategies that will increase the visibility and reach of RDs as nutrition influencers would be warranted.

# Acknowledgements

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## Literature Cited

Black, A, S Desroches and M Fernandez. "Education matters: Certified health professionals have higher credibility than non health professionals on Instagram." Alberta Academic Review (2019): 11-12.

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