

Finding The Perfect Influencer-Brand Fit

A quantitative study on how the combination of social media influencer type and brand type affects the success of an influencer collaboration.

Alice Fransson & Emilia Köping-Höggård

Bachelor Thesis in Retail Management

Stockholm School of Economics

May 16th, 2023

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to our supervisor Jonas Colliander for your valuable insights and knowledge. We would further like to thank the respondents of our survey for contributing with your time and input. Finally, we want to thank our friends and family for your unconditional love and support.

ABSTRACT

In recent years, the use of influencer marketing as a marketing tool has become increasingly popular. With the growth of influencer marketing, different social media influencer (SMI) types have emerged. Previous literature has explored the favorability of one SMI type over another, but none have incorporated brand type as a moderator. Therefore, this study aims to investigate how the combination of a smaller vs larger influencer and luxury vs mainstream brand will affect the perceived fit of the collaboration, which will then affect influencer credibility, brand credibility, brand attitude, brand interest and eWOM. A quantitative approach was conducted through an online, self-completion survey with 434 valid respondents. The answers were then statistically analyzed through Independent t-Tests, and One- and Two-way ANOVAs. The results of the study show that luxury brands should not use smaller influencers, as such collaboration creates a worse perceived influencer-brand fit. Consequently, the poor fit leads to diluted brand and influencer credibility which negatively affects brand attitude, brand interest and eWOM. However, no significant differences were identified for the mainstream brand. Thus, the results indicate that mainstream brands can collaborate with both smaller and larger influencers. These results contribute to the theoretical field of influencer marketing and are also insightful for marketing managers.

Keywords: *Influencer marketing, perceived fit, SMI types, influencer-brand fit, luxury brands.*

Authors: Alice Fransson (50735) and Emilia Köping-Höggård (50727)

Supervisor: Jonas Colliander, Associate Professor, Department of Marketing and Strategy, Center for Retailing

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	1
ABSTRACT	2
1. INTRODUCTION	5
1.1 Background	5
1.2 Research Gap	6
1.3 Purpose and Expected Contribution	6
2. THEORY	7
2.1 Background to the study	7
2.1.1 Influencer Marketing	7
Influencer Types	8
2.1.2 Luxury vs Mainstream Brands	10
The Importance of Psychological Distance for Luxury Brands	10
2.2 Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses Generation	11
2.2.1 Perceived Fit	11
Match-up Hypothesis and Schema Congruence Theory	12
The Importance of Perceived Fit in Influencer Marketing	13
2.2.2 Brand and Influencer Credibility	14
2.2.3 Brand Attitude	16
2.2.4 Brand Interest	17
2.2.5 eWOM	17
3. METHOD	18
3.1 Research Design	19
3.2 Preparatory Work	19
3.2.1 Choice of Components of the Stimuli	19
Choice of Fashion Influencer and Sponsored Product	19
Choice of Fashion Brands	20
Choice of Instagram Posts	20
3.2.2 Pre-Study	20
Purpose	20
Method	21
Results	21

3.3 Main Study	22
Purpose	22
Method	22
3.3.1 Measures	23
Mediating Variable	23
Perceived Fit	23
Dependent Variables	24
Influencer and Brand Credibility	24
Brand Attitude	24
Brand Interest	25
eWOM	25
4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS	25
4.1 General Favorability of SMI Type	25
4.2 Interaction Effects	27
4.3 Comparing the Four Combinations	27
4.3.1 Mediating Variable	28
Perceived Fit	28
4.3.2 Dependent Variables	29
Influencer Credibility	29
Brand Credibility	29
Brand Attitude	30
Brand Interest	30
eWOM	31
5. DISCUSSION	32
5.1 Theoretical Implications	35
5.2 Managerial Implications	35
5.3 Limitations and Future Research	36
Appendix A: Pre-test Questionnaire	37
Appendix B: Main Study Questionnaire	38
References	45

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In 2019, the term “influencer” was introduced in the Oxford Dictionary (OlsenMetrix Marketing n.d.). An influencer is regarded as “a person who is paid by a company to show and describe its products and services on social media, encouraging other people to buy them” (Cambridge Dictionary n.d.). Much has happened since the introduction of influencers, making this area of social media marketing one of the fastest growing industries in the world (Artry 2023), with a current market value of 16.4 billion U.S dollars (Dencheva 2023). Although some might have thought influencer marketing to be a short-lived trend, the evidence shows stable growth, with the mentioned market value more than doubling between 2019 and 2022 (ibid). Indeed, the global influencer marketing platform is expected to expand at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 32.5% between 2022 and 2029, which argues for an exciting future (PR Newswire 2023). With the growth of influencer marketing, new social media influencer (SMI) types have emerged, with the number of followers as the distinguishing factor. The different SMI types have pros and cons, where the larger influencers contribute to greater brand exposure whereas smaller influencers often generate higher follower engagement rates (Dencheva 2023).

Influencer marketing is widely used across different industries, but especially in the fashion industry. Historically, mainstream brands were early adopters of integrating influencers in their marketing strategy, and did so by featuring influencers on their social media platforms and paid them to create their own sponsored content. An example of a mainstream brand collaborating with an influencer is the brand GinaTricot and influencer Bianca Ingrosso (Instagram 2019), who have created several successful marketing campaigns together. Luxury brands, however, have previously approached social media and influencers more cautiously. This is mainly due to the counter-intuitiveness of an exclusive brand being present on a platform focused on accessibility (Luxe Digital 2022). However, some luxury brands have entered the world of influencer marketing. For example, the luxury fashion brand Versace collaborated with fashion influencer Devon Lee Carlson (Facebook 2020). Looking forward, Forbes identifies the usage of smaller influencers as the greatest influencer marketing trend for 2023 (Schwarz 2022). It is therefore not surprising that mainstream brands such as NA-KD already have begun using smaller influencers in their marketing (Arheden 2021).

The question is now: is the trend of using smaller influencers suitable for all brand types, or will the unique brand characteristics of luxury brands force them to be more cautious?

1.2 Research Gap

The rapidly changing environment of social media marketing, with new trends emerging frequently, makes it an interesting research field to investigate. Further, both academia and managers call for new insights within the field to stay relevant. Currently, there exists extensive research within the field of influencer marketing (e.g Campbell & Farrell 2020; Campbell & Grimm 2019; Lou & Yuan 2019; Lou 2022; Colliander & Dahlén 2011). Some previous studies have investigated which SMI type provides the best advertising outcomes, where a favorability of smaller influencers have been presented (Park et al. 2021, Wies et al. 2023). However, none that we know of, have investigated the possible moderating role of brand type, i.e. luxury vs mainstream, which creates an interesting research gap to explore. Investigating the possible moderating effect of brand type, i.e. luxury vs mainstream, is further interesting as it has previously affected outcomes of other marketing tactics such as user-designed products (Fuchs 2013).

1.3 Purpose and Expected Contribution

We aim at contributing with knowledge on which SMI type is favorable for different types of brands, i.e. luxury vs mainstream, as academia is currently lacking research on such knowledge. Following established methods, we intend to explain how the combination of a smaller vs larger influencer and luxury vs mainstream brand will affect the perceived fit of the collaboration, which will then affect advertising outcomes influencer credibility, brand credibility, brand attitude, brand interest and eWOM.

Further, with influencer marketing being key in fashion brands marketing strategies, it is not only interesting for researchers, but also managers to investigate its full potential. According to research by Altimeter and Linqia, 25% of a digital marketing budget should be allocated to influencer marketing (Linqia n.d.), making it a large investment for established fashion brands. It is therefore important for managers to understand what influencer strategy generates the highest ROI, especially in recessionary times where marketing budgets are

constrained. Moreover, as luxury brands have unique characteristics of exclusivity (Park et al. 2020), and therefore may be hesitant to engage in influencer marketing, it is even more important for managers of luxury brands to succeed with their influencer marketing strategy.

Our purpose with this study is therefore to examine if brand type, i.e. luxury vs mainstream, has a moderating role on perceived fit, which then affects influencer credibility, brand credibility, brand attitude, brand interest and eWOM, when using a smaller vs larger influencer in social media advertising. Thus, the aim is to contribute to already established research on influencer marketing while simultaneously providing managers of luxury and mainstream brands with new insights.

To close the current research gap, the possible moderating role of brand type will be answered based on already existing theory on perceived fit (e.g. Aaker & Keller 1990; Völckner & Sattler 2006; Lynch & Schuler 1994; Kamins & Gupta 1994) and the match-up hypothesis (Kamins 1990; Till & Busler 2000; Kahle & Homer 1985), which are often used when examining the fit between a spokesperson/influencer and a sponsoring brand or the fit between a brand extension and the parent brand. Further, theory on psychological distance (Kapferer 1997; Park et al. 2020) is used to explain the phenomenon of luxury brands and their exclusive characteristics. To make our contribution, we will conduct quantitative research with an online, self-completion questionnaire with four combinations of SMI and brand type. Based on the answers, we will be able to conduct statistical analysis such as t-Tests, and One- and Two-way ANOVAs to draw conclusions on the moderating role of brand type.

2. THEORY

2.1 Background to the study

2.1.1 Influencer Marketing

Several forces, such as changed media consumption behaviors and consumer reactions, have shifted the advertising industry towards online channels (Campbell & Farrell 2020) making influencers an effective marketing resource. According to Campbell and Grimm (2019), an

influencer is “someone who posts to social media in exchange for compensation”. Influencer marketing is thus a marketing communication tool where influencers are used to drive consumers' brand awareness and/or purchase decisions. However, endorsing products is not new to marketing communications as celebrities have been used for several decades (Kaikati 1987) in advertising with the hope of transferring celebrities' qualities such as trustworthiness and attractiveness to a brand or product (Erdogan 1999). In contrast to celebrities, influencers are “regular people” who have become famous for creating and posting content online. Traditional celebrities must therefore become regular content creators to develop influencer status (Lou & Yuan 2019).

Regarding the created content, influencer-produced content is often considered more authentic than brand-generated ads (Campbell & Farrell 2020). When explaining this phenomenon, “the parasocial relation” between influencers and their followers are often mentioned as a key mechanism (Lou 2022; Hu et al. 2020; Lou & Yuan 2019; Aw & Chuah 2021). Hartmann and Goldhoorn (2011) states that Horton and Wohl introduced the concept of “parasocial interaction” in 1956, explaining it as a “simulacrum of conversational give and take” that takes place between users and mass media performers. The following year, Horton and Strauss developed the definition by arguing that a “parasocial interaction [is experienced by the user] as immediate personal and reciprocal, but these qualities are illusory and are presumably not shared by the speaker” (Hartmann & Goldhoorn 2011). The parasocial interaction is thus an illusion of a face-to-face relationship with a media performer (Colliander & Dahlén 2011). Indeed, previous research considers parasocial relations to be one-sided as the audience are more involved with the celebrity and it is not reciprocal. Moreover, Lou and Yuan (2021) further developed this framework into a “trans-parasocial relation” to capture the unique relationship between an influencer and its followers where the interaction between influencer-follower is more interactive and co-created. The influencer-follower relationship is unique in comparison to traditional celebrity-follower relationships because the influencer is more involved and interacts with the followers by answering comments, “re-posting”, and “liking” messages (Abidin 2021).

Influencer Types

Even though influencer marketing is relatively new, the scope is constantly changing with new social media influencer (SMI) types emerging. Influencers differ significantly from one

another in branding and focus, follower base, engagement rates, monetary requirements for collaboration, and skill sets (Campbell & Farrell 2020). Because of the differing characteristics, influencers can be grouped together in these SMI types. Campbell and Farrell (2020) identify five SMI types with the number of followers as the main differentiating variable. The five influencer types are celebrity influencers, mega influencers, macro influencers, micro influencers, and nano influencers. Further, perceived authenticity, accessibility, expertise, and cultural capital also affect the categorization of SMI types done by Campbell and Farrell (2020).

Our study focuses on macro and nano influencers and we will therefore go into depth about those SMI types. A macro influencer has 100.000-1.000.000 followers and is attractive to collaborate with because of the large brand exposure and “bang for the buck” (Campbell & Farrell 2020). In contrast, a nano influencer has 0-10.000 followers and is therefore the SMI type with the smallest following. Generally, their followers are friends and acquaintances and these influencers generate high engagement rates because of their accessibility and perceived authenticity (Campbell & Farrell 2020).

With the rise of several SMI types, researchers have been interested in determining which SMI type is preferable in advertising. Present research explains how there appears to be a trade-off between popularity and intimacy within influencer market. Larger influencers, such as macro influencers, are more popular, whereas smaller influencers, like nano influencers, create more feelings of intimacy (Park et al. 2021). This is also supported by Wies et al. (2023) who show evidence of an inverted U-shaped relationship between influencer follower count and engagement from followers. Indeed, a higher follower count implies broader reach but also cues a weaker relationship that reduces followers’ engagement likelihood. Moreover, Park et al. (2021) argues for the superiority of micro-influencers because of their persuasiveness and high perceived authenticity which spills over on the brand, creating better advertising outcomes. As one can expect different advertising outcomes when using different SMI types, it is interesting to investigate if one SMI type is superior when brand type, i.e. luxury vs mainstream, has a moderating role.

2.1.2 Luxury vs Mainstream Brands

Although fashion brands may differ on several dimensions, a significant distinction is often made between luxury and mainstream brands. The term luxury is derived from the latin word *luxus*, meaning “excess, extravagance” and even “vicious indulgence” (Berthon et al. 2009). When considering definitions of luxury brands, most authors recognize both tangible and intangible aspects. Regarding the tangible aspects, authors mention functional value (Berthon et al. 2009), a high level of quality, and a premium price (Fuchs et al. 2013) as characteristics of luxury brands. Further, some previous studies also highlight a luxury brand's intangible aspects such as the effect on personal oriented perceptions (Vigneron & Johnson 2004), and some even define luxury as a “concept” with symbolic dimensions (Berthon et al. 2009). Indeed, luxury brands can be used as a symbol to classify or distinguish oneself in relation to relevant others (Vigneron & Johnson 2004). Luxury brands' ability to signal status can be explained by theory on psychological distance, making the creation of psychological distance one of the core principles when managing luxury brands (Kapferer 1997). Park et al. (2020) defines psychological distance as “consumers' subjective perception of the distance between a luxury brand and the mass-market consumers”. That luxury brands utilize social media to engage with consumers can therefore be considered contradictory (Kim & Ko 2012), as the fundamental concepts of social media and luxury contradict each other. Indeed, social media is inclusive and accessible for everyone, while luxury is exclusive and accessible for a selected group of wealthy consumers (Park et al. 2020). In contrast to luxury brands, mainstream fashion brands are defined as “brands that entail a lower but reasonable level of quality” (Fuchs et al. 2013). That mainstream fashion brands were early adopters of social media marketing (Luxe Digital 2022) is therefore not surprising, as such brands want to be accessible for everyone.

The Importance of Psychological Distance for Luxury Brands

The unique characteristics of a luxury brand, with emphasis on psychological distance (Park et al. 2020), lays the foundation for our hypotheses. Based on this theory on luxury brands, we anticipate that brand type, i.e. luxury vs mainstream, will moderate effects on the perceived fit of the influencer collaboration which will then affect the dependent variables: influencer credibility, brand credibility, brand attitude, brand interest, and eWOM. The moderating role of brand type, i.e. luxury vs mainstream, has been researched in several

different areas before. For example, one can see similarities with luxury brands engaging in influencer marketing and co-creating products with consumers, which Fuchs et al. (2013) examined. As argued by Fuchs et al. (2013), a dilemma can be created for brands. On the one hand, the fashion industry has always distanced itself from consumers. On the other hand, forming stronger bonds with user communities would enable brands to become truly customer oriented. With the results of their study in mind, where it was found that co-creating products with consumers harms luxury brands, Fuchs et al. (2013) argues that closeness to users dilutes luxury fashion brands, as the usage of co-creation signals lower status. Their results thus confirm the importance of psychological distance for luxury brands.

This makes us hypothesize that the effects found for co-creation, where it is not positive for luxury brands to engage in the activity and be close to consumers, could also be found when luxury brands utilize smaller influencers who are close to their followers. Thus, previous research recommending the usage of smaller influencers (Park et al. 2021), might not be applicable to all brands. Especially not luxury brands that rely on psychological distance to consumers, as that contradicts the close relationship followers have with a smaller influencer. In the following section, a more detailed explanation on our hypotheses will be presented.

2.2 Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses Generation

2.2.1 Perceived Fit

The mediating variable in our study is perceived fit, which has also been referred to as congruency, similarity and relevance in previous studies (Bergkvist & Zhou 2016). Further, perceived fit has historically been researched in brand extension literature (Aaker & Keller 1990; Völckner & Sattler 2006; Buil et al. 2009; Albrecht et al. 2013) and in a celebrity or spokesperson context (Lynch & Schuler 1994; Kamins & Gupta 1994; Bergkvist & Zhou 2016).

One of the first studies on the importance of fit, made by Aaker and Keller (1990), found that evaluations on brand extensions are more positive if there is a higher perceived fit between product classes. Völckner and Sattler (2006) later found that the fit between a parent brand and an extension product is the most important key driver of brand extension success,

measuring also marketing support, parent-brand conviction, retailer acceptance, and parent-brand experience. The importance of fit in brand extensions was further emphasized by Buil et al. (2009) who found that brand extensions with high fit receive higher consumer evaluations. Regarding the literature on fit in endorsements, Bergkvist and Zhou (2016) made an extensive literature review on celebrity endorsements where they refer to fit as the “degree of similarity or consistency between the celebrity and the brand (or product category)”. The authors mention several studies with results showing that better fit between the celebrity and brand leads to more positive brand evaluations (e.g., Choi & Rifon 2012; Kamins & Gupta 1994; Kirmani & Shiv 1998). Thus, previous research has highlighted the importance of perceived fit.

Match-up Hypothesis and Schema Congruence Theory

Several well-known theories exist that try to explain the importance of fit between endorser and the endorsed brand or the brand extension and the parent brand. The most famous ones are the matchup-hypothesis (Kamins 1990; Till & Busler 2000; Kahle & Homer, 1985) and schema congruency theory (Meyers-Levy & Tybout 1989; Lynch & Schuler 1994).

Kamins (1990) is one of the first authors to mention the ‘Match-up hypothesis’ by explaining that an endorsement becomes effective when the characteristics of the brand/product is matched with the endorser’s image. Kahle and Homer (1985) argue that a matchup hypothesis can be explained by using social adaptation theory and emphasizes a match between “the message conveyed by the image of the celebrity and the message about the product”. Social adaptation theory further suggests that consumers will rely on a source of information only as long as it helps them adapt to their surroundings (Lynch & Schuler 1994).

Lynch and Schuler (1994) also developed a framework to capture potential effects of a match between a spokesperson and product. The framework is based on the match-up hypothesis and schema congruence theory, where the latter argues that brand image is formed based on brand associations held in a person's memory (Meyers-Levy & Tybout 1989). The authors explain with the framework that a matchup between a spokesperson’s characteristics and product attributes can change current schemas. Thus, a matchup between a spokesperson and product affects current associations and schemas of consumers.

The Importance of Perceived Fit in Influencer Marketing

With the development of influencer marketing, researchers have also begun to measure the impact of fit when using influencers for advertising purposes. Indeed, studies have shown positive effects on consumers evaluation of a brand or product when there is a match between the influencer and the endorsed product (Breves et al. 2019; Kim & Kim 2021; Qian & Park 2021). Further, perceived fit has been shown to be important for both the influencer and the brand (Breves et al. 2019). For the endorser, the perceived expertise and trustworthiness is affected by the fit. For the brand, the perceived fit has a significant direct effect on brand attitude and behavioral intentions. It is further argued that a good influencer-endorsement fit results in more positive product attitudes than an ill-fitting endorsement (Kim & Kim 2021). In a recent study by Janssen et al. (2022), the number of followers of an influencer is also considered when evaluating the impact of fit, which is interesting as we aim at comparing different SMI types. The results showed that fit and number of followers work in tandem. The positive effects generated by more followers, i.e. positive ad- and product-attitude and higher purchasing probability of the advertised product, will only occur if the advertised product fits the influencer's self-branded image. Considering this previous research, perceived fit is indeed highly important to succeed with influencer marketing.

Considering brand type, i.e luxury vs mainstream, some previous research has examined the importance of fit for especially luxury brands (Qian & Park 2021; Albrecht et al. 2013). Qian and Park (2021) conducted a study on China's luxury market and found that dissatisfaction with the brand's endorsement and dilution of the brand emerged when consumers perceived there to be a poor fit between influencer and endorsed luxury brand. This negatively affected purchase- and eWOM-intentions. Albrecht et al. (2013) found that the predominant driver of brand extension success is represented by overall extension fit, and not by factors related to the parent brand. They related this to luxury brands by explaining how luxury brands, in comparison to non luxury brands, rely more on aspects beyond functional value to determine extension success. Thus, perceived fit may be even more relevant to consider for luxury brands.

We believe there will be a better perceived fit between a luxury brand and a macro influencer, compared to a nano influencer, in line with previous research on the importance of fit to succeed with brand extensions (Aaker & Keller 1990; Völckner & Sattler 2006; Buil et al.

2009; Albrecht et al. 2013) and marketing efforts (e.g Lynch & Schuler 1994; Kamins & Gupta 1994; Bergkvist & Zhou 2016). In line with theory on psychological distance (Park et al. 2020), we believe that the unique characteristics and exclusivity of a luxury brand is better matched with a larger, macro influencer. As mentioned, smaller influencers, such as nano influencers, develop closer relationships with their followers (Park et al. 2021) signaling accessibility and not exclusivity, which is not suitable for a luxury brand and therefore creates a worse fit.

H1a: There will be more positive effects on perceived fit when a luxury brand is collaborating with a macro influencer compared to a nano influencer.

Further, we believe there will be more positive effects on perceived fit when a mainstream brand is collaborating with a nano influencer, compared to a macro influencer. This, as recent literature has shown a general favorability for smaller influencers (Park et al. 2021). Further, we believe small influencers represent the “everyday person” which will fit the current brand schemas consumers have towards an accessible mainstream brand.

H1b: There will be more positive effect on perceived fit when a mainstream brand is collaborating with a nano influencer compared to a macro influencer.

2.2.2 Brand and Influencer Credibility

Sternthal et al. (1978) explains that credibility in general is made upon two components – trustworthiness and expertise, where expertise is sometimes also denoted as competence (Flanagin & Metzger 2007). Because influencers are often perceived as experts (Djafarova & Rushworth 2017), one can understand why high credibility is something the content creators should strive for. As influencers and brand managers both should aim for signaling high credibility through their social-media content (Breves et al. 2019), credibility is an important outcome variable when measuring the effects of influencer marketing.

Previous research has shown that perceived fit affects credibility (Kamins 1990; Kamins & Gupta 1994; Breves et al. 2019; Mishra et al. 2015). In 1994, Kamins and Gupta established

that a better spokesperson-product fit leads to higher believability. Since then, several studies have also shown the effect perceived fit has on credibility. For example, Mishra et al. (2015) identified that celebrity and brand congruence had a significant impact on credibility. Additionally, considering influencer marketing, Breves et al. (2019) found that a good influencer-brand fit had a positive impact on credibility.

In line with previous research (Kamins 1990; Kamins & Gupta 1994; Breves et al. 2019; Mishra et al. 2015), our hypothesis is therefore that there will be more positive outcomes on credibility when there is a better influencer-brand fit. Thus, we expect that there will be more positive effects on influencer credibility when a luxury brand is collaborating with a macro influencer compared to a nano influencer as we believe this combination will have a better fit.

H2a: There will be more positive effects on influencer credibility when a luxury brand is collaborating with a macro influencer compared to a nano influencer.

Further, we expect more positive effects on influencer credibility when a mainstream brand is collaborating with a nano influencer compared to a macro influencer. This, as we expect perceived fit to be better for the mainstream-nano combination as hypothesized in H1b.

H2b: There will be more positive effects on influencer credibility when a mainstream brand is collaborating with a nano influencer compared to a macro influencer.

Similar to influencer credibility, we expect equivalent results on brand credibility as of the previous research. Hence, we hypothesize that there will be more positive effects on brand credibility when a luxury brand is collaborating with a macro influencer, compared to a nano influencer. This, as we anticipate the combination of a luxury brand and macro influencer to have a better fit.

H3a: There will be more positive effects on brand credibility when a luxury brand is collaborating with a macro influencer compared to a nano influencer.

Further, we expect more positive effects on brand credibility when a mainstream brand is collaborating with a nano influencer compared to a macro influencer. This, as we expect perceived fit to be better for the mainstream-nano combination.

H3b: There will be more positive effects on brand credibility when a mainstream brand is collaborating with a nano influencer compared to a macro influencer.

2.2.3 Brand Attitude

Brand attitude is consumers' overall evaluation of a brand and is relevant because it explains consumer behavior (Keller 1993). Erdogan (1999) argues that celebrities who are perceived as credible yield more positive effects on brand evaluations. Additional studies on endorser marketing have found positive effects of source/endorser/influencer credibility on consumers' brand attitudes and behavior (Mishra et al. 2015; Djafarova & Rushworth 2017; Breves et al. 2019). For instance, Mishra et al. (2015), identified that ad credibility in endorsement marketing significantly impacted brand attitude. Previous studies have thus shown that credibility affects brand attitude. However, Breves et al. (2019) also found a direct effect of influencer-brand fit on brand attitude. Thus, perceived fit showed positive outcomes on brand attitude also when credibility was not acting as a mediator, which further highlights the importance of perceived fit.

Based on this previous research, we believe there will be more positive outcomes on brand attitude when there is a better influencer-brand fit, because of the increased credibility caused by the high perceived fit. Thus, we expect that there will be more positive effects on brand attitude when a luxury brand is collaborating with a macro influencer compared to a nano influencer.

H4a: There will be more positive effects on brand attitude when a luxury brand is collaborating with a macro influencer compared to a nano influencer.

We further expect that there will be more positive effects on brand attitude when a mainstream brand is collaborating with a nano influencer compared to a macro influencer, as of the higher level of credibility caused by the better perceived fit.

H4b: There will be more positive effects on brand attitude when a mainstream brand is collaborating with a nano influencer compared to a macro influencer.

2.2.4 Brand Interest

Since influencer-brand fit and credibility has a direct effect on consumers' brand attitudes (Breves et al. 2019), we hypothesize that brand interest will be affected by the same mediators. This, as we consider interest as another way of measuring attitude.

Our hypothesis is therefore that there will be more positive outcomes on brand interest as of the increased credibility when there is a better influencer-brand fit. Thus, we expect more positive effects on brand interest when a luxury brand is collaborating with a macro influencer compared to a nano influencer.

H5a: There will be more positive effects on brand interest when a luxury brand is collaborating with a macro influencer compared to a nano influencer.

We anticipate that there will be more positive effects on brand interest when a mainstream brand is collaborating with a nano influencer compared to a macro influencer, as of the higher level of credibility caused by the better perceived fit.

H5b: There will be more positive effects on brand interest when a mainstream brand is collaborating with a nano influencer compared to a macro influencer.

2.2.5 eWOM

As previously mentioned, perceived influencer-brand fit affects behavioral intentions of consumers (Breves et al. 2019). One such behavioral intention is electronic word of mouth

(eWOM), which is defined as “the sharing of information about a product or service in the form of social media recommendations, online reviews, or influencer-generated content” (Gupta 2022). According to Van Doorn et al. (2010), eWOM is a behavioral manifestation toward a brand or product. Consumers liking, sharing, and commenting on posts are therefore examples of eWOM activities. Further, a recent study by Qian and Park (2021) showed that influencer-brand fit directly affected eWOM intentions. We therefore hypothesize that eWOM intentions will be affected by influencer-brand fit. Thus, we anticipate more positive effects on eWOM when a luxury brand is collaborating with a macro influencer compared to a nano influencer.

H6a: There will be more positive effects on eWOM when a luxury brand is collaborating with a macro influencer compared to a nano influencer.

We further expect that there will be more positive effects on eWOM when a mainstream brand is collaborating with a nano influencer, compared to a macro influencer, as the perceived influencer-brand fit is hypothesized to be better.

H6b: There will be more positive effect on eWOM when a mainstream brand is collaborating with a nano influencer compared to a macro influencer.

3. METHOD

The following section explains the paper's methodological approach including the preparatory work and main study. Explained below are the chosen stimuli, techniques used to collect data, quality of data and tests performed.

The research used a quantitative approach by relying on collected numerical data. In accordance with Bell et al. (2019) description of quantitative research, hypotheses have been formulated and were further tested through an online self-completion questionnaire. This type of research is beneficial as it is quick, convenient and eliminates interviewer effects that can alter results (Bell et al. 2019). There are also disadvantages to a quantitative approach as it limits the possibility to ask further questions, clarify or elaborate on an answer (ibid).

However, there are limitations to all possible research methods and we found the quantitative approach most suitable for the purpose of this thesis.

3.1 Research Design

The paper is divided into two parts; a preparatory study and a main study. The two studies can be found in Appendix A and Appendix B. The purpose of the pre-study was to ensure correct understanding of the stimuli and verify the selected components. The main study was designed with four scenarios to measure how the fit between an influencer and brand affects consumer attitudes and behavioral outcomes.

3.2 Preparatory Work

3.2.1 Choice of Components of the Stimuli

Choice of Fashion Influencer and Sponsored Product

A fictional fashion influencer named ‘Alex Andersson’ was created for the purpose of this study. When selecting the right fashion influencer, it was important to have a generic name that did not indicate a specific gender. This, to make the influencer more relatable to a larger sample size, which reduced the risk of limiting the sample size. When portraying Alex as a macro influencer, a following of 950 000 followers was chosen to fit the SMI type. Similarly, the nano version of Alex was given 7 500 followers. Reducing the risk of limiting the sample size was also considered when choosing the sponsored product. A generic black backpack was therefore chosen as we consider it gender neutral and a product that is possible to be offered by both Chanel and Zara. The picture was chosen from Pinterest with the intention of making the instagram post look credible. Our main intention was to choose a picture with a strong focus on the product, as we wanted the influencer-brand fit to be a mediating variable and not other aspects of the person pictured.

Choice of Fashion Brands

As of the hypotheses, two different types of fashion brands were selected, i.e. one luxury and one mainstream brand, with Chanel and Zara as the chosen brands. At selection, “The Fashion Pyramid of Brands” was used as it positions different types of brands (Fuchs 2013). High-end luxury brands, such as Chanel, are positioned at the narrow top to showcase their narrow and wealthy customer segment. In contrast, mainstream brands, such as Zara, are positioned at the broader bottom because of their accessibility and wide customer segment. Further, brands that we consider neutral and non-controversial were selected. Some fashion brands have recently gone through public scandals which can contribute to negative associations and biased results. Therefore, brands such as Balenciaga (Issawi 2023) and H&M (West 2018) were not selected.

Choice of Instagram Posts

Our main priority when we created the four Instagram posts was to make them realistic. As in a real sponsored Instagram post, it was disclosed which brand had sponsored the post by having a “Paid partnership with...” bar at the top of the post (Appendix B). The number of likes and comments shown in the screenshot of the post were further altered to match the SMI type. Thus, based on a quick field study on Instagram, the macro influencer was given 69 780 likes and 569 comments, and the nano influencer received 805 likes and 14 comments to match their respective followings. Further, the caption was created by observing real influencer sponsored posts and imitating the language, hashtags, and emojis used.

3.2.2 Pre-Study

Purpose

The purpose of the pre-study was to ensure that the number of followers and brand type are perceived in accordance with our assumptions. Thus, we wanted to confirm that Zara is perceived as a mainstream brand and Chanel as a luxury brand. Further verification that an influencer with 950 000 followers is perceived as larger than an influencer with 7 500 followers was necessary.

Method

An online self-completion questionnaire was used to conduct the pre-study. In the questionnaire, respondents were first asked if they have an Instagram account to ensure they are familiar with the platform. Those that answered “No” to this question were then removed from the sample. Second, to confirm the brand type, respondents were asked to rate how luxurious they perceive the two brands to be. The brand perception was measured on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree) where respondents were asked how strongly they agree with the statement “I perceive Chanel as a luxury (vs. mainstream) fashion brand” and “I perceive Zara as a luxury (vs. mainstream) fashion brand”. Lastly, respondents were asked about the perceived size of the influencer. This was also measured on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree) where respondents were asked to imagine two scenarios: following an influencer with 950 000 followers and an influencer with 7 500 followers. Respondents were then asked how strongly they agree with the statement “I perceive this influencer to be big”. Finally, respondents were asked to select the number 4 to eliminate non-reliable answers. This resulted in 10 respondents participating in the pre-study sample.

Results

Mean comparisons were used to analyze the results from the pre-study. For the question regarding how well Zara vs Chanel fit into the perception of a luxury brand, the mean comparison showed a higher value for Chanel ($M_{Chanel} = 6.90$) than Zara ($M_{Zara} = 1.30$). Thus, respondents perceived Chanel to be more of a luxury brand than Zara, which was in line with our assumptions. Further, regarding the question of how big an influencer of 7 500 (nano) vs 950 000 followers (macro) is perceived, the mean analysis showed a higher value for the macro influencer ($M_{Macro} = 6.70$) than the nano influencer ($M_{Nano} = 2.40$). Thus, the respondents perceived the macro influencer with 950 000 followers to be larger than the nano influencer with 7 500 followers. This result was also in line with our previous assumptions.

3.3 Main Study

Purpose

The purpose of the main study was to understand how the fit between an influencer and brand affects consumer attitudes and behavioral outcomes. The survey was created in English as it is the original language of the variables measured. Thus, we wanted to limit the possible risk of distorting measurement validity if changing the language.

Method

When distributing the survey we mainly utilized our social network by sharing it on LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram. We also emailed it to all students at SSE. Further, we shared it in groups on Facebook to diversify the sample.

Regarding the questionnaire design, the survey first included an introduction consisting of information about the research, contact information to us, and an estimated completion time of three minutes. Further, the possibility of entering a lottery at the end of the survey was introduced to attract more respondents. The participation in the lottery was voluntary as we wanted to ensure anonymity to increase the respondents honesty. GDPR regulations were also mentioned and the respondents were asked to consent to participating in the survey by checking “I consent”. Target group questions were then asked. To enable the possibility of segmenting answers based on their familiarity with Instagram, respondents were asked if they have an Instagram account and if so, how often they use it. Further, it was asked how strongly respondents agree with the statement “I am interested in fashion” which was measured on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree).

The respondents were first introduced to a description of the influencer, where the number of followers were manipulated based on SMI type. Respondents were then shown the manipulated sponsored Instagram post created by us. One of the scenarios was randomly shown where everything except the manipulation was held constant to ensure comparability. The four scenarios available, with different manipulations on stimuli components were; (1) a macro influencer sponsored by a luxury brand, (2) a macro influencer sponsored by a mainstream brand, (3) a nano influencer sponsored by a luxury brand, and (4) a nano

influencer sponsored by a mainstream brand. Respondents were forced to view the sponsored Instagram post for at least ten seconds to ensure detailed inspection and reliable results. The measured variables were then studied to analyze how the choice of influencer contributes to the respondents thoughts about the brand and its products. Two control questions were then asked to ensure validity. First, it was asked how many followers the influencer had to enable filtering out the respondents who did not understand the size of the influencer. Second, it was asked what the survey was about, with options being “grocery retailing”, “influencer marketing”, and “recessionary times”. At the end of the survey, the respondents had the opportunity of entering their email address to participate in the lottery.

A total of 722 answers were collected and three checks were conducted on this sample to clean the data. We ensured that the respondent answered correctly on the two control questions, completed the survey in at least 1,5 minutes, and had a standard deviation, regarding their chosen answers, above 0 to avoid any straight-line answers. The final data set included 434 answers which were evenly distributed amongst the four combinations created by the different scenarios.

3.3.1 Measures

Mediating Variable

Perceived Fit

Perceived fit was measured using a four-item measure, including the items; “*There is a logical connection between the influencer and Chanel*”, “*The image of Chanel and the image of the influencer are similar*”, “*The influencer and Chanel fit together well*”, and “*It makes sense to me that Chanel sponsors this influencer*”. The perceived fit was measured on a seven-point likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree). The measures were adapted from Grohs and Reisinger (2014) and aimed to test hypotheses *H1a* and *H1b*. Given a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.962, the four items were merged into an index to measure the perceived fit between the influencer and brand.

Dependent Variables

The questionnaire measured five dependent variables, being brand credibility, influencer credibility, brand attitude, brand interest and eWOM intentions. All dependent variables were measured on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree) which is commonly used in quantitative research (Bell et al. 2019).

Influencer and Brand Credibility

The measures were adapted from Ohanian (2014) and aimed to test hypotheses *H2a*, *H2b*, *H3a* and *H3b*. Both influencer and brand credibility was measured on a seven-point likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree).

Influencer credibility was measured using a three-item measure, including the items; “*The influencer is perceived as credible*”, “*The influencer is perceived as trustworthy*”, and “*The influencer is perceived as reliable*”. Given a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.979, the three items were merged into an index to measure the influencer credibility.

Brand credibility was also measured using a three-item measure, including the items; “*The brand is perceived as credible*”, “*The brand is perceived as trustworthy*”, and “*The brand is perceived as reliable*”. Given a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.982, the three items were merged into an index to measure the brand credibility.

Brand Attitude

Brand attitude was measured using a three-item measure, including the items “*My impression of Chanel is good*”, “*My impression of Chanel is favorable*”, “*My impression of Chanel is pleasant*”. Brand attitude was measured on a seven-point likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree). The measures were adapted from Qian and Park (2021) and aimed to test hypotheses *H4a* and *H4b*. Given a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.982, the three items were merged into an index to measure brand attitude.

Brand Interest

Interest for the brand was measured using a four-item measure, including the items “*I am intrigued by Chanel*”, “*I’d like to know more about Chanel*”, “*Learning more about Chanel would be useless*”, “*I’m a little curious about Chanel*”. Interest was measured on a seven-point likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree). The measures were adapted from Machleit et al. (1993) and aimed to test hypotheses *H5a* and *H5b*. To merge the items into an index, we first had to recode “*Learning more about Chanel would be useless*”. This, as its values went in the opposite direction compared to the other items by 1 being the most “positive” value and 7 the most “negative” value. Given a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.934, the four items were merged into an index to measure interest.

eWOM

eWOM was measured using a three-item measure, including the items “*It is likely/possible/probable that I would like and/or comment and/or share this post on Instagram*”. Brand attitude was measured on a seven-point likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree). The measures are adapted from Colliander (2019) and aimed to test hypotheses *H6a* and *H6b*. Given a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.978, the three items were merged into an index to measure eWOM intentions.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 General Favorability of SMI Type

As recent literature has highlighted a favorable use of smaller influencers (Park et al. 2021), we first wanted to test if there is a general favorability towards one influencer type, no matter the brand. To conclude if one SMI type was favorable, we compared the two types of influencers; nano and macro. Thus, we combined the *Luxury-Macro* combination with the *Mainstream-Macro* combination (N = 203), and similarly combined the *Luxury-Nano* combination with the *Mainstream-Nano* combination (N = 231). Then, an Independent-Samples t-Test was conducted to determine how SMI type affects the perceived fit which then affects the dependent variables. Thus, the indexes previously created were used as test variables.

Results from the t-Test indicate that the usage of a macro influencer contributes to a greater perceived fit than using a nano influencer ($M_{Macro} = 4.98$, $M_{Nano} = 3.45$, $p < 0.001$). Further, the results are more favorable towards the usage of a macro influencer compared to a nano influencer when measuring influencer credibility ($M_{Macro} = 4.85$, $M_{Nano} = 3.36$, $p < 0.001$), brand credibility ($M_{Macro} = 5.20$, $M_{Nano} = 3.75$, $p < 0.001$), brand attitude ($M_{Macro} = 5.13$, $M_{Nano} = 3.84$, $p < 0.001$), brand interest ($M_{Macro} = 4.70$, $M_{Nano} = 3.60$, $p < 0.001$), and eWOM ($M_{Macro} = 3.84$, $M_{Nano} = 2.70$, $p < 0.001$).

Variables	Significance level	Mean Nano	Standard deviation Nano	Mean Macro	Standard deviation Macro
Perceived fit	<0.001*	3.45	1.87	4.98	1.73
Influencer Credibility	<0.001*	3.36	1.80	4.85	1.75
Brand Credibility	<0.001*	3.75	1.87	5.20	1.51
Brand attitude	<0.001*	3.84	1.82	5.13	1.59
Brand Interest	<0.001*	3.60	1.68	4.70	1.69
eWom	<0.001*	2.70	1.97	3.84	2.43

Table 1: Independent Samples t-Test: Nano vs. Macro
Significant results ($p \leq 0.05$) are marked with *

Based on these results, using a macro influencer is more favorable than using a nano influencer, when not taking brand type into account. The results are contrary to the previous literature which has emphasized usage of smaller influencers (Park et al. 2021). This may be explained by our sample having approximately 50% luxury brand observations. Thus, even though the brand type is not analyzed in this test, it will still affect the outcome. Therefore, we continued to test if the brand type, i.e. luxury vs mainstream, affected outcomes when interacting with the SMI type.

4.2 Interaction Effects

We then tested if the results of the previous analysis, favoring macro usage, applied to both luxury and mainstream brands. To see how the combination SMI type*Brand type affects the dependent variables we conducted a Two-Way ANOVA test.

The mediating variable, perceived fit, and the dependent variables; influencer credibility, brand credibility, brand interest and eWOM, were the computed indexes and the fixed factor variables were SMI type: nano or macro, and brand type: luxury or mainstream.

Variables	Sig. (SMItype*Brandtype)
Perceived Fit	<0.001*
Influencer Credibility	<0.001*
Brand Credibility	<0.001*
Brand Attitude	<0.001*
Brand Interest	<0.001*
eWOM	<0.001*

Table 2: Two-Way ANOVA: SMItype*Brandtype
Significant results ($p \leq 0.05$) are marked with *

As seen in Table 2, significant interaction effects are observed for all dependent variables ($p < 0.001$). Thus, we can conclude that the combination of brand type and SMI type in influencer marketing affects behavioral outcomes.

4.3 Comparing the Four Combinations

As concluded, there is an interaction effect between SMI type and brand type. Therefore, we wanted to compare the four scenarios previously created based on the combinations of SMI type and brand type. When investigating the differences for the luxury brand we compared *Luxury-Nano* and *Luxury-Macro*. Further, we compared *Mainstream-Nano* and *Mainstream-Macro* when looking into differences for the mainstream brand.

Combination	Denoted as
Chanel + Nano influencer	<i>Luxury-Nano</i>
Chanel + Macro influencer	<i>Luxury-Macro</i>
Zara + Nano influencer	<i>Mainstream-Nano</i>
Zara + Macro influencer	<i>Mainstream-Macro</i>

Table 3: SMI type and Brand type combinations

To go deeper into differences between the combinations and the dependent variables, we conducted a One-Way ANOVA test to compare mean values between the combinations.

4.3.1 Mediating Variable

Perceived Fit

We started with comparing the difference in perceived fit for a luxury brand in line with H1a: *There will be more positive effects on perceived fit when a luxury brand is collaborating with a macro influencer compared to a nano influencer.* The One-Way ANOVA test showed a significance below 5% ($p < 0.001$) which indicates there are differences between the combinations. When we further look at the mean values it suggests that the perceived fit for the *Luxury-Macro* combination ($M_{Luxury-Macro} = 4.77$) is better than the perceived fit for the *Luxury-Nano* combination ($M_{Luxury-Nano} = 2.13$). Therefore, the result supports H1a as there are more positive effects on perceived fit between a luxury brand and a macro influencer than between a luxury brand and a nano influencer.

Further, we examined the mainstream brand in accordance with H1b: *There will be more positive effect on perceived fit when a mainstream brand is collaborating with a nano influencer compared to a macro influencer.* The One-Way ANOVA test showed non-significant results ($p = 0.182$) which suggests that there are no significant differences between the two combinations. Further, the mean analysis shows the similar results ($M_{Mainstream-Macro} = 5.20$, $M_{Mainstream-Nano} = 4.74$) between the two combinations. Thus, we fail to support H1b as there are no significant effects on perceived fit when a mainstream brand is collaborating with a macro- or nano influencer.

4.3.2 Dependent Variables

Influencer Credibility

When investigating the credibility of the influencer we first tested H2a: *There will be more positive effects on influencer credibility when a luxury brand is collaborating with a macro influencer compared to a nano influencer.* The One-Way ANOVA test indicated that there are significant differences between the two combinations ($p < 0.001$). When comparing the mean values we conclude that there are more positive effects on influencer credibility when a luxury brand is collaborating with a macro influencer ($M_{Luxury-Macro} = 4.85$) compared to a nano influencer ($M_{Luxury-Nano} = 2.43$). This supports H2a.

Further we tested the effects for a mainstream brand, in accordance with H2b: *There will be more positive effects on influencer credibility when a mainstream brand is collaborating with a nano influencer compared to a macro influencer.* The One-Way ANOVA test indicated that there are no significant differences between the two combinations ($p = 0.074$) as the significance level is above 5%. The mean values further show that there are small differences on the effect on influencer credibility when a mainstream brand collaborates with a macro influencer ($M_{Mainstream-Macro} = 4.85$) compared to a nano influencer ($M_{Mainstream-Nano} = 4.26$). Hence, the ANOVA test fails to support H2b.

Brand Credibility

Regarding the credibility of the brand we first tested H3a: *There will be more positive effects on brand credibility when a luxury brand is collaborating with a macro influencer compared to a nano influencer.* The One-Way ANOVA test indicated that there are significant differences between the two combinations ($p < 0.001$). Analysis on the mean values conclude that there are more positive effects on brand credibility when a luxury brand is collaborating with a macro influencer ($M_{Luxury-Macro} = 5.17$) compared to a nano influencer ($M_{Luxury-Nano} = 2.79$). Thus, the results support H3a.

Further, we investigated H3b: *There will be more positive effects on brand credibility when a mainstream brand is collaborating with a nano influencer compared to a macro influencer.*

The One-Way ANOVA test indicated that there are no significant differences between the two combinations ($p = 0.095$) as the significance level is above 5%. Further, the mean values show that there are small differences for a mainstream brand collaborating with a macro influencer ($M_{Mainstream-Macro} = 5.22$) compared to a nano influencer ($M_{Mainstream-Nano} = 4.68$). Thus, we fail to support H3b.

Brand Attitude

When investigating effects on brand attitude, we first tested H4a: *There will be more positive effects on brand attitude when a luxury brand is collaborating with a macro influencer compared to a nano influencer.* The One-Way ANOVA test indicated that there is a significant difference between the two combinations ($p < 0.001$). The mean analysis further indicates that the effect on brand attitude is greater when a luxury brand is collaborating with a macro influencer ($M_{Luxury-Macro} = 5.12$) compared to a nano influencer ($M_{Luxury-Nano} = 2.96$). This result supports H4a.

We then tested the effect for the mainstream brand, in line with H4b: *There will be more positive effects on brand attitude when a mainstream brand is collaborating with a nano influencer compared to a macro influencer.* The One-Way ANOVA test indicated that there is no significant difference between the two combinations ($p = 0.268$) as the significance level is above 5%. Further, the mean analysis shows the small difference in effect when a mainstream brand collaborates with a macro influencer ($M_{Mainstream-Macro} = 5.14$) compared to a nano influencer ($M_{Mainstream-Nano} = 4.71$). Thus, we fail to support H4b.

Brand Interest

With regards to brand interest we first tested H5a: *There will be more positive effects on brand interest when a luxury brand is collaborating with a macro influencer compared to a nano influencer.* The One-Way ANOVA test indicated that there is a significant difference between the two combinations ($p < 0.001$), as the significance level is below 5%. Further, the mean analysis shows that there are better effects on interest when a luxury brand collaborates with a macro influencer ($M_{Luxury-Macro} = 4.84$) than a nano influencer ($M_{Luxury-Nano} = 2.79$). This result supports H5a.

We then tested the effects on interest for a mainstream brand, in accordance with H5b: *There will be more positive effects on brand interest when a mainstream brand is collaborating with a nano influencer compared to a macro influencer.* The One-Way ANOVA test indicated that there is no significant difference between the two combinations ($p = 0.893$) as the significance level is above 5%. Further, the mean analysis shows the small difference when a mainstream brand collaborates with a macro influencer ($M_{Mainstream-Macro} = 4.56$) compared to a nano influencer ($M_{Mainstream-Nano} = 4.39$). This result fails to support H5b.

eWOM

When testing our last dependent variable eWOM, we started with the effects for a luxury brand, in accordance with H6a: *There will be more positive effects on eWOM when a luxury brand is collaborating with a macro influencer compared to a nano influencer.* The One-Way ANOVA test suggested significant differences between the two combinations ($p < 0.001$). Further, the mean analysis shows that there are better effects on eWOM when a luxury brand collaborates with a macro influencer ($M_{Luxury-Macro} = 3.92$) compared to a nano influencer ($M_{Luxury-Nano} = 1.82$). This result supports H6a.

Further, for the mainstream brand, we tested H6b: *There will be more positive effect on eWOM when a mainstream brand is collaborating with a nano influencer compared to a macro influencer.* The One-Way ANOVA test indicated that there is no significant difference between the two combinations ($p = 0.918$) as the significance level is above 5%. Further, the mean analysis shows the small difference between collaborating with a macro influencer ($M_{Mainstream-Macro} = 3.76$) and a nano influencer ($M_{Mainstream-Nano} = 3.55$). This result fails to support H6b.

Variables	Sig. <u>Luxury</u>	Mean <i>Luxury-Macro</i>	Mean <i>Luxury-Nano</i>	Sig. <u>Mainstream</u>	Mean <i>Mainstream-Macro</i>	Mean <i>Mainstream-Nano</i>
Perceived Fit	< 0.001*	4.77	2.13	0.182	5.20	4.74
Influencer Credibility	< 0.001*	4.85	2.43	0.074	4.85	4.26
Brand Credibility	< 0.001*	5.17	2.79	0.095	5.22	4.68
Brand Attitude	< 0.001*	5.12	2.96	0.268	5.14	4.71
Brand Interest	< 0.001*	4.84	2.79	0.893	4.56	4.39
eWOM	< 0.001*	3.92	1.82	0.918	3.76	3.55

Table 4: Summary table of One-Way ANOVA tests
Significant results ($p \leq 0.05$) are marked with *

5. DISCUSSION

As previously mentioned, influencer marketing is a growing and rapidly changing industry with new trends emerging constantly. One of the latest trends is the usage of smaller influencers, with less than 100 000 followers, such as nano and micro influencers, to exploit their authenticity and close relationship with the audience. Mainstream brands like NA-KD have already jumped on the trend by frequently collaborating with these smaller SMI types. This paper thus aimed to answer if the trend of using smaller influencers is suitable for all brand types, or if the unique characteristics of luxury brands will force them to be more cautious? The studies in this thesis present insightful results on how the perceived fit between brand type and SMI type affect behavioral outcomes, when engaging in influencer marketing. Thus, this paper provides both managerial and theoretical implications.

Through an Independent t-Test, with perceived fit as the mediating variable and influencer credibility, brand credibility, brand attitude, brand interest and eWOM as dependent variables, the main study first concluded that macro influencers are the superior SMI type, no

matter the SMI- and brand type combination. This contradicts previous literature that emphasizes smaller influencers' superiority (Park et al. 2021). However, this may be affected by the nature of this experiment as the respondents of the survey were not exposed to the positive characteristics of smaller influencers, such as the closeness to their followers and perceived authenticity. Instead, emphasis was only put on the number of followers, likes and comments which we believe can favor the larger influencer.

Further, our aim was to investigate possible interaction effects between SMI type and brand type combinations. Based on a Two-Way ANOVA test with perceived fit as the mediating variable and the previously mentioned dependent variables (influencer credibility, brand credibility, brand attitude, brand interest and eWOM), interaction effects were identified which concluded that the combination of SMI type and brand type affects behavioral outcomes. This is in line with previous research on co-creation which identified differing results based on brand type, i.e luxury vs mainstream, where more negative outcomes were found for luxury brands (Fuchs et al. 2013). Thus, although no previous research has investigated the role brand type plays in combination with different SMI types, we can see similarities in previous research, as of the unique characteristics luxury brands possess and the theory of psychological distance (Park et al. 2020).

After confirming significant interaction effects, we compared four combinations of SMI- and brand type; *Luxury-Nano*, *Luxury-Macro*, *Mainstream-Nano* and *Mainstream-Macro*, to investigate implications on behavioral outcomes when engaging in influencer marketing. In line with H1a, it was first concluded that perceived fit was significantly higher when a luxury brand collaborated with a macro influencer, compared to a nano influencer. Thus, smaller influencers generate a poor perceived fit for a luxury brand and should be avoided. As the results are in line with our hypothesis, they are not surprising and are in accordance with theory on psychological distance (Park et al. 2020). Therefore, the worse fit between a nano influencer and the luxury brand can be explained by the luxury brand signaling exclusivity which is not matched with the nano influencer. This can further be explained by the nano influencers' close relationship with their followers (Park et al. 2021), signaling accessibility, which is not optimal when marketing a luxury brand. Thus, the luxury brands exclusivity clashes with the nano influencers accessibility, creating a worse perceived fit. In contrast, there was no significant effect on perceived fit when a mainstream brand collaborated with a macro influencer, compared to a nano influencer, leading to not being able to support H1b.

Thus, the results were similar for the mainstream brand regardless of the chosen SMI type and no favorability for a smaller influencer was found which contradicts previous findings (Park et al. 2021).

Looking at the effects of perceived fit on credibility, the results showed that more positive effects on perceived fit leads to higher credibility. Hence, the *Luxury-Macro* combination achieved higher results on influencer credibility (H2a) and brand credibility (H3a) than the *Luxury-Nano* combination. As hypothesized, the perceived fit positively affected the degree of credibility. The positive effect of perceived fit on credibility is foreseeable as it is in accordance with previous research that emphasizes the positive effect perceived fit has on credibility (Kamins 1990; Kamins & Gupta 1994; Breves et al. 2019; Mishra et al. 2015). Hence, the poor perceived fit between the luxury brand and nano influencer further reduces credibility, both for the brand and influencer. These results are important for both content creators and managers, who all strive for achieving high credibility. Further, credibility may be argued to have higher importance for luxury brands as they value their status of exclusivity, which has previously made such brands cautious of using influencer marketing (Luxe Digital 2022). Thus, based on our results, luxury brands should not collaborate with smaller influencers to avoid diluting their credibility. With regards to H2b and H3b, there was no significant effect on credibility when a mainstream brand collaborated with a macro influencer, compared to a nano influencer. Therefore, H2b and H3b failed to be supported. Thus, the non-significant effects on perceived fit generated non-significant effects on both brand and influencer credibility for the mainstream brand.

Moving on to brand attitude, brand interest and eWOM, better results were identified for the *Luxury-Macro* combination compared to the *Luxury-Nano* combination. The results are thus in line with H4a, H5a and H6a. This can be explained by a series of effects, where the higher perceived fit leads to higher credibility, which in turn creates more positive effects on brand attitude, brand interest and eWOM. Thus, the worse fit between the luxury brand and nano influencer does not only reduce credibility, but also consequently affects important behavioral outcomes, damaging the luxury brand and influencer. Lastly, there was no significant effect on either brand attitude, brand interest or eWOM when a mainstream brand collaborated with a macro influencer, compared to a nano influencer. Hence, the results fail to support H4b, H5b and H6b as no favorability for the nano influencer was found.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

As presented, our results showcase the importance of perceived fit, in accordance with previous studies on successful brand extensions (Aaker & Keller 1990; Völckner & Sattler 2006; Buil et al. 2009; Albrecht et al. 2013) and marketing efforts (Lynch & Schuler 1994; Kamins & Gupta 1994; Bergkvist & Zhou 2016). However, the results contribute to the specific body of knowledge related to influencer marketing and specifically, the choice of SMI type for different brands. As previous studies have shown favorability for smaller influencers (Park et al. 2021), this study contributes to the field of research by showing that this is not true for all brand types, as it backfires for luxury brands. Hence, the study contributes to research on the unique characteristics of luxury brands which can be explained by the theory of psychological distance (Park et al. 2020). Further, that luxury brands should not use smaller influencers because of the worse perceived fit, can be explained by theories on the match-up hypothesis (Kamins 1990; Till & Busler 2000; Kahle & Homer, 1985) and schema congruence theory (Meyers-Levy & Tybout 1989; Lynch & Schuler 1994). Finally, in line with previous literature on credibility (Kamins 1990; Kamins & Gupta 1994; Breves et al. 2019; Mishra et al. 2015), brand attitude (Mishra et al. 2015; Djafarova & Rushworth 2017; Breves et al. 2019), brand interest (Breves et al. 2019) and eWOM (Breves et al. 2019; Qian & Park 2021), this study also shows that perceived fit effects these variables.

5.2 Managerial Implications

Influencer marketing is widely used by fashion brands and continues to grow yearly. It is therefore of great importance for marketing managers to understand how to optimize their influencer marketing strategy. The results of this study contributes with knowledge on which SMI type to use depending on the characteristics of the fashion brand. As recent trends in influencer marketing favor smaller influencers, because of the closeness to their audience and perceived authenticity, it is relevant for marketing managers to understand how to approach these trends. The results indicate that a marketing manager for a mainstream fashion brand benefits from using both small and large influencers, as of the indifferent perceived influencer-brand fit. However, the results contribute with even more important insights for marketing managers of luxury brands, as those should consider their influencer collaborations more carefully. The results of this study shows that a collaboration with a smaller influencer for a luxury brand contributes to a worse perceived influencer-brand fit which dilutes brand

credibility, influencer credibility, brand attitude, brand interest and eWOM. As this is something all marketing managers want to avoid, the results indicate that luxury fashion brands should collaborate with larger influencers when engaging in influencer marketing. Therefore, it is crucial for luxury brand managers to tailor their influencer marketing strategy towards the unique characteristics of their brand. Hence, the main priority should be to protect the high status and unattainable image of the luxury brand.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research

This study has contributed valuable insights on influencer marketing. However, there are limitations and therefore also possibilities for future research. First, the study only focused on the fashion industry. Future research can therefore explore how the combination of SMI type and brand type applies in different sectors, such as the car industry, cosmetics industry, and travel industry. Second, the study only compared two brands, Zara and Chanel, which aimed to represent the whole categories of mainstream and luxury brands. There is a risk that these brands have unique characteristics, making it difficult to generalize the insights. Therefore, future research could examine multiple brands within mainstream and luxury brands. Third, only macro and nano influencers were compared in this study which also could make it difficult to generalize regarding “smaller” and “larger” influencers. For example, one does not know if the insights apply to other smaller SMI types such as micro influencers. Therefore, future research could either investigate all SMI types or conduct a similar study for micro and mega influencers to compare the results. Additionally, the study is limited to only using Instagram as the social media channel. Thus, it is not certain the insights apply for all social media channels such as TikTok or Youtube. Future research could therefore examine the effects on other platforms. Finally, the study could be extended with more statistical tests in SPSS such as a process analysis to prove the mediating effects of perceived fit. Thus, future research could extend this study with more in-depth statistical tests.

Appendix A: Pre-test Questionnaire

Do you have an Instagram account?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

How strongly do you agree with this statement?

I perceive Chanel as a luxury (vs. mainstream) fashion brand

(1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree)

How strongly do you agree with this statement?

I perceive Zara as a luxury (vs. mainstream) fashion brand

(1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree)

Imagine that you follow an influencer on Instagram with 7,500 followers. How strongly do you agree with this statement?

I perceive this influencer to be big

(1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree)

Imagine that you follow an influencer on Instagram with 950,000 followers. How strongly do you agree with this statement?

I perceive this influencer to be big

(1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree)

Please select the number four

- ☐ 2
- ☐ 8
- ☐ 4

Appendix B: Main Study Questionnaire

Introduction: Hi,

We are two Bachelor students from the Stockholm School of Economics and currently writing our Bachelor thesis in Retail Management. The thesis centers around influencer marketing. The survey should not take longer than 3 minutes and your answers are completely anonymous. No personal data is collected, we follow GDPR regulations and the data will be deleted on June 1st.

At the end of the survey you have the chance to win a 500 SEK voucher from Zara by entering your email address voluntarily.

If you have any questions about the survey, please email us: 50727@student.hhs.se (Emilia) or 50735@student.hhs.se (Alice).

Thank you! We really appreciate your input.

Consent: *By selecting "I consent" you acknowledge the above text and agree to continue.*

- ☐ I consent

Q1: *Do you have an Instagram account?*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q2: *If you use Instagram, how often do you use it?*

- ☐ More than 10 times a day
- ☐ 2-5 times a day
- ☐ 1 time a day
- ☐ A few times per week
- ☐ One time per week
- ☐ A few times per month
- ☐ One time per month

Q3: *How strongly do you agree with this statement?*

I am interested in fashion

(1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree)

Version 1: This version was presented to respondents that were randomized to see the luxury brand and nano influencer combination.

Info1_Luxury_Nano: On the next page you will see a sponsored Instagram post from the Swedish influencer Alex Andersson. Alex is 25 years old and is an acquaintance to you through mutual friends. They have 7,500 followers on Instagram where Alex posts photos from their daily life.

Imagine following Alex and that you see the following post in your regular Instagram feed.

Post_Luxury_Nano:



Info2_Luxury_Nano: Based on the influencer post you just saw, please answer how the choice of influencer contributes to these thoughts about Chanel and its products.

Version 2: This version was presented to respondents that were randomized to see the luxury brand and macro influencer combination.

Info1_Luxury_Macro: On the next page you will see a sponsored Instagram post from the Swedish influencer Alex Andersson. Alex is 25 years old and one of the most influential influencers in Sweden with 950 000 followers on Instagram where Alex posts photos from their daily life.

Imagine following Alex and that you see the following post in your regular Instagram feed.

Post_Luxury_Macro:



Info2_Luxury_Macro: Based on the influencer post you just saw, please answer how the choice of influencer contributes to these thoughts about Chanel and its products.

Version 3: This version was presented to respondents that were randomized to see the mainstream brand and nano influencer combination.

Info1_Mainstream_Nano: On the next page you will see a sponsored Instagram post from the Swedish influencer Alex Andersson. Alex is 25 years old and is an acquaintance to you through mutual friends. They have 7,500 followers on Instagram where Alex posts photos from their daily life.

Imagine following Alex and that you see the following post in your regular Instagram feed.

Post_Mainstream_Nano:



Info2_Mainstream_Nano: Based on the influencer post you just saw, please answer how the choice of influencer contributes to these thoughts about Zara and its products.

Version 4: This version was presented to respondents that were randomized to see the mainstream brand and macro influencer combination.

Info1_Mainstream_Macro: On the next page you will see a sponsored Instagram post from the Swedish influencer Alex Andersson. Alex is 25 years old and one of the most influential influencers in Sweden with 950 000 followers on Instagram where Alex posts photos from their daily life.

Imagine following Alex and that you see the following post in your regular Instagram feed.

Post_Mainstream_Macro:



Info2_Mainstream_Macro: Based on the influencer post you just saw, please answer how the choice of influencer contributes to these thoughts about Zara and its products.

Fit: *Based on the instagram post, how strongly do you agree with these statements?*

- There is a logical connection between the influencer and brand
- The image of the brand and the image of the influencer are similar
- The influencer and brand fit together well
- It makes sense to me that the brand sponsors this influencer

(1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree)

Credibility_Influencer: *Based on the instagram post, how strongly do you agree with these statements?*

- The influencer is perceived as credible
- The influencer is perceived as trustworthy
- The influencer is perceived as reliable

(1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree)

Credibility_Brand: *Based on the instagram post, how strongly do you agree with these statements?*

- The brand is perceived as credible
- The brand is perceived as trustworthy
- The brand is perceived as reliable

(1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree)

Brand_Attitude: *Based on the instagram post, how strongly do you agree with these statements?*

- My impression of the brand is good
- My impression of the brand is favorable
- My impression of the brand is pleasant

(1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree)

Brand_Interest: *Based on the instagram post, how strongly do you agree with these statements?*

- I am intrigued by the brand
- I'd like to know more about the brand
- Learning more about the brand would be useless
- I'm a little curious about the brand

(1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree)

eWOM: *Based on the instagram post, how strongly do you agree with these statements?*

- It is likely that I would like and/or comment and/or share this post on Instagram
- It is possible that I would like and/or comment and/or share this post on Instagram
- It is probable that I would like and/or comment and/or share this post on Instagram

(1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree)

Followers: *How many followers did the influencer have?*

- 500,000+ followers
- 100,000-500,000 followers
- 10,000-100,000 followers
- 0-10,000 followers

Control: *What was this survey about?*

- Grocery retailing
- Influencer marketing
- Recessionary times

Lottery: *If you want to participate in the lottery, please enter your email address:*

References

- AAKER, D.A. and KELLER, K.L., 1990. Consumer Evaluations of Brand Extensions. *Journal of Marketing*, **54**(1), pp. 27-41.
- ABIDIN, C., 2015. Communicative ♥ intimacies: Influencers and Perceived Interconnectedness. *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology*, **8**.
- ALBRECHT, C., BACKHAUS, C., GURZKI, H., and WOISETSCHLÄGER, D.M., 2013. Drivers of Brand Extension Success: What Really Matters for Luxury Brands. *Psychology & Marketing*, **30**(8), pp. 647-659.
- ARHEDEN, J., 2021. Influencer Marketing 2022: The NA-KD view. *Linkedin*. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/influencer-marketing-2022-na-kd-view-julia-arheden/> . [Accessed: April 17th 2023].
- ARTRY, J., 2023. Biggest Social Media Trends in 2023. <https://tech.co/digital-marketing/social-media-trends> [Accessed: April 18th 2023].
- AW, E.C. and CHUAH, S.H., 2021. “Stop the unattainable ideal for an ordinary me!” fostering parasocial relationships with social media influencers: The role of self-discrepancy. *Journal of business research*, **132**, pp. 146-157.
- BELL, E., BRYMAN, A. and HARLEY, B., 2019. Business Research Methods. 5th edition. *Oxford: Oxford University Press*.
- BERGKVIST, L. and ZHOU, K.Q., 2016. Celebrity endorsements: a literature review and research agenda. *International Journal of Advertising*, **35**(4), pp. 642-663.
- BERTHON, P., PITT, L., PARENT, M. and BERTHON, J., 2009. Aesthetics and Ephemerality: Observing and Preserving the Luxury Brand. *California management review*, **52** (1), pp. 45-66.
- BOERMAN, S.C., WILLEMSSEN, L.M. and VAN DER AA, E.P., 2017. “This Post Is Sponsored”: Effects of Sponsorship Disclosure on Persuasion Knowledge and Electronic Word of Mouth in the Context of Facebook. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, **38**, pp. 82-92.
- BREVES, P.L., LIEBERS, N., ABT, M. and KUNZE, A., 2019. The Perceived Fit between Instagram Influencers and the Endorsed Brand: How Influencer–Brand Fit Affects Source Credibility and Persuasive Effectiveness. *Journal of Advertising Research*, **59**(4), pp. 440-454.

BUIL, I., DE CHERNATONY, L. and HEM, L.E., 2009. Brand extension strategies: perceived fit, brand type, and culture influences. *European Journal of Marketing*, **43**(11/12), pp. 1300-1324.

CAMBRIDGE DICTIONARY, n.d. Influencer. *Cambridge Dictionary*.
<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/influencer>. [Accessed: May 9th 2023].

CAMPBELL, C. and FARRELL, J.R., 2020. More than meets the eye: The functional components underlying influencer marketing. *Business horizons*, **63**(4), pp. 469-479.

CAMPBELL, C. and GRIMM, P.E., 2019. The Challenges Native Advertising Poses: Exploring Potential Federal Trade Commission Responses and Identifying Research Needs. *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, **38**(1), pp.110-123.

CHOI, S.M. and RIFON, N.J., 2012. It Is a Match: The Impact of Congruence between Celebrity Image and Consumer Ideal Self on Endorsement Effectiveness. *Psychology & Marketing*, **29**(9), pp. 639-650.

COLLIANDER, J., 2019. "This is fake news": Investigating the role of conformity to other users' views when commenting on and spreading disinformation in social media. *Computers in Human Behavior*, **97**, pp. 202-215.

COLLIANDER, J. and DAHLÉN, M., 2011. Following the Fashionable Friend: The Power of Social Media. *Journal of advertising research*, **51**(1), pp. 313-320.

DENCHEVA, V., 2023. Influencer marketing worldwide - statistics & facts. *Statista*.
<https://www.statista.com/topics/2496/influence-marketing/#topicOverview> [Accessed: April 17th 2023].

DJAFAROVA, E. and RUSHWORTH, C., 2017. Exploring the credibility of online celebrities' Instagram profiles in influencing the purchase decisions of young female users. *Computers in Human Behavior*, **68**, pp. 1-7.

ERDOGAN, B.Z., 1999. Celebrity Endorsement: A Literature Review. *Journal of Marketing Management*, **15**(4), pp. 291-314.

Facebook, 2020. Sponsored post Devon Lee Carlson and Versace. *Facebook*.
<https://www.facebook.com/260751060175/posts/santas-helper-devon-lee-carlson-appears-in-all-for-you-a-very-versace-christmas-/10164545581020176/> [Accessed: April 18th 2023].

FLANAGIN, A.J. and METZGER, M.J., 2007. The role of site features, user attributes, and information verification behaviors on the perceived credibility of web-based information. *New Media & Society*, **9**(2), pp. 319-342.

FUCHS, C., PRANDELLI, E., SCHREIER, M. and DAHL, D.W., 2013. All That Is Users Might Not Be Gold: How Labeling Products as User Designed Backfires in the Context of Luxury Fashion Brands. *Journal of marketing*, **77**(5), pp. 75-91.

GROHS, R. and REISINGER, H., 2014. Sponsorship effects on brand image: The role of exposure and activity involvement. *Journal of Business Research*, **67**(5), pp. 1018-1025.

GUPTA, K., 2022. What Is eWOM and Why Does It Matter for Marketers? *Uberall*.
<https://uberall.com/en-us/resources/blog/what-is-ewom-and-why-does-it-matter-for-marketers> [Accessed: May 10th 2023].

HARTMANN, T. and GOLDHOORN, C., 2011. Horton and Wohl Revisited: Exploring Viewers' Experience of Parasocial Interaction. *Journal of communication*, **61**(6), pp. 1104-1121.

HU, L., MIN, Q., HAN, S. and LIU, Z., 2020. Understanding followers' stickiness to digital influencers: The effect of psychological responses. *International Journal of Information management*, **54**, pp. 102169.

ISSAWI, D., 2023. What to Know About the Balenciaga Ad Scandal. *The Cut*.
<https://www.thecut.com/2023/03/what-to-know-about-the-balenciaga-ad-scandal.html> [Accessed: April 4th 2023].

INSTAGRAM, 2019. Sponsored post Bianca Ingrosso and Gina Tricot. *Instagram*.
<https://www.instagram.com/p/BxFw7fhjkOc/?hl=se> [Accessed: April 18th 2023].

JANSSEN, L., SCHOUTEN, A.P. and CROES, E.A.J., 2022, Influencer advertising on Instagram: product-influencer fit and number of followers affect advertising outcomes and influencer evaluations via credibility and identification. *International Journal of Advertising*, **41**(1), pp.101-127.

KAHLE, L.R. and HOMER, P.M., 1985. Physical Attractiveness of the Celebrity Endorser: A Social Adaptation Perspective. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, **11**(4), pp.954-961.

KAIKATI, J.G., 1987. Celebrity Advertising: A Review and Synthesis. *International Journal of Advertising*, **6**(2), pp. 93-105.

KAMINS, M.A., 1990. An Investigation into the "Match-up" Hypothesis in Celebrity Advertising: When Beauty May Be Only Skin Deep. *Journal of Advertising*, **19**(1), pp.4-13.

KAMINS, M.A. and GUPTA, K., 1994. Congruence between spokesperson and product type: A matchup hypothesis perspective. *Psychology & Marketing*, **11**(6), pp. 569-586.

- KAPFERER, J., 1997. Managing luxury brands. *Journal of Brand Management*, **4**(4), pp. 251-259.
- KELLER, K.L., 1993. Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity. *Journal of Marketing*, **57**(1), pp. 1-22.
- KIM, D.Y. and KIM, H., 2021. Trust me, trust me not: A nuanced view of influencer marketing on social media. *Journal of Business Research*, **134**, pp. 223-232.
- KIM, A.J. and KO, E., 2012. Do social media marketing activities enhance customer equity? An empirical study of luxury fashion brand. *Journal of Business Research*, **65**(10), pp. 1480-1486.
- KIRMANI, A. and SHIV, B., 1998. Effects of Source Congruity on Brand Attitudes and Beliefs: The Moderating Role of Issue-Relevant Elaboration. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, **7**(1), pp. 25-47.
- LINQIA, n.d. How Much Budget Should You Spend on Influencer Marketing? *Linqia*.
<https://www.linqia.com/insights/how-much-budget-should-you-spend-on-influencer-marketing/> [Accessed: April 18th 2023].
- LOU, C., 2022. Social Media Influencers and Followers: Theorization of a Trans-Parasocial Relation and Explication of Its Implications for Influencer Advertising. *Journal of Advertising*, **51**(1), pp. 4-21.
- LOU, C. and YUAN, S., 2019. Influencer Marketing: How Message Value and Credibility Affect Consumer Trust of Branded Content on Social Media. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, **19**(1), pp. 58-73.
- Luxe Digital, 2022. The Debated Popularity of Influencer Marketing for Luxury Brands. *Luxe Digital*.
<https://luxedigital.com/business/digital-luxury-reports/debated-popularity-influencer-marketing-luxury-brands/#cite-note-4> [Accessed: April 17th 2023].
- LYNCH, J. and SCHULER, D., 1994. The matchup effect of spokesperson and product congruency: A schema theory interpretation. *Psychology & Marketing*, **11**(5), pp. 417-445.
- MACHLEIT, K.A., ALLEN, C.T. and MADDEN, T.J., 1993. The Mature Brand and Brand Interest: An Alternative Consequence of Ad-Evoked Affect. *Journal of Marketing*, **57**(4), pp. 72.
- MEYERS-LEVY, J. and TYBOUT, A., 1989. Schema Congruity as a Basis for Product Evaluation. *Journal of Consumer Research*, **16**(1), pp. 39-54.
- MISHRA, A.S., ROY, S. and BAILEY, A.A., 2015. Exploring Brand Personality-Celebrity Endorser Personality Congruence in Celebrity Endorsements in the Indian Context. *Psychology & Marketing*, **32**(12), pp. 1158-1174.

OHANIAN, R., 1990. Construction and Validation of a Scale to Measure Celebrity Endorsers' Perceived Expertise, Trustworthiness, and Attractiveness. *Journal of Advertising*, **19**(3), pp. 39-52.

OlsenMetrix Marketing, n.d. *The history of influencer marketing*.

<https://olsenmetrix.com/views/the-history-of-influencer-marketing/> [Accessed: April 18th 2023].

PARK, J., LEE, J.M., XIONG, V.Y., SEPTIANTO, F. and SEO, Y., 2021. David and Goliath: When and Why Micro-Influencers Are More Persuasive Than Mega-Influencers. *Journal of Advertising*, **50**(5), pp. 584–602.

PARK, M., IM, H. and KIM, H., 2020. “You are too friendly!” The negative effects of social media marketing on value perceptions of luxury fashion brands. *Journal of Business Research*, **117**, pp. 529-542.

PR Newswire, 2023. Influencer Marketing Platform Market Size Worth 69.92 Billion with Excellent CAGR of 32.50% by 2029, Size, Share, Industry Demand, Rising Trends and Competitive Outlook. *Yahoo! Finance*.

<https://finance.yahoo.com/news/influencer-marketing-platform-market-size> [Accessed: April 18th 2023].

QIAN, J. and PARK, J., 2021. Influencer-brand fit and brand dilution in China’s luxury market: the moderating role of self-concept clarity. *Journal of Brand Management*, **28** (2), pp. 199-220.

SCHWARZ, R., 2022. Influencer Marketing Predictions For 2023. *Forbes*.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescommunicationscouncil/2022/12/21/influencer-marketing-predictions-for-2023/?sh=4cbd386c4994> [Accessed: April 17th 2023].

SMITH, P. 2023., Global apparel market - statistics & facts. Statista.

<https://www.statista.com/topics/5091/apparel-market-worldwide/#topicOverview> [Accessed: April, 4, 2023].

STERNTHAL, B., DHOLAKIA, R. and LEAVITT, C., 1978. The Persuasive Effect of Source Credibility: Tests of Cognitive Response. *Journal of Consumer Research*, **4**(4), pp. 252-260.

TILL, B.D. and BUSLER, M., 2000. The Match-Up Hypothesis: Physical Attractiveness, Expertise, and the Role of Fit on Brand Attitude, Purchase Intent and Brand Beliefs. *Journal of Advertising*, **29**(3), pp.1-13.

VIGNERON, F. and JOHNSON, L. W., 2004. Measuring perceptions of brand luxury. *Journal of Brand Management*, **11**(6), pp. 484-506.

VAN DOORN, J., LEMON, K.N., MITTAL, V., NASS, S., PICK, D., PIRNER, P. and VERHOEF, P.C., 2010. Customer Engagement Behavior: Theoretical Foundations and Research Directions. *Journal of Service Research*, **13**(3), pp. 253-266.

VÖLCKNER, F. and SATTLER, H., 2006. Drivers of Brand Extension Success. *Journal of Marketing*, **70**(2), pp. 18-34.

WEST, S., 2018. H&M faced backlash over its 'monkey' sweatshirt ad. It isn't the company's only controversy. *The Washington Post*.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/arts-and-entertainment/wp/2018/01/19/hm-faced-backlash-over-its-monkey-sweatshirt-ad-it-isnt-the-companys-only-controversy/> [Accessed: April, 4, 2023].

WIES, S., BLEIER, A. and EDELING, A., 2023. Finding Goldilocks Influencers: How Follower Count Drives Social Media Engagement. *Journal of Marketing*, **87**(3), pp. 383-405.