



Social influencer advertising: The new marketing emergence

The effects of celebrities, macro-influencers and micro-influencers product endorsement on advertising effectiveness and credibility

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Abstract

In recent years, companies are increasingly looking for celebrities and influencers to endorse their products through their social media channels. While celebrity endorsement has been widely studied, there is still a limited understanding on the effectiveness of influencers in advertising research. Therefore, the present study seeks to determine the advertisement effectiveness of celebrities vs. influencers. It will also look further into influencer effectiveness and compare the advertising effectiveness of a macro-influencer vs. a micro-influencer. Moreover, the current research will also focus on credibility as a potential mediator of the relationship between the endorser and its advertising effect. Finally, the study will also look into the advertisement effectiveness amongst different types of endorsed products. In a 2x3 between-subjects design amongst 207 participants, the study investigated the underlying effect of the type of endorser (celebrity vs. macro-influencer vs. micro-influencer) and product (hedonic vs. utilitarian) in terms of advertising effectiveness, mediated by credibility. The results showed that influencers had a higher advertising effectiveness in comparison to celebrities. Furthermore, it showed that macro-influencers have a higher advertising effectiveness than micro-influencers. The study also revealed that endorsers promoting a hedonic product have a higher advertising effectiveness than when promoting a utilitarian product. It was also found that credibility does mediate the relationship between the endorser and its effect in advertising. These findings were discussed in terms of their implication, limitations, and suggestions for further research.

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1. Introduction

With the rise of social media, brands are starting to take interest in the marketing opportunities that celebrity and influencer endorsements provide via social media. Celebrities are popular due to their talent recognition such as acting or singing, while influencers are individuals who have gained fame by successfully branding themselves in social media (Khamis, Ang and Welling, 2016).

Consumers are increasingly turning to celebrities and influencers for product advice (De Veirman, Cauberghe and Hudders, 2017). This is due to the fact that nowadays consumers are becoming skeptical about traditional advertising methods (De Veirman et al., 2017). As a consequence, marketers are focusing on different methods, such as celebrity endorsement on social media channels, in order to promote their products and services (Schouten et al., n.d.). Previous research has demonstrated that such form of product endorsement can lead to a positive attitude towards the endorsed brand, as well as a high advertising effectiveness (Till, Stanley and Priluck, 2008; Spry, Pappu and Cornwell, 2011; Schouten, Jansen and Verspaget, n.d.).

When considering the advertising effectiveness of a celebrity vs. an influencer in social media, some differences may be found. Compared to traditional celebrity endorsement, there are reasons to believe that influencer marketing might be more effective. Influencers have gained the ability to gather an audience large enough to sustain themselves through their online persona, while still remaining unknown by the mainstream media (Marwick, 2015). To their audience, they are a reliable source of information, and thus may convince their audience to purchase the product they are endorsing (De Veirman et al., 2017; Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017; Schouten et al., n.d.). However, there is little research about the effectiveness of celebrities vs. influencers in advertising.

Moreover, the effect that influencers have on consumers may depend on the type of influencer, specifically, whether the influencer is a micro- or macro-influencer. A micro-influencer tends to have a smaller follower base in comparison to a macro-influencer. There is no clear definition regarding the distinction between each type of influencer, but usually a micro-influencer is considered a personality with less than 50,000 followers (Mediakix, 2016). Little research has been done regarding the comparison between micro- and macro- influencer on advertising effectiveness.

Nevertheless, according to De Veirman et al. (2017) a higher number of followers may result in a larger reach to consumers, thus increasing the effectiveness of the advertisement and reachability to audiences. Similarly, when it comes to consumers looking for inspiration, they are more inclined to identify with a personality who is more popular and glamorous (Schouten et al., n.d.). Moreover, research shows that influencers are considered to be more credible than celebrities (Uzunoglu and Kip, 2014; Schouten et al., n.d.), and there is also some research suggesting that popular influencers are perceived more credible than less popular influencers (Uzunoglu and Kip, 2014; De Veirman et al., 2017). Credibility can be considered an important role in the relationship between consumers and their purchase intention (Chapple and Cownie, 2017; Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017; Schouten et al., n.d.), therefore, in the present study credibility will serve a mediator.

Moreover, the effect of the popularity of celebrities and influencers on advertising effectiveness may have a stronger effect depending on the type of product they endorse. Previous research has shown that the match between the endorser and the product type is important for credibility and satisfactory attitudes (Kamins and Gupta, 1994). It is claimed that the effectiveness of the endorser is based on consumer's attributions of product-endorser fit, meaning whether they believe that the endorser does use and like the endorsed product (Gräve, 2017). The current study will examine the possible effects of influencers endorsing utilitarian and hedonic endorsed products. A hedonic product is appealing and more pleasing, whereas a utilitarian product is practical and functional (Lu, Liu and Fang, 2016). Since a celebrity or an influencer may be perceived as an appealing character, this means that the connection with a hedonic product, which is visually appealing, can have a stronger effect in comparison to the connection with a utilitarian product. Due to the endorser's connection to the product, they can increase consumer's personal attachment to a product with a hedonic value (Lin, Bruning and Swarna, 2018).

Therefore, the current study will examine the effects of celebrity, macro-influencer, micro-influencer endorsing two different product types on advertising effectiveness. Credibility will serve as the mediator in the relationship between endorser and product type with its advertising effectiveness.

RQ: What are the effects of the type of endorser and product in terms of advertising effectiveness? How does credibility mediate the relationship between endorser and product type on advertising effectiveness?

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Celebrity endorsement

As previously mentioned in the introduction, celebrity endorsement marketing has become an attractive advertising method for businesses. Using influential personas such as celebrities may result in a high advertising effectiveness (Kamins et al., 1989; Amos et al., 2008; Till et al., 2008; Schouten et al., unknown). The effect of advertising has three main functionalities: awareness and knowledge, attitude towards the product, and purchase intention (Lavidge and Steiner, 1961). This entails that advertising effectiveness may be measured based on these functionalities. The three advertising functionalities are directly related to a psychological model which divides behavior in three ways: The cognitive component, which would be the awareness and knowledge; the affective component, which relates to the attitude; and the motivational component, which relates to the purchase intention (Lavidge and Steiner, 1961). This model helps to understand the process consumers go through when encountering an advertisement.

Nowadays, we live in a society in which consumers are constantly overwhelmed with advertising messages (Till et al., 2008). As described in the study conducted by Till et al. (2008), this has resulted in consumers trying to avoid as many advertising messages as possible. Similarly, consumers have the power to skip a commercial or install an ad-blocker software, in order to avoid an advertisement on the Internet (De Veirman et al., 2017). Therefore, celebrity endorsements have been found to be more efficient at attracting the consumer's attention in modern day advertising (Till et al., 2008). Moreover, when someone is endorsing a product, consumers may not perceive this as an advertisement, but more like a recommendation from their idol.

Celebrity endorsement is not only used to increase a business' revenue, but also in adding value to the product they are endorsing (Amos, Holmes and Strutton, 2008). They add a more personal feeling to the product in comparison to a normal advertisement. Celebrity endorsement advertising has been a successful tool for marketers due to the positive feeling that celebrities give off to consumers (Till et al., 2008). When a fan encounters the celebrity they admire, they cannot help but feel happy and excited. So it would make sense that they would want to have the same products as their idol. This is because traditionally, societies have been assigning celebrities the role of being influential people, partly due to the way they are being portrayed in the media as characters that are above the average person (Amos et al., 2008). Because celebrities are being perceived as

influential characters, this results in individuals looking up to them. Therefore, since a celebrity may be perceived as a special person, the product they are endorsing can also be perceived as something special. Thus, when marketers use a celebrity to endorse their product, the meaning that has been developed around the celebrity will transfer onto the product (Erdogan and Baker, 2000; Amos et al., 2008).

There are several explanations of why this new type of marketing has been more successful in comparison to traditional marketing. Some of these reasons may be explained with the theories of social influence identification and source attractiveness.

2.1.1. Social Influence Identification and Source Attractiveness

One theory that explains the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement advertising is social influence identification theory. (Kamins et al., 1989). Social influence identification plays a role in the cognitive effects of advertisement effectiveness. Identification is when an individual seeks to look like a certain person, therefore, adopting the behavior of that person in order to enhance his or her self-image (Kelman, 1961; Kamins et al., 1989). In the case of celebrities, the consumer's identification process would be considered as wishful identification, which is inspiring to be like a celebrity (Kamins et al. 1989; Schouten et al., unknown). Thus, when consumers identify with a celebrity, they are willing to purchase the product the celebrity is endorsing, hoping that the celebrity's meaning will transfer into their own lives. (McCracken, 1989; Amos et al., 2008).

Another model that may explain the successfulness of celebrity endorsement is the model of source attractiveness. According to the model, the familiarity and likability of the endorser determines its attractiveness to the consumers (Erdogan, 1999; Gräve, 2017). Attractiveness includes a number of characteristics that individuals see in celebrities such as intellectual skills, personality, lifestyle or physical appearance. (Erdogan, 1999). Some authors indeed have suggested that the attractiveness of celebrities may serve as a predictor of advertising effectiveness (Till and Busler, 2000; Amos et al., 2008). But having an attractive endorser does not automatically translates into consumers being willing to purchase the product that is being endorsed. Baker and Churchill (1977) conducted a study in which it was concluded that, although attractiveness did positively affect advertisement evaluations, it did not had a great effect on purchase intention amongst consumers (Amos et al., 2008). Amos et al. (2008)

explained this results by stating that it was due to the lack of credibility. Because there was no relationship between the endorser and the product in the post of the advertisement, consumers were skeptical towards the real intention of the celebrity endorsing the product (Baker and Churchill, 1977). This is due to the fact that consumers might think that the celebrity is endorsing the product, not because they like it, but because they are being paid for it. Consequently, having an attractive celebrity endorsing your product does not automatically mean there will be a high advertising effectiveness. There are other factors, like credibility, that also have an effect on consumer's reactions. In previous studies, it has been established that when an endorser is perceived as more credible to the consumer's minds, this will make the association with the endorser and the brand more strong and efficient when it comes to the effectiveness of the advertisement (Biswas et al., 2006; Spry et al., 2011). Thus, credibility will serve as an important factor when measuring the relationship between endorser and product in advertising effectiveness, which will be explained more in-depth next.

2.2. *Celebrity vs. Influencer*

Nowadays celebrities are not the only personas of influence in the world of social media. A new type of influential persona has been emerging over the recent years, known as influencers. An influencer is defined as a person who is an opinion leader in social media channels and communicates in an online environment to a large audience (Abidin, 2015; Uzunoğlu and Kip, 2014; Gräve, 2017).

Influencers tend to present themselves on social media as “normal”, approachable and real people (Chapple and Cownie, 2017; Schouten et al., n.d.). Schouten et al., (n.d.) conducted a study in which participants felt more similar to and trusted influencers more than celebrities. This may be due to the fact that influencers also share similarities with their followers, since some are just ordinary high school or university students (Chae, 2017). Hence, they are perceived more as a friend to their followers in comparison to celebrities. This leads to believe that influencers may be more effective because consumers may feel more similar to them, in comparison to celebrities (Gräve, 2017).

However, consumers also look up to both celebrities and influencers as influential people. Consumers follow influencers in social media because they admire them and they also have a feeling of connectedness with them (Uzunoğlu and Kip, 2014). Thus, influencers can be considered a mix of being a celebrity and at the same time being a

friend. Due to the closer relationship that influencers maintain with their followers, not only do consumers look up to influencers as influential people, but also feel a closer relation with them. Based on similarity, when an endorser possesses an image closer to the ideal self-image of the consumer, this results in the consumer rating the advertisement in a more favorable manner and with greater purchase intention (Choi and Rifon, 2012).

2.2.1. Effects of credibility

Source credibility model is the trustworthiness consumers' place in the endorser as a source of information (Ohanian, 1990; Amos et al., 2008; Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017). The credibility of an endorser oftentimes may serve as a factor to a successful outcome in product endorsement advertising (Amos et al., 2008). Furthermore, in the context of advertising, source credibility is referred as the trustworthiness, attractiveness and the level of expertise the endorser entails (Erdogan, 1999; Amos et al., 2008; Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017). Trustworthiness is described as the degree of confidence that is placed on consumers mind when a person is trying to convey and deliver a message to them (Ohanian, 1990; Amos et al., 2008). Meaning that, if the message that the endorser is delivering is convincing enough, consumers will trust more the endorser. Several previous studies have supported the effect that trustworthiness has on consumer's attitudes (Ohanian, 1990). For example, when consumers consider a product endorsement to be valid and trustworthy, then they will develop a positive attitude towards the endorser and the brand (Spry et al., 2011).

The level of expertise is the consumer's perception of the influencer's relevance of the product they are endorsing (Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017). In order to be perceived as an expert, the product that the endorser is promoting needs to be relevant to what their persona entails (e.g. a fashion endorser promoting a fashion product), that would be considered a high product-endorser fit (Amos et al., 2008; Schouten et al., n.d.). In a research conducted by Crano (1970), it was concluded that consumers had more favorable attitudes towards a high-expert source in comparison to when they were exposed to a low-expert source (Ohanian, 1990). Furthermore, this would mean that if the product does not fit the expertise of the endorser, these would be perceived as less credible (Dwivedi and Johnson, 2013; Lee and Koh, 2015; Schouten et al., n.d.).

Attractiveness can also change attitudes and product evaluation (Joseph, 1982; Ohanian, 1990). Attractiveness can be measured by the endorser's perception of similarity,

likability and familiarity that they have over the consumers (Amos et al., 2008). If an endorser is perceived similar and familiar to the consumers, then they will be seen as more attractive (Amos et al., 2008; Schouten et al., n.d.), resulting in being more credible. This gives a reason to believe that an influencer endorser can be perceived as more credible than a celebrity endorser, since influencers are perceived as more similar in the consumer's mind.

Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) conducted a study using the source credibility model in which it was concluded that consumers perceived influencers more trustworthy in comparison to celebrities. Schouten et al., (n.d.) also discovered that credibility was more prominent on influencers in comparison to celebrities. In comparison to celebrities, influencers tend to present the product as a recommendation based on personal experiences (Schouten et al., unknown). Miller and Baseheat (1969) discovered that a person was perceived as highly trustworthy when the message that same person delivered contained a strong opinion (Ohanian, 1990). When an endorser is promoting a product, they tend to add their personal opinion about the product. This makes the endorsement have a more personal experience with the product, thus creating more credible value. Traditional celebrities already have an established influential status on social media in comparison to influencers, who have built their fame in online environments (Schouten et al., n.d.). Due to their closer relation to their followers, influencers are perceived as more credible. Consequently, even though endorsing a product with a celebrity may be a successful promotional tool used by marketers in some ways (Spry et al., 2011), influencer endorsers might be more effective. Based on the points mentioned above, the following hypotheses are established:

H1a: Influencer endorsements have higher advertising effectiveness than celebrity endorsements.

H1b: Credibility mediates the relationship between endorser type and advertising effectiveness.

2.3. Influencers

Although the term “influencer” might be relatively new, sub-categories amongst influencers have been emerging over the past years. Some of these new sub-categories of influencers are known as micro- and macro- influencers.

As mentioned in the introduction, no previous studies has established a clear definition stating the differences between micro- and macro- influencers. The number of followers can serve as an indication in creating a distinction between the types of influencers. The website Mediakix (2016) claims that the distinction between both groups is purely based on the number of followers each influencer has. The website also describes that a micro-influencer tends to have around 50,000 followers, meanwhile a macro-influencer has around 1 million. Another way to approach the distinction between each influencer category can be based in other fields aside of the number of followers. According to Booth and Matic (2011) other variables to measure the rank of an influencer can be the viewers per month, post frequency, number of likes, engagement, and social aggregator rate. Social aggregator is described as the level of the influencers’ participation in social media, meaning how many accounts in social media they own (Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, etc.) (Booth and Matic, 2011). Therefore, one could determine who is a micro-, or macro- influencer, based on these constructions. An influencer with a higher amount of viewers per month, post frequency, number of likes, engagement, and social media accounts could be described as a macro-influencer.

For the present study, a micro-influencer will be classified as a person who has around 50,000 followers, relatively few likes on posts, and a low engagement rate, and a macro-influencer would have around 1 million followers with more likes and a higher engagement rate. This method is the most suitable one for the present study since it is following the guidelines presented in the information provided above. Most of the information available regarding the distinction between micro- and macro- influencers indicates that the key numbers presented in the study (followers, likes, engagement) are the most appropriate in order to distinguish each type of influencer.

2.3.1. Macro- vs. Micro- Influencer

Consumers are more likely to purchase a product when the endorser is perceived as credible (Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017). Therefore, being perceived as someone credible might transfer into getting a higher advertising effect. Influencers who are seemed as experts are considered as a more reliable and credible source of information. This is also due to their network size and reputation (Chapple and Cownie, 2017).

In a study conducted by Uzunoğlu and Kip (2014), it was found that having a large number of followers resulted in participant's having more positive attitude towards the endorser. Moreover, influencers who are more popular can be perceived as more likeable, due that they are seen as more popular characters (De Veirman et al., 2017). Moreover, when an influencer is perceived as someone popular then people also trust the influencer more (Sundar, 2008; De Veirman et al., 2017). Consequently, influencers with a large amount of followers can be perceived as credible and expert endorsers in comparison to influencers with less amount of followers. When people link attributes of credibility to an influencer, this translates into a higher advertising effectiveness (Ohanian, 1990; Amos et al., 2008; Ewers, 2017).

Since credibility can be more prominent in macro-influencers, this also means that they can also have a higher advertising effect in comparison to micro-influencers. Credibility is not the only factor that translates into having a higher advertising effectiveness, likeability can also serve as a factor. Having a larger audience translates into having a better reputation, thus becoming more likeable (Chapple and Cownie, 2017). The more likeable someone is, the more attractive and credible that person becomes (McGuire, 1985; Chapple and Cownie, 2017). Moreover, macro-influencers tend to have a higher amount of likes in comparison to micro-influencers due to their network size. Consequently, having a positive rating (e.g. a high number of likes) leads to a higher credibility and a positive attitude from consumers towards the influencer (Wang, 2006).

If consumers are perceiving the endorser as someone likeable, this means that the advertising effectiveness will perform better (Chapple and Cownie, 2017). Not only being more likeable makes macro-influencer be perceived as more credible, but also gives them a higher advertising effectiveness. That is why the following hypotheses are proposed:

H2a: Endorsements by macro-influencers leads to higher advertising effectiveness than endorsements by micro-influencers.

H2b: Macro-influencers are perceived as more credible in comparison to micro-influencers.

2.4. Utilitarian vs. Hedonic Products

Based on individuals' purchase motivation and usage experience, a product may be perceived as utilitarian or hedonic (Chang, Chen and Tan, 2012). When looking into products, consumers go through a process of "do I want it or do I need it?". "Do I want it" means that the product is something one might want because of its pleasing feeling, but does not necessarily mean that they need it. "Do I need it", means that something is useful and one might need it, for example, a washing machine, but one does not necessarily want it. Products that are perceived as hedonic are more likely to fall under the "want" preferences, whereas products that are perceived as utilitarian will fall under the "need" preferences (Dhar and Wertenbroch, 2000).

As previously mentioned in the introduction, utilitarian products are perceived as functional, practical and as a necessity (Dhar and Wertenbroch, 2000; Voss, Spangenberg, and Grohmann, 2003; Lu et al., 2016). When evaluating utilitarian products, consumers tend to assess more the objective and the utilities of the product (Chang et al., 2012). When a consumer is shopping for a utilitarian product, they do not pay attention to the level of attractiveness of the product or its surroundings, they just focus on its utility (To et al., 2007). Hedonic products on the other hand may be perceived as exciting, enjoyable, and visually pleasing (Dhar and Wertenbroch, 2000; Voss, Spangenberg, and Grohmann, 2003; Lu et al., 2016). When consumers are in search of a product that makes them feel emotionally attached to it and a feeling of pleasure, they look for products that have a hedonic value (To et al., 2007).

While the advertising effectiveness of product endorsement on influencers and celebrities is undeniably effective, there are still some guidelines to be discovered on how businesses can partner up effectively with them (Lin, Bruning, and Swarna, 2018). One cannot simply endorse a product on a celebrity, or an influencer, and expect to have a positive outcome out of it. That is why in order to have a positive advertisement result, the type of product should match the type of celebrity or influencer.

Kamins (1990) showed that for products that were not appealing or attractive enough, known as utilitarian products, the use of an endorser to promote such products had no direct impact on the consumers' attitude towards the product. Hedonic products, on the other hand, are assessed based on their attractiveness (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Dhar and Wertenbroch, 2000). Celebrities and influencers endorers are attractive and likeable, therefore, advertisers hope that the people will link the attractiveness of the endorser to the product (Kamins 1990; De Veirman et al., 2017). This congruity positively affects the perception, attitude, purchase intention and credibility of the consumers towards the ad (Hsu and McDonald, 2002). If the product that the influencers and celebrities are endorsing are also perceived attractive, then consumers tend to be more receptive towards the advertisement (Baker and Churchill, 1977). This means that since an influencer or a celebrity is attractive to the consumer's mind, as well as a hedonic product, then the advertising effect is higher, as there is fit between the product and the endorser. Chang et al. (2012) conducted a study in which it was concluded that products with hedonic values endorsed by an influencer with a strong tie to the product, resulted in stronger purchase intentions than products with a utilitarian value. Following the reasoning presented above, the following hypothesis is presented.

H3: Endorsers endorsing hedonic products are more effective than endorers endorsing utilitarian products.

3. Method

3.1. Design and Manipulation

The study deployed a 3 (endorser type: celebrity vs. macro-influencer vs. micro-influencer) x 2 (product type: hedonic vs. utilitarian) between-subjects design, resulting in a total of 6 conditions. The stimuli consisted of three different types of endorsers promoting either a fashion or beauty utilitarian or hedonic product. The chosen fashion and beauty products were based on a Google search by looking at different definitions such as the one seen in the website Unbounce (2014), as well as personal knowledge. The Google search also showed that the most popular endorsers in social media are female influencers that endorse fashion and beauty products. The website Mediakix (2017) explained that beauty influencers are one of the top six categories in the influencer world. In a recent study conducted by Gannon and Prothero (2018) it was also mentioned that the beauty and fashion industry is a growing market in social media (Pixability, 2015). Therefore, it was deducted that the fashion and beauty industry is one of the biggest categories when it comes to influencers and celebrity endorsements on social media, and would be the most suitable topic for the current research.

The three different endorsers we chose Kendal Jenner (celebrity), Laura Escanes (macro-influencer) and Raquel Boscá (micro-influencer). The choice of endorser was based on personal knowledge and Google search. There were two product levels, hedonic or utilitarian, and each endorser was assigned with a product of each type. Therefore, there was a celebrity-hedonic stimuli, celebrity-utilitarian stimuli, macro-influencer hedonic stimuli, etc. The list of the final products used for the experiment can be found in the Appendix A alongside the endorser type.

3.2 Pretest

To determine the products that the celebrities and influencers would endorse, six hedonic and six utilitarian products were selected for a pretest. 15 participants were selected to participate on the pretest through a Qualtrics survey. The participants were exposed to a total of 12 images, of which they had to individually rate 6 hedonic products and 6 utilitarian products. The products were selected based on Google search and personal knowledge. The total selected products can be found below in Appendix B.

For assessing the pretest of the product type selection the hedonic/utilitarian scale of Voss, Spangenberg and Grohmann (2003) was used. The measurements for hedonic and utilitarian products both consisted of 12 items. For the pretest, 6 items were selected, 3 measuring the hedonic value and 3 measuring the utilitarian value, on a 7-point scale. For hedonic, the values were: dull-exciting, unpleasant-pleasant, and enjoyable-unenjoyable. For utilitarian, the values were: helpful-unhelpful, practical-impractical, and functional-not functional.

Lastly, after creating the pretest and revising the results, the final selection of the products for the experiment was completed. Several t-tests were performed for each product to rate their individual scores in the hedonic and utilitarian scales. The total scores of each product can be found below in Table 1.

Table 1.
Means and Standard Deviations for Hedonic and Utilitarian Products

Products	<i>Hedonic scores</i>		<i>Utilitarian scores</i>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Hedonic				
Lipstick	5.64	1.27	4.53	1.47
Hand bag	5.21	1.12	4.73	1.73
Heels	5.26	1.65	3.43	2.04
Designer sneakers	5.26	1.55	5.00	1.85
Fancy coat	6.10	.84	5.06	1.27
Make up foundation	6.31	.76	5.54	1.44
Utilitarian				
Lip balm	4.05	1.15	6.07	1.12
Rain coat	3.15	1.86	5.82	1.48
Backpack	3.44	1.65	6.41	.69
Loafers	3.36	1.37	5.33	1.05
Hydrating cream	4.44	1.62	5.77	1.33
Sneakers	3.54	1.55	5.79	1.04

Note: Scores in bold means they were significant

Table 1 shows the scores of each item based in the hedonic and utilitarian scale. Overall, none of the hedonic products were perceived as utilitarian, and none of the utilitarian products were perceived as hedonic. Only the lipstick, heels, and the fancy coat scored significantly in the hedonic value scale, and all the utilitarian products scored

significantly is the utilitarian value scale. Based on the results of the pretest and personal preferences, the final selected products for the experiment were: lipstick, fancy coat and heels for hedonic, and lip balm, rain coat and loafers for utilitarian.

3.3 Participants

The approach taken for the method of sampling was convenience sampling. The participants voluntarily participated in the questionnaire under two requirements: They had to be English speakers and they had to own an Instagram account. The participants participated in the experiment through a Qualtrics link that was distributed across varied social media channels. In total, 241 participants participated in the experiment and completed the survey. Out of the 241 participants, 34 participants had to be removed since they failed to answer the manipulation checks correctly, this will be explained more in-depth in the procedure section. Therefore, the total amount of participants was 207 (M age = 31.92, SD = 10.89, ranging from 18 to 70 years old). Out of the total amount of participants, 24 were males and 121 were females, the remaining were shown as missing, meaning that they did not answer the gender question.

Furthermore, 79 participants were exposed to the celebrity post, 66 were exposed to the macro-influencer post, and 62 were exposed to the micro-influencer post. In Table 2 one can observe the total amount of participants per condition.

Table 2.
Number of Participants per Condition

Condition	<i>N</i>
	42
Celebrity, Hedonic product	
Celebrity, Utilitarian product	37
Macro-Influencer, Hedonic product	35
Macro-Influencer, Utilitarian product	31
Micro-Influencer, Hedonic product	36
Micro-Influencer, Utilitarian product	26
Total	207

3.4. Procedure

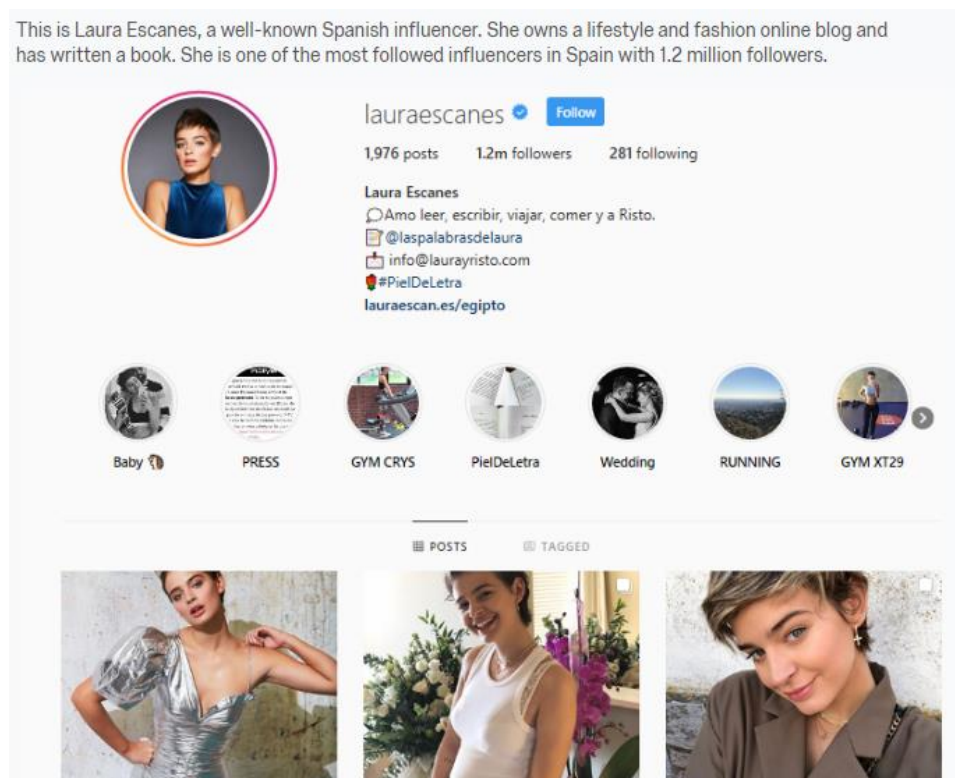
First, participants were briefly introduced to the overall purpose of the study, as well as reassuring them of the confidentiality of the study. If the participants had any

questions regarding the study, the email of the researcher was provided at the end of the brief. Finally, after the briefing they had to mark down if they wanted to proceed with the study or not, with a simple “yes or no question”. The participants that marked “no” were redirected to the end of the survey with a thank you note. The participants that marked down “yes” continued onto the next part of the survey.

Second, a couple of questions regarding their use of Instagram were asked to the participants. These questions were just so the researcher got an overview on the Instagram habits of the participants on the survey. Some of the questions included, if they owned an Instagram account, their amount of followers, the amount of people they follow, and how many days in a weekly average they used Instagram.

Continuing, the participants were randomly assigned to one of the six conditions presented in the study. They first were presented with a short description, including the name of the endorser and who they are. Participants were also presented with the Instagram main feed, alongside their number of followers. See Figure 1 for an example of the introduction of the endorser. The rest of the endorser’s introduction slides can be found in Appendix C.

Figure 1



Next, they were shown a fictitious Instagram post of the endorser promoting either a utilitarian or a hedonic product. The post consisted of a fictitious image, a fictitious number of likes, a fictitious description of the post, and fictitious comments. See Figure 2 for an example. The rest of the stimuli can be found below in the Appendix A.

Figure 2



Consequently, after being exposed to the stimuli, two manipulation check questions were asked to reassure that the participants paid attention to the stimuli. The first question asked to the participants was to pick the name of the endorser they have just seen, with three options available: Kendall Jenner, Laura Escanes, and Raquel Boscá. The second manipulation check asked participants to pick which object they have seen in the post, with two options available (e.g. a lipstick or lip balm). If participants failed one, or both, of the manipulation checks, these were excluded from the experiment.

Finally, the participants were asked to respond to a number of questions measuring the advertising effectiveness of the post, and the credibility of the endorser. The experiment ended with a thank you note and an explanation of the experiment, stating that the images they were exposed to were all fictitious.

3.5. *Measurements*

In order to assess the participants' responses, the scales that were used for the current study are based on previous studies.

To assess advertising effectiveness two sub-scales were used, one for attitude towards the advertisement and the other one for purchase intention. To assess the overall advertising effectiveness, the two sub-scales were combined into one. The scale to measure attitude towards the advertisement was based on the previous scale "Attitude towards the brand" used by Spears and Singh (2014). The measurement consists of five items on a 7-point scale: unappealing-appealing, bad-good, unpleasant-pleasant, unfavorable-favorable, and unlikeable-likeable. Purchase intention will be measured based on the same question created by Schouten et al., (n.d.), "how likely are you willing to purchase this product?"

Lastly, credibility was measured based on the scale of trustworthiness and expertise sub-scales used by Ohanian (1990). The dimension of the trustworthiness scale consisted of a five items on a 7-point scale: dependable-undependable, honest-dishonest, reliable-unreliable, sincere-insincere, and trustworthy-untrustworthy. The dimension of the expertise scale was also based of a five items on a 7-point scale: expert-not an expert, experienced-inexperienced, knowledgeable-unknowledgeable, qualified-unqualified, and skilled-unskilled. The two sub-scales were combined into one in order to measure credibility as a whole. Table 2 shows the scales, items, and reliabilities of each scales.

Table 2
Measurements Overview

	Cronbach's Alpha
Advertising effectiveness	.93
<i>Attitude towards the advertisement</i>	
Please fill in the following statements on a scale 1 to 7 about your feelings towards the post you have just seen	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unappealing-Appealing - Bad-Good - Unpleasant-Pleasant - Unfavorable-Favorable - Unlikeable-Likeable 	
<i>Purchase intention</i>	
How likely are you willing to purchase this product?	
Credibility	.94
<i>Trustworthiness</i>	
Please rate on a scale 1 to 7 about your feelings towards (name of endorser) promoting the product that you have just seen	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Undependable-Dependable - Dishonest-Honest - Unreliable-Reliable - Insincere-Sincere - Untrustworthy-Trustworthy - 	
<i>Expertise</i>	
Please rate on a scale 1 to 7 about your attitude towards (name of endorser) relation to the product	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Non-expert-Expert - Inexperienced-Experienced - Not knowledgeable-Knowledgeable - Unqualified-Qualified - Unskilled-Skilled 	

4. Results

4.1 Hypothesis testing

First, to test hypothesis H1a, an independent sample t-test was performed. On average, influencers ($M = 4.38$, $SD = 1.45$) had a higher advertising effectiveness than celebrities ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 1.81$). Equal variance between groups was not assumed $F(205, 138.7) = 8.09$, $p = .005$. The difference between influencer endorsement and celebrity endorsement was significant ($M_{diff} = -.75$, $t(138.7) = -3.11$, $p = .002$), (BCa 95% CI [-1.22, -.27]). The difference represents a medium size effect $d = .46$.

To further test H1a, as well as testing H2a and H3, a factorial ANOVA was carried out. For this factorial ANOVA, aside of reaffirming that influencers have a higher advertising effectiveness than celebrities, it also investigated if macro-influencers have a higher advertising effectiveness than micro-influencers, and if the endorsement of hedonic products have a higher advertising effectiveness than the endorsement of utilitarian products. All the data was normally distributed which means that the assumptions of normality were met.

The ANOVA showed a significant main effect of endorser, $F(2,201) = 9.08$, $p < .001$, $\eta_{\text{partial}}^2 = .08$. The outcome of the advertising effectiveness for macro-influencer was higher ($M = 4.70$ $SD = 1.47$) than for celebrity ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 1.81$) and micro-influencer ($M = 4.03$ $SD = 1.36$).

A Helmert contrasts was performed to further look into the differences within the type of endorsers. The Helmert contrasts show a significant main effect when comparing Level 1 (celebrity) vs. Level 2 and 3 (macro- and micro- influencers), at the same time reaffirming and supporting H1a, ($Diff = -.74$, $p = .001$), (BCa 95% CI [-1.17, -.31]). It also shows a significant main effect, which it confirms that macro-influencers also have a higher advertising effect in comparison to micro-influencers, ($Diff = .68$, $p = .013$), (BCa 95% CI [.15, 1.22]). Therefore, H2a is supported by the data.

There was also a significant main effect of product type on advertising effectiveness, $F(1,201) = 14.74$, $p < .001$, $\eta_{\text{partial}}^2 = .07$. Outcome scores of advertising effectiveness for hedonic products were higher ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 1.56$) than for utilitarian products ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 1.60$). This means that H3, products that are hedonic have a higher advertising effectiveness than products that are utilitarian, is supported by the data.

Continuing, there was no interaction effect between the type of endorser and the type of product on advertising effectiveness, $F(2,201) = .68, p = .515, \eta_{\text{partial}}^2 = .01$. This means that the endorser type on the endorsement of product type does not have a difference in the effect when it comes to advertising effectiveness.

Following, we investigated whether credibility mediates the relationship between endorser type (celebrity vs. influencer) and advertising effectiveness. Therefore, we first conducted a factorial ANOVA with brand type and endorser type as factors and credibility as dependent variable to check for any main and interaction effects on credibility. Next, we conducted a mediation analysis was performed using the procedures developed by Preacher and Hayes, (Hayes, 2013). In this analysis, the type of endorser (celebrity vs. influencer) was entered as a predictor to advertising effectiveness, and the credibility was entered as mediator.

The ANOVA showed a significant main effect of endorser, $F(2,201) = 6.03, p = .003, \eta_{\text{partial}}^2 = .06$. The outcome of credibility for macro-influencer was higher ($M = 4.30, SD = 1.11$) than for celebrity ($M = 3.68, SD = 1.24$) and micro-influencer ($M = 3.91, SD = .97$). Helmert contrasts showed a significant effect for both Level 1 (celebrity) vs. Level 2 and 3 (both influencer type), ($Diff = -.42, p = .008$), (BCa 95% CI [-.74, -.11]) and Level 2 (macro-influencer) vs. Level 3 (micro-influencer), ($Diff = .43, p = .032$), (BCa 95% CI [.04, .81]). The contrasts confirms that influencers are more credible than celebrities, and that macro-influencers are more credible than micro-influencers. Therefore, H2b is supported. There was also a significant main effect of product type on credibility, $F(1,201) = 9.97, p = .002, \eta_{\text{partial}}^2 = .06$. Outcome scores for hedonic products were higher ($M = 4.17, SD = 1.12$) than for utilitarian products ($M = 3.68, SD = 1.14$). This reaffirms that products that are hedonic are perceived as more credible in comparison to products that are utilitarian. There was no interaction effect between the type of endorser and the type of product on advertising effectiveness, $F(2,201) = .06, p = .940, \eta_{\text{partial}}^2 = .00$.

The mediation analyses with PROCESS showed a significant total effect of type of endorser on advertising effectiveness ($b = .75, SE = .23, p = .002$), indicating that influencers are more likely to have a higher advertising effectiveness in comparison to celebrities. When adding credibility as the mediator to the model, this indicates a full mediation, $b = .30, SE = .16, p = .063$. There was a significant indirect effect ($b = 0.45, SE = 0.17, 95\% \text{ BCa CI } [.08, .47]$). The completely standardized indirect effect with

credibility as a mediator was $b = .13$, $SE = 0.05$, 95% BCa CI [.03, .23], which represents a small effect. This means that H1b is supported by the data.

Furthermore, to investigate whether credibility mediates the relationship between endorser type (macro- vs- micro- influencer) and advertising effectiveness, another mediation analysis was performed using the procedures developed by Preacher and Hayes, (Hayes, 2013). In this analysis, the type of endorser were entered as a predictor to advertising effectiveness, and the credibility was entered as mediator. There was a significant total effect of type of endorser on advertising effectiveness ($b = -.66$, $SE = .25$, $p = .009$), indicating that macro-influencers are more likely to have a higher advertising effectiveness in comparison to micro-influencers. When adding credibility as the mediator to the model, this indicates a full mediation, $b = -.30$, $SE = .18$, $p = .116$. There was a significant indirect effect ($b = -.37$, $SE = 0.18$, 95% BCa CI [-.72, -.03]). The completely standardized indirect effect with credibility as a mediator was $b = -.13$, $SE = .06$, 95% BCa CI [-.24, -.01], which represents a small effect. This means that credibility does have an effect as a mediator.

5. Discussion & Conclusion

5.1 Discussion of Findings

The current study investigated whether the type of endorser and the type of product had an impact on advertising effectiveness. In addition, it also looked into credibility as a mediator variable of the relationship between the endorser and the product in advertising effectiveness. This study demonstrated that influencers indeed have a higher advertising effectiveness in comparison to celebrities (Schouten et al., n.d.) and revealed that hedonic products have a higher effectiveness in comparison to utilitarian products. Lastly, the study also showed that credibility does mediate the relationship between the endorser and the advertising effectiveness.

The expectation for H1a was that an influencer endorser would have a higher advertising effectiveness in comparison to a celebrity endorser. This hypothesis was supported by the data of the current study. Therefore, this study confirms previous research that has investigated celebrity and influencer product endorsements in terms of advertising effectiveness (Gräve, 2017; De Veirman et al., 2017; Schouten et al., n.d.). One explanation of why influencers are more effective than celebrities might be because

they are perceived as more credible. Indeed, H1b was also supported by the data of the study, which suggested that credibility served as a mediator in the relationship between endorser type and advertising effectiveness. The current study revealed that influencers can come across as more trustworthy and more as experts than celebrities. Because influencers tend to review and endorse about products that fit their personal characteristics more so than celebrities, this results in them being perceived as experts and have a higher credibility (Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017).

Following, the study looked into the differences amongst two different types of influencers. H2a predicted that macro-influencers would have a higher advertising effectiveness than micro-influencers. The study results supported the prediction of macro-influencers having a higher advertising effectiveness than micro-influencers. According to Chapple and Cownie (2017) a higher number of followers in social media translates into a bigger network size and a better reputation, thus performing better when endorsing a product or service. This means that because a higher number of followers has a bigger reach to consumers, the advertising effectiveness is also higher. A higher number of followers also indicates a higher popularity, thus affecting the likeability towards the influencers (De Veirman et al., 2017). Consequently, a higher number of followers means having a positive rating, and thus being more liked by the consumers (Wang, 2006).

Credibility also served as a mediator in the relationship between the types of influencer on advertising effectiveness. Following the reasoning established by Chapple and Cownie (2017), having a larger audience translates into a better reputation, which means that influencers with a larger share of followers can be perceived as more credible than those with fewer followers. The results showed a significant effect of credibility as a mediator. An additional ANOVA test also showed that macro-influencers were perceived as more credible in comparison to celebrities and micro-influencers. Meaning that overall, macro-influencers have a higher advertising effect in comparison to celebrities and micro-influencers.

Finally, the study investigated the differences between endorsing hedonic products versus utilitarian products. H3 predicted that endorsing hedonic products would have a higher advertising effectiveness than the endorsement of a utilitarian product. The results of the study supported the prediction. These results may be supported by the match-up hypothesis: When consumers perceive a good match between the product and endorsers, this could lead to a higher advertising effect (Friedman and Friedland, 1979;

Amos et al., 2008). As influencers are better suited to promote hedonic products (Chang et al., 2012), endorsing hedonic products is more effective.

5.2 Limitations & Further Research

The current study has several limitations. In terms of the methodological and experimental aspect, during the manipulation checks it was found that participants could not distinguish the difference between certain hedonic and utilitarian products. Specifically, participants had trouble making a distinction between the fancy coat and the rain coat, perhaps in future studies this distinction should be made clearer, so there is no confusion between the two products. Another approach that should be taken into account for future research is to investigate more different products. By using several different product-endorser combinations, more varieties of the stimulus material is created, so it can be investigated if the results hold for different products.

Furthermore, the effects of celebrity endorsement have extensively been studied over the years (Kamins et al., 1989; Erdogan & Baker, 2000; Amos et al., 2008; Till et al., 2008). Only a few studies have focused on the advertising effectiveness of influencer endorsement over the past years (De Veirman et al., 2017; Gräve, 2017; Glucksman, 2017; Schouten et al., n.d.). The emergence of influencers is relatively new, that is why there is still a lot of research that can be done regarding their advertising effectiveness. The current study focused on the difference between macro-influencer and micro-influencer, future studies could also focus on other types of influencers such as nano-influencers or mega-influencers. Another future study could also focus to what extent are macro-influencers more effective than celebrities or micro-influencers. Perhaps if a macro-influencer becomes too popular, to the point they start to look like a celebrity, they also become less effective in terms of advertising effectiveness.

5.3 Implications

The current study extended the conceptual framework of celebrity and influencer endorsement proposed by Schouten et al. (n.d.), with an addition of product type to investigate if there is a difference between hedonic and utilitarian products in terms of advertising effectiveness. Although throughout the study, as mentioned above, some limitations were found, this study has several interesting implications.

First, confirming previous research, it was found that influencer endorsement can be more effective in advertising effectiveness compared to celebrity endorsement. Moreover, credibility was shown to be an important mediator when it comes to the relationship between endorser type and advertising effectiveness. Thus, further research should take into account credibility as an important underlying mechanism to a high advertising effectiveness when it comes to celebrity/influencer product endorsement.

Second, when taking deeper look into the influencer world, the study also revealed that macro-influencers are more effective in advertising in comparison to micro-influencers. This is the first study to investigate this comparison between influencers. Credibility was also a key factor for this outcome. Macro-influencers not only are more effective in terms of advertisement, but also were perceived as more credible. The current study not only revealed that influencers are more effective than celebrities, but it also showed that macro-influencers are more effective than micro-influencers or celebrities.

Third, the study also gave an indication on which types of products can be more effective in advertisement. The endorsement of hedonic products scored a higher advertising effectiveness in comparison to the endorsement of utilitarian products. This means that hedonic products better matches influencers and celebrities than utilitarian. Therefore, future research should take into account the product type.

To finalize, the key outcome of the overall study is that consumers will be more likely to have a better reaction to hedonic products endorser by macro-influencers. The research will help to understand how product endorsements can be beneficial to companies when selecting an endorser and the type of product they want to promote.

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Appendix A

Manipulations of the 2x3 experiment; Endorser type and Product type.

Version 1. Celebrity – Hedonic product



Version 2. Celebrity – Utilitarian product



Version 3. Macro-influencer – Hedonic product



Version 4. Macro-influencer – Utilitarian product



Version 5. Micro-influencer – Hedonic product



Version 6. Micro-influencer – Utilitarian product



Appendix B

Selection of products for pre-test.

Heels



Loafers



Lipstick



Lip balm



Fancy coat



Rain coat



Hand bag



Backpack



Designer sneakers



Sneakers



Make up foundation



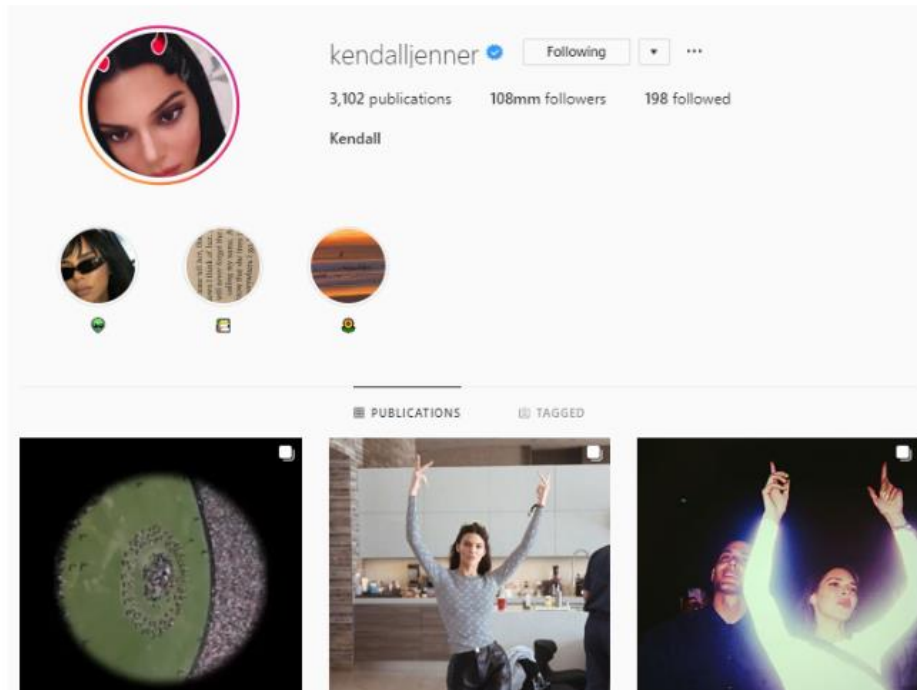
Hydrating cream



Appendix C

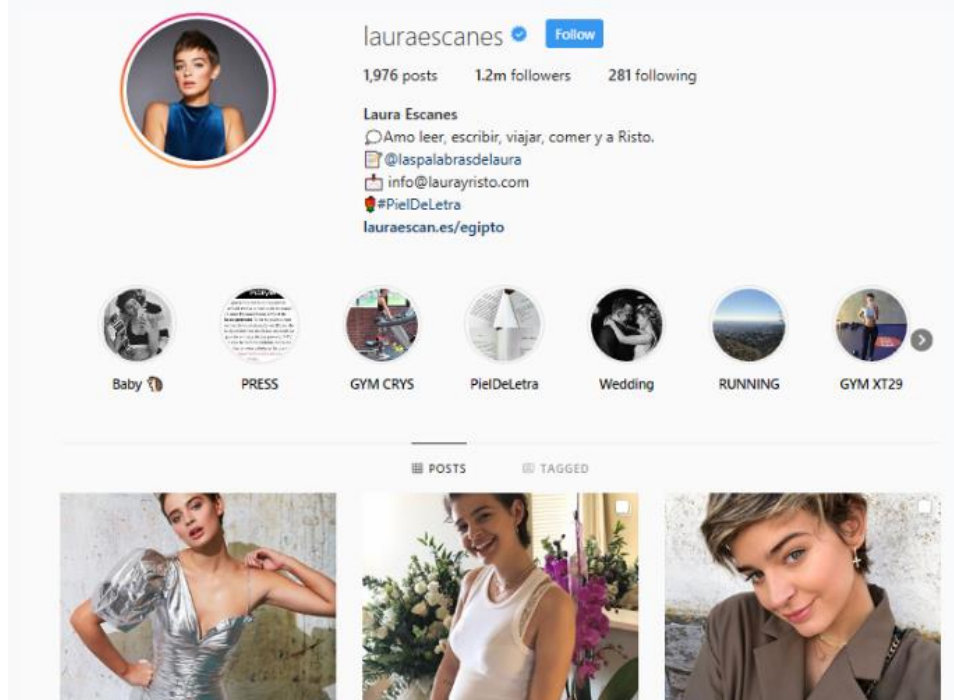
1. Introduction celebrity

This is Kendall Jenner, an international supermodel and part of the Kardashian family. She is a well known-celebrity with currently 108 million followers on Instagram.



2. Introduction macro-influencer

This is Laura Escanes, a well-known Spanish influencer. She owns a lifestyle and fashion online blog and has written a book. She is one of the most followed influencers in Spain with 1.2 million followers.



3. Introduction micro-influencer

This is Raquel Boscá, an influencer that is from Spain. In her Instagram channel she posts about lifestyle, beauty and fashion. She currently has 71 thousand followers on Instagram.

