

How similar-to-me is too similar-to-me? Do young women really want to be like the influencer in that luxury advertisement?

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Abstract

This study asks whether social media influencers or celebrities are more effective in endorsing luxury consumer goods. Using a New Zealand sample of women aged 18-25, this study employed a between-subjects experimental design with participants responding to either a celebrity or influencer advertising condition, using a luxury handbag as a stimulus. The current study finds that consumers only marginally favour celebrity endorsers over influencers, in the context of luxury goods, via wishful identification. However, neither endorser type impacted purchase intention, with existing ownership of similar goods a better predictor of purchase intention amongst the sample. In this study, the use of an endorser reduced purchase intention (comparable to the participant viewing the product alone), suggesting that advertising reach may be a better performance indicator than purchase stimulation when marketers are considering using a known endorser. This study provides a novel contribution to endorsement and promotion literature, as it contrasts prior studies of low involvement goods (such as cosmetics or diet products) which find that young female consumers prefer endorsers who are socially closer to themselves. The study is one of the few to directly compare responses to celebrity and social media endorsement of luxury products, thus extending our knowledge of the likely return on investment of endorsement by celebrities and influencers.

Subject Areas: *Advertising, Consumer Behaviour, Electronic Commerce and Internet Marketing*

Track: Digital Marketing & Social Media