Awwvertising strategy: exploring how cuteness impacts influencer marketing

Tanmaya Kansara

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By: Tanmaya Kansara

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Signed by the final Examining Committee:

_____Chair
Dr. Kamila Sobol

_____ Examiner
Dr. Kamila Sobol

_____ Examiner
Dr. Darlene Walsh

_____ Supervisor
Dr. Caroline Roux

Approved by. _____
Dr. Mrugank Thakor, Graduate Program Director

_____
Dr. Anne-Maire Croteau, Dean of John Molson School of Business

Abstract

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Influencer marketing has become a valuable marketing communications channel for brands to generate positive connections with consumers. Building on the success of their human counterparts, a unique niche of pet influencers has emerged and provided brands with new social media marketing opportunities. My thesis investigated whether, how, and why pet influencers impact consumers' responses to sponsored social media posts featuring them. Across one pre-test and three studies, I investigated the effects of the perceived level of cuteness of a social media influencer (i.e., pet influencer vs. human influencer) on consumers' attitudes, behavioral intentions, and purchase likelihood. Study 1 found no main effects of influencer type on consumers' responses, but revealed serial mediations through mood and perceived persuasion intent, which closely and conceptually replicated in Studies 2a and 2b respectively. My thesis provides theoretical contributions, avenues for future research, and managerial implications related to the use of pet influencers in marketing communications.

Keywords: cuteness, pet influencers, influencer marketing, mood, perceived persuasion intent, consumer behavior

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Completing this thesis was a rollercoaster ride of late nights, endless revisions, and moments of doubt, but ultimately, it was an incredibly rewarding journey. Thank you.

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Introduction

Pets have long been used in advertisements to evoke positive consumer responses (Myers et al., 2022). Examples include the "Andrex Puppy," Friskies and its "Dear Kitten" videos, and Budweiser's "Puppy Love" commercial. Following the rise of social media marketing (Powderly, 2024), pets have also been taking over the influencer market. Despite being a growing niche, the pet influencer market boasts many past (e.g. Grumpy cat, Lil Bub, Manie, Boo; Patnaik, 2023) and current (see Table 1 for examples) "celebrities".

Table 1. Famous pet influencers on Instagram in 2023.

Name	**Type of pet**	**Number of followers (in millions)**
Nala Cat	Cat	4.5
Doug the Pug	Dog	3.6
Tardar Sauce (Grumpy Cat)	Cat	2.6
Loki the Wolf Dog	Dog	1.8
Noodle the Pug	Dog	0.27

Source: https://www.statista.com/statistics/785972/most-followers-instagram-petfluencers/

As their human counterparts, pet influencers often work with a variety of brands. Sponsorships from pet-related products such as pet food, toys, clothing and adoption agencies are common given their fit with these types of influencers. However, the adorable nature of pets also draws in brands producing products not related to pets, such as The Body Shop, Urban Decay and Mercedes Benz (Alain, 2022). Pet influencers can be effective because humans tend to connect to pets more easily than to other people, especially famous ones (Alain, 2022). Pet content also tends to be uplifting, enjoyable, and adorable.

Pets tend to be associated with cuteness, as they often arouse an instant "aww" when seeing or interacting with them. Research has shown that our brains release dopamine when we see cute pictures (Burke, 2016); a tactic that marketers have long been capitalizing on. However, although there has been growing research in marketing on the effects of influencer marketing and of cuteness on consumer behavior, there is scant research on the effects of pet influencers. My thesis will therefore explore whether, how, and why pet influencers impact consumers' responses to branded content on social media featuring them.

In this thesis, I will first review prior research on influencer marketing and on cuteness to provide my rationale for investigating the effects of pet influencers on consumer behavior, for my proposed underlying psychological mechanisms, and for my hypotheses. I will then present the results of a pre-test and three studies, in which participants were asked to evaluate a sponsored social media post featuring a pet influencer, human influencer, or branded content promoting a robot vacuum (Studies 1 and 2a) or a mop (Study 2b). The studies also explored the roles of mood and perceived persuasion intent in the effects of pet influencers on consumers' responses. Note that the studies offer both exploratory (Study 1) and confirmatory (Studies 2a and 2b) findings. Lastly, I will discuss the implications of my research and possible future research directions that build on its limitations.

Theoretical Background

Influencer Marketing

Social media influencers are online personalities who aim to amass a large following after posting content on various social media platforms, such as Instagram and TikTok (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Such influencers tend to have knowledge in specific areas like beauty, fitness, lifestyle, or travel (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Due to their connection with their followers (Jin et al., 2021; Reinikainen et al., 2020), which tends to increase their perceived credibility and trust (Reinikainen et al., 2020), brands often collaborate with influencers to promote their products and services; which has given rise to influencer marketing. Many brands tend to compensate influencers with money for the exposure they provide them. However, brands now also (or instead) tend to give trips, experiences, or free products/services in return for the influencer promoting their offerings (Campbell & Farrell, 2020).

Influencer marketing has rapidly been growing and becoming an important part of many brands' marketing strategy, with the global influencer marketing market valued at US$21.1 billion in 2023; more than triple that in 2019 (Dencheva, 2023). Influencers are an attractive choice for brands as they have already established themselves in their respective areas of expertise and have innate characteristics that allow consumers to trust their opinions (Kanaveedu & Kalapurackal, 2022). Recent statistics show that 90% of marketers believe that influencer marketing is effective, in part because 49% of consumers depend on recommendations made by influencers, and 69% of consumers trust these recommendations (Scott, 2024). However, De Veirman et al. (2017) found that the number of followers, the ratio between followers and following, and the fit between the product type and influencer are all major factors to consider when designing an influencer marketing strategy. For instance, although many influencers have reached "celebrity" status by building their following over the years, which has been shown to increase their likability and credibility (Conde & Casais, 2023), many brands are increasingly working with "smaller" influencers, as they tend to be perceived as more authentic and trustworthy, as well as more closely aligned with the interests and needs of their followers (Wissman, 2018).

However, when shopping in an online space, consumers tend to be more goal-oriented, which makes them more averse to conspicuous advertising (Cho & Cheon, 2004). Due to this, advertising on social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok can be challenging and has led to less conspicuous and more authentic advertisements (Campbell & Grimm, 2018). Consequently, influencer marketing seems to be hitting a roadblock, as many influencers are facing credibility issues (Karimi, 2023), due to the rising awareness that they are monetarily compensated for promoting products/services (Gerrath & Usrey, 2020). However, a different type of social media influencer may have an edge over their human counterparts, namely pet influencers.

Pet Influencers

Pet influencers can be just as popular as their human counterparts (if not more), due to their inherent cuteness, and often attract and entertain throngs of social media followers (Myers et al., 2022). Similar to human influencers, pet influencers are online personalities that aim to achieve a large social media presence. Their accounts are owned and controlled by their owners who post content featuring the pet and (if any) brand collaborations (Martina Di Cioccio et al., 2024). This type of influencer marketing has flourished to the extent that there now are many agencies

specializing in pet influencers. For example, The Dog Agency is a self-renowned "home to the most influential animals in the world". Founded in 2015, the agency has represented all sorts of pets, such as dogs and cats, and has worked with brands such as Amazon, Disney, Spotify, and Sony Music (The Dog Agency, n.d.).

The most obvious advertising strategy for pet influencers is to represent brands specializing in pet-related products; a market expected to reach over US$400 billion in revenue by 2032 (Fortune Business Insights, 2021). However, many pet influencers have extended their endorsements to various non-pet-related brands – such as Dyson, the Body Shop, and Ritz Carlton, among many others (Chavie Lieber, 2018). Pet influencers have been shown to impact various consumer responses (e.g., booking intentions) (Zhang et al., 2023). Although past research has examined how exposure to pets can influence consumers' responses to advertisements (Jia et al., 2022), there is scant research on pet influencers in particular (e.g., Zhang et al., 2023), and more specifically on their role in marketing communications. My thesis thus aims to fill this gap by better understanding whether and why pet influencers may impact consumers' attitudes and behavioral intentions for the promoted products/brands. One way pet influencers may do so is through their inherent cuteness, as pets are often seen as cute (e.g., Sherman et al., 2009), and cuteness has been shown to play an important role in marketing.

Cuteness

Cuteness has been defined as characteristics of an "object" that invoke feelings of delight, and that makes it adorable and endearing (Afred Suci & Wang, 2023). In earlier research, cuteness was defined based on the physical characteristics of an object that resemble that of a baby (e.g., big eyes, large forehead, small nose; Dale, 2016). More recent research has identified two distinct types of cuteness: kindchenschema and whimsicality (Scott & Nenkov, 2014). Kindchenschema – the originally studied type of cuteness – refers to the helplessness and vulnerability of young beings, whereas whimsicality refers to humor and playfulness (Scott & Nenkov, 2014).

Cute entities and objects have been found to increase people's mood (Lien & Wu, 2021), convince them to buy products (Lu et al., 2021), and to form communities (Golonka et al., 2023). Prior research in marketing has investigated the effects of cute products on indulgent consumption (Scott & Nenkov, 2014), of cute products with anthropomorphized features (Epley et al., 2007), of cute foods with whimsical features (Scott & Nenkov, 2014), of cute posters about recycling and cute recycling bins on prosocial behavior (Wang et al., 2017), of cuteness on mitigating product unfamiliarity (Afred Suci & Wang, 2023), of cute packaging design on product tastiness and healthiness (Schnurr, 2019), and of cuteness in AI applications (Lv et al., 2022).

In addition, brands often use cute mascots – which are especially popular in Japan (Madge, 1998) – partly because "cute sells" (The Mill East Asia, 2021). Ads featuring animal characters – which often act as cute mascots for brands (e.g., Royale kittens, Taco Bell chihuahua) – have been shown to enhance brand perceptions and influence consumers' buying decisions (Lancendorfer et al., 2008). Pet influencers could thus be considered as cute brand ambassadors (similar to cute mascots) when promoting brands or products on social media, given that prior research has used pictures of pets as stimuli to prime cuteness (Sherman et al., 2009). Of note, pets can fall under both types of cuteness discussed above. Indeed, pets can possess baby-like features (Borgi & Cirulli, 2016) that make them seem vulnerable and prompt nurturing feelings (Sherman et al., 2009), which fits with the kindchenschema type of cuteness. Conversely, pets

can also be playful and fun, making them a source of entertainment, which fits the whimsical type of cuteness (Myrick, 2015). In my thesis, I will consider pets influencers as representing both types of cuteness, as attempting to disentangle the roles and effects of each type is beyond the scope of this research.

Building on the positive effects of cuteness on consumer behavior found in prior work, I hypothesize a positive effect of cuteness on consumers' responses (i.e., attitudes, behavioral intentions, and purchase likelihood) to an advertisement featuring a pet (i.e., cute) influencer. Therefore:

> **H1:** A sponsored media post featuring a pet influencer (vs. human influencer or branded content) will generate more positive attitudes, behavioural intentions, and purchase likelihood toward the brand/ad promoted in the post.

Specifically, in my studies, I will compare the effects of pet influencers to that of human influencers and branded content, as they are two common types of marketing-related content on social media. My studies will employ sponsored social media posts as stimuli, as brands have been spending more heavily on digital (vs. traditional) advertising for several years (Ma & Du, 2018), and especially social media marketing (Dencheva, 2023), making them a highly topical and relevant form of marketing communications.

Mood

In addition to positively impacting marketing outcomes, cuteness has been shown to have a positive effect on consumers' affective states (Myrick, 2015; Chou et al., 2021), and such states have been shown to influence consumers' decisions (Achar et al., 2016). Past research in marketing has investigated the effects of both positive and negative affect on consumer behavior. For instance, researchers have investigated the role of emotions in a store environment on shopping behavior (Sherman et al., 1997), how affect regulation is related to promotion or prevention focus for consumers (Arnold & Reynolds, 2009), and the effects of mood on pre-consumption and post-consumption product evaluations (Miniard et al., 1992). In the influencer marketing literature, past research has investigated the effects of mood on impression formation of both the influencer and the brand, as well as information retention (van Erp, 2021).

Cuteness has been shown to generate various affective states. For instance, cute aggression is a mix of overwhelming and caring emotions that translate into the desire to squeeze, pinch, or even bite an object of affection (Knight, 2024). While this may seem like an aggressive response to an otherwise harmless object, cute aggression is a tool to manage the overload of positive feelings brought upon when interacting with something "too cute to handle" (Knight, 2024). More generally, cuteness has been shown to positively impact affective states, and people often consume cute content to regulate their mood (Golonka et al., 2023). For example, people often look at dog pictures for a quick well-being boost (Golbeck & Colino, 2023), or at cat pictures to feel better (Myrick, 2015). Whimsical cuteness can also trigger positive emotions that make people feel amused and make them smile (Cann & Matson, 2014). Importantly, although correlated, cuteness and positive affective states – such as mood – have been shown to be distinct. For instance, Sherman et al. (2009) used both baby and adult animals as cuteness stimuli in their work, as they both generally are considered to be cute, but babies are perceived as cuter than their adult counterparts (e.g., kitten vs. adult cat). The authors found no difference in terms

of mood between the baby and adult conditions, as both conditions resulted in positive mood, which allowed them to isolate the effects of cuteness from that of mood.

Further, extant prior research has demonstrated an "affect transference" effect when brands associate themselves with an "object" (e.g., celebrity, movie, cause) in their marketing communications, where consumers' positive (vs. negative) feelings toward the object tend to be transferred to the brand (Bergkvist & Taylor, 2016). As cuteness has been shown to impact mood (Sherman et al. 2009) and mood has been shown to impact the persuasiveness of messages (Golonka et al., 2023; Golbeck & Colino, 2023; more on this below), I will focus on the effects of mood (vs. specific emotions) in my thesis. Consumers' positive mood following exposure to pet influencers could thus transfer to the brands/products they promote on social media, thus positively impacting their attitudes and behavioral intentions. I therefore predict that being exposed to pet (i.e., cute) influencers (vs. human influencers or branded content) will enhance consumers' mood which, in turn, will positively impact their responses to the sponsored social media post. Consequently, I hypothesize that:

> **H2:** Consumers' mood will mediate the effect of influencer type on attitudes, behavioural intentions, and purchase likelihood towards the brand/ad promoted in a sponsored social media post.

Perceived Persuasion Intent

When exposed to marketing communications – such as a sponsored social media post – consumers not only evaluate its content, but also the perceived persuasion intent of the communications (Reinhard et al., 2006), among other responses. Exposure to marketing communications usually activates consumers' persuasion knowledge, which is their acquired knowledge about marketing tactics and marketing communications, and which allows them to recognize and assess potential persuasion attempts by marketers (Rahmani, 2023). Persuasion knowledge thus helps consumers identify whether and how marketers are trying to influence them to purchase their products/services (Friestad & Wright, 1995). This usually leads to consumers questioning the motives behind advertisements, making them more skeptical of the claims presented, which in turn may lead to less favorable attitudes towards the brand (Friestad & Wright, 1995). Among the various ways consumers can evaluate a persuasive message, they may try to determine the ulterior motives underlying the persuasion attempt (e.g., manipulative vs. sincere), or its perceived persuasive intentions (Reinhard et al., 2006).

Perceived persuasive intentions are important in the context of influencer marketing, as this type of marketing communications is generally seen as more authentic than "traditional" marketing communications (e.g., branded social media posts), partly because the persuasive appeal in an influencer's post is typically integrated into their organic content (Myers et al., 2022). However, research has suggested that the activation of persuasion knowledge can inhibit the persuasive effect of an organic advertisement and reduce the evaluations of the brand and the influencer (Krouwer et al., 2017). This may be due to the rising awareness that influencers are monetarily compensated for promoting products/services on social media (Gerrath & Usrey, 2020), therefore prompting suspicions of ulterior motives (Reinhard et al., 2006), such that paid endorsement disclosures – which are increasingly regulated – tend to negatively impact consumers' perceptions of social media content (Karagür et al., 2021).

In addition to more explicit persuasion cues (e.g., #ad in the description of social media posts), consumers can also rely on more implicit cues (e.g., perceived attractiveness of the

influencer) when attempting to evaluate the persuasive intent of marketing communications (Reinhard et al., 2006). Cuteness may act as an implicit persuasion cue, as it has been found to prompt inferences about certain personality attributes, such as being sincere and honest (Zebrowitz et al., 1996). Further, being seen as vulnerable and innocent can help instill feelings of trust (Moorman et al., 1993). Sponsored posts featuring pet influencers may thus prompt more positive perceived persuasion intentions (e.g., more authentic or sincere motives) than human influencers or branded content due to their inherent cuteness. I therefore predict that pet (i.e., cute) influencers (vs. human influencers or branded content) will prompt more positive persuasion intentions which, in turn, will positively impact their responses to the sponsored social media post. Consequently, I hypothesize that:

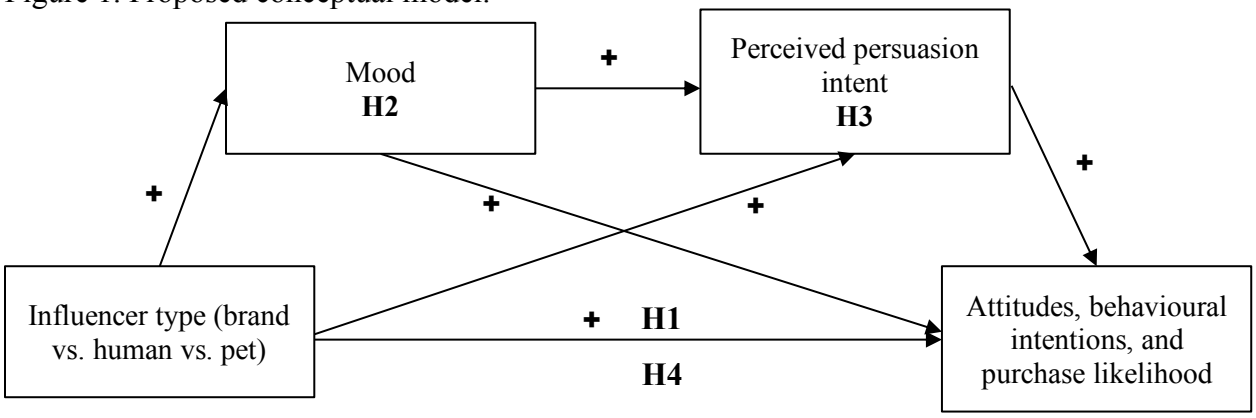
> **H3:** Consumers' perceived persuasion intent will mediate the effect of influencer type on attitudes, behavioural intentions, and purchase likelihood towards the brand/ad promoted in a sponsored social media post.

Furthermore, prior research has shown that mood can impact the effectiveness of persuasion attempts. For instance, Bless et al. (1990) found that consumers in a good (vs. bad) mood are more likely to generate more positive associations and have more favorable attitudes towards a persuasive message. As another example, Petty et al. (1993) found that positive (vs. neutral) mood positively impacts people's attitudes towards a persuasive message. Building on this research, it seems safe to assume that mood should impact consumers' perceived persuasion intent of marketing communications.

Consequently, I predict that pet influencers (vs. human influencer or branded content) will induce a more positive mood, which will result in more positive perceived persuasion intentions of the sponsored social media post, in turn resulting in more positive consumer responses to the brand/ad. I thus hypothesize that:

> **H4:** The effect of influencer type on attitudes, behavioural intentions, and purchase likelihood will be serially mediated through i) mood and ii) the perceived persuasion intent of the sponsored social media post.

Figure 1. Proposed conceptual model.



Overview of the experiments

The thesis consists of one pre-test and three studies. The goal of the pre-test was to determine whether sponsored social media posts featuring different types of influencers (i.e., brand vs. human vs. pet) and products (i.e., robot vacuum and mop) differed only in terms of cuteness. Study 1 tested the hypothesized effects of cuteness (operationalized through different types of influencers) on consumers' responses, and explored the roles of the proposed psychological process (i.e., mood and perceived persuasion intent), which were then confirmed in Study 2. Study 2 consisted of two confirmatory studies (i.e., 2a and 2b) that tested the hypothesized serial mediation effects of mood and perceived persuasion intent uncovered during study 1's exploratory analyses. Study 2a was a close replication of Study 1, while Study 2b was a conceptual replication of Study 1 (and Study 2a) using a different product, which varied in terms of price and level of involvement, in order to help determine the generalizability of the findings. Across the studies, Instagram posts were used as stimuli as it is considered a top social media platform for influencer marketing at the time of writing. In a similar vein, the pet influencers used for the stimuli were small dogs, as they tend to gain the most exposure on Instagram (Permenter, 2024).

Pre-test

The pre-test aimed to determine whether the stimuli (i.e., sponsored social media posts) designed for the experiments varied only in terms of cuteness (operationalized as influencer type) and no other factors (e.g., credibility, trustworthiness, liking). The pretest tested three types of influencer – branded content, human influencers, and pet influencers – because I wanted to compare the effects of pet influencers to that of their human counterparts, but also include an "ad" (i.e., branded social media post) as another control. The stimuli tested in the pre-test also included two types of products – mop and robot vacuum – to determine whether participants would evaluate them differently in terms of their perceived price (i.e., "basic" vs. premium) and usage (i.e., for pets vs. for humans). The pretest further aimed to determine whether the sampled population was familiar with pet influencers on social media (to develop a descriptive portrait of the sample).

Methods

Three-hundred and twenty-two U.S. participants were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk via CloudResearch and were compensated $1.00 for a 6-minute study. Participants who did not pass any of the attention checks, incorrectly answered specific questions (e.g., put their birth year instead of age when asking for the latter), mentioned that they encountered technical issues while completing the survey, indicated that they were distracted, or indicated that their data should not be used in the analyses were removed from the study. The final sample thus consisted of 280 participants (M_{Age} = 41.43; SD = 11.29; 56.7% male).

Participants first had to provide informed consent, answer three attention/comprehension checks (e.g., "A chicken is a type of insect;" True/False), and were presented with a short introduction about the purpose of the study. Participants were then randomly assigned to one of three conditions: brand, human, or pet influencer. They were sequentially presented with two social media posts featuring a lower-priced (i.e., mop) and a higher-priced (i.e., robot vacuum) product (fixed order of presentation) from a hypothetical brand (i.e., MopMate or VacuMate).

The overall design of the pre-test thus was a 3 (influencer type) x 2 (product type) mixed design. See Appendix 1 and 2 for stimuli.

The first series of questions about each social media post pertained to the evaluation of the influencer. Participants were asked to evaluate how credible, believable, trustworthy, likable, appealing, and pleasant the influencer seemed on a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). Participants were then presented with a short definition of cuteness (see Appendix 4) and asked to rate the level of cuteness of each post (items: cute, adorable, endearing, whimsical, playful, fun, vulnerable) on a 7-point-scale (0 = not at all to 6 = extremely). The next series of questions pertained to the evaluation of the product promoted in each post. Participants were asked to rate the perceived price of the product on 7-point bipolar scales (items: inexpensive/expensive; affordable/unaffordable; necessity/luxury). Participants were then asked to evaluate the intended usage of the featured product (items: to take care of your pets; your home; yourself) on a 7-point-scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). Next, participants were asked to rate how the social media post made them feel – in order to rule out potential alternative explanations related to mood – on 7-point bipolar scales (items: sad/happy, calm/excited, and negative/positive). The last series of questions pertained to participants' social media habits and preferences. Participants were asked questions regarding how often they saw general content and sponsored posts featuring pets on social media, their pet-related preferences (i.e., whether they found pets cute and which type they found cuter), and their opinions of pets being used in social media content. Finally, participants completed standard demographics and data quality (e.g., distractions, technological issues) questions. See Appendix 3 for a comprehensive list of measures.

Results and Discussion

Factor Analyses

I first conducted factor and reliability analyses on each set of items included in the pre-test, in order to determine whether they could be combined into indexes to be used in subsequent analyses. The analyses were conducted (and items were combined) according to each product type, in order to be able to make comparisons between the two. See Tables 2-4 for the results.

Table 2. Factor analyses: Low-price product (mop) – Pre-test.

Items	**Variable**	**Eigenvalue**	**Alpha**
Credible, Believable, Trustworthy, Likable, Appealing, and Pleasant	Evaluation	4.96	.96
Cute, Adorable, Endearing, Whimsical, Playful, Fun, and Vulnerable	Cuteness	5.51	.96
Inexpensive/Expensive; Affordable/Unaffordable; Necessity/Luxury	Perceived Price	2.24	.82
Happy, Excited, and Positive	Mood	2.18	.78

Table 3. Factor analyses: High-price product (robot vacuum) – Pre-test.

Items	Variable	Eigenvalue	Alpha
Credible, Believable, Trustworthy, Likable, Appealing, and Pleasant	Evaluation	4.99	.96
Cute, Adorable, Endearing, Whimsical, Playful, Fun, and Vulnerable	Cuteness	5.66	.96
Inexpensive/Expensive; Affordable/Unaffordable; Necessity/Luxury	Perceived Price	2.21	.82
Happy, Excited, and Positive	Mood	2.17	.77

Table 4. Factor analysis (social media usage) – Pre-test.

Items	Eigenvalue	Alpha
Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook	1.82	.67

Evaluation of the post, influencer, and, product

I conducted 2-way repeated-measure ANOVAs with product type as a within-subject variable and influencer type as a between-subject variable for each dependent variable (i.e., post evaluation, cuteness, and price perceptions). For post evaluation, there was a significant interaction between influencer and product type ($F(2, 277) = 15.070$, $p = <.001$), as well as significant main effects of influencer type ($F(2, 277) = 3.206$, $p = .042$) and product type ($F(1,277) = 7.276$, $p = .007$). Specifically, the human influencer promoting the mop ($M_{Human} = 3.92$, SD = 1.79) was evaluated more negatively than the brand ($M_{Ad} = 4.49$, $SD = 1.60$) or pet influencer ($M_{Pet} = 4.88$, $SD = 1.52$) promoting the same product ($F(2, 277)$, $p = <.001$). Conversely, there was no significant difference based on influencer type for the evaluation of the robot vacuum ($M_{Ad} = 4.74$, $SD = 1.53$; $M_{Human} = 4.48$, $SD = 1.64$; $M_{Pet} = 4.60$, $SD = 1.61$; $F(2, 277) = .630$, $p = .533$). These results suggest that the stimuli used for the human influencer and lower involvement product was not as well received by participants and may need to be changed in future studies, as it is the only condition that differs from the others. See tables below for the results for cuteness and price.

Table 5. Two-way repeated measures ANOVAs – Pre-test.

Evaluation	***df***	***F***	***p***
Influencer type	2, 277	3.206	.042
Product type	1, 277	7.276	.007
Influencer x product	2,277	15.070	<.001
Cuteness	***df***	***F***	***p***
Influencer type	2, 277	64.785	<.001

Product type	1, 277	35.582	<.001
Influencer x product	2, 277	14.574	<.001
Mood	***df***	***F***	***p***
Influencer type	2, 277	.835	.435
Product type	1, 277	.354	.552
Influencer x product	2, 277	4.736	.009
Price	***df***	***F***	***p***
Influencer type	2, 272	2.405	.092
Product type	1, 272	402.316	<.001
Influencer x product	2, 272	5.199	.006

Note. The degrees of freedom for price are lower because of missing data due to a technical glitch in Qualtrics.

Table 6. Means and standard deviations for significant interactions – Pre-test.

Variable	**Control (Ad) Mean (*SD*)**		**Human Mean (*SD*)**		**Pet Mean (*SD*)**	
	Mop	**Vacuum**	**Mop**	**Vacuum**	**Mop**	**Vacuum**
Evaluation	$4.49^{1,3}$ (1.60)	4.74^{3} (1.53)	$3.92^{1,2,4}$ (1.79)	4.48^{4} (1.64)	$4.88^{2,5}$ (1.52)	4.60^{5} (1.61)
Cuteness	1.65^{1} (1.63)	1.68^{2} (1.63)	$3.29^{1,3}$ (1.53)	$2.37^{2,3}$ (1.64)	$4.20^{1,4}$ (1.21)	$3.81^{2,4}$ (1.47)
Mood	4.59^{5} (0.13)	4.78^{5} (0.13)	4.72^{6} (0.13)	4.52^{6} (0.12)	4.87 (0.13)	4.78 (0.12)
Price	$2.79^{1,2}$ (1.28)	5.12^{2} (1.10)	$3.42^{1,3}$ (1.15)	5.02^{3} (1.20)	3.11^{4} (1.20)	4.90^{4} (1.11)

Note. Means with a common superscript across the same row differ at $p < .05$ or less significance level.

In terms of cuteness, the pet influencer was rated higher compared to the human influencer and the brand, for both product types. Further, the ads for the mop and the vacuum did not differ in terms of cuteness, but the posts about the mop were evaluated as cuter than those for the vacuum when promoted by either a human or pet influencer. In terms of price perceptions, the

mop was evaluated as lower priced than the robot vacuum across influencer conditions. The mop was also perceived as cheaper when promoted by the brand compared to the other types of influencer, while there is no such difference for the robot vacuum.

Social media habits and pet-related preferences

Participants indicated using Instagram ($M = 4.56$; $SD = 2.11$) more than the other forms of social media – i.e., Facebook ($M = 4.44$; $SD = 2.14$) and TikTok ($M = 3.19$; $SD = 2.22$). Participants scored around the midpoint of the scale in terms of how often they saw pets on social media ($M = 4.72$; $SD = 1.67$) and how often they encountered ads featuring pets on social media ($M = 4.30$; $SD = 1.67$). On average, participants indicated finding pets cute ($M = 6.15$; $SD = 1.22$). In addition, participants found both dogs and cats equally cute in greatest proportion ($P_{Both} = 49.3\%$, $P_{Cats} = 15.4\%$, $P_{Dogs} = 33.6\%$, $P_{Neutral} = 1.6\%$) and found dogs cutest overall, and indicated that they found both dogs and cats cute ($M = 2.31$; $SD = 1.13$).

In addition, participants indicated having a positive opinion of pets being used to promote products on social media ($M = 4.94$; $SD = 1.48$), The questionnaire included a follow-up qualitative question asking participants to explain their opinion of pets being used to promote products on social media, to better understand their ratings Common themes in participants answers were uncovered. Participants described ads featuring pets to be "attention-grabbing," and that they found it to be "pleasant" while viewing the ad. Participants also mentioned the type of product that the influencers advertise to be an important factor. Pet-related products advertised by pets seem to be more likely to be well received and accepted than non-pet-related products. See Table 7 for a sample of quotes.

Table 7. Common themes in opinions on using pets in social media marketing.

Common Themes	**Quotes**
Attention-grabbing	"Posts featuring cute or funny pets tend to attract high levels of engagement on social media, including likes, shares, and comments."
	"...pets would automatically catch the attention of most people since most people think that pets are cute. It grabs people's attention right away."
	"...I'll spend more time looking at an ad with a cat or dog than a human just so I can look at the cuteness longer which in turn means the ad will probably imprint on me better."
Pleasant (viewing experience)	"The presence of a pet lends a feeling of warmth and "homeyness" or coziness to a social media post or product post."
	"Most dogs bring a smile to my face so an ad with a good dog picture will always get me to stop and look for a second and odds are I'll form a positive view of the brand or at the very least they'll get a brownie point."
	"I think the pets add an element of calm and happiness in advertisements used to promote products on social media."

Pet product	"Obviously, if it's a product for a pet, otherwise, I'm always open to seeing any kind of pet or animal on social media. The best posts are about animals."
	"It wouldn't make sense for a pet to promote a product unless it was specifically pet-related like dog food."
	"...I love dogs… I do approve of pets being used to promote products related to pets."

Overall, the pre-test confirmed that all the social media posts were evaluated similarly except in terms of cuteness. The pet influencer was evaluated to be cuter than both the human influencer and brand post, while the human influencer was evaluated to be cuter than the brand post, as expected. In addition, the pre-test results suggested that the stimuli used for low-price product (i.e., mop) was not as equivalent (due to the human influencer post being evaluated more negatively) as the one for the high-price product (i.e., robot vacuum), such that the later stimuli was selected for Study 1.

Study 1

The goal of Study 1 was to better understand how a more (vs. less) cute social media influencer impacts consumers' responses to a sponsored social media post. I pre-registered my hypotheses and analyses using AsPredicted (see Appendix 5). In the pre-registration, I hypothesized that the higher perceived cuteness of a social media influencer would result in more positive perceived persuasive intentions of a sponsored social media post and, in turn, in more positive attitudes and behavioral intentions towards the featured brand and product. The pre-registered hypotheses were not supported, such that Study 1 instead serves as an exploratory study, and the results served as a foundation for the hypotheses formulated in this thesis (which will be confirmed in Studies 2a and 2b).

Methods

Six-hundred and ninety-two participants were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk via CloudResearch and were compensated $1.00 for a 6-minute study. However, participants who did not pass the attention checks, who incorrectly answered specific questions (e.g., put their birth year instead of age when asking for the latter), mentioned that they encountered technical issues while completing the survey, indicated that they were distracted, or indicated that their data should not be used in the analyses were removed from the analyses. These data exclusion criteria were pre-registered and consistently applied across all subsequent studies. The final sample thus consisted of 669 participants (M_{age} = 43.29; SD = 11.96; 58.1% male).

Participants first had to provide informed consent, answer three attention/comprehension checks (e.g., "A chicken is a type of insect" True/False) and were presented with a short introduction about the purpose of the study. Participants were then randomly assigned to one of three conditions: ad (branded content), human influencer, or pet influencer. They were presented with a social media post featuring a robot vacuum product from a hypothetical brand (i.e., VacuMate). Participants were then presented with the process measures and dependent variable

in a randomized order (i.e., process first and DV second, or vice versa). The overall design of Study 1 thus was a 3 (influencer type) x 2 (order of presentation) mixed design.

The process measure consisted of questions asking participants to evaluate their perceived persuasion intentions of the sponsored social media post presented to them. Participants first evaluated the extent to which the post aimed to sell a product, entertain, influence preferences, provide information, and persuade on a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). These items were included in the study for exploratory purposes and were not included in subsequent studies, so they will not be discussed further (see Appendix 7 for the analyses of these items). Participants then evaluated the persuasion intent of the post on 7-point bipolar scales (items: insincere/sincere; inauthentic/authentic; manipulative/not manipulative; not convincing/convincing).

The dependent measures first asked participants about their opinions of the product featured in the post on a 7-point bipolar scale (items: bad/good; negative/positive; unfavorable/favorable). They were then asked to rate their behavioral intentions on a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) – i.e., if they would: "Like to know more about VacuMate," "Be interested in learning more about the robot vacuum," "Look for more information about VacuMate," and "Recommend this robot vacuum to other people." Further, participants were asked about their purchase likelihood, or whether they would consider VacuMate the next time they were looking for a robot vacuum on a 7-point scale (1 = extremely unlikely to 7 = extremely likely).

Next, participants were asked to rate the level of cuteness of the post (items: cute, adorable) on a 7-point scale (0 = not at all to 6 = extremely). The items used to assess cuteness were reduced based on the results of the pre-test, as all items (which included kindschenschema and whimsical cuteness items) loaded on the same factor. The two items with the highest factor loadings in the pre-test were thus used in all the studies to reduce the number of questions in the experiments. Participants were then asked to rate how the social media post made them feel, in order to rule out potential alternative explanations related to mood, on a 7-point bipolar scale (sad/happy). Finally, participants completed standard demographics and data quality (e.g., distractions, technological issues) questions. See Appendix 6 for a comprehensive list of measures.

Results and Discussion

Factor Analyses

I first conducted factor and reliability analyses on each set of items included in the study, in order to determine whether they could be combined into indexes to be used in subsequent analyses. See Table 8 for the results.

Table 8. Factor analyses – Study 1.

Items	Variable	Eigenvalue	Alpha
Sincere, Authentic, NotManipulative, Convincing	Persuasion Intent	3.13	.91
Good, Positive, Favorable	Attitudes	2.86	.98
Know, Interested, Look, Recommend	Intentions	3.53	.96

		r	*p*
Cute, Adorable	Cuteness	.940	<.001

Pre-registered analyses: Order effects

I conducted two-way ANOVAs with influencer type and order of presentation to test for potential order effects. Most of the interaction effects on the process measures and dependent variables were not significant (see Table 9), except for three (out of eight) analyses. Refer to Appendix 7 for the third significant analysis.

First, there was a significant interaction between influencer type and order of presentation on perceived persuasion intent ($F(2,663) = 3.154$, $p = .043$). When the persuasion-related items were assessed before the dependent variables, the human and pet influencers were seen as having more negative persuasive intentions than the branded post ($M_{Brand} = 4.22$, $SD = 1.33$; $M_{Human} = 3.38$, $SD = 1.58$; $M_{Pet} = 3.64$, $SD = 1.48$; $F(2,663) = 9.016$, $p < .001$)., Similar results were obtained when the persuasion-related items were measured after the dependent variables ($M_{Brand} = 4.21$, $SD = 1.32$; $M_{Human} = 3.67$, $SD = 1.62$; $M_{Pet} = 3.97$, $SD = 1.60$; $F(2,663) = 3.154$, $p = .043$).

Second, there was a significant interaction between influencer type and order of presentation on purchase likelihood ($F(2,663) = 4.453$, $p = .012$). When the persuasion-related items were assessed before the dependent variables, the branded post generated higher purchase likelihood compared to the human or pet influencers ($M_{Brand} = 4.52$, $SD = 1.60$; $M_{Human} = 3.82$, $SD = 1.68$; $M_{Pet} = 3.95$, $SD = 1.71$; $F(2,663) = 5.708$, $p = .003$). Conversely, when the persuasion-related items were measured after the dependent variables, purchase likelihood did not differ based on influencer type ($M_{Brand} = 4.21$, $SD = 1.32$; $M_{Human} = 3.96$, $SD = 1.62$; $M_{Pet} = 4.26$, $SD = 1.66$; $F(2,663) = 1.248$, $p = .288$). As mentioned above, none of the remaining moderation analyses produced significant interactions (see Table 10).

Table 9. Two-way ANOVAs: Process measure – Study 1.

Persuasion Intent	***df***	***F***	***p***
Influencer type	2, 663	7.361	<.001
Process first	1, 663	11.521	<.001
Influencer x process first	2, 663	3.154	.043

Table 10. Two-way ANOVAs: Dependent variables – Study 1.

Attitudes	***df***	***F***	***p***
Influencer type	2, 663	1.001	.368
Process first	1, 663	36.580	<.001
Influencer x process first	2, 663	2.232	.108

Intentions	***df***	***F***	***p***
Influencer type	2, 663	1.746	.175
Process first	1, 663	19.426	<.001
Influencer x process first	2, 663	1.715	.181
Purchase Likelihood	***df***	***F***	***p***
Influencer type	2, 663	1.774	.170
Process first	1, 663	24.058	<.001
Influencer x process first	2, 663	4.453	.012
Mood	***df***	***F***	***p***
Influencer type	2, 663	26.595	<.001
Process first	1, 663	10.587	.001
Influencer x process first	2. 663	1.639	.195

Table 11. Manipulation check - Cuteness.

Cuteness	***df***	***F***	***p***
Influencer type	2, 663	116.147	<.001
Process first	1, 663	.781	.398
Influencer x process first	2, 663	2.121	.110

Exploratory analyses: Order effects with covariates

I conducted exploratory analyses to further test for potential order effects by including gender and age as covariates. The inclusion of these covariates in the analyses did not change the direction nor significance of most of the results, except for persuasion intent, where the interaction became non-significant (see Appendix 8).

Pre-registered analyses: Main effects of influencer type

I conducted one-way between-subject ANOVAs with influencer type as the independent variable on the process measure and dependent variables. First, there was a significant main effect of post type on cuteness, such that the post featuring a pet influencer was evaluated as cuter compared to the ones featuring the brand or the human influencer ($F(2,666) = 118.592$, $p = < .001$; $M_{Brand} = 1.93$, $SD = 1.75$; $M_{Human} = 1.83$, $SD = 1.68$; $M_{Pet} = 4.05$, $SD = 1.70$), confirming the effectiveness of the cuteness manipulation. Second, three of the main effects (i.e., attitudes, purchase likelihood, and intentions) were not significant (see Table 12), while two (out of five) analyses produced significant results (i.e., persuasion intent and cuteness). For instance, there

was a significant main effect of influencer type ($F(2,666) = 7.151$, $p = < .001$) on persuasion intent ($M_{Brand} = 4.21$, $SD = 1.32$; $M_{Human} = 3.67$, $SD = 1.62$; $M_{Pet} = 3.97$, $SD = 1.61$, such that the brand post produced more positive persuasion intentions than the influencer posts (see Table 12).

Table 12. Main effects of influencer type – Study 1.

Variable	***df***	***F***	***p***	M_{Brand} (*SD*)	M_{Human} (*SD*)	M_{Pet} (*SD*)
Persuasion Intent	2, 663	7.151	<.001	4.21^{6} (1.32)	3.67^{6} (1.62)	3.97 (1.61)
Attitudes	2, 663	1.099	.334	5.00^{7} (1.34)	4.82^{7} (1.35)	4.98 (1.41)
Intentions	2, 663	1.706	.182	4.16^{10} (1.74)	3.84^{10} (1.87)	4.00 (1.88)
Purchase Likelihood	2, 663	1.570	.209	$4.57^{8,9}$ (1.54)	4.31^{8} (1.74)	4.37^{9} (1.67)
Mood	2, 663	27.622	<.001	4.69^{13} (1.03)	4.62^{14} (1.06)	$5.35^{13,14}$ (1.32)
Cuteness	2, 663	118.592	<.001	1.91^{11} (1.75)	1.83^{12} (1.68)	$4.05^{11,12}$ (1.70)

Note. Means with common superscript from the same row significantly differ from each other ($p < .05$).

Exploratory analyses: Main effects of influencer type with covariates

Exploratory analyses were conducted to further analyze the main effects of influencer type with gender and age as covariates. The inclusion of these covariates in the analyses did not change the direction nor significance of the results (see Appendix 9). Further, I re-ran the analyses with mood also included as a covariate (in addition to gender and age), and the main effects of influencer type on the process measure and all dependent variables became significant (all p's < .001; see Appendix 10).

Based on these results, I decided to run serial mediation analyses to explore whether the relationships between influencer type and the dependent variables were serially mediated through mood and persuasion intent, given that prior research has shown that mood can impact the effectiveness of persuasion message (Bless et al., 1990), as mentioned above. I thus decided to explore the roles of mood and persuasion on the effects of post type on the dependent variables.

Exploratory Analyses: Serial mediation analyses

I conducted serial mediation analyses using PROCESS Model 6 with influencer type as the independent variable (coded as 0 = pet influencer, 1 = branded content, and 2 = human influencer), mood as the first mediator, perceived persuasion intent as the second mediator, and attitudes, behavioral intentions and purchase likelihood as the dependent variables. Each

dependent variable was analyzed separately. The analyses produce significant serial mediation analyses for all three dependent variables (see Table 13).

Table 13. Serial mediation analyses – Study 1.

	Mood	**Perceived persuasion intent**	**Attitudes**
Pet (vs. brand)	β = -.6613, *SE* = .1082, *t* = -6.1129, *p* <.001	β = .7673, *SE* = .1194, *t* = 6.4249, *p* <.001	β = .1601, *SE* = .0867, *t* = 1.8465, *p* = .0653
Pet (vs. human)	β = -.7311, *SE* = .1084, *t* = -6.7426, *p* <.001	β = .2809, *SE* = .1204, *t* = 2.3332, *p* = .0199	β = .2764, *SE* = .0851, *t* = 3.2473, *p* = .0012
Mood	–	β = .7909, *SE* = .0416, *t* = 18.9997, *p* <.001	β = .4225, *SE* = .0364, *t* = 11.6037, *p* <.001
Perceived persuasion intent	–	–	β = .4603, *SE* = .0273, *t* = 16.8547, *p* <.001
Mediation 95% CI (Pet vs. brand)	[-.41; -.17]	[.25; .47]	[-.34; -.15]
Mediation 95% CI (Pet vs. human)	[-.44; -.19]	[.01; .25]	[-.37; -.18]
	Mood	**Perceived persuasion intent**	**Behavioral intentions**
Pet (vs. brand)	β = -.6613, *SE* = .1082, *t* = -6.1129, *p* <.001	β = .7673, *SE* = .1194, *t* = 6.4249, *p* <.001	β = .3955, *SE* = .1263, *t* = 3.1319, *p* = .0018
Pet (vs. human)	β = -.7311, *SE* = .1084, *t* = -6.7426, *p* <.001	β = .2809, *SE* = .1204, *t* = 2.3332, *p* = .0199	β = .4194, *SE* = .1240, *t* = 3.3814, *p* = .0008
Mood	–	β = .7909, *SE* = .0416, *t* = 18.9997, *p* <.001	β = .5576, *SE* = .0530, *t* = 10.5118, *p* <.001
Perceived persuasion intent	–	–	β = .5610, *SE* = .0398, *t* = 14.0989, *p* <.001
Mediation 95% CI (Pet vs. brand)	[-.53; -.23]	[.29; .57]	[-.41; -.19]
Mediation 95% CI (Pet vs. human)	[-.57; -.26]	[.01; .30]	[-.45; -.21]
	Mood	**Perceived persuasion intent**	**Purchase likelihood**

Pet (vs. brand)	β = -.6613, *SE* = .1082, *t* = -6.1129, *p* <.001	β = .7673, *SE* = .1194, *t* = 6.4249, *p* <.001	β = .4204, *SE* = .1209, *t* = 3.784, *p* = .0005
Pet (vs. human)	β = -.7311, *SE* = .1084, *t* = -6.7426, *p* <.001	β = .2809, *SE* = .1204, *t* = 2.3332, *p* = .0199	β = .4433, *SE* = .1187, *t* = 3.7346, *p* = .0002
Mood	–	β = .7909, *SE* = .0416, *t* = 18.9997, *p* <.001	β = .4962, *SE* = .0508, *t* = 9.7731, *p* <.001
Perceived persuasion intent	–	–	β = .4635, *SE* = .0381, *t* = 12.1702, *p* <.001
Mediation 95% CI (Pet vs. brand)	[-.48; -.20]	[.25; .47]	[-34.; -.15]
Mediation 95% CI (Pet vs. human)	[-.52; -.23]	[.89; .25]	[-.37; -.17]

Exploratory analyses: Serial mediation analyses with covariates

I re-ran the serial mediations with gender and age as covariates. The inclusion of these covariates in the analyses did not change the direction nor the significance of the effects (see Appendix 11).

Discussion

In sum, study 1 revealed serial mediations (actually suppression effects; more on this in the general discussion) between influencer type and attitudes, behavioral intentions, and purchase likelihood through mood and perceived persuasion intent. The one-way ANOVAs revealed no significant main effects of influencer type, but these effects became marginal or significant in the serial mediations. Specifically, the branded content or the human influencer produced a more negative mood than the pet influencer. However, the branded content or the human influencer were seen as having more positive persuasion intentions than the pet influencer, and mood was positively correlated with perceived persuasion intent. The branded content or the human influencer further resulted in more positive attitudes, intentions, and purchase likelihood towards the promoted brand than the pet influencer, and mood and persuasion intentions were positively correlated with participants' responses.

Study 1 produced counterintuitive results that either do not support (H1) or contradict (H2-H3) most of my hypotheses, but the serial mediation hypothesis (H4) was supported. Next, Study 2a and 2b will attempt to confirm the serial mediation effects uncovered through exploratory analyses in study 1.

Study 2a

The main goal of study 2 was to attempt to closely (study 2a) and conceptually (study 2b) replicate the serial mediations uncovered through exploratory analyses in study 1. Study 2's hypotheses and analyses were pre-registered using AsPredicted (see Appendix 13). The main differences between studies 1 and 2 are that I removed the branded content (i.e., ad) condition to focus on the effects of pet versus human influencers, and the inclusion and order of presentation

of (some of) the measures. Study 2a closely replicated study 1 using the same high-involvement product (i.e., robot vacuum), whereas study 2b conceptually replicated study 1 using a low-involvement product (i.e., mop), in order to determine the generalizability of the findings.

Methods

Two-hundred and twenty-six participants were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk via CloudResearch and were compensated $1.00 for a 5-minute study. However, participants who did not meet the same pre-registered exclusion criteria as in Study 1 were removed from the study. The final sample thus consisted of 226 participants (M_{Age} = 43.5; *SD* = 11.98; 49.1% female).

The procedure was identical to Study 1 except that i) the study included only two influencer type (i.e., pet vs. human), ii) the order of presentation of the measures was kept consistent, such that participants saw the process measures (i.e., mood and perceived persuasion intent) before seeing the outcome measures, iii) the perception purpose measure was not included in the study. See Appendix 1 and 2 for stimuli and Appendix 12 for a comprehensive list of measures.

Results and Discussion

Factor analyses

I first conducted factor and reliability analyses on each set of items included in the study, in order to determine whether they could be combined into indexes to be used in subsequent analyses. See Table 14.

Table 14. Factor analyses – Study 2a.

Items	**Variable**	**Eigenvalue**	**Alpha**
Sincere, Authentic, NotManipulative, Convincing	Persuasion Intent	3.18	.91
Good, Positive, Favorable	Attitudes	2.91	.98
Know, Interested, Look, Recommend	Intentions	3.55	.96
		r	***p***
Cute, Adorable	Cuteness	.956	<.001

Main effects of influencer type

As pre-registered, I conducted one-way between-subject ANOVAs with influencer type as the independent variable on all the process measures and dependent variables. There was a significant main effect of influencer type on cuteness, such that the pet influencer post was evaluated as cuter compared to the human influencer posts ($F(1,224) = 64.120$, $p = <.001$; $M_{Human} = 2.20$, $SD = 1.68$; $M_{Pet} = 4.02$, $SD = 1.74$), confirming the effectiveness of the cuteness manipulation. No other main effect was significant (see table 15), such that H1 was not supported.

Table 15. Main effects of influencer type – Study 2a.

Variable	*df*	*F*	*p*	M_{Human} (*SD*)	M_{Pet} (*SD*)
Persuasion Intent	1, 224	.036	.850	4.16 (1.52)	4.20 (1.47)
Attitudes	1, 224	.045	.832	4.89 (1.34)	4.93 (1.38)
Intentions	1, 224	.520	.472	3.80 (1.67)	3.63 (1.65)
Purchase Likelihood	1, 224	.709	.401	4.19 (1.61)	4.01 (1.71)
Mood	1, 224	17.839	<.001	4.71 (1.04)	5.33 (1.14)
Cuteness	1, 224	64.120	<.001	2.20 (1.68)	4.02 (1.74)

Main effects of influencer type with covariates

Exploratory analyses were conducted to explore the main effects of influencer type when including gender and age as covariates. All the main effects remained non-significant (see Appendix 14).

Serial mediation analyses

Serial mediation analyses were conducted using PROCESS Model 6 with influencer type as the independent variable (coded as 0 = pet and 1 = human influencer), mood as the first mediator (continuous), perceived persuasion intent as the second mediator (continuous) and attitudes, behavioral intentions and purchase likelihood as the dependent variables. Each dependent variable was analyzed separately. The analyses produced significant serial mediation analyses for all three dependent variables (see Table 16).

Table 16. Serial mediations – Study 2a.

	Mood	**Perceived persuasion intent**	**Attitudes**
Influencer type	β = -.6195, *SE* = .1467, *t* = -4.2236, *p* <.001	β = 3992., *SE* = .1771, *t* = 2.2547, *p* = .0251	β = .1554, *SE* = .1175, *t* = 1.3223, *p* = .1874
Mood	–	β = .7051, *SE* = .0776, *t* = 9.0839, *p* <.001	β = .2769, *SE* = .0596, *t* = 4.6441, *p* <.001
Perceived persuasion intent	–	–	β = .5901, *SE* = .0439, *t* = 13.4288, *p* <.001
Mediation 95% CI	[-.33; -.06]	[.01; .44]	[-.40; -.13]
	Mood	**Perceived persuasion intent**	**Behavioral intentions**
Influencer type	β = -.6195, *SE* = .1467, *t* =	β = 3992., *SE* = .1771, *t* =	β = .2988, *SE* = .1730, *t* =

	-4.2236, p <.001	2.2547, p = .0251	1.7267, p = .0856
Mood	–	β = .7051, *SE* = .0776, t = 9.0839, p <.001	β = .1848, *SE* = .0878, t = 2.1047, p = .0364
Perceived persuasion intent	–	–	β = .6649, *SE* = .0647, t = 10.2750, p <.001
Mediation 95% CI	[-.27; -.00]	[.03; .51]	[-.45; -.14]
	Mood	**Perceived persuasion intent**	**Purchase likelihood**
Influencer type	β = -.6195, *SE* = .1467, t = -4.2236, p <.001	β = 3992., *SE* = .1771, t = 2.2547, p = .0251	β = .3376, *SE* = .1896, t = 1.7800, p = 0.764
Mood	–	β = .7051, *SE* = .0776, t = 9.0839, p <.001	β = .2116, *SE* = .0962, t = 2.1985, p = .0289
Perceived persuasion intent	–	–	β = .5496, *SE* = .0709, t = 7.7487, p <.001
Mediation 95% CI	[-.33; -.00]	[.02; .42]	[-.39; -.12]

Serial mediation analyses with covariates

To further explore the serial mediations, I re-ran the analyses with gender and age as covariates. The inclusion of these covariates in the analyses did not change the direction or the significance of the effects (see Appendix 15).

Discussion

Contrary to Study 1, I found a mediation (vs. suppression) effect of mood and perceived persuasion intent, because the main effects of influencer remained non-significant (vs. became significant) when the serial mediators were added in the model. The one-way ANOVAs revealed non-significant main effects of influencer type on the three outcome measures (i.e., attitudes, behavioral intentions, and purchase likelihood). As for the serial mediations, the human influencer produced more negative mood than the pet influencer. However, the human influencer was seen as having more positive persuasion intentions than the pet influencer, and mood was positively correlated with perceived persuasion intent. The human influencer further resulted in more positive attitudes, intentions, and purchase likelihood towards the promoted brand than the pet influencer, and mood and persuasion intentions were positively correlated with these outcomes. These findings again do not support (H1) or contradict (H2-H3) most of my hypotheses, but the serial mediation hypothesis (H4) was supported.

Study 2b

As mentioned above, the goal of study 2b was to conceptually replicate study 2a (and study 1) using a different product (i.e., a mop instead of a robot vacuum), in order to determine the

generalizability of the findings. The image featured in the sponsored social media post from a human influencer was modified in this study from the one used in the pre-test, because the pre-test showed that the mop stimuli produced more negative evaluations in the human influencer condition. I thus changed the image to one I hoped would produce less negative effects.

Methods

Two-hundred and twenty-three participants were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk via CloudResearch and were compensated $1.00 for a 5-minute study. Study 2b followed the exact same procedures as study 2a, except that the product featured in the sponsored social media post was a low-involvement product (i.e., a mop). The final sample thus consisted of 223 participants (M_{Age} = 44.45; *SD* = 14.17; 58.3% female). See Appendix 12 for a comprehensive list of measures.

Results and Discussion

Factor Analyses

I first conducted factor and reliability analyses on each set of items included in the study, in order to determine whether they could be combined into indexes to be used in subsequent analyses. See Table 17 for the results.

Table 17. Factor analyses – Study 2b.

Items	**Variable**	**Eigenvalue**	**Alpha**
Sincere, Authentic, NotManipulative, Convincing	Persuasion Intent	3.39	.94
Good, Positive, Favorable	Attitudes	2.82	.97
Know, Interested, Look, Recommend	Intentions	3.65	.97
		r	***p***
Cute, Adorable	Cuteness	.931	<.001

Main effects of influencer type

I conducted one-way between-subject ANOVAs with influencer type as the independent variable on all the process measures and dependent variables. Similar to study 2a, there was a significant main effect of post type on cuteness, such that the pet influencer post was evaluated as cuter compared to the human influencer post ($F(1,221) = 53.708$, $p = <.001$; $M_{Human} = 2.05$, *SD* = 1.81; $M_{Pet} = 3.78$, *SD* = 1.74), confirming the effectiveness of the cuteness manipulation. No other main effect was significant (see Table 18).

Table 18. Main effects of influencer type – Study 2b.

Variable	***df***	***F***	***p***	M_{Human} (*SD*)	M_{Pet} (*SD*)
Persuasion Intent	1, 221	2.144	.145	4.00 (1.70)	4.32 (1.53)

Attitudes	1, 221	1.207	.273	4.87 (1.31)	5.06 (1.28)
Intentions	1, 221	.014	.906	3.71 (1.81)	3.74 (1.80)
Purchase Likelihood	1, 221	1.727	.190	4.03 (1.80)	4.33 (1.61)
Mood	1, 221	7.980	.005	4.71 (0.96)	5.10 (1.11)
Cuteness	1, 221	53.708	<.001	2.05 (1.78)	3.78 (1.74)

Main effects of influencer type with covariates

Exploratory analyses were conducted to analyze the main effect on influencer type with gender and age as covariates. All the main effects remained non-significant (see Appendix 16).

Serial mediation analyses

Serial mediation analyses were conducted using PROCESS Model 6 with influencer type as the independent variable (coded as 0 = pet and 1 = human influencer), mood as the first mediator (continuous), perceived persuasion intent as the second mediator (continuous) and attitudes, behavioral intentions and purchase likelihood as the dependent variables. Each dependent variable was analyzed separately. The analyses produced significant serial mediation analyses for all three dependent variables (see Table 19).

Table 19. Serial mediations – Study 2b.

	Mood	**Perceived persuasion intent**	**Attitudes**
Influencer type	β = -.3920, *SE* = .1388, *t* = -2.8248, *p* = .0052	β = .0891, *SE* = .1658, *t* = .5373, *p* = .5916	β = .1086, *SE* = .1002, *t* = 1.0835, *p* = .2798
Mood	–	β = 1.0387, *SE* = .0790, *t* = 13.1559, *p* <.001	β = .3796, *SE* = .0637, *t* = 5.9563, *p* <.001
Perceived persuasion intent	–	–	β = .4719, *SE* = .0407, *t* = 11.909, *p* <.001
Mediation 95% CI	[-.28; -.04]	[-.11; .19]	[-.33; -.06]
	Mood	**Perceived persuasion intent**	**Behavioral intentions**
Influencer type	β = -.3920, *SE* = .1388, *t* = -2.8248, *p* = .0052	β = .0891, *SE* = .1658, *t* = .5373, *p* = .5916	β = .3789, *SE* = .1510, *t* = 2.5097, *p* = .0128
Mood	–	β = 1.0387, *SE* = .0790, *t* = 13.1559, *p* <.001	β = .5456, *SE* = .0960, *t* = 5.6817, *p* <.001
Perceived persuasion	–	–	β = .6085, *SE* = .0613, *t* =

intent			9.9195, p <.001
Mediation 95% CI	[-.39; -.06]	[-.13; .25]	[-.44; -.07]
	Mood	**Perceived persuasion intent**	**Purchase likelihood**
Influencer type	β = -.3920, *SE* = .1388, *t* = -2.8248, *p* = .0052	β = .0891, *SE* = .1658, *t* = .5373, *p* = .5916	β = .0464, *SE* = .1619, *t* = .2867, *p* = .7746
Mood	–	β = 1.0387, *SE* = .0790, *t* = 13.1559, *p* <.001	β = .4464, *SE* = .1030, *t* = 4.336, *p* <.001
Perceived persuasion intent	–	–	β = .5412, *SE* = .0658, *t* = 8.2242, *p* <.001
Mediation 95% CI	[-.34; -.05]	[-.12; .24]	[-.40; -.07]

Serial mediation analyses with covariates

I re-ran the serial mediations with gender and age as covariates. The inclusion of these covariates in the analyses did not change the direction or the significance of the effects (see Appendix 17).

Discussion

Study 2b revealed a mix of suppression (for behavioral intentions) and mediation (for attitudes and purchase likelihood) effect of mood and perceived persuasion intent, which combines the effects found in studies 1 (suppression) and 2a (mediation). The one-way ANOVAs again revealed non-significant main effects of influencer type on the three outcome measures (i.e., attitudes, behavioral intentions, and purchase likelihood). As for the serial mediations, similar to the previous studies, the human influencer produced more negative mood than the pet influencer. However, the human influencer was seen as having more positive persuasion intentions than the pet influencer, and mood was positively correlated with perceived persuasion intent. The human influencer further resulted in more positive attitudes, intentions, and purchase likelihood towards the promoted brand than the pet influencer, and mood and persuasion intentions were positively correlated with these outcomes. These findings again do not support (H1) or contradict (H2-H3) most of my hypotheses, but the serial mediation hypothesis (H4) was supported. In addition, the results of study 2b suggest that the findings of studies 1 and 2a generalize to a different product (i.e., lower involvement mop vs. higher involvement robot vacuum).

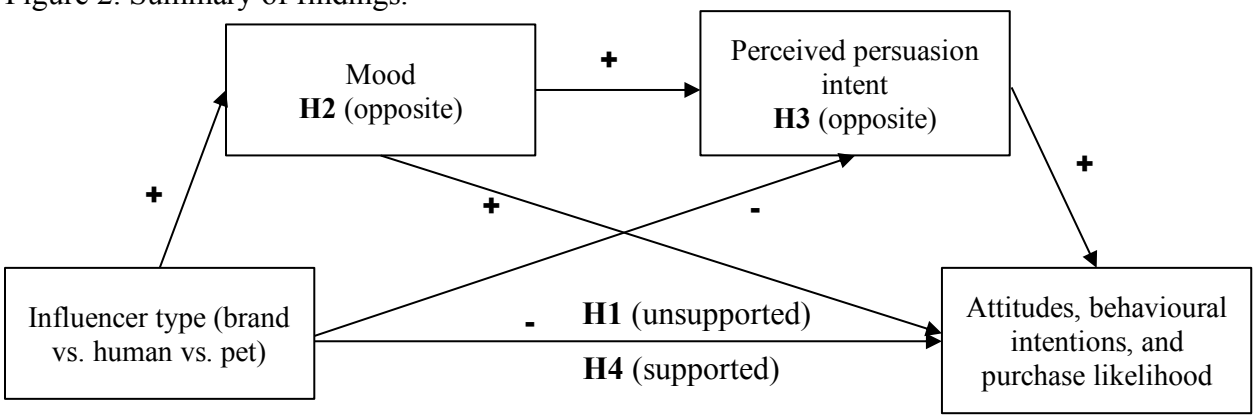
General discussion

As firms increasingly spend more of their marketing communications budgets on influencer marketing, marketers need to better understand which type(s) of influencers are more effective for their brand. Overall, the main goal of this thesis was to better understand how the use of pet influencers (vs. human influencers or branded content) in sponsored social media posts impacted consumers' responses to the advertised brand and product.

The pre-test established that a pet influencer was evaluated as being cuter than both a human influencer and a brand post (and a human influencer was evaluated as being cuter than a brand post), and helped identify a relatively neutral stimuli for the experiments. Study 1 explored the effects of influencer type (i.e., pet vs. human vs. brand) on consumers' responses (i.e., attitudes, behavioral intentions, purchase likelihood). Although there were no main effects of influencer type on most of the outcome variables, the study revealed a serial mediation effect of influencer type on the three outcome measures through mood and the perceived persuasion intent of the post. Study 2 aimed to replicate and confirm Study 1's findings, with Study 2a being a close replication (using the same stimuli; i.e., robot vacuum) and Study 2b being a conceptual replication (using a lower-involvement product; i.e., mop). Both Study 2a and 2b replicated the serial mediation effects found in Study 1.

Overall, the pet influencer (vs. human influencer or branded content) had no significant direct effect on consumer responses, and was directionally negative, such that H1 was not supported. The meditation effects of mood (H2) and perceived persuasion intent (H3), although significant, produced consumer responses in the opposite direction (i.e., negative) than predicted. However, mood and perceived persuasion intent serially mediated the effects of influencer type on consumer responses, such that H4 was supported. See figure 2 for a summary for my findings.

Figure 2. Summary of findings.



Theoretical contributions

My thesis offers theoretical contributions to the literature on influencer marketing and on cuteness. First, the current research contributes to the literature on influencer marketing by comparing the effects of different types of influencers based on their perceived cuteness. Previous research on this topic has mostly compared the effects of human and virtual influencers (Arsenyan & Mirowska, 2021; Li et al., 2023), while neglecting making similar comparisons between human and pet influencers, even if pet influencers have been a growing niche of the influencer marketing market (Anderson, 2024). My findings therefore help better understand how pet (vs. human) influencers impact consumers' responses to sponsored social media posts featuring them by showing that they can prompt different responses from consumers.

Second, the current research contributes to the literature on cuteness, by investigating its role in influencer marketing. Previous research in marketing investigated how cute products and/or packaging impacts indulgent consumption (Scott & Nenkov, 2014), product familiarity (Afred Suci & Wang, 2023), or perceived food tastiness and healthiness (Schnurr, 2019), among

others. However, although prior research has established the cuteness of pets (Sherman et al., 2009), little research has investigated their role in marketing communications. The current research found that, although sponsored social media posts featuring pet (vs. human) influencers generated more positive mood, consistent with prior research on cuteness (Sherman et al., 2009), they prompted more negative perceived persuasion intentions, which is contrary to prior research on the effects of mood on persuasion (Petty et al., 1993). My findings therefore highlight the importance of unpacking the role of cuteness in general, and of pet influencers in particular, in marketing communications, as they may produce different outcomes than those observed for other cute marketing cues (e.g., product design, packaging).

Lastly, the current research identified that both consumers' mood and their perceived persuasion intentions of the marketing communications played a sequential role in the effect of cuteness in marketing communications, as serial mediations were found across the studies. My findings therefore highlight the importance of considering the roles of various psychological processes in the effects of cuteness and influencer marketing, as their effects on consumers' responses may not always be straightforward.

Limitations and future research directions

My thesis has several limitations that offer avenues for future research. First, the serial mediation effects found across the studies differed in their nature, as they were a mix of mediation and suppression effects (where a main effect became more, rather than less, significant in a serial mediation analysis) across studies. This means that the roles of mood and perceived persuasion intent, though important, remain somewhat unclear. On one hand, these variables could be psychological processes underlying the relationship between influencer type and consumer responses (based on the mediation effects). On the other hand, they could instead be confounding factors that increase the magnitude of the effects of influencer type on consumer responses once they are controlled for (based on the suppression effects; MacKinnon, 2000). The exact roles of these variables are thus still unclear based on my findings and warrant further investigation.

Second, in this thesis, the pet influencer generated more positive mood, more negative perceived persuasion intentions, than its human (or branded) counterpart. The negative effect on perceived persuasion intent may be because pets who become influencers often are mistreated by their owners who exploit them for monetary gains (Khan, 2023). Some participants who took part in my studies did mention concerns (in the open-ended comment section) related to the exploitation of pet influencers. Future research should thus consider investigating the role of "perceived exploitation" in the effects of pet influencers, as it can impact how consumers respond to influencer marketing, such as in the case of "sharenting" (where parent influencers are perceived to be exploiting their kids; Mouhamad Rachini, 2023). Consumers further seem to be experiencing "influencer fatigue," where they are becoming weary of influencer marketing due to its lack of authenticity and questionable promotional tactics (Nast, 2022; Concannon, 2023). Consumers might thus have also become wary of pet influencers, which warrants further investigation.

Third, to enhance the perceived realism of the sponsored social media posts used in my studies, their caption varied based on influencer type (i.e., written from the perspective of the brand, or human or pet influencer). Consequently, the stimuli differed in terms of cuteness not only based on the image showcasing the influencer type, but also based on the caption accompanying the post. The language used in the captions might thus have produced unintended

confounds (e.g., using verbs in the present tense has been shown to be more persuasive than using verbs in the past tense; Packard et al., 2023). Future research could thus further explore the effects of varying different "cuteness cues" (e.g., image vs. text) in marketing communications on consumer responses. In addition, participants were provided with a definition of cuteness when asked to assess their perceived cuteness of the sponsored social media posts in the pre-test, to ensure that they did not confound the term "cute" with other lay uses of the term (e.g., someone may be considered "cute" due to their physical attractiveness), but such definition was not provided to participants in the studies, in order to more realistically assess their perceived cuteness and prevent biasing their answers. Future research could investigate whether consumers interpret the term "cute" differently for pets (e.g., adorable) versus human (e.g., attractive) influencers, as their lay understanding of the term may prompt different psychological processes.

Moreover, the stimuli employed in the studies only used still images, as they aimed to replicate Instagram's aesthetics. However, videos have become consumers' preferred way of consulting content across major social media platforms (Solomon Thimothy, 2019), such that future research might want to investigate whether the effects of pet influencers in marketing communications differ depending on their format (as video includes additional cues, such as a sound and movement). Further, although I employed sponsored social media posts as stimuli for my studies, they did not include salient persuasion cues, such as hashtags (e.g., #ad) or clear sponsorships disclosures. Future research may thus want to investigate whether, and if so how, such cues may interact with the effects identified in this thesis. More (vs. less) salient persuasion cues could negatively impact consumers' mood when viewing sponsored social media posts, such that there could be a bidirectional effect between mood and perceived persuasion intent, which could also be investigated in future research.

In addition, the stimuli employed in the studies only featured non-pet-related products (i.e., robot vacuum and mop), but pet influencers often promote pet-related products (e.g., pet food, toys, accessories). The pre-test revealed that consumers seem more receptive to pet influencers promoting products that are relevant (vs. irrelevant) to the pets. Future research may thus want to investigate whether pet influencers are better for promoting pet-related products (pet food, toys, accessories), products that can benefit both the pets and their owners (e.g., robot vacuum and mop, to clean after the pet), or their owners only (e.g., personal care products, food not fit for pets). For products that can benefit both the pets and their owners, as those employed in the studies, making the benefits for the pet salient (which was not the case in the stimuli employed) may also produce different results. Future research could also investigate whether pet influencers are better for promoting utilitarian versus hedonic products, as cuteness has been shown to be more closely related to aesthetics (which may be more hedonic) than function (which may be more utilitarian) in the case of products (Scott & Nenkov, 2014).

Lastly, the stimuli employed in the studies only featured dogs as pet influencers. Although dogs are the most popular type of pet influencers on social media (Permenter, 2024), future studies could complement my findings by investigating whether other types of pets, such as cats (the second most popular type of pet influencers) or atypical pets (e.g., lizards such as @macgyverlizard or tortoises such as @tillygthetortoise on Instagram). Atypical pets may be polarizing in terms of perceived cuteness, as they may (or may not) fall under an "ugly cute" aesthetic (Watts, 2017), which may produce different results than more "typical" cuteness. In a similar vein, the stimuli employed in the studies only featured either a human or a pet influencer, but not both in the same post. However, pet influencer content sometimes includes their owner(s), and it is unclear whether the presence of a human (or of a pet in human influencer

content) impacts its effectiveness. Further, I did not assess participants' pet ownership status in my studies, but this individual difference may play a role in how consumers respond to pet influencers (Martina Di Cioccio et al., 2024), which could be investigated in future research.

Managerial implications

My thesis also offers practical implications for marketers. My findings suggest that pet (vs. human) influencers may not be the best type of influencers for promoting non-pet-related products, as they generated lower attitudes, behavioral intentions, and purchase likelihood for the brands and products featured in the sponsored social media posts employed in my studies. Marketers should thus consider whether consumers would be receptive to pets promoting their products before deciding to partner with pet influencers. The positive effect of pet influencers on mood found across the studies, as well as exploratory findings from Study 1 – where pet influencers were seen as more entertaining than their human (or branded) counterparts (see Appendix 7) – further suggest that, although pets may not be the best type of influencers for non-pet-related products, they may serve other purposes that could be beneficial for brands, as they could still have longer term effects on consumers' attitudes. Pet influencers may thus be more appropriate for campaigns attempting to impact the top of the marketing communications funnel (i.e., awareness, attention) than the bottom of the funnel (i.e., decisions, purchase behavior), when used to promote non-pet-related products.

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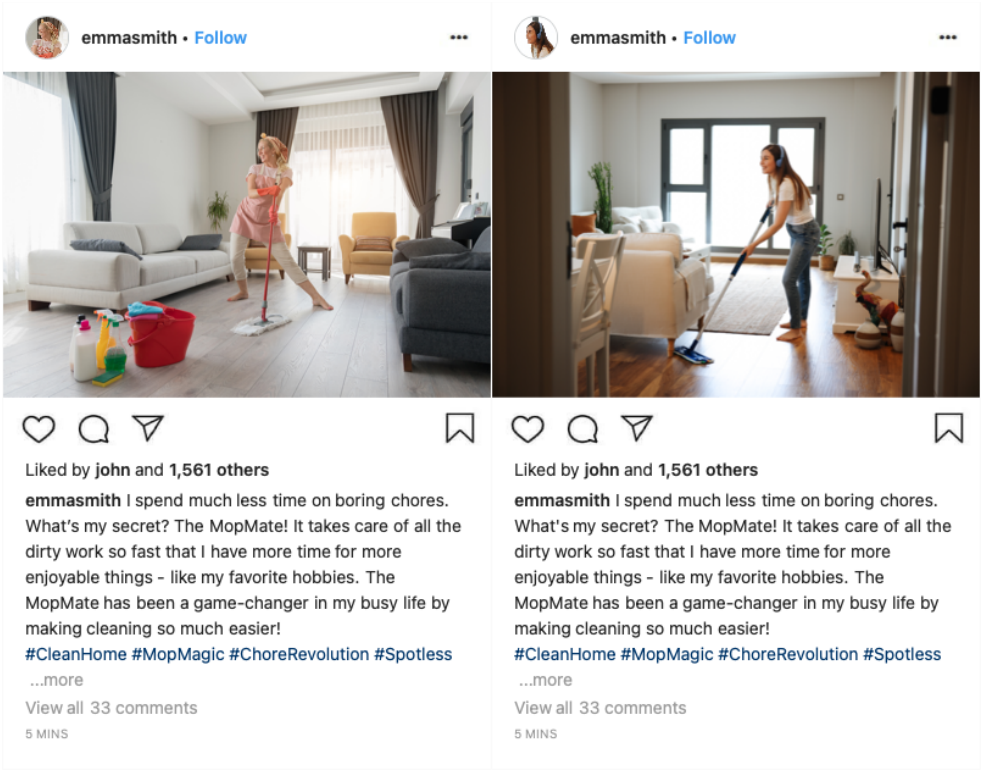
Appendices

Appendix 1. Stimuli used in pre-test and study 2 (low-involvement product)

Branded post



Human influencer (left: stimuli used in the pre-test; right: modified stimuli used in Study 2)

Pet influencer

Appendix 2. Stimuli used in pre-test, study 1 and study 2 (high involvement product)

Branded post

Human influencer

Pet influencer

Appendix 3. Pre-test materials

Question	Scale/Responses
I find the post… • Credible • Believable • Trustworthy • Likable • Appealing • Pleasing	1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree
I find the post… • Cute • Adorable • Endearing • Whimsical • Playful • Fun • Vulnerable	0 = not at all to 6 = extremely
The product showcased in the post seems: • Very inexpensive - Very expensive • Very affordable - Very unaffordable	7-point bipolar scale

• Mostly a necessity - Mostly a luxury	
The product showcased in the post is mostly used to take care of: • Your pet(s) • Your home • Yourself	1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree
Overall, the social media post makes me feel: • Sad - Happy • Calm - Excited • Negative - Positive	7-point bipolar scale
How often do you see content featuring pets on social media?	1 = Never to 7 = Multiple times a day
How often do you encounter ads or sponsored posts featuring pets on social media?	1 = Never to 7 = Multiple times a day
Do you generally find pets cute?	1 = Definitely not to 7 = Definitely yes (4 = Indifferent)
Which type of pets do you find cuter?	Mostly cats, Both equally, Mostly dogs, Neither
What is your opinion of pets being used to promote products on social media?	1 = Strongly dislike to 7 = Strongly like (4 = Neither like nor dislike)
Please briefly explain your answer to the previous question.	Open-ended

Appendix 4. Description of cuteness used in the pre-test

Cuteness is generally defined as being attractive in an adorable or endearing way. There also are two different types of cuteness: i) baby schema cuteness, which is related to the physical features of newborns (e.g., bulging forehead, large eyes, rounded cheeks), and ii) whimsical cuteness which is associated with fun and playfulness.

Note. This definition was presented to participants right before assessing their perceived cuteness of the social media post in the pre-test to ensure that they did not confound the term "cute" with other lay uses of the term (e.g., someone may be considered "cute" due to their physical attractiveness). However, this definition was not presented to participants in the studies in order to more realistically assess their perceived cuteness and prevent biasing their answers.

Appendix 5. Pre-registered analyses - Study 1

'*Influencer Cuteness Study 1*'
(AsPredicted #160011)

Created: 01/29/2024 02:27 PM (PT)

Author(s)
Tanmaya Kansara (Concordia University) - t_kansar@live.concordia.ca
Caroline Roux (Concordia University) - caroline.roux@concordia.ca

1) Have any data been collected for this study already?
No, no data have been collected for this study yet.

2) What's the main question being asked or hypothesis being tested in this study?
We will be testing whether higher perceived cuteness of a social media influencer decreases the perceived persuasive intent of a sponsored social media post and, in turn, increases positive attitudes and behavioral intentions towards the featured brand.

3) Describe the key dependent variable(s) specifying how they will be measured.
Perceived persuasion intent (mediator) will be assessed using three items (sell a product, influence preferences, persuade) on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) scale, as well as two items (manipulative, convincing) on a bipolar scale (1-7).

Attitudes toward the brand (DV) will be assessed using three items (good, positive, favorable) on a bipolar scale (1-7).

Behavioral intentions (DV) will be assessed using three items (look for more information, learn more about the product, recommend the product) on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) scale, as well as one item (consideration) on a 1 (extremely unlikely) to 7 (extremely likely) scale.

4) How many and which conditions will participants be assigned to?
Between-subjects design. Participants will be assigned to one of three sponsored social media posts featuring a robot vacuum cleaner: posted by i) the brand (control condition 1), a human influencer (control condition 2), or a pet influencer (cuteness condition).
We will also randomize the order of presentation of the mediator and DVs.

5) Specify exactly which analyses you will conduct to examine the main question/hypothesis.
We will run two-way ANOVAs (3 (post type: ad vs. human vs. pet) X 2(order of presentation: DVs first vs. mediator first)) to test for potential order of presentation effects.
Assuming there is no order effects, we will:
- Run one-way ANOVAs on the mediator (perceived persuasion intent) and the two DVs (attitudes and behavioral intentions).
- Conduct mediation analyses using PROCESS Model 4 and a multicategorical IV, with social media post type as the IV, perceived persuasion intent as the mediator, and attitudes/behavioral intentions as DVs.

6) Describe exactly how outliers will be defined and handled, and your precise rule(s) for excluding observations.
We will exclude participants who: i) failed any of the attention checks, ii) who incorrectly answered specific questions (e.g., put their birth year instead of age when asking for the latter), iii) encountered technical issues while completing the survey, iv) indicated that they were distracted, and/or v) indicated that their data should not be used in the analyses.

7) How many observations will be collected or what will determine sample size?
No need to justify decision, but be precise about exactly how the number will be determined.
We will aim for 100 participants per cell. Given the 3 (post type) x 2 (order of presentation) design, we will thus aim for 600 participants after data exclusions. To account for data exclusions, an extra 15 participants per condition will be recruited. We will therefore recruit 690 participants in total.

8) Anything else you would like to pre-register?
(e.g., secondary analyses, variables collected for exploratory purposes, unusual analyses planned?)
We will assess the perceived cuteness of (manipulation check) and emotional response to (potential confound) the stimuli.
We will explore the effect of additional items (entertain, provide information, sincere, authentic) included with the process measures.

Appendix 6. Study 1 materials

Question	Scale/Responses

This post mostly tries to… ● Sell a product ● Entertain ● Influence preferences ● Provide information ● Persuade	1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree
This post seems… ● Insincere - Sincere ● Inauthentic - Authentic ● Manipulative - Not manipulative ● Not convincing - Convincing	7-point bipolar scale
My opinion of Vacumate is… ● Bad - Good ● Negative - Positive ● Unfavorable - Favorable	7-point bipolar scale
After seeing this post, I would… ● Like to know more about VacuMate ● Be interested in learning more about the robot vacuum ● Look for more information about VacuMate ● Recommend this robot vacuum to other people	1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree
What is the likelihood that you would consider VacuMate the next time you are looking for a robot vacuum?	1 = extremely unlikely to 7 = extremely likely
I find the post… ● Cute ● Adorable	0 = Not at all to 6 = Extremely
Overall, this post makes me feel: ● Sad - Happy	7-point bipolar scale

Appendix 7. Goal measure (persuasion purpose, entertainment purpose and informational purpose) and related analyses - Study 1

Factor analysis

Items	**Variable**	**Eigenvalue**	**Alpha**
Persuade, Sell, Influence	Persuasion Purpose	1.98	.73

Two-way ANOVAs

Persuasion purpose	***df***	***F***	***p***

Influencer type	2, 663	7.361	<.001
Process first	1, 663	11.521	<.001
Influencer x process first	2, 663	3.154	.043
Entertainment purpose	***df***	***F***	***p***
Influencer type	2, 663	127. 334	<.001
Process first	1, 663	2.459	.117
Influencer x process first	2, 663	.119	.887
Informational purpose	***df***	***F***	***p***
Influencer type	2, 663	.331	.718
Process first	1, 663	4.129	.043
Influencer x process first	2, 663	2.474	.085

Main effects of influencer type

Variable	***df***	***F***	***p***	M_{Brand} (***SD***)	M_{Human} (***SD***)	M_{Pet} (***SD***)
Persuasion purpose	2, 663	7.151	<.001	4.21[1] (1.32)	3.67[1,2] (1.62)	3.97[2] (1.61)
Entertainment purpose	2, 663	128.149	<.001	3.31[3] (1.70)	3.00[4] (1.63)	5.23[3,4] (1.40)
Informational purpose	2, 663	.275	.760	4.23[5] (1.65)	4.23 (1.65)	4.13[5] (1.67)

Order effects with gender and age as covariates

Persuasion purpose	***df***	***F***	***p***
Gender	1, 661	14.810	<.001
Age	1, 661	.001	.980
Influencer type	2, 661	8.177	<.001
Process first	1, 661	11.264	<.001
Influencer x process first	2, 661	2.937	.054

Entertainment purpose	***df***	***F***	***p***
Gender	1, 661	.178	.673
Age	1, 661	7.425	.007
Influencer type	2, 661	127.453	<.001
Process first	1, 661	2.584	.108
Influencer x process first	2, 661	.246	.782
Informational purpose	***df***	***F***	***p***
Gender	1, 661	2.934	.087
Age	1, 661	11.667	<.001
Influencer type	2, 661	.339	.712
Process first	1, 661	4.115	.043
Influencer x process first	2, 661	2.057	.129

Main effects with gender, age, and mood as covariates

Persuasion purpose	***df***	***F***	***p***
Gender	1, 664	15.520	<.001
Age	1, 664	.000	.993
Influencer type	2, 664	8.004	<.001
Entertainment purpose	***df***	***F***	***p***
Gender	1, 664	.176	.675
Age	1, 664	7.054	.008
Influencer type	2, 664	128.043	<.001
Informational purpose	***df***	***F***	***p***
Gender	1, 664	3.075	.080
Age	1, 664	12.463	<.001
Influencer type	2, 664	.293	.746

Appendix 8. Order effects with gender and age as covariates - Study 1

Process measure

Persuasion intent	***df***	***F***	***p***
Gender	1, 661	14.810	<.001
Age	1, 661	.001	.980
Influencer type	2, 661	8.177	<.001
Process first	1, 661	11.264	<.001
Influencer x process first	2, 661	2.937	.054

DVs

Attitudes	***df***	***F***	***p***
Gender	1, 661	31.581	<.001
Age	1, 661	.523	.470
Influencer type	2, 661	1.568	.209
Process first	1, 661	37.074	<.001
Influencer x process first	2, 661	2.143	.118
Intentions	***df***	***F***	***p***
Gender	1, 661	12.646	<.001
Age	1, 661	1.471	.226
Influencer type	2, 661	2.054	.129
Process first	1, 661	19.338	<.001
Influencer x process first	2, 661	1.662	.191
Purchase likelihood	***df***	***F***	***p***
Gender	1, 661	9.329	.002
Age	1, 661	.124	.724
Influencer type	2, 661	1.943	.144
Process first	1, 661	23.819	<.001

Influencer x process first	2, 661	4.327	.014

Manipulation check - Cuteness

Cuteness	***df***	***F***	***p***
Gender	1, 661	13.591	<.001
Age	1, 661	6.326	.012
Influencer type	2, 661	121.005	<.001
Process first	1, 661	.683	.409
Influencer x process first	2, 661	1.613	.200

Appendix 9. Main effects with gender and age as covariates - Study 1

Process Measures

Persuasion intent	***df***	***F***	***p***
Gender	1, 664	15.520	<.001
Age	1, 664	.000	.993
Influencer type	2, 664	8.004	<.001

DVs

Attitudes	***df***	***F***	***p***
Gender	1, 664	31.257	<.001
Age	1, 664	.371	.543
Influencer type	2, 664	1.687	.186
Purchase likelihood	***df***	***F***	***p***
Gender	1, 664	9.734	.002
Age	1, 664	.083	.773
Influencer type	2, 664	1.765	.172
Intentions	***df***	***F***	***p***
Gender	1, 664	12.933	<.001
Age	1, 664	1.256	.263

Influencer type	2, 664	2.035	.131

Manipulation Check - Cuteness

Cuteness	***df***	***F***	***p***
Gender	1, 664	14.384	<.001
Age	1, 664	6.938	.009
Influencer type	2, 664	123.001	<.001

Appendix 10. Main effects with gender, age, and mood as covariates - Study 1.

Process Measures

Persuasion intent	***df***	***F***	***p***
Gender	1, 663	2.943	.087
Age	1, 663	.190	.663
Mood	1, 663	341.301	<.001
Influencer type	2, 663	21.087	<.001

DVs

Attitudes	***df***	***F***	***p***
Gender	1, 663	13.007	<.001
Age	1, 663	.088	.767
Mood	1, 663	472.869	<.001
Influencer type	2, 663	13.000	<.001
Purchase likelihood	***df***	***F***	***p***
Gender	1, 663	.490	.484
Age	1, 663	.005	.941
Mood	1, 663	349.620	<.001
Influencer type	2, 663	18.459	<.001
Intentions	***df***	***F***	***p***
Gender	1, 663	1.355	.245

Age	1, 663	.917	.339
Mood	1, 663	404.057	<.001
Influencer type	2, 663	17.684	<.001

Manipulation check - Cuteness

Cuteness	***df***	***F***	***p***
Gender	1, 663	1.533	.216
Age	1, 663	8.842	.003
Mood	1, 663	503.279	<.001
Influencer type	2, 663	91.366	<.001

Appendix 11. Serial mediation analyses with gender, age and mood as covariates - Study 1.

	Mood	**Perceived persuasion intent**	**Attitudes**
Pet (vs. brand)	β = -.6670, *SE* = .1069, *t* = -6.2410, *p* <.001	β = .7554, *SE* = .1195, *t* = 6.3221, *p* <.001	β = .1511, *SE* = .0862, *t* = 1.7522., *p* = .0802
Pet (vs. human)	β = -.7568, *SE* = .1073, *t* = -7.0546, *p* <.001	β = .2592, *SE* = .1209, *t* = 2.1444, *p* = .0324	β = .2523, *SE* = .0850, *t* = 2.9691, *p* = .0031
Gender	β = -.1922, *SE* = .0444, *t* = -4.3313, *p* <.001	β = -.0839, *SE* = .0489, *t* = -1.7156, *p* = .0867	β = -.1091, *SE* = .0343, *t* = -3.1768, *p* = .0016
Age	β = -.0022, *SE* = .0037, *t* = -.5934, *p* = .5531	β = .0017, *SE* = .0040, *t* = .4359, *p* = .6631	β = -.0018, *SE* = .0028, *t* = -.6353, *p* = .5254
Mood	–	β = .7790, *SE* = .0422, *t* = 18.4743, *p* <.001	β = .4113, *SE* = .0364, *t* = 11.3099, *p* <.001
Perceived persuasion intent	–	–	β = .4548, *SE* = .0272, *t* = 16.7120, *p* <.001
Mediation 95% CI (Pet vs. brand)	[-.40; -.20]	[.24; .46]	[-.33; -.15]
Mediation 95% CI (Pet vs. human)	[-.44; -.20]	[.00; .24]	[-.37; -.18]
	Mood	**Perceived persuasion intent**	**Behavioral intentions**

Pet (vs. brand)	β = -.6670, *SE* = .1069, *t* = -6.2410, *p* <.001	β = .7554, *SE* = .1195, *t* = 6.3221, *p* <.001	β = .3958, *SE* = .1264, *t* = 3.1317, *p* = .0018
Pet (vs. human)	β = -.7568, *SE* = .1073, *t* = -7.0546, *p* <.001	β = .2592, *SE* = .1209, *t* = 2.1444, *p* = .0324	β = .4179, *SE* = .1246, *t* = 3.3547, *p* = .0008
Gender	β = -.1922, *SE* = .0444, *t* = -4.3313, *p* <.001	β = -.0839, *SE* = .0489, *t* = -1.7156, *p* = .0867	β = -.0195, *SE* = .0503, *t* = -.3873, *p* = .6987
Age	β = -.0022, *SE* = .0037, *t* = -.5934, *p* = .5531	β = .0017, *SE* = .0040, *t* = .4359, *p* = .6631	β = -.0054, *SE* = .0041, *t* = -1.3284, *p* = .1845
Mood	–	β = .7790, *SE* = .0422, *t* = 18.4743, *p* <.001	β = .5544, *SE* = .0533, *t* = 10.3993, *p* <.001
Perceived persuasion intent	–	–	β = .5612, *SE* = .0399, *t* = 14.0672, *p* <.001
Mediation 95% CI (Pet vs. brand)	[-.53; -.23]	[.30; .57]	[-.40; -.19]
Mediation 95% CI (Pet vs. human)	[-.58; -.27]	[.01; .29]	[-.45; -.22]
	Mood	**Perceived persuasion intent**	**Purchase likelihood**
Pet (vs. brand)	β = -.6670, *SE* = .1069, *t* = -6.2410, *p* <.001	β = .7554, *SE* = .1195, *t* = 6.3221, *p* <.001	β = .4208, *SE* = .1211, *t* = 3.4763, *p* = .0005
Pet (vs. human)	β = -.7568, *SE* = .1073, *t* = -7.0546, *p* <.001	β = .2592, *SE* = .1209, *t* = 2.1444, *p* = .0324	β = .4440, *SE* = .1194, *t* = 3.7183, *p* = .0002
Gender	β = -.1922, *SE* = .0444, *t* = -4.3313, *p* <.001	β = -.0839, *SE* = .0489, *t* = -1.7156, *p* = .0867	β = .0017, *SE* = .0482, *t* = .0345, *p* = .9725
Age	β = -.0022, *SE* = .0037, *t* = -.5934, *p* = .5531	β = .0017, *SE* = .0040, *t* = .4359, *p* = .6631	β = -.0005, *SE* = .0039, *t* = -.1237, *p* = .9016
Mood	–	β = .7790, *SE* = .0422, *t* = 18.4743, *p* <.001	β = .4963, *SE* = .0511, *t* = 9.7130, *p* <.001
Perceived persuasion intent	–	–	β = .4637, *SE* = .0382, *t* = 12.1270, *p* <.001
Mediation 95% CI (Pet vs. brand)	[-.40; -21.]	[.24; .47]	[-.34; -.15]
Mediation 95% CI	[-.54; -.25]	[-.00; -.24]	[-.38; -.10]

(Pet vs. human)			

Appendix 12. Study 2 materials

Question	Scale/Responses
Overall, this post makes me feel: ● Sad - Happy	7-point bipolar scale
This post seems… ● Insincere - Sincere ● Inauthentic - Authentic ● Manipulative - Not manipulative ● Not convincing - Convincing	7-point bipolar scale
My opinion of VacuMate/MopMate is… ● Bad - Good ● Negative - Positive ● Unfavourable - Favourable	7-point bipolar scale
After seeing this post, I would… ● Like to know more about VacuMate/MopMate ● Be interested in learning more about the robot vacuum/mop ● Look for more information about VacuMate/MopMate ● Recommend this robot vacuum/mop to other people	1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree
What is the likelihood you would consider VacuMate/MopMate the next time you are looking for a robot vacuum/mop?	1 = extremely unlikely to 7 = extremely likely
I find the post… ● Cute ● Adorable	0 = Not at all to 6 = Extremely

Appendix 13. Pre-registered analyses - Study 2

'*Influencer Cuteness Study 2*'
(AsPredicted #169540)

Created: 04/06/2024 11:07 AM (PT)

Author(s)
Tanmaya Kansara (Concordia University) - t_kansar@live.concordia.ca
Caroline Roux (Concordia University) - caroline.roux@concordia.ca

1) Have any data been collected for this study already?
No, no data have been collected for this study yet.

2) What's the main question being asked or hypothesis being tested in this study?
Study 2a: Close replication
We will test if the serial mediation effect found through exploratory analyses in Study 1 can be replicated.
We hypothesize that the relationship between influencer type (human vs. pet) and the dependent variables (attitudes, behavioral intentions, and purchase likelihood) will be serially mediated through mood and perceived persuasion intent.

Study 2b: Conceptual replication
We will test if the above serial mediation effect also replicates for a low-involvement product (a mop).

3) Describe the key dependent variable(s) specifying how they will be measured.
Mood (mediator) will be assessed using one item (sad-happy) on a bipolar scale (1-7). Perceived persuasion intent (mediator) will be assessed using four items (sincere, authentic, not manipulative, convincing) on bipolar scales (1-7). All items will be averaged into a single measure for the analyses.
Attitudes (DV) will be assessed using three items (good, positive, favorable) on a bipolar scale (1-7). All items will be averaged into a single measure for the analyses.
Intentions (DV) will be assessed using three items (look for more information, learn more about the product, recommend the product) on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) scale. All items will be averaged into a single measure for the analyses.
Purchase likelihood (DV) will be assessed using one item on a 1 (extremely unlikely) to 7 (extremely likely) scale.

4) How many and which conditions will participants be assigned to?
Between-subject design. Participants will be assigned to one of four experimental conditions:
- Half the participants will be assigned to one of two stimuli featuring an influencer advertising a robot vacuum. One condition will feature a human influencer and the other condition will feature a pet influencer.
- The other half of participants will be assigned to one of two stimuli featuring an influencer advertising a mop. Again, one condition will feature a human influencer and the other condition will feature a pet influencer.
Even if both studies 2a and 2b will be simultaneously run through the same Qualtrics link, we will treat them as two separate studies rather than one moderation study, as we do not have any theoretical rationale for the potential role of product type (high- vs. low-involvement) as a moderator.

5) Specify exactly which analyses you will conduct to examine the main question/hypothesis.
One-way ANOVAs, to compare the means of the process and outcome measures between the two experimental conditions for each product type.
Serial mediation analyses using PROCESS Model 6, to attempt to confirm the roles of mood and perceived persuasion intent found in study 1 (i.e., influencer type as IV, mood and perceived persuasion intent as serial mediators, and attitudes/intentions/purchase likelihood as DVs).

6) Describe exactly how outliers will be defined and handled, and your precise rule(s) for excluding observations.
We will exclude participants who: i) failed any of the attention checks, ii) who incorrectly answered specific questions (e.g., put their birth year instead of age when asking for the latter), iii) encountered technical issues while completing the survey, iv) indicated that they were distracted, and/or v) indicated that their data should not be used in the analyses.

7) How many observations will be collected or what will determine sample size?
No need to justify decision, but be precise about exactly how the number will be determined.
We will aim for 100 participants per cell. Given the four conditions across the two experiments (influencer: human or pet; product: robot vacuum or mop), we will thus aim for 400 participants after data exclusions. To account for data exclusions, an extra 15 participants per condition will be recruited. We will therefore recruit 460 participants in total.

8) Anything else you would like to pre-register?
(e.g., secondary analyses, variables collected for exploratory purposes, unusual analyses planned?)
We will assess the perceived cuteness of (manipulation check) the stimuli using two items (cute, adorable) on 1 (not at all) to 7 (extremely) scales. Although we generally did not find effects of gender and age when included as covariates in the analyses of study 1, we will again explore whether they impact the results of study 2a and 2b.

Appendix 14. Main effects with gender and age as covariates - Study 2a.

Process Measures

Persuasion intent	***df***	***F***	***p***
Gender	1, 222	7.381	.007
Age	1, 222	.945	.332
Influencer type	1, 222	.041	.839

DVs

Attitudes	***df***	***F***	***p***
Gender	1, 222	8.855	.003
Age	1, 222	1.642	.201
Influencer type	1, 222	.054	.817
Purchase likelihood	***df***	***F***	***p***
Gender	1, 222	5.345	.022
Age	1, 222	1.138	.287
Influencer type	1, 222	1.099	.296
Intentions	***df***	***F***	***p***
Gender	1, 222	4.068	.045
Age	1, 222	1.295	.256
Influencer type	1, 222	.784	.377

Manipulation check - Cuteness

Cuteness	***df***	***F***	***p***
Gender	1, 222	1.573	.211
Age	1, 222	.412	.522
Influencer type	1, 222	61.245	<.001

Appendix 15. Serial mediation analyses with gender and age as covariates - Study 2a

	Mood	**Perceived persuasion intent**	**Attitudes**
Influencer type	β = -.5892, *SE* = .1477, *t* =	β = .4441, *SE* = .1763, *t* =	β = .1817, *SE* = .1182, *t* =

	-3.9888, p = .0001	2.5190, p = .0125	1.5378, p = .1255
Gender	β = -.1112, *SE* = .0671, t = -1.6560, p = .0991	β = -.1680, *SE* = .0779, t = -2.1577, p = .0320	β = -.0703, *SE* = .0520, t = -1.3522, p = .1777
Age	β = .0004, *SE* = .0062, t = .0707, p = .9437	β = .0077, *SE* = .0071, t = 1.0870, p = .2782	β = .0048, *SE* = .0047, t = 1.0238, p = .3070
Mood	–	β = .6853, *SE* = .0774, t = 8.8570, p <.001	β = .2774, *SE* = .0595, t = 4.6606, p <.001
Perceived persuasion intent	–	–	β = .5773, *SE* = .0445, t = 12.9853, p <.001
Mediation 95% CI	[-.33; -.05]	[.04; .46]	[-.37; -.11]
	Mood	**Perceived persuasion intent**	**Behavioral intentions**
Influencer type	β = -.5892, *SE* = .1477, t = -3.9888, p = .0001	β = .4441, *SE* = .1763, t = 2.5190, p = .0125	β = .2737, *SE* = .1731, t = 1.5812, p = .1153
Gender	β = -.1112, *SE* = .0671, t = -1.6560, p = .0991	β = -.1680, *SE* = .0779, t = -2.1577, p = .0320	β = -.0183, *SE* = .0762, t = -.2408, p = .8099
Age	β = .0004, *SE* = .0062, t = .0707, p = .9437	β = .0077, *SE* = .0071, t = 1.0870, p = .2782	β = -.0160, *SE* = .0069, t = -2.3214, p = .0212
Mood	–	β = .6853, *SE* = .0774, t = 8.8570, p <.001	β = .1780, *SE* = .0872, t = 2.0409, p = .0425
Perceived persuasion intent	–	–	β = .6753, *SE* = .0651, t = 10.3684, p <.001
Mediation 95% CI	[-.27; -.00]	[.04; .56]	[-.43; -.12]
	Mood	**Perceived persuasion intent**	**Purchase likelihood**
Influencer type	β = -.5892, *SE* = .1477, t = -3.9888, p = .0001	β = .4441, *SE* = .1763, t = 2.5190, p = .0125	β = .3296, *SE* = 1.903, t = 1.7320, p = .0847
Gender	β = -.1112, *SE* = .0671, t = -1.6560, p = .0991	β = -.1680, *SE* = .0779, t = -2.1577, p = .0320	β = -.0745, *SE* = .0837, t = -.8902, p = .3743
Age	β = .0004, *SE* = .0062, t = .0707, p = .9437	β = .0077, *SE* = .0071, t = 1.0870, p = .2782	β = -.0143, *SE* = .0076, t = -1.8911, p = .0599
Mood	–	β = .6853, *SE* = .0774, t =	β = .2042, *SE* = .0958, t =

		8.8570, p <.001	2.1312, p = .0342
Perceived persuasion intent	–	–	β = .5514, *SE* = .0716, t = 7.7031, p <.001
Mediation 95% CI	[-.31; .00]	[.04; .45]	[-.36; -.10]

Appendix 16. Main effects with gender and age as covariates - Study 2b

Process Measures

Persuasion intent	***df***	***F***	***p***
Gender	1, 219	.980	.323
Age	1, 219	1.206	.273
Influencer type	1, 219	1.762	.186

DVs

Attitudes	***df***	***F***	***p***
Gender	1, 219	1.330	.250
Age	1, 219	2.285	.132
Influencer type	1, 219	.835	.362
Purchase likelihood	***df***	***F***	***p***
Gender	1, 219	.372	.542
Age	1, 219	1.407	.237
Influencer type	1, 219	1.280	.259
Intentions	***df***	***F***	***p***
Gender	1, 219	4.172	.042
Age	1, 219	.172	.679
Influencer type	1, 219	.047	.829

Manipulation check - Cuteness

Cuteness	***df***	***F***	***p***
Gender	1, 219	1.900	.169

Age	1, 219	.079	.779
Influencer type	1, 219	53.925	<.001

Appendix 17. Serial mediation analyses with gender and age as covariates - Study 2b

	Mood	**Perceived persuasion intent**	**Attitudes**
Influencer type	β = -.3831, *SE* = .1413, *t* = -2.7114, *p* = .0072	β = .1022, *SE* = .1697, *t* = .6022, *p* = .5477	β = .1216, *SE* = .1024, *t* = 1.1873., *p* = .2364
Gender	β = -.1250, *SE* = .0923, *t* = -1.3538, *p* = .1772	β = -.0141, *SE* = .1095, *t* = -.1284, *p* = .8980	β = -.0183, *SE* = .0660, *t* = -.2770, *p* = .7820
Age	β = .0051, *SE* = .0050, *t* = 1.0131, *p* = .3121	β = .0034, *SE* = .0059, *t* = .5695, *p* = .5696	β = .0035, *SE* = .0036, *t* = 9.706, *p* = .3328
Mood	–	β = 1.0343, *SE* = .0798, *t* = 12.9579, *p* <.001	β = .3765, *SE* = .0640, *t* = 5.8807, *p* <.001
Perceived persuasion intent	–	–	β = .4702, *SE* = .0408, *t* = 11.5152, *p* <.001
Mediation 95% CI	[-.27; -.04]	[-.11; .21]	[-.33; -.05]
	Mood	**Perceived persuasion intent**	**Behavioral intentions**
Influencer type	β = -.3831, *SE* = .1413, *t* = -2.7114, *p* = .0072	β = .1022, *SE* = .1697, *t* = .6022, *p* = .5477	β = .3320, *SE* = .1534, *t* = 2.1640, *p* = .0316
Gender	β = -.1250, *SE* = .0923, *t* = -1.3538, *p* = .1772	β = -.0141, *SE* = .1095, *t* = -.1284, *p* = .8980	β = -.1725, *SE* = .0989, *t* = -1.7435, *p* = .0827
Age	β = .0051, *SE* = .0050, *t* = 1.0131, *p* = .3121	β = .0034, *SE* = .0059, *t* = .5695, *p* = .5696	β = -.0044, *SE* = .0053, *t* = -.8166, *p* = .4151
Mood	–	β = 1.0343, *SE* = .0798, *t* = 12.9579, *p* <.001	β = .5371, *SE* = .0959, *t* = 5.5987, *p* <.001
Perceived persuasion intent	–	–	β = .6092, *SE* = .0612, *t* = 9.9566, *p* <.001
Mediation 95% CI	[-.38; -.05]	[-.13; .27]	[-.43; -.06]
	Mood	**Perceived persuasion intent**	**Purchase likelihood**

Influencer type	β = -.3831, *SE* = .1413, *t* = -2.7114, *p* = .0072	β = .1022, *SE* = .1697, *t* = .6022, *p* = .5477	β = .0659, *SE* = .1657, *t* = .3976, *p* = .6913
Gender	β = -.1250, *SE* = .0923, *t* = -1.3538, *p* = .1772	β = -.0141, *SE* = .1095, *t* = -.1284, *p* = .8980	β = .0402, *SE* = .1069, *t* = .3757, *p* = .7075
Age	β = .0051, *SE* = .0050, *t* = 1.0131, *p* = .3121	β = .0034, *SE* = .0059, *t* = .5695, *p* = .5696	β = .0029, *SE* = .0058, *t* = .4996, *p* = .6179
Mood	–	β = 1.0343, *SE* = .0798, *t* = 12.9579, *p* <.001	β = .4473, *SE* = .1036, *t* = 4.3157, *p* <.001
Perceived persuasion intent	–	–	β = .5401, *SE* = .0661, *t* = 8.1715, *p* <.001
Mediation 95% CI	[-.33; -.04]	[-.12; .24]	[-.39; -.05]