



DISERTATION PROPOSAL TITLE:
INFLUENCERS AND FAST FASHION: AN ANALYSIS OF
SOCIAL MEDIA IMPACT ON
PRETTY LITTLE THING



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SUBMISSION DATE: 07/11/2025

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1. Introduction

Over the past decade, influencer marketing has become a key strategic tool for fast fashion brands, particularly in the UK. Platforms such as Instagram and TikTok have transformed how companies engage with their audiences, allowing for direct, visual, and emotional communication (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019; Kim & Ko, 2020). PrettyLittleThing (PLT), founded in 2012 and part of the Boohoo group, has distinguished itself through a bold approach to digital campaigns, collaborating with celebrities, micro-influencers, and emerging creators to expand its reach and reinforce its aspirational image.

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2021), brand awareness is the first step in the consumer decision-making process, and influencers serve as catalysts to boost this visibility. Numerous studies have demonstrated that sponsored content can influence purchase intent and perceptions of authenticity (Brown & Wilson, 2020; Celestin, 2023). However, most existing research focuses on young or student audiences, often neglecting active adult consumers, especially within work contexts.

This study aims to analyse how PrettyLittleThing's influencer campaigns affect brand perception among working adults in London, accounting for factors such as notoriety, perceived authenticity, engagement, and loyalty. A quantitative approach based on Chaffey's (2023) RACE (Reach, Act, Convert, Engage) model will be employed to provide robust empirical evidence for both academic and business practices.

In addition to enriching the literature on digital marketing, this research aims to offer concrete recommendations for fast-fashion brands looking to optimise their campaigns for diverse, economically active adult audiences. Given that PrettyLittleThing has started diversifying its collaborations and repositioning its image to appeal to broader segments (Burney, 2025), it is crucial to understand how these strategies are perceived beyond the traditional youth market.

2. Rationale

Fast fashion has faced increasing scrutiny for its environmental and social impacts. However, brands like PrettyLittleThing (PLT) remain popular among British consumers thanks to their accessibility, competitive pricing, and strong digital presence (Kotler & Armstrong, 2021; Burney, 2025). PLT has capitalised on this trend by launching campaigns with influencers that enhance its aspirational, youthful image, particularly on platforms like TikTok and Instagram, where visual, viral content drives high engagement (Celestin, 2023).

While influencer marketing has been effective in boosting brand awareness, its impact on adult consumers' perceptions of authenticity and loyalty remains relatively unexplored. This study focuses on an underrepresented demographic: working adults aged 20 to 50 who are active social media users and interact with sponsored content in both professional and everyday contexts. By applying Chaffey's (2023) RACE (Reach, Act, Convert, Engage) model, we aim to evaluate how PLT's campaigns influence brand awareness, engagement, and loyalty within this audience.

Research Gap

Most studies on influencer marketing in fast fashion primarily focus on teenagers or college students (Brown & Wilson, 2020; Smith & Johnson, 2020). Few have examined how these strategies impact active adult consumers, particularly in urban settings such as London. Additionally, PLT's recent shift toward a more diverse and socially conscious image indicates a strategic change that has yet to be academically evaluated (Burney, 2025). This study aims to address that gap by providing empirical evidence on a vital demographic segment for the commercial sustainability of fast fashion brands.

Research Objectives

General Objective:

- To analyse the impact of PrettyLittleThing's influencer campaigns on brand perception among working adults in London.

Specific Objectives:

- Evaluate the level of awareness generated by campaigns on Instagram and TikTok.
- Measure the relationship between the type of influencer (micro vs. celebrity) and the perception of authenticity.
- Analyse the correlation between digital engagement and brand loyalty.

Research Questions

1. How do PrettyLittleThing's influencer campaigns influence brand awareness among working adults in London?
2. Which type of influencer generates the best perception of authenticity and trust?
3. Is there a significant relationship between engagement with sponsored content and purchase intent or brand loyalty?

3. Literature Review

Influencer marketing has become a crucial tool for fast-fashion brands, enabling them to connect with digital audiences in a direct, emotional way. PrettyLittleThing (PLT), part of the Boohoo group, has distinguished itself through its extensive use of campaigns on Instagram and TikTok. The brand collaborates with celebrities, micro-influencers, and content creators who embody its aspirational aesthetic (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019; Celestin, 2023).

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2021), brand perception—meaning the mental associations consumers form about a company—is heavily influenced by the authenticity of the message and the credibility of the individual conveying it. In this context, micro-influencers tend to foster greater trust than celebrities by providing content that feels more personal and less commercial (Brown & Wilson, 2020; Kim & Ko, 2020). This distinction is particularly relevant for PLT, which has diversified its strategy to incorporate a broader range of representative voices (Burney, 2025).

The RACE (Reach, Act, Convert, Engage) model, proposed by Chaffey (2023), serves as a framework for analysing digital campaigns based on their ability to attract, activate, and retain consumers. PLT employs this model through sponsored content, discount codes, and direct product links. However, recent studies indicate that excessive exposure to promotional content can lead to digital fatigue, which may diminish perceptions of authenticity (Celestin, 2023; Aira, 2024).

Research by Hsu and Chang (2016) and Patil (2017) shows that brand awareness does not always translate into customer loyalty, especially within the fast-fashion sector, where consumer behaviour is both volatile and highly price-sensitive. This finding is further supported by more recent studies that highlight that adult consumers increasingly prioritise authenticity, sustainability, and emotional connection with brands (González & Malik, 2022; Burney, 2025).

Despite these insights, most studies focus on young or student audiences, leaving a significant gap in the literature on the effects of influencer campaigns on active adult consumers, particularly in urban and workplace contexts. This study aims to bridge that gap by providing empirical evidence on how factors such as perceived authenticity, frequency of exposure, and influencer type influence brand perception and purchase intent among a relatively unexplored demographic segment.

4. Methodology

Philosophical Approach: Positivism

This study adopts a positivist perspective, focusing on objective observation and quantifiable measurements of social phenomena. In the context of digital marketing, this approach enables the evaluation of influencer campaigns using empirical data, thereby avoiding subjective interpretations (Saunders et al., 2019).

Theoretical Approach: Deductive

The research is grounded in existing theories related to brand perception and digital influence, such as the RACE model (Chaffey, 2023) and the Brand Equity approach (Keller, 2013). These theories will be examined alongside the collected data to validate hypotheses regarding the relationships among influencer types, perceived authenticity, and brand loyalty (Creswell, 2014).

Methodological Strategy: Structured Survey

An online questionnaire will serve as the primary data collection instrument. This method enables efficient and standardised information gathering, facilitating statistical analysis (Groves et al., 2009). The questions will be closed-ended and will

utilise Likert-type scales and multiple-choice options. These will focus on key variables such as notoriety, authenticity, engagement, and loyalty.

Type of Research: Quantitative (Mono Method)

The study will exclusively adopt a quantitative approach, ensuring methodological coherence and allowing the identification of patterns and correlations among variables (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Time Horizon: Cross-sectional

The research will be conducted at a specific point in time, without a longitudinal follow-up. This design captures current perceptions within a dynamic digital environment (Creswell, 2014).

Sample and Profile of Participants

The sample will consist of 50 working adults aged 20 to 50 who live in London and are active Instagram or TikTok users. Participants will be selected using convenience and snowball sampling, with outreach through personal and professional networks. To qualify, participants must be followers or consumers of PrettyLittleThing, which will be verified through a filter question at the beginning of the quiz.

This participant profile was chosen to address the objective of studying a segment underexplored in the literature: an economically active audience exposed to digital campaigns in both work and daily contexts.

Platform and Influencer Justification

Campaigns on Instagram and TikTok will be analysed, as these are the platforms most utilised by PrettyLittleThing (PLT) and are known for their capacity to generate visual and viral content (Celestin, 2023). A distinction will be made between micro-influencers (those with fewer than 100,000 followers) and celebrities (those with more than 500,000 followers), as previous studies suggest that there are significant differences in the perception of authenticity and trust between these two groups (Brown & Wilson, 2020; Kim & Ko, 2020).

Sampling Considerations

While snowball sampling allows for the collection of a focused participant group, it may introduce selection biases, as participants are likely to share similar

characteristics. This limitation will be acknowledged in the discussion section, and efforts will be made to diversify the questionnaire's distribution channels.

Data Collection

The questionnaire will be distributed via Microsoft Forms and will be available for one week. It will be shared through email, WhatsApp groups, and social media. Participants will receive an information sheet and a consent form before participating. The estimated time to complete the questionnaire is approximately 10 minutes.

Data Analysis

The collected data will be analysed using Microsoft Excel, utilising basic statistical functions to identify trends, averages, standard deviations, and correlations among key variables.

Ethical Considerations

Anonymity and confidentiality of the data will be ensured. All participants will sign an informed consent form, and the information will be stored in the institutional OneDrive, in accordance with UWTSD's ethics policy (Smith & Johnson, 2015). No sensitive data will be collected, and no invasive techniques will be applied.

5. Expected Results and Limitations

Expected Results

The results are anticipated to confirm that PrettyLittleThing's influencer campaigns generate significant brand awareness among adult consumers in London, particularly on visual platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. It is expected that micro-influencers, due to their closeness to audiences and perceived authenticity, will positively impact brand trust and loyalty more than celebrities or larger-scale influencers (Brown & Wilson, 2020; Celestin, 2023).

Additionally, engagement with sponsored content is likely to correlate with a higher intention to purchase, though this may not translate into sustained loyalty. This suggests that while notoriety and the desire to consume may drive initial interest,

they may not be sufficient to sustain a long-term relationship with the brand, especially in the fast-fashion sector, where consumer behaviour is often volatile and highly trend-sensitive (González & Malik, 2022; Patil, 2017).

The study is also expected to reveal differences in perceptions of authenticity across influencer type, exposure frequency, and platform. These findings could provide practical recommendations for optimising future digital campaigns aimed at adult audiences.

Limitations

- **Sample Size and Type:** The study will focus on 50 working adults in London, which limits the generalizability of the results to other demographic groups or regions of the UK.
- **Sampling Method:** We will use convenience sampling and snowball sampling, which may introduce selection biases and reduce the representativeness of the sample.
- **Collection Instrument:** The online questionnaire may not capture the emotional or contextual nuances that a qualitative interview could reveal.
- **Time Horizon:** As this is a cross-sectional study, we will not be able to assess how brand perception evolves.
- **Access to Internal Data:** The research will rely on external insights and will not have access to internal metrics from PrettyLittleThing, which limits the analysis of actual conversion rates.

These limitations will be considered when interpreting the results and making final recommendations, acknowledging the exploratory nature of the study and its potential as a foundation for future research.

5. Expected Findings

The study's results are expected to confirm that PrettyLittleThing's influencer campaigns generate high brand awareness among UK adult consumers, particularly on visual platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. Micro-influencers, because of their personal connection with audiences and perceived authenticity, are likely to

have a more positive impact on brand loyalty than larger influencers or celebrities (Brown & Wilson, 2020; Kim & Ko, 2020).

Additionally, it is anticipated that engagement generated by sponsored content will correlate with a higher intention to purchase, though this may not necessarily translate into long-term brand loyalty. This suggests that notoriety and the desire to consume do not always translate into sustained loyalty, especially in the fast-fashion sector, where consumer behaviour can be volatile and highly influenced by trends (Hsu & Chang, 2016; Patil, 2017).

The study may also uncover differences in perceptions of authenticity based on influencer type, exposure frequency, and platform. These insights could be valuable for optimising future digital marketing campaigns.

6. Timeframe

To ensure efficient, structured project execution, a work schedule has been designed with a 10-week horizon. Each phase corresponds to a key stage of the research process, from literature review to final writing. This Gantt Chart allows you to visualise progress, anticipate possible delays, and keep your focus on the goals set.

Table 1 Weekly planning table

TASK	W1	W2	W 3	W 4	W 5	W6	W 7	W8	W9	W10
Literature review										
Questionnaire Design										
Data Collection										
Data Annalitics										
Interpreting Results										
Drafting conclusions and recommendations										
Final Proofreading and Editing										

7. Conclusion

This proposal outlines a relevant, methodologically sound study of the impact of influencer marketing on the brand perception of PrettyLittleThing, an iconic UK fast-fashion company. In today's saturated digital environment, where purchasing decisions are increasingly shaped by visual content and social recommendations, it is essential to understand how adult consumers respond to influencer campaigns. This understanding is vital for both business practices and academic research (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019; Smith & Johnson, 2020).

Adopting a positivist approach, utilising a deductive method, and employing a quantitative strategy through surveys enables a comprehensive examination of the phenomenon from an objective and replicable perspective. This aligns with recommendations from Creswell (2014) and Saunders et al. (2019) regarding perception studies in digital marketing. By focusing on a sample of working adults, this study extends previous research that has primarily focused on students or adolescent audiences, thereby providing a more diverse and representative view of the contemporary British consumer (Brown & Wilson, 2020; Hsu & Chang, 2016).

The findings are expected to enhance our understanding of how brands can optimise their digital strategies to foster awareness, engagement, and loyalty in less-explored market segments. Additionally, this study can serve as a foundation for future research on authenticity, micro-influence, and consumer behaviour within the fast-fashion sector, consistent with Kotler & Armstrong's (2021) recommendations to adapt marketing strategies to specific sociocultural contexts. This proposal outlines a relevant, methodologically sound study of the impact of influencer marketing on the brand perception of PrettyLittleThing, an iconic UK fast-fashion company. In today's saturated digital environment, where purchasing decisions are increasingly shaped by visual content and social recommendations, it is essential to understand how adult consumers respond to influencer campaigns.

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